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Editor's Introduction:  
Traditions of the Fathers  
Daniel C. Peterson

“Bunter,” said Lord Peter, as the kitchen door closed behind them, “do you know why I am doubtful about the success of those rat experiments?”

“Meaning Dr. Hartman’s, my lord?”

“Yes. Dr. Hartman has a theory. In any investigations, my Bunter, it is most damnably dangerous to have a theory.”

“I have heard you say so, my lord.”

“Confound you—you know it as well as I do! What is wrong with the doctor’s theories, Bunter?”

“You wish me to reply, my lord, that he only sees the facts which fit in with the theory.”

“Thought-reader!” exclaimed Lord Peter bitterly.¹

What Dorothy Sayers’s aristocratic sleuth does not seem to realize, of course, is that it is virtually impossible for any investigator, be he or she a detective or a scientist or a historian, to function without a theory. Not, at least, for more than the first few moments of contemplating a question.² Bunter’s obvious reluctance to

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1 Matthew Roper and my son Joseph Peterson were helpful in locating certain materials for citation in this essay.

agree with the usually perceptive Lord Peter is entirely justified. The issue is never whether or not we will have a hypothesis or a working theory—for we inevitably will—but how good a theory it will be, and how open we will be to potentially modifying or even disconfirming new data. And this applies, we must emphatically note, not only to religious believers. It applies to atheists and agnostics fully as well. Even the pragmatist who boasts of his or her freedom from ideology operates, necessarily, on the basis of at least an unreflective, muddle-headed notion of how the world works and what is or is not good. “Philosophy is inescapable,” observed Karl Jaspers. “The only question is, whether it will be conscious or not, whether it will be good or bad, confused or clear. Whoever rejects philosophy acts on a philosophy himself, without being aware of it.”3 Much of what we think we know and much of what we value, in fact, we have imbibed subrationally from our earliest days, and have rarely if ever thought to question or to examine. This received tradition—for such it may be called—can be good, bad, or, very frequently, a matter of utter indifference (such as ways of decorating a Christmas tree or the direction that clothing should face in a closet).

Typically, when the scriptures allude to “the traditions of men” or “the traditions of the fathers,” they are speaking negatively about the false notions that hinder people from recognizing and accepting the truth (e.g., at 1 Peter 1:18; D&C 74:4; 93:39). “Why do ye . . . transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” the Savior asked his audience (Matthew 15:3). “For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men” (Mark 7:8). The Lamanites, too, were misled by the false traditions of their fathers (Mosiah 1:5; 10:12–3; Alma 9:16; 60:32; Helaman 15:4).

Salvation therefore consists, at least partially, in overcoming false traditions (Alma 9:17; Helaman 5:51; 15:7–8; D&C 74:6–7),

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and, accordingly, it is part of the goal of those who preach the true gospel to lead people to see the incorrectness of the traditions they have previously been taught (Alma 17:9; 24:7). (This is, perhaps, one of the justifications that can be offered for criticism in general and for book reviews in particular.) Thereafter, following their conversion, the Saints are not to “mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction” (Alma 3:8); indeed, in the New Testament they are commanded to avoid those who do not follow the apostolic tradition (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Much of the Old Testament can in fact be read as an account of people sorely tempted to accept the traditions of those around them and of those who sought to ensure that they would keep their distance from those traditions. “Beware,” wrote the apostle Paul in an age when Hellenism, rather than Canaanite idolatry, was the chief snare, “lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). Unfortunately, as Latter-day Saints know, and as history abundantly attests, the early church did not take his advice. Thus most of Christendom—to say nothing of the rest of the religious world—lies more or less under “the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children” (D&C 123:7).

I have no doubt, as unecumenical as it sounds, that the great intellectual traditions, which include other religions and even other Christian denominations, are among those to be grouped in the blinding “traditions of men.” For all their contributions, which are significant, and for all their value, which is immense, even the best worldviews offered us by a largely apostate global culture can block understanding and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But I have been struck in recent days by the stubborn persistence of false perceptions that do not reach even the level of what some anthropologists call “little traditions.” We might perhaps call them “microtraditions.” Small as they are, though, and despite the fact that they have no basis in reality, the little myths that I am thinking of distort and blind. They live on, and they undoubtedly make it harder for certain people to hear the real message of the gospel of Jesus Christ when it is preached to them.

I have in mind two specific incorrect “traditions.”
The first, fostered by certain evangelical critics of the church, maintains that, in the belief of Latter-day Saints, the atonement of Jesus Christ covers only the transgression of Adam and, accordingly, ensures only our resurrection from physical death. This assertion has recently been repeated by no less an authority than Mr. Ed Decker, in a slick, multicolored brochure clearly intended for mass distribution.4

“The Bible is clear,” Mr. Decker quite accurately noted in an earlier publication, “that Jesus did not just die for Adam’s sin but for the individual sins of individual people.”5 And any believing Latter-day Saint who is even minimally conversant with the teachings of his or her church would instantly agree with the biblical doctrine, which is also the doctrine of the scriptural texts unique to the restored gospel. But Mr. Decker nonetheless insists that Mormons deny Jesus’ atoning death for our sins. To Latter-day Saints, he says, Jesus is “no more than a pointer, an example,” and “without redemptive powers.”6 “In Mormonism,” he declares, “the blood of Christ atones for Adam’s sin only, which brings resurrection to all. . . . Christ’s blood doesn’t atone for a single individual sin.”7 The Latter-day Saints, says Mr. Decker, “spurn—even mock—the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ.”8

Hank Hanegraaff, successor to the late “Dr.” Walter Martin as leader of the Christian Research Institute in California, has chimed in with a similar (and, sad to say, rather widely distributed) claim.9 In an undated “CRI Perspective” entitled “Mormonism and Salvation,” Hanegraaff informs his unfortunate readers that,

6 Decker, Decker’s Complete Handbook, 253, 255; compare 56.
7 Dave Hunt and Ed Decker, Unmasking Mormonism (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1984), 34.
8 Decker, Decker’s Complete Handbook, 311.
9 On Walter R. Martin, see the astonishing exposé offered by Robert L. and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, vol. 3 (Mesa, Ariz.: Brownsworth, 1986).
INTRODUCTION

When Mormons talk about salvation by grace, they’re referring to what they themselves call “general salvation.” By this, Mormons mean that everybody is going to be resurrected, after which they will be judged according to their works. In other words, everybody gets an entrance pass to God’s courtroom, but once inside, they’re on their own! This, of course, adds up to nothing more than salvation by works.

It doesn’t really matter that the allegation made by Mr. Decker and Mr. Hanegraaff is flagrantly false, nor does it matter that literally hundreds if not thousands of passages from Latter-day Saint scripture and Latter-day Saint leaders teach quite a different doctrine than that which these two critics attribute to us. It certainly doesn’t matter that I (rather redundantly) refuted Mr. Decker’s claim on this subject in 1995. He is repeating it yet again, in 1997. And, given the gravity of the charge, it will be surprising if this assertion that Latter-day Saints deny the central doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the Savior’s atonement—does not make it more difficult for some to hear, much less accept, the message of the restoration. That, after all, is the point of the accusation.

A second microtradition, popular among secularizing critics (but not only among them), holds that Latter-day Saints are forbidden to think for themselves. We are, according to this

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10 See Peterson, “P. T. Barnum Redivivus,” 76–82. It appears, by the way, that Mr. Decker is familiar with my refutation, and that he is rather displeased by it. In a 26 February 1997 E-mail message, he informed me that he and another professional anti-Mormon are gathering materials for an attack on your humble editor.

tradition, the stupefied victims of an un-American ecclesiastical tyranny. On 3 March 1997, a woman named Laurie (or something of the kind) called in to the program “Take Two” on Salt Lake City’s television station KUTV (Channel 2). The host, Rod Decker, and his two guests, D. Michael Quinn and Marvin Hill, had been discussing past disagreements among the General Authorities of the church. With obvious irony, “Laurie” demanded to know how such disagreements could possibly occur, given the fact that Mormonism forbids unregulated individual opinion:

Laurie: “Mormon scripture itself discourages independent thought when it states that, and I quote, ‘The thinking has already been done,’ and when independent thought . . .”

Rod Decker: “All right. I’ll ask him that, okay. We’ve heard that. ‘When the Church leaders speak, the thinking has been done.’”

Unfortunately, neither Mr. Decker, Dr. Quinn, or Dr. Hill challenged the substance of the quoted passage, nor did anyone ask “Laurie” for a scriptural reference. The source for the statement in question is actually a June 1945 ward teachers’ message, and one should scarcely need to point out that it is not to be found in any Latter-day Saint scripture. For obvious reasons, however, it has become quite popular among certain critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Back in the early 1980s, for example, in an article addressed to intellectually inclined religious skeptics, George D. Smith, the owner of Signature Books, cited the statement as evidence of what Mormonism is really about. One might, of course, have thought that the 1986 publication of George Albert Smith’s repudiation of the statement would have euthanized it. After all, at the time he penned this, George Albert Smith was the president of the church—and, as the

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June 1945 ward teachers’ message itself explains, “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. . . . When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy.”13 But the myth lives on. (How many other ward teachers’ messages, from the 1940s or any other decade, are remembered today?) Edward H. Ashment used it, for instance, to flog the church during an address to the 1991 annual meeting of the Mormon History Association.14 And now, indeed, this obscure ward teaching message, apparently written by a minor church functionary and more than a half century old, has been elevated by at least one critic of the church into a vital passage from the canonical scriptures of the Latter-day Saints.

More important than the specific charge of intellectual tyranny, however, is the implicit claim (often made explicit elsewhere) that Latter-day Saint belief, or Christian belief, or religious belief in general, grows out of ignorance, is out of touch with new developments in science and scholarship, is out of sync with contemporary morals and human experience, or is simply out of date, and, therefore, should be tossed out. The argument, such as it is, is seldom overtly stated. More often, we are presented with a proposition that pretends to be either the obvious and undeniable conclusion of an unstated syllogism, or, simply, intuitively apparent to all Deep Thinkers. The well-publicized “Jesus Seminar,” for example, announces in one of its recent books that “the Christ of creed and dogma, who had been firmly in place in the Middle Ages, can no longer command the assent of those who have seen

13 The full text of the message, as well as that of a letter of concerned inquiry from Rev. J. Raymond Cope and the important reply of President George Albert Smith, may be found in “A 1945 Perspective,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 19/1 (1986): 35–9. For a different (and predictably hostile) perspective on the exchange between Rev. Cope and Pres. Smith, see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, The Mormon Purge (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1993). 56. In a remarkable passage, the Tanners effectively contend that Pres. Smith’s statement refusing to assume the role of a religious dictator must be rejected. Why? Because he and his colleagues actually want to be religious dictators and, thus, deny that anybody ever has a right to reject or even question their statements.

the heavens through Galileo’s telescope.”

15 Why this should be so, and what Galileo’s primitive little telescope has to do with the central doctrines of Christianity, is never made clear, although the Seminar (in my opinion, rather pompously) dedicates its book to the Italian astronomer’s memory. But one can hardly fail to be reminded, in this context, of an exchange in C. S. Lewis’s early novel The Pilgrim’s Regress—a novel that seems more prescient with each passing year. The conversation revolves around the “Landlord,” who, in Lewis’s allegory, represents God:

“But how do you know there is no Landlord?”

“Christopher Columbus, Galileo, the earth is round, invention of printing, gunpowder!!” exclaimed Mr. Enlightenment in such a loud voice that the pony shied.

“I beg your pardon,” said John.

“Eh?” said Mr. Enlightenment.

“I didn’t quite understand,” said John.

“Why, it’s plain as a pikestaff,” said the other.

“Your people in Puritania believe in the Landlord because they have not had the benefits of a scientific training. For example, I dare say it would be news to you to hear that the earth was round—round as an orange, my lad!”

“Well, I don’t know that it would,” said John, feeling a little disappointed. “My father always said it was round.”

“No, no, my dear boy,” said Mr. Enlightenment, “you must have misunderstood him. It is well known that everyone in Puritania thinks the earth flat. It is not likely that I should be mistaken on such a point. Indeed, it is out of the question.”


Just as dogmatically, and with just as little actual argument, the Jesus Seminar informs us that “Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo have dismantled the mythological abodes of the gods and Satan, and bequeathed us secular heavens.” Really? The Russian cosmonaut who, having orbited the earth a few times, returned to the ground and announced that he had not seen God, yields nothing to the Seminar in subtlety or depth of thought. One recalls also John Stuart Mill’s exclamation of disapproving surprise, while contemplating “the remarkable phenomenon of Mormonism” during the late 1850s, at “the unexpected and instructive fact that an alleged new revelation and a religion founded on it . . . is believed by hundreds of thousands, and has been made the foundation of a society in the age of newspapers, railways, and the electric telegraph.”

The sheer passage of time, and the mere accumulation of technology and scientific insights, reveals nothing, in itself, about the truth or falsity of religious claims—no more than does the bare traversing of geographical distances, however great. Serving as a missionary in Switzerland, I once met a woman whose name remained on the membership rolls of the church although she had long been uninterested in worshipping with the Saints. When I asked her why her testimony had withered away, she replied that she had lived abroad for several years and that her acquaintance with the wider world had so broadened her soul that she now found the gospel far too narrow for her tastes. Asked where she had lived that had so expanded her horizons, she answered, “Frankfurt.” (Frankfurt is a German-speaking city no more than three hundred miles distant from the German-speaking city in which we were sitting at the time.) Needless to say, to a pair of missionaries who had traveled thousands of miles and learned a new language in order to speak with her (my companion having spent part of his youth in Burma and Ethiopia), this did not seem a fully adequate explanation.

Likewise, the question isn’t one of antiquity or pedigree, but of truth. The Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon had both antiquity and pedigree. As Giddianhi observed, the

17 Funk et al., The Five Gospels, 2.
Gadianton “society and the works thereof . . . are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us” (3 Nephi 3:9). Jaredite secret societies were also surrounded with an aura of authentic antiquity (Ether 8:9, 15–8; 9:26; 10:33). The book of Moses puts the earthly origins of such secret combinations at the very dawn of history, when Satan administered the oath to his mortal deputy, Cain (Moses 5:29–31, 49, 51; compare Ether 8:15, 25). Materialistic and practically atheistic naturalism, which can seem so very modern and up-to-date, goes back at least to Lucrètius (d. 54 B.C.), Epicurus (d. 270 B.C.), and Democritus (d. 360 B.C.). And it is not merely modern religious believers who have been known to lose their faith and to adopt essentially atheistic worldviews. For example, we have the well-known case of the ancient Talmudic sage Elisha Ben Abuyah.19

The great Muslim thinker al-Ghazālī (d. A.D. 1111) knew that the pedigree and the antiquity of certain rivals to scriptural theism—notably of Hellenistic philosophy, far and away the most prestigious intellectual system of his time—were dangerously distracting and seductive:

The heretics in our times have heard the awe-inspiring names of people like Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. They have been deceived by the exaggerations made by the followers of these philosophers—exaggerations to the effect that the ancient masters possessed extraordinary intellectual powers: that the principles they have discovered are unquestionable . . . and that with all the subtlety of their intelligence and the originality of their accomplishments they repudiated the authority of religious laws; denied the validity of the positive contents of historical religions, and believed that all such things are only sanctimonious lies and trivialities.

When such stuff was dinned into their ears, and struck a responsive chord in their hearts, the heretics in our times thought that it would be an honour to join the company of great thinkers for which the renuncia-

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19 Milton Steinberg, As a Driven Leaf (New York: Behrman House, 1939), fleshes out Elisha’s fragmentary biography in a rather moving novel.
tion of their faith would prepare them. . . . They flattered themselves with the idea that it would do them honour not to accept even truth uncritically. But they had actually begun to accept falsehood uncritically. They failed to see that a change from one kind of intellectual bondage to another is only a self-deception, a stupidity. What position in this world of God can be baser than that of one who thinks that it is honourable to renounce the truth which is accepted on authority, and then relapses into an acceptance of falsehood which is still a matter of blind faith, unaided by independent inquiry?20

Al-Ghazālī lamented the foolishness of "people who tend to think that a vainglorious conversion to unoriginal heresy would be an indication of intelligence and good sense."21 Such people are not confined to the medieval period.

Every Easter, an urge to publish articles on the quest for the Real Jesus of History seems to overcome popular magazines like Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report.22 These articles typically feature the Jesus Seminar and other supposedly "representative" scholars, and the academic situation in biblical studies is routinely misrepresented—if only by virtue of the fact that the importance of the radical revisionists within the profession of biblical studies is grossly inflated. As I have noted elsewhere, those who assume that the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar and its fellow travelers rest on actual evidence, or are grounded in real textual discoveries, are quite mistaken.23

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20 Sabih Ahmad Kamali, trans., Al-Ghazali’s Tahafut al-Falasifah (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963), 2–3. A fresh translation of this text by Professor Michael Marmura of the University of Toronto is soon to appear under the auspices of Brigham Young University in a dual-language edition (with the original Arabic).

21 Kamali, Al-Ghazali’s Tahafut al-Falasifah, 3.


23 For a discussion of the Jesus Seminar and its analogues on the fringes of Mormondom, see Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Triptych,” xi–xli.
But it is true that the arguments back and forth are rarely if ever decisive and that the scholarly consensus shifts. In academic studies of the Bible, in the past, now, and into the future so long as we live on this side of the veil, all is uncertainty. It has been said that the late American philosopher Sidney Hook, a noted agnostic, was once asked what he would do if, after death, he found himself still alive and in the presence of God. What would he say to the supreme being? Professor Hook replied, “I will ask him why he didn’t give me better evidence.”

It is in some ways a fair point. But we are fortunate, remarkably fortunate, that the Lord in our day has removed much of the ambiguity and made the options clear. The decision of whether or not to obey the gospel rests on no everlastingly inconclusive sifting of ancient textual variants. It need not be indefinitely postponed, pending the doubtful reconstruction of long-vanished and very foreign cultures. We are not paralyzed. The decision is available now, and the answer is Yes, or it is No. In modern times, amid abundant historical documentation, God has given us the Book of Mormon,

Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also; Which was given by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them—Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old; Thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. (D&C 20:9-12)

The entirely reasonable question, “If God spoke then, why does he not speak now?” dissolves once it is recognized as a pseudoproblem, a bogus issue that is based on a false, if under-

24 See James A. Keller, review of Reported Miracles: A Critique of Hume, by J. Houston, Faith and Philosophy 13/2 (1996): 286-93, for a sophisticated recent statement of the position—which I, of course, reject—that the texts of the Bible are too fragmentary and self-contradictory to allow their accounts of miracles and revelations to serve as satisfactory empirical evidence for religious belief.
standable, premise. Furthermore, the essential historical data of the New Testament find confirmation in the record revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Book of Mormon authors knew in advance, for instance, that Jesus would come to earth and take upon himself a physical body (and they knew the approximate time of his coming). Several saw him before his mortal advent. They knew his name-title, “Jesus Christ.” They knew the name and the virginity of his mother. They knew the place of his birth. They foresaw his baptism, including its location and other specific details of the ministry of John the Baptist. They knew that he would call twelve apostles to assist in his ministry. King Benjamin prophesied of his many miracles. The Lehite prophets expected his atoning death by crucifixion, knowing also of the three days of darkness that would intervene before his resurrection. They understood the sacrifices of the law of Moses as foreshadowing his sacrifice. The Book of Mormon confirms the authenticity of many of the sayings ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament Gospels. It confirms his pain in the Garden of Gethsemane and his resurrection on the third day.

The most important event that the Book of Mormon reports is the appearance of the resurrected Christ in America. But this, of course, would be impossible unless Christ were divine and was truly resurrected. During his visit to the New World, Christ reiterated his fundamental New Testament teachings. For instance, he redelivered, and thus confirmed the unity of, the Sermon on the Mount.

The Book of Mormon is thus, if it is true, a powerful second witness to the essential accuracy of the New Testament Gospels. And this is precisely what it was supposed to be, for it is, as its relatively recent subtitle expressly says, another testament, a second witness, of the Lord Jesus Christ. It begins, on its title page, by declaring that it has come forth “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

At roughly the midpoint of the volume, and at the very midpoint of Nephite history, the magnificent Christ-centered chiasm of Alma 36 testifies of the atonement and healing power of the Savior. And, finally, at its conclusion, the Book of Mormon summons its readers to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32). Throughout its pages, the Book of Mormon testifies that “there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (Helaman 5:9).

But is the Book of Mormon true?
Yes, it is.

Remarkable eyewitness confirmations of the Book of Mormon exist from the earliest time. There is, for example, the testimony of Joseph Smith himself, expressed both verbally and in his actions as they were observed by others. Listen to his wife, Emma Smith, in an 1856 interview with E. C. Briggs:

She remarked of her husband Joseph’s limited education while he was translating the Book of Mormon, and she was scribe at the time, “He could not pronounce the word Sariah.” And one time while translating, where it speaks of the walls of Jerusalem, he stopped and said, “Emma, did Jerusalem have walls surrounding it?” When I informed him it had, he replied, “O, I thought I was deceived.”

The Prophet’s honesty and sincerity are apparent in this simple story, and they shine brightly in his personal writings, as these have begun to be published in recent years.

Similarly, the honesty and consistency of the Three and the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon are manifestly apparent

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in the materials concerning them that have been preserved for our examination today, and extensive historical research about them has confirmed their reliability.28 Several early sources, for example, tell of Oliver Cowdery, confronted during a trial by a rival attorney who sought to embarrass and discredit him. Alienated from the body of the church, offered an opportunity and abundant motivation to distance himself from the widely condemned claims of an unpopular people, Cowdery nevertheless reaffirmed his testimony of the angel, the plates, and the corroborating divine voice.29

On the day following the death of David Whitmer in 1888, the Chicago Times reported an interview with an unnamed “Chicago Man.” This man related a conversation that he had carried on with another individual some years before, a prominent resident of the county in which David Whitmer had lived, who had been a lawyer and a sheriff there and who had, he said, known the Witness very well and had told him a remarkable story of David Whitmer’s later life.

In the opinion of this gentleman, no man in Missouri possessed greater courage or honesty than this heroic old man [David Whitmer]. “His oath,” he said, “would send a man to the gallows quicker than that of any man I ever knew.” He then went on to say that no person had ever questioned his word to his knowledge about any other matter than finding the Book of Mormon. He was always a loser and never a gainer by adhering to the faith of Joseph Smith. Why persons should ques-


29 For a discussion of this incident, with references, see Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 58–60. One account, problematic in its details, but probably essentially correct, is cited by Susan Easton Black, ed., Stories from the Early Saints: Converted by the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 94.
tion his word about the golden plates, when they took it in relation to all other matters, was to him a mystery.30

In an 1878 interview with Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, David Whitmer gave dramatic and emphatic testimony of his experience as a Witness:

I saw [the plates and other Lehite artifacts] just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life, declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God.31

Six years later, Whitmer was interviewed by the leader of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith III:

Rather suggestively [Colonel Giles] asked if it might not have been possible that he, Mr. Whitmer, had been mistaken and had simply been moved upon by some mental disturbance, or hallucination, which had deceived him into thinking he saw the Personage, the Angel, the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the sword of Laban.

How well and distinctly I remember the manner in which Elder Whitmer arose and drew himself up to his full height—a little over six feet—and said, in solemn and impressive tones: "No, sir! I was not under any hallucination, nor was I deceived! I saw with these eyes and I heard with these ears! I know whereof I speak!"32

31 Interview with Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith (Richmond, Mo., 7–8 September 1878), reported in a letter to President John Taylor and the Council of the Twelve dated 17 September 1878. Originally published in the *Deseret News*, 16 November 1878, and reprinted in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 40.
We are fortunate to have, too, the witness of Joseph Smith’s family and of many of the other early Latter-day Saints. I shall select only a few statements from these early believers, a representative sample that could be multiplied many times. As William Smith, the Prophet’s younger brother, expressed it in 1875,

There was not a single member of the family of sufficient age to know right from wrong but what had implicit confidence in the statements made by my brother Joseph concerning his vision and the knowledge he thereby obtained concerning the plates.

Father and mother believed him; why should not the children? I suppose if he had told crooked stories about other things, we might have doubted his word about the plates, but Joseph was a truthful boy. That father and mother believed his report and suffered persecution for that belief shows that he was truthful.33

When Katherine Smith Salisbury, the sister of the Prophet, first saw the Book of Mormon, she was convinced that, without God’s guidance, her brother could never have produced such a work. “I can testify,” she later said,

to the fact of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, . . . and also to its truth, and the truth of the everlasting gospel as contained therein. . . . Many times when I have read its sacred pages, I have wept like a child, while the Spirit has borne witness with my spirit of its truth.34

Hyrum Smith, who along with being the Prophet’s loyal elder brother was one of the Eight Witnesses to the plates, wrote in December 1839 of his sufferings in Missouri:

I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. However I thank God that I

felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to . . . ; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life.35

These were not empty words. Four and a half years later, Hyrum Smith sealed his testimony with his blood at Carthage, Illinois. The historical evidence indicates that he realized his likely fate and that he went to it willingly.36 (It is relevant to note here that the Greek word martyr means “witness.”)

John Taylor also knew Joseph well and nearly died with him at Carthage Jail. A cultured English convert, he went on to become the third president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But in 1844, while he was still recovering from the grievous wounds that enemies of the church had inflicted on him, he paid his tribute to the Prophet. He testified that “the Book of Mormon, and this book of Doctrine and Covenants of the church, cost the best blood of the nineteenth century to bring them forth for the salvation of a ruined world” (D&C 135:6).

The Prophet’s wife, Emma Smith, who knew Joseph Smith as intimately as any human being could have, testified to her eldest son of the Book of Mormon two months before her death. Is it plausible to believe that an elderly mother, knowing that her life was nearing its end, would consciously mislead her son about a matter of such importance and eternal consequence? No. It is obvious, therefore, that Emma Smith’s testimony was the product of honest personal conviction.

The Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity—I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as a scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals or after interruptions, he would at

35 Ibid., 96.
once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible. . . . The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.37

My own ancestor, Joseph Knight Jr., recalled his earliest encounter with the young Prophet:

In 1827 [the winter of 1826–1827] he [my father] hired Joseph Smith. Joseph and I worked and slept together. My father said Joseph was the best hand he ever hired. We found him a boy of truth. He was about 21 years of age. I think it was in November [1826] he made known to my father and I that he had seen a vision, that a personage had appeared to him and told him where there was a gold book of ancient date buried, and if he would follow the directions of the angel he could get it. We were told it in secret. . . . My father and I believed what he told us. I think we were the first [to believe] after his father’s family [and probably Martin Harris]. . . . At last he got the plates, and rode in my father’s wagon and carried them home.38

During the night of 22 September 1827, at the conclusion of the precise day on which Joseph Smith received the golden plates from the Hill Cumorah, Vilate and Heber C. Kimball and their neighbors John Greene and “Father Young” watched a spectacular vision of an army of soldiers in the sky for hours. Only

37 Cited by Black, Stories from the Early Saints, 91–2.
later, when they encountered early missionaries, did they appreciate the timing and significance of what they had seen. Many of the distinctive doctrines of Mormonism were revealed to Solomon Chamberlain even before the publication of the Book of Mormon, and he was led by the Spirit to the Smith family at the very time the book was at the printer's. "A sweet melodious voice" testified to Luman Shurtliff of the calling of Joseph Smith and the truth of the Book of Mormon. Brigham Young recalled several individuals (clearly beyond the better-known "official" witnesses to the Book of Mormon) "who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God." One of the early members of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Young said, "prayed, and the vision of his mind was opened, and the angel of God came and laid the plates before him, and he saw and handled them, and saw the angel, and conversed with him as he would with one of his friends." The angel Moroni appeared to Oliver Granger. An angel showed the plates to Harrison Burgess. Two of the three Nephites appeared to the skeptical Benjamin Brown and testified to him of the truth of the Book of Mormon. When they left, the Spirit warned him, "Now, you know for yourself! You have seen and heard! If you now fall away, there is no forgiveness for you."

We are blessed, even, with the witness of some early non-Latter-day Saints. For example, historians have recovered an interview with a Presbyterian lady, a Mrs. Palmer, who grew up on a farm close to Joseph Smith's. She

said her father loved young Joseph Smith and often hired him to work with his boys. She was about six

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40 See Black, Stories from the Early Saints, 71–2.
41 Brigham Young, JD 7:164 (5 June 1859). That early apostle, whoever he was, later fell away, said President Young, warning that even those with strong and seemingly invincible faith can lose their testimonies.
42 See Black, Stories from the Early Saints, 10.
43 See ibid., 27.
44 See ibid., 31.
years old, she said, when he first came to their home.

She remembered, she said, the excitement stirred up among some of the people over the boy's first vision, and of hearing her father contend that it was only the sweet dream of a pure-minded boy.

She stated that one of their church leaders came to her father to remonstrate against his allowing such close friendship between his family and the "Smith boy," as he called him. Her father, she said, defended his own position by saying that the boy was the best help he had ever found.45

In later days, however, the visit of Moroni, and the translation of the Book of Mormon—which made clearer the demanding nature of the religious claims of the restoration—unfortunately injured the family's affection for young Joseph beyond repair. Early participants in the emergence of the church knew what some perhaps overly sophisticated observers today do not: There can be no compromise, no middle ground, on the question of whether or not God spoke to Joseph Smith. A choice is inescapable. And, I am convinced, it is designed to be so.

But we are not left with merely nineteenth-century witnesses to the truth of the gospel. The remarkable text of the Book of Mormon is itself internal evidence of its truth. Its complexity, its richness, and the fact that so many generations of varied people, of various nationalities and cultures, have found it satisfying, speak eloquently of the power of what the Lord did through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Parley Pratt, to choose one example, remembered his first encounter with the Book of Mormon: "I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep."46 Daniel Spencer Jr. was a prosperous Massachusetts merchant. "One day, when his son was with him in his study, he suddenly burst into a flood of tears, and exclaimed: 'My God, the thing is true, and as an honest

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46 Cited by Black, Stories from the Early Saints, 64.
man I must embrace it; but it will cost me all I have got on earth.’” 47 George Cannon of Liverpool read the book through twice, concluding that “No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so.”48

Mounting external evidence supports the Book of Mormon as well. And this is exactly as the Lord foretold it to his early servants. In an interview with James H. Hart, in 1883, David Whitmer recalled that

When we [the Witnesses] were first told to publish our statement, we felt sure the people would not believe it, for the Book told of a people who were refined and dwelt in large cities; but the Lord told us that He would make it known to the people, and people should discover the ruins of lost cities and abundant evidence of the truth of what is written in the Book.49

This, I am firmly convinced, is currently being fulfilled through the efforts of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and others doing similar work. (A recent rereading of John L. Sorenson’s An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon has left me impressed, all over again, with the insight and general plausibility of its suggestions.)

Most importantly, the evidence of the Spirit is available to those who seek it. I, for one, have received the witness of the Spirit, and I bear testimony that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be, and that the gospel is true. The gospel is not just a myth, a pretty story. It rests on literal, historical truth.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). President Hinckley has told the story of a young Asian military officer from a non-Christian background, who accepted the gospel and was baptized while training in the United States. Elder Hinckley (not yet president of

47 Cited by ibid., 76.
48 Cited by ibid., 26.
49 Interview with James H. Hart (Richmond, Mo., 21 August 1883), as recorded in Hart’s notebook; reprinted in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 96.
the church) asked him what would happen when he returned home. “My family will be disappointed,” the young man replied.

“I suppose they will cast me out. They will regard me as dead. As for my future and my career, I assume that all opportunity will be foreclosed against me.” “Are you willing to pay so great a price for the gospel?” Elder Hinckley questioned. Tears rose to the young man’s eyes as he responded, “It’s true, isn’t it?” When Elder Hinckley replied, “Yes, it’s true,” the man concluded, “Then what else matters?”

And, truly, what else does matter?

Thus the false traditions of the world are countered by the tradition of the gospel, which we affirm to be true and God-given. In other words, a righteous tradition exists, a tradition whose origin is to be sought elsewhere than in the apostate cultures in and among which we live our daily lives. It is a tradition that we are divinely obligated to pass on to those who have not yet received it (Mosiah 26:1). Nephite identity, for instance, rested not merely on their rejection of Lamanite tradition but on their acceptance of the records and tradition of their fathers (Alma 3:11). Not all traditions of all fathers are false. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Shall the youth of Zion falter
In defending truth and right?
While the enemy assaileth,
Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!
True to the faith that our parents have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs have perished,
To God’s command,
Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.51

51 “True to the Faith,” Hymns, no. 254.
Editor’s Picks

Having concluded on that rather militant note, I will now assume the black robes of the judge. As has become traditional in recent issues of the Review, I shall now list certain texts or items treated in the present issue and shall offer my own (necessarily subjective) ratings. I have formed my opinions, in some cases, from personal and direct acquaintance with the materials in question. In all cases, I have determined the rankings after reading the reviews published herein and after further conversations either with the relevant reviewers or with those who assist in the editing of the Review. But the final judgments, and the final blame for making them, are mine. This is how the rating system works:

**** Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely.
*** Enthusiastically recommended.
** Warmly recommended.
* Recommended.

So, at last, and for whatever value and utility they may have, here are my ratings for the items that we feel we can recommend from the present issue of the FARMS Review of Books:

*** Marilyn Arnold, Sweet Is the Word: Reflections on the Book of Mormon—Its Narrative, Teachings, and People.
* Allan K. Burgess, Timely Truths from the Book of Mormon.
*** Heroes from the Book of Mormon.
** Katherine Myers, The Lehi Tree: A Novel.
*** Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon.
** Glenn L. Pearson and Reid E. Bankhead, Building Faith with the Book of Mormon.
** Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the reviewers for their efforts in evaluating the books and other materials that we have asked them to examine. Shirley S. Ricks and Alison V. P. Coutts, assisted by Claire Foley, did most of the real work in getting the reviews ready for publication. Melvin J. Thorne offered useful comments and criticism. I am indebted to each of them for their contributions.

We employ the abbreviations that are customary in Latter-day Saint publishing. The *Journal of Discourses* appears as *JD*, while *TPJS* refers to *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *HC* denotes B. H. Roberts’s compilation of the *History of the Church* (which is commonly but incorrectly referred to as the *Documentary History of the Church*) and *CHC* denotes *Comprehensive History of the Church* (written by B. H. Roberts).

Reviewed by Karen Lynn Davidson

When President Benson called on Latter-day Saints to study the Book of Mormon, Marilyn Arnold knew that for her, reading and thinking were just the beginning. She notes, “I have often needed to write about a book in order to collect my thoughts about it” (p. vii). Arnold’s thoughts are now published as *Sweet Is the Word*, a distinctive and engaging commentary for anyone, scholar or beginner, who wants a better understanding of the Book of Mormon.

Many faithful members of the church have written on Book of Mormon topics. Marilyn Arnold adds to her faith a significant qualification: she is a reader and teacher of literature, known especially as a scholar of American literature. She is sensitive to language as it reveals character and motive, and gifted in gauging the meaning and suggestions of a phrase, sometimes of a single word. Against a solid backdrop of personal faith and a belief in the truth of her scriptural text, she has written a passage-by-passage study of the Book of Mormon—a “close reading,” in literary terms.

“I am not a scriptural scholar,” Arnold claims, “and I have not called on the scholars to assist my reading” (p. vii). Her task is to read, reflect, and write. She is also not afraid to speculate: Why was Nephi so fond of Isaiah’s teachings? What clues do we have as to Corianton’s (unrecorded) part in his dialogue with his father? What could have made Jacob so prone to discouragement? What might have gone through Mormon’s mind as he decided what to keep and what to cut in preparing his abridgment? Why do Book of Mormon prophets not speak about the end of the world? This is how an active reader reads, and it is a wonderful lesson in pondering, not just reading, the scriptures.
Arnold organizes her book in reader's-companion fashion, moving through the Book of Mormon chapter by chapter. She summarizes so clearly the events, teachings, family relationships, and time sequences of the Book of Mormon that a first-time reader could benefit immensely from having *Sweet Is the Word* for parallel study.

But would this book be useful to a Book of Mormon scholar? After all, we usually assume that the Book of Mormon doesn’t need a Cliffs Notes, however well written those notes may be! My guess is that for even the most conscientious reader, Arnold will point out new issues. Sometimes she merely brings up an interesting question: What is the worth of sacred texts “to the body,” for example (1 Nephi 19:7)? Sometimes she raises questions and answers them as well: What is the significance of Nephi’s changing word choices in showing his spiritual growth over the years (p. 26)? How do the Savior’s carefully chosen references to the word *Father* indicate his “scrupulous definition of his role as the divine Son” (p. 274)? There will be some new insights here for anyone, I would think.

In addition, for an experienced reader of the Book of Mormon, years of familiarity may have tended to flatten the events and people, so that what was dramatic and surprising on first reading has by now become (sadly) just a series of familiar examples for our moral benefit. Arnold awakens our emotional response. She calls the Book of Mormon “theater,” “electric,” “the stuff of a national epic,” and tells us why it is so. She marvels at the unique and often very human personalities of the individual prophets, the triumph of out-and-out physical courage, the blackening influence of cynical indifference, and, above all, the powerful poetry of the Book of Mormon—poetry of praise, aspiration, and sometimes even of depression. She brings this drama back into high relief once again, thus helping us respond with our heart as well as our conscience.

Anyone who teaches a class in any gospel subject will find this book useful. An instructor who wants to bring some new light to familiar lesson material can use this book’s index to correlate Book of Mormon insights with many topics. Arnold thoughtfully suggests present-day applications that would make fine discussion topics: the role of “remembrance,” what it means to prepare our
minds for instruction, what the Book of Mormon teaches about the link between generosity and redemption, and so forth.

Although Arnold refers to few outside sources, she does allow herself now and then a brief reference to such writers as Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, and Mark Twain. When she draws these parallels, I feel teased; I want more. If I were to name something I missed in this book, it would be a more frequent taste of the ways in which thoughtful poets, fiction writers, and essayists can broaden our understanding of scriptural truth. Those of us who love literature delight in learning about such parallels—and again, what a bonus this would be for a teacher who wants to approach old topics in a new way! I hope Marilyn Arnold’s next book will lead us down some of these paths.
Timely Truths from the Book of Mormon by Allan K. Burgess consists of fourteen chapters, each constructed very loosely around a gospel topic partially supported by excerpts from the Book of Mormon. The book appears to be directed toward a readership that is less familiar with the basic content of the Book of Mormon and Latter-day Saint doctrine. Such an audience may find the book’s anecdotal nature accessible. However, those looking for a scholarly treatment of Book of Mormon themes are likely to be disappointed by the book’s structural weakness and its shallow approach to the subject matter.

The lack of introduction or preface of any sort leaves Burgess’s objectives and the book’s intended readership unclear. The back cover of the book announces that it “focuses on the relevance of the Nephite record to everyday concerns,” but I often found only a minimal connection made between the two. Both the Book of Mormon and contemporary challenges are addressed, but their relationship remains vague. For example, chapter 4 is entitled “An Infinite Atonement: 2 Nephi 9.” I expected to read relevant citations from Jacob’s teachings about Christ’s sacrifice and mercy, but in ten pages of text, only one brief reference is made to this important passage of scripture. Other chapters contain sections listing only the basic events and characters of the cited scriptures, without any commentary at all. While Burgess does use many scriptural references from the Book of Mormon, he relies most heavily on stories and quotations from the Ensign and other anecdotal sources to support his points.

The book’s most apparent weakness is Burgess’s failure to dig below the surface for any novel insight into the numerous gospel themes he tackles. Readers looking for a motivational (as opposed
to instructional) text will fare better than those expecting a new approach to Book of Mormon scholarship. Burgess states the obvious, without attempting to probe behind truisms and clichés for deeper substance. Topics ranging from adversity and repentance to missionary work and warfare are brought up but not pursued beyond rote seminary understanding. Ironically, he writes about this very problem in his book:

> Sometimes we feel that we understand some gospel principle so well that we fail to continue to study and learn about that particular principle. It may be taught so often or seem so simple that when we have to give a lesson or a talk on the subject we just refer to the information we have used in the past. (pp. 45–6)

Burgess has filled this book with information that most Latter-day Saints have heard and often “used in the past.” As a result, I was left feeling unsatisfied and slightly bored, as though I’d been reading a rambling series of Sunday School lessons rather than a commentary on deeper themes of the Book of Mormon.

One way to add more depth and insight would have been to broaden the scope of reference material used. It seemed to me that an excessive amount of the content was purely anecdotal (at the expense of anything new by way of knowledge). To be certain, some stories from the lives of Church leaders are inspirational, assisting the reader in personalizing the application of gospel concepts. Many of the other stories, however, could easily have been omitted as they are dull and add little that is unique or meaningful, not to mention that some lack credibility or are factually inaccurate.¹ In addition, while scriptural texts and statements from General Authorities are the foundation for understanding gospel principles, consideration of the growing body of scholarly literature on the Book of Mormon should also enhance a believer’s search for new ways to comprehend and apply these texts.

A final oversight was the lack of information about the author. Since I am not familiar with Allan Burgess or his work, a

¹ For example a story is cited on page 4 as “heard by the author at a stake conference in February 1994,” and the BYU cheerleader story on pages 77–8 implies that BYU won a national football championship in 1990, when in fact that championship was won in 1984.
biographical sketch or even a simple sentence about his background and his qualifications would have been very reassuring. Data of this sort would lend weight to the author’s exhortations.

In conclusion, those who wish to learn or be reminded of basic gospel teachings from the Book of Mormon may find this book useful. The publisher’s note on the back cover promises a “deeper, more practical understanding of gospel themes.” Realization of this promise will be confined to those who have only a limited understanding to begin with. Most are likely to consider this book bland and unoriginal, and serious scriptural students will probably find time spent with the Book of Mormon itself more satisfying and beneficial.

Reviewed by Cristie B. Gardner

"Thanks for the great book, Mom! I didn't get a single other thing done." So spake my teenage son Matthew. I had handed him a copy of Heroes from the Book of Mormon to peruse while he was waiting for an appointment. He filled in the time, totally absorbed, and then continued reading throughout the day. That, to me, was a good test of the riveting appeal our true heroes have for the youth in our day.

The fact that the descriptions of the heroes are written by General Authorities makes reading Heroes from the Book of Mormon doubly appealing. Perhaps many of us have wondered what influences in their past have prepared these modern-day witnesses for their callings today. What makes a man a prophet? What characteristics or talents do the Brethren emulate in their youth and adulthood that prepare them to be called and chosen? Who are their heroes? What shapes their lives? The individual messages in Heroes from the Book of Mormon have thrilled and inspired me.

The format in the book follows the sequence in the Book of Mormon. Different Brethren have selected different heroes, whom they describe from a personal perspective. Nephi is first. Elder Russell M. Nelson relates that

When I received my call to serve as one of the Twelve Apostles, my response included a quotation from Nephi: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7)." (p. 1)

He cites the examples of willingness and obedience that were a hallmark of Nephi's discipleship—examples which Elder Nelson has tried to emulate in his personal discipleship as he and Sister
Nelson have accepted assignments in the church. As an early morning seminary teacher, I found Elder Nelson’s choice of a seminary mastery scripture (1 Nephi 3:7) a bonus for teaching my class. Any personal illustrations of the scriptures are valuable teaching resources. The added vignettes that describe how Elder Nelson applied the scriptures in his professional and family life make it easy for me and my students to see how we can liken the scriptures unto ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23).

How does one differentiate between academic and spiritual truths? Elder Nelson describes how he discovered that the two are not separate, and he recounts how understanding this principle enabled him to do inspired research in the field of medicine. He also speaks of honoring parents and of having implicit trust in the Lord and in the Lord’s power to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. Nephi’s life demonstrated for Elder Nelson the need to honor his word with determination. Nephi communicated his marvelous message with, as Elder Nelson writes, “a diversity of literary devices, . . . narrative, rhetoric, and poetic forms, including a psalm” (p. 6). Despite his literary talents, Nephi “had a penchant for plain expression. ‘My brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err’ (2 Nephi 25:20)” (p. 7).

It is clear from Elder Nelson’s chapter that the life of a disciple is not easy (perhaps that phrase in itself is a Hebraic understatement), but that Nephi’s signature—“I must obey”—was the source of a life and mission which “were destined to bless us and all people of our day” (p. 15).

Reluctantly leaving Elder Nelson’s depiction of Nephi, I thumbed through the book with an eye for special details in its format. I discovered to my delight that page 3 includes a footnote with added references to additional information. The footnotes appear throughout the book and are a valuable resource. The back of the book also includes a detailed index, so someone like me (who can always remember that there was a great story in the book teaching a principle, but not who taught it) can readily locate the information.

Elder Merrill J. Bateman does an effective, thoughtful comparison of Lehi’s tree and Alma’s seed. His insights are deep and powerful. This chapter is not an easy read. It is, however, well worth the time it takes to study and reread its contents. The careful
student of the Book of Mormon learns of the many historical events prophesied by Lehi and fulfilled by the seed of Alma—events that foreshadow what we can see occurring around us today. With his wise insights, Elder Bateman conveys important messages to the serious Book of Mormon scholar. He also provides a feast of doctrinal abundance: "Christ’s fruit is His atonement, with all its attendant blessings and gifts" (p. 23). “If one has the tree (Christ) and its fruit (the Atonement and its blessings) within oneself, one’s countenance will reflect Christ’s image” (p. 29). Elder Bateman concludes his chapter with his testimony:

As the tree grows inside one’s soul, the image of Christ begins to appear in one’s countenance. Through a person’s faith in Christ, one receives additional gifts of the Holy Spirit made possible by the atonement and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He puts off the natural man and becomes Christlike. One is born again by the power of the atonement and the Holy Spirit. (p. 31)

I have used Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s teachings about “Jacob the Unshakable” several times personally and with friends who struggle with adversity. Writes Elder Holland, “Jacob was a child of the wilderness, a son born to affliction” (p. 34). Through the process of his growth through adversity, Jacob becomes a true prophet—one who is unshakable.

The value of Jacob as a true hero for our day is inestimable. Youth who read of this man of God, particularly as seen through the eyes of a modern-day apostle, cannot help but see parallels in their own lives. Many of us encounter our own “Sherem,” a person who tries to shake our testimony in everyday situations. Jacob is a worthy model who shows the way to deal with those who would want us to waver. Elder Holland’s vivid depiction of Jacob’s childhood makes Jacob’s experiences easier to visualize. Says Elder Holland, “at a very early age Jacob’s future character and unshakable faith were being forged in the furnace of affliction” (p. 34).

It might be said of Jacob that he was a victim of child abuse, for he witnessed Laman and Lemuel’s attempts to kill Nephi and their disruption of his family. Such comparisons, though painful,
may be an encouraging example for the youth of our day of how to conquer their environments. I read Elder Holland’s message thinking of my seminary students—those from broken homes or those who struggle with temptations from questionable peer influences. Elder Holland’s straightforward approach is appealing to read; his style is down-to-earth and has the tone of a great Gospel Doctrine lesson, written on a level that will appeal to any age group.

Referring once more to my seminary students, I think of the many lovely and faithful young women who also have need of feminine heroes. The only element I might suggest for consideration in creating such a book as *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* is to include some women for us to emulate—sisters like Abish, the faithful Lamanite convert who is a servant to King Lamoni, or King Lamoni’s lovely queen, who, along with her powerful spouse, experiences the mighty change of heart. I think of Sariah’s profound allegiance to Lehi as she follows him in faith through the wilderness, bearing children and enduring afflictions with equanimity and grace. Few sisters are described at length within the pages of the Book of Mormon, but their stories are faith promoting, and they serve to validate womanly roles for the young women of today.

“Enos was a prophet who practiced persistence” (p. 47), writes Elder John H. Groberg, who then goes on to illustrate “ever-expanding circles of spiritual growth” (p. 48) in the form of gratitude, humility, and effort. This motivational chapter has an inspiring “how-to” format that leads the reader to make the same kind of changes in life’s directions as did Enos.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell shares his gleanings from the writings of King Benjamin with characteristic eloquence: “Some among us today certainly share their time and talents but nevertheless hold back some of themselves, indicating a lack of full consecration and an unwillingness to ‘give away’ certain small sins” (p. 62). Elder Cree-L Kofford aptly describes the unique qualities of Abinadi: “Perhaps it was his total obedience as he went, presumably alone, among those whom he must have known would take his life, to deliver the word of the Lord and to cry repentance to the people” (p. 69). With Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, we share insights on “Alma the Elder: A Role Model for Today.” He writes,
While yet a young man, Alma lived and worked in the court of the wicked King Noah as one of the king's appointed priests. . . . His life in an evil society presented Alma with many of the same temptations that afflict us today. His position of considerable authority in a corrupt government also confronted him with life-threatening conflicts once he embraced the gospel. Understanding how he turned his back on temptation, overcame sin, and stood fearlessly for righteousness can help us deal with our own challenges as we struggle to choose the right. (p. 80)

Elder L. Tom Perry continues with the legacy that Alma left his son Alma the Younger. Elder Perry shares his witness of the value of missionary service and of a life turned toward Christ, epitomized in Alma the Younger. Elder Henry B. Eyring talks of Amulek and the lessons in obedience we learn from him.

One of the great lessons from what we know of Amulek is that once God knows we will obey, He will try to give us the greatest of all blessings: sanctification and hope of eternal life. The process of receiving that may take more pain and loss than we would think to seek. But with that mighty change God blesses us with the spiritual sight to see value which dwarfs the loss, the trials, and the adversity. The story of Amulek's life after that day is a sobering yet hopeful lesson for all of us. (p. 107)

I loved reading of Zeezrom in the chapter written by Elder Dean L. Larsen. Elder Larsen goes into detail about the conditions in the Nephite government when Zeezrom appears on the scene:

It is not difficult to fill in the pieces of the political, moral, and social mosaic from the recorded account. Corruption and dishonesty in official circles have become endemic. Grasping for material riches, the people have clamored to gain advantage one over another. Judges have become corrupt, susceptible to bribes and yielding advantage to those who can show favors. . . .
Numerous lawyers have emerged, skilled not only in the law but also in exploiting the devious legal system for the potential benefit of themselves and their clients. (p. 113)

Sound familiar? I thought so, too. After all, the Book of Mormon was written for us—never read in its entirety by the Nephite or Lamanite populations in their day.

Elder F. Burton Howard’s mother read the stories of the missionary experiences of Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, and Ammon to Elder Howard before he could read. What a way to teach our children! Hence, Elder Howard’s enthusiasm for the missionary story of Ammon is evident from the very beginning of his chapter: “to me a hero is one who is and does more than we commonly expect of someone by exceeding the normal limitations of virtue, faith, valor, and excellence. He or she inspires others to exceed them as well” (p. 121).

“Captain Moroni, an Authentic Hero,” is the title of Elder Joe J. Christensen’s chapter. “With divine guidance [the prophet Mormon] selected and included those portions of the records that would be most valuable to us in our day. What are the messages from Captain Moroni and his time that have applicability to us at the present time?” (p. 128). Elder Christensen goes on to share those messages with us: what to teach, principles of true leadership, and the characteristics of a true model for our times. Elder John K. Carmack follows with his depiction of Pahoran, whose “conduct and spirit in the face of extreme provocation teaches us how to react during threatening situations and also teaches us about freedom’s priceless value” (p. 135).

Elder Richard G. Scott combines scripture and narration masterfully in a text about Nephi, son of Helaman. The flow from quotation to commentary is so natural and smooth that the reader is absorbed into the thought processes Elder Scott wishes to stimulate: “And it came to pass that Nephi went his way towards his own house, pondering upon the things which the Lord had shown unto him” (Helaman 10:2). As is characteristically the case, that pondering opened a channel of communication that brought additional understanding and truth to Nephi” (p. 152).

Elder Andrew W. Peterson combines his story of Samuel the Lamanite with his own experiences to share three thoughts re-
garding principles that Samuel exemplified in his life: (1) Whate’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part; (2) Daily Walls to Climb; and (3) Following Living Prophets. Elder Spencer J. Condie begins his chapter with these words: “If ever there lived a person who resisted and withstood the evil influence of a depraved world to become a worthy servant of the Lord, this person was Mormon” (p. 168). I love the practical and motivating insights that follow in both of these chapters.

Perhaps the most famous example of faith in the Book of Mormon is that of the brother of Jared, who saw the finger of the Lord, and then was able to see and learn far more than ever was shared in the written pages. Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr. speaks of the brother of Jared as a personal hero—an exemplar for our lives.

Although the book of Ether is brief, it covers a lengthy period of history and contains a great message of hope in the face of tragedy. Elder Monte J. Brough relates several experiences in which a study of the prophet Ether was helpful, and then says: “As each of us faces personal tragedy, we can have a much better acceptance of the final results because of the prophet Ether’s example” (p. 194).

Heroes from the Book of Mormon includes a message about Moroni from our modern-day prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. President Hinckley writes, “Of all the characters who walk the pages of the Book of Mormon, none stands a greater hero, save Jesus only, than does Moroni, son of Mormon” (p. 195). Elder Carlos E. Asay describes how all the chapters in the book Heroes from the Book of Mormon teach of prophets who “wove into the tapestry of the Book of Mormon precious strands of truth that make it a powerful and enduring volume of sacred writings known as another testament of Christ” (p. 202).

Part of the pleasure in reading Heroes from the Book of Mormon is in enjoying the different teaching styles of those who contributed chapters. I hesitate to share too much, for my narration of what was meaningful for me will only be a watered-down version of what may or may not be meaningful for another reader. As one professor once told me, “The personal notes and applications you write in the margins of a book are more important for you than what is actually printed in the pages of the book.” The book is
not one to be read once and put on a shelf as a dust magnet. It is rich in stories, applications, and doctrine; it is a thought-provoking and inspiring depiction of great men who have inspired great men. It is a book to read again and again, and to share with our families.

Reviewed by Warren P. Aston

From a 1997 perspective it is possible to look back nearly three decades and see how much Arabian Book of Mormon studies owe their current impetus to the vision and effort of just a few individuals.

The development of a rotating adult scripture curriculum by the church in the early 1970s necessitated a review of available materials by the *Ensign* editorial staff under Jay Todd, managing editor. For more than a decade previously, Todd had pondered the idea of Latter-day Saints visiting the areas through which Lehi might have traveled, and he was well aware that virtually nothing had been done in the field of Arabian studies by Latter-day Saint scholars since Hugh Nibley’s 1950 series of articles, *Lehi in the Desert*.

In 1975, Lynn and Hope Hilton of Salt Lake City, who had visited the Middle East often and had business interests in Egypt, were invited by Todd on behalf of the *Ensign* to make the journey. They did so early in 1976, accompanied by their daughter and a photographer. On this first trip they were able to spend only one day in Salalah in Oman, but they began examining the routes that Lehi might have followed from Jerusalem and down the coast of the Red Sea.

It would be a mistake to regard this new book as merely an updated version of their original 1976 work, *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, 1 which was also excerpted in the September and October issues of the *Ensign* that year. Twenty years later, *Discovering Lehi*, subtitled *New Evidence of Lehi and Nephi in Arabia*, contains about twice the material of its predecessor, and most of the

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original photography has been replaced with other, more useful pictures, maps, and diagrams. Most of the new material in the book has already been published since 1976 in a variety of places and is here brought together around the common theme of the Lehite land journey across Arabia.

Moving sequentially through the book, the Hiltons first give an updated summary of the research they undertook in the months before their 1976 trip, effectively giving an overview of Arabian history and an outline of the entire desert odyssey—more than 2,500 miles—that Lehi made, preparing the reader for the very mixed offerings that follow.

One of the book’s strengths is its incorporation of enough supplementary and anecdotal material to paint a fairly comprehensive and accurate picture of Arabian culture and customs for those not familiar with that part of the world. The authors attempt to tackle most aspects of Nephi’s account of the journey: the composition of the group, the mode of travel, geography, desert life, and customs.

In view of the essentially geographical nature of this work, I was surprised that the authors do not more adequately discuss the place where Lehi probably lived (and from which he presumably departed); they usually treat the city of Jerusalem as Lehi’s home instead of the much more likely “land of Jerusalem.” Here too, perhaps, the Hiltons missed the chance to raise—and hopefully rebut—the issue of the so-called “Lehi Cave,” which seems to have become somewhat embedded in popular Mormon awareness.

Chapter 4 easily demolishes an ill-thought-out idea, published surprisingly enough in the Church News in 1988, that the Lehite journey could have been down through Egypt rather than over the Arabian peninsula, thus ending in a Bountiful on the Somali coast on the Horn of Africa.2

The next chapter returns us to the trail. It is vintage Hilton, giving us the only Latter-day Saint analysis to date of the lengthiest section of the entire overland journey made by the Lehites: the route followed from Jerusalem to Nahom. Inserted in the midst of this analysis is some interesting material, based on recent

scholarship, on the likely site for Mt. Sinai—relevant, as the Hiltons point out, because Lehi may have been following a well-established tradition in fleeing Jerusalem to the mount.

After a full chapter spent discussing Semitic marriage customs, chapters 7 and 8 make the Hiltons' case that missionary preaching by Lehi and Nephi during their passage through Arabia may have spawned a civilization known to scholars as the "Lehyanites." This idea, however, is introduced through what I believe is the unwarranted assumption that Doctrine and Covenants 33:8 indicates that Nephi preached to large numbers of people during the passage to Bountiful, converting many of them. This latter-day scripture, of course, actually refers to Nephi's rebuking his rebellious brothers (2 Nephi 1:27–8), and I see no hint anywhere in scripture that the Lehites actively preached their beliefs in Arabia, much less made converts in such numbers that a new civilization resulted. This does not mean, of course, that it could not or did not happen, only that it cannot be supported scripturally.

The Lehyanite nation, centered in the general area of northern Arabia, where the valley of Lemuel and Shazer must have been located, was prominent between about 500 and 200 B.C., after which time the people were conquered by the Nabateans. Noting the similarity to Lehi's name, the Hiltons have proposed for some years now that the designation Lehyanites may derive from Lehi's time in this area and, specifically, that the Lehyanites were possible descendants of Nephi's converts.

The Hiltons cover what little is known of the history of the area, the archaeological evidence for the nation, and anecdotal hints that the Lehyanites may have been "Jewish." Much attention is focused by the authors on a large circular vessel with interior steps that still stands amidst the ruins of a Lehyanite temple or sanctuary, suggesting, as they see it, that it may be the Arabian equivalent of the font in Solomon's Temple.

It is worth noting that the Lehyanites are not the only possible imprint of the prophet Lehi in tribal Arabia; other parallels suggestive of Lehi's prophetic role have been noted on the other side of the Arabian peninsula. At the end of it all, however, as is so

often the case in these matters, all we are left with is some interesting possibilities. Far too little is yet known about early Arabia to strengthen a link with the historical Lehi, and other explanations are readily available for every point advanced, attractive and intriguing as they may be to Latter-day Saints.

To their credit, over the years the Hiltons have usually been quick to acknowledge research advances by others in the areas covered by their book. Thus we find their acceptance that the Book of Mormon Nahom is located at the place of the same name in the Yemen Arab Republic, rather than at Al Qunfidhah in Saudi Arabia as they had speculated in their first book. The modern place (actually pronounced “Neh-Hem” in Yemen today, as opposed to the pronunciation given in the book) is closer to being at a latitude of 16 degrees north, not at the “about 15 degrees” repeated throughout the book.

Chapter 11 develops what is certainly the most controversial theory that the Hiltons have advanced to date—that the “skin of darkness” placed upon the Lamanites by the Lord in the New World resulted from Laman and Lemuel taking additional dark-skinned Arab wives while en route to Bountiful. For me, while interesting and even superficially attractive as providing a naturalistic explanation for the dark skins, this chapter contributed less to the book than any other.

The Hiltons, who continually picture the Lehites arriving in a New World totally devoid of other people (see pages 73 and 143, for example), seem unaware of the competent scholarship that accounts for such matters as skin color and population sizes, and which, therefore, would negate or at least make unnecessary many of the points raised in this book. Years ago, for example, John Sorenson, noting Near Eastern parallels, pointed out that the Nephite view of the Lamanites was probably based more on their

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5 The present-day tribal area of Nahom extends from roughly 15 degrees 45 minutes to 16 degrees 20 minutes north; thus a median of 16 degrees is more accurate. The more northern figure is actually preferable, as the Lehite departure point would have been from the encampment in the Jawf plain rather than from Ishmael’s burial site, which was almost certainly in the elevated hills in the south. Khor Kharfot, the only location that meets Bountiful’s scriptural description, is at a latitude of 16 degrees and 44 minutes north.
antipathy toward their straying brethren than on any desire to provide an objective description of skin color. Incidentally, nowhere do the Hiltons identify any Arab tribes with skins noticeably darker than other Semitic groups, nor do I believe it is possible to do so.

But, more seriously, the Hiltons fail to come to grips with what the scriptures actually say about the “dark skin.” Alma 3:7, for example, explicitly asserts that the skin of darkness was given to “Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women”—wording that negates the basis for the Hiltons’ theory. Furthermore, Jacob—writing only a short time after arriving in the New World—explained that the very reason the Lamanites would not be destroyed was that, unlike many of the Nephites, they had not forgotten the Lord’s commandment prohibiting plural wives, concubines, and whoredoms (Jacob 3:5).

Clearly, the identifying mark placed upon these people came about by some other agency than intermarriage. It is one thing to point out or suggest possible contributions from the cultural milieu through which the Lehites passed, but quite another to ignore key relevant scriptures and to base a theory completely on assumptions and forced cultural “parallels,” as seems to happen constantly in this section of the book.

Before dealing with the final stages of Discovering Lehi, mention needs to be made of one of the appendixes at the end of the book. The first, “The Hand as a Cup in Ancient Temple Worship,” is alone worth the purchase price of the book and is a sensitively worded but potent reminder that our sacred ordinances are rooted in antiquity. In other words, they are demonstrably not merely arbitrary or random products of Joseph Smith’s imagination or his environment. As we see that the ordinances have a basis in the real world, our appreciation of their symbolism is immeasurably enhanced. A number of other examples from the ancient world of human figures in ritual positions are strongly suggestive of our own ordinances, but I was pleased to see this paper incorporated into the book because of its very limited circulation.

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since it was given at a 1981 symposium. It deserves greater exposure.

The book rightly comes to a focus and conclusion at Nephi’s Bountiful, the place marking the transition from the Old to the New World in the Book of Mormon. The Hiltons departed on their 1976 journey believing that the only viable candidate for Bountiful must be Salalah in modern Oman, basing this on Nibley’s studies, which in turn relied on the 1932 eyewitness account of Bertram Thomas. So far as the location of Bountiful is concerned, they now accept that Khor Kharfot (usually referred to as Wadi Sayq in the text) is “probably the best proposed [site] to date” (p. 153). But they still express concerns. Curiously, here as elsewhere in their book, the Hiltons omit any mention of the book In the Footsteps of Lehi, published in 1994, and rely only on the preliminary reports on both Nahom and Bountiful published by FARMS in 1991. This is, of course, unfortunate since the book was a more current source of data.

In any consideration of where Bountiful might be, the pivotal scripture is Nephi’s unambiguous statement that travel from Nahom to Bountiful was in a “nearly eastward” direction (1 Nephi 17:1). Like others before and since, the Hiltons seem to have trouble accepting the clear implications of this scripture. It is clear from the text that the Lehites were doing anything but merely following a trading route complete with water holes on this last, most difficult, and dangerous stage of the entire journey. Geography, historical facts, and even common sense are sometimes abandoned here as the authors try to make the facts fit their original Salalah theory, aided by a series of maps which tend to confuse rather than clarify.

Thus we find, for example, a statement on page 34 that the journey from Nahom to Bountiful took “about 35 days.” No basis or logic for this figure is ever given, but I suspect that it was

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7 Earlier personal correspondence from Lynn and Hope Hilton to Warren Aston, dated 21 October 1991, offered a somewhat more positive acceptance of the Bountiful site.

8 Warren P. and Michaela Knoth Aston, “The Place Which Was Called Nahom: The Validation of an Ancient Reference to Southern Arabia” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1991), and “And We Called the Place Bountiful: The End of Lehi’s Arabian Journey” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1991).
derived from accounts of the period of travel taken on the ancient incense routes. Nephi’s comment that the women of the group “began to bear their journeyings without murmurings” (1 Nephi 17:2) could be read as implying that a substantial period was involved in this last stage of the journey rather than just a month or so. On page 34 the Hiltons feature a small map of Lehi’s journey; however, the map misplaces Nahom and shows the path of the expedition gracefully arching down to Salalah instead of in the “nearly eastward” direction Nephi describes.

Even earlier in the book, page 15 reproduces a map showing a zigzag course from the west coast to the east coast of Arabia before continuing along the coast up to Salalah. The southern portion of this map bears little resemblance to recognized trade routes and the coastal section ending at Salalah is geographically impossible. Such a route could not have been described by Nephi as “nearly eastward” and would have had the Lehites arriving first on the Hadhramaut coast and then wending their way along the coastline for hundreds of miles northeast to Dhofar (incidentally bypassing the most fertile spot at Khor Kharfot!). It is misleading and confusing to label this map as depicting a route “just as described in the Book of Mormon.” The map on page 133, showing in more detail the Hiltons’ proposed routing to Bountiful/Salahah, is little better than the other maps just discussed and suggests Lehi followed a circuitous inland route from Nahom east to Shabwah, northeast for quite some distance, east again to the highly contested site of “Ubar,” and finally southeast to Salalah.

Suffice it to say that those who prefer to take Nephi at his word and accept that travel after Nahom was “nearly eastward,” as scripture records, will find that a completely feasible straight-line route from Nahom, deviating less than half a degree from true east, will arrive at the only candidate in Arabia that matches the scriptural criteria, Khor Kharfot.9

The Hiltons devote their final chapter to an analysis of what Nephi might have meant when he gave the direction of travel after Nahom as “nearly eastward,” suggesting that he might have

9 Warren P. and Michaela Knoth Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), contains the scriptural profile of the Old World Bountiful (pp. 27–9), followed by an analysis, based on ground surveys, of each possible site on the Arabian coastline (pp. 37–59).
meant not just the route to Bountiful but also the sea journey across two thirds of the globe to the New World. While it is true that the projected landing place in Mesoamerica accepted by most Book of Mormon scholars is close in latitude to Nahom and Bountiful, even a cursory glance at an atlas will show that the sea voyage could not possibly have maintained a "nearly eastward" direction. The need to avoid the Indian subcontinent and to negotiate the island groups north of Australia alone obviously required numerous and substantial deviations.

In addition, the only feasible method for an unpowered easterly Pacific crossing would have required the assistance of the periodic equatorial countercurrent, thus resulting in a latitudinal deviation from Nahom to the land of first inheritance roughly equivalent to the entire journey from Jerusalem to Bountiful. In light of these geographical realities, therefore, it is difficult to read 1 Nephi 17:1 as referring to anything other than the land journey from Nahom to Bountiful as described in the text.

Throughout the book, the present-day location of Bountiful is usually given as "Dhofar." But this choice of nomenclature is ultimately quite misleading. While it is true that the only site meeting all of Nephi's very precise criteria for Bountiful, Khor Kharfot, is technically in the southern province of Dhofar, it is part of a distinct and entirely different geological region, being backed by the Qamar mountain range rather than the Qara hills behind Salalah. The two sites have little more than an arbitrary political description in common. The Hiltons, who have never visited any of the other possible sites for Bountiful in either Yemen or Oman, nowhere attempt a comprehensive analysis of what Nephi actually says about Bountiful. When one does so the shortcomings of Salalah as a candidate become rapidly apparent.

While the Hiltons' book is correct in its general thrust and in its insistence on the literal historicity of the Book of Mormon, it is unfortunate that, with regard to Bountiful in particular, they have chosen to disregard a whole body of information that would have greatly strengthened their case and increased the value of their book to the average Latter-day Saint. As of 1992, the entire east coast of the Arabian peninsula has been ground-surveyed from a Latter-day Saint perspective, an essential prerequisite to settling the question of Bountiful's present-day location, and the need no
longer exists to rely solely on historical accounts or theories as the Hiltons do in this book. In the process of making their own case, the Hiltons, in both the text and illustrations, have somewhat obscured the simple geographical truths that should have been plain and irresistibly appealing to the reader.

As we approach the new millennium, Latter-day Saints can now point with confidence to the first eighteen chapters of the Book of Mormon as being verifiable and rooted in a historical reality that no critic can dismiss. The place called Nahom, it now seems, is still there today, and the derision directed in the past, even quite recently, at the concept of a fertile "Bountiful" has vanished. Furthermore, this unique place is in precisely the directional relationship to Nahom required by the text. The deafening silence from the critics that has greeted all the published work to date concerning Lehi's journey is significant.

Despite the book's flaws and the Hiltons' tendency to see correspondences in virtually everything they have encountered, they have mostly avoided overstating their claims for evidence in Arabia supporting the reality of Lehi's journey. Rarely do they appeal to testimony or impressions, and then only as confirmation of what they see as physical evidence. Certainly nothing in this book approaches the logical and geographical absurdities contained in some recent books claiming to deal with this area of Book of Mormon studies, including assertions that Lehi traveled not only across Arabia, but across India and southeast Asia to a Bountiful in either Macau or Hong Kong harbor, or—worse still—that the actual outline of Nephi's ship can still be seen and even photographed on the shores of Bountiful.

Although I ultimately find their theories regarding the Lehyanites and the origin of Lamanite skin color unconvincing and their continued (albeit often ambiguous) support for a Salalah Bountiful frustrating, the book has the merit of much original

10 To date I am unaware of any substantive criticism regarding any of the data presented in the book In the Footsteps of Lehi.
thought based on more than armchair research. Read with caution and in conjunction with other published research, the book well deserves a place in the scanty Latter-day Saint literature dealing with this area. The Hiltons' writing is at its best and most valuable when discussing the early stages of the Lehite desert odyssey, and it still represents the only significant commentary on the long journey down the east coast of the Red Sea. Until more fieldwork is undertaken in Arabia that will remain the case.

The book Discovering Lehi is the result of twenty years of research. Lynn and Hope Hilton's continued efforts are a needed reminder that Latter-day Saints have much work still ahead to mine the wealth of insight, enlightenment, and confirming evidence awaiting us in the well-preserved Old World setting where the Book of Mormon story begins.
These two books are apparently the first in a continuing series attempting to assemble current thought on the controversial subjects of geography, culture, and history of the Book of Mormon. In the first volume, Step by Step through the Book of Mormon: The Story in Scriptures—A Geographical, Cultural, and Historical System of Understanding, the author has printed only the verses and phrases in the Book of Mormon that contain references to geography, culture, and chronology. I would prefer, rather, to have these scriptures in context with the entire text in order to gain additional insights. One can read the verses Miner has extracted and then refer to the Book of Mormon, but it seems like a waste of time and effort.

Appendixes A, B, and C (dealing with chronology, people, and places) may be useful to some as they study the history in the Book of Mormon. They could be followed as one studies the text or used to locate items of interest in the text. However, they should be used with caution. In a rapid review of these appendixes, I found what I consider to be important omissions. For example, in Appendix A (pp. 101–10), no mention is made of Lehi’s death, which event is certainly at least as significant as the appearance of Lehi’s and Sariah’s gray hairs, which is listed. Also, in Appendix B (pp. 111–7) Miner lists Neph1, Lehi1, Jacob2 (the son of Lehi), as key historical characters but not as significant religious characters. To me their greatest contribution to their people and to us was their religious contributions. It is interesting that the author has chosen to list Jeremiah (from the Bible) as a key historical
character and Isaiah as a significant religious character. Many other inconsistencies appear in his list.

The second volume of this series, *A Cultural Commentary, Part I—Through the Wilderness to the Promised Land*, is completely different in style and content from the first volume. Here, Miner lists a Book of Mormon reference with a word or phrase and then comments on it by quoting others who have written commentaries about the verse or, in some cases, writes his own commentary. In his commentary on the verses, Miner quotes almost everyone who has had anything to say about geography, chronology, and archaeology of the Book of Mormon. Some of those he quotes are reputable scholars—e.g., John Clark, Hugh Nibley, John Sorenson, John Tvedtnes, John Welch. Unfortunately he also uses material from many much less reputable sources—Milton Hunter and Thomas Ferguson, Scot and Maurine Proctor, and Joseph Allen.

It appears that Miner knew what he wanted to say about each verse and searched the literature until he found support for his ideas, without regard for the credibility of the source. A major concern is that many potential readers would accept all the references and explanations as equally credible and authoritative. Also, when Miner does not quote others, he writes his own commentary. These sections are full of assumptions and suppositions with no data to support them. For example, see "Omni 1:20 Large Stone" on page 97, where a long explanation with no facts or data is given.

A major problem with Miner's book is his apparent lack of professionalism. For example, John Sorenson's *The Illustrated Companion to the Book of Mormon* is frequently cited. This book has not been published, a manuscript does not exist, and much of it has not even been written. Miner has made a serious error in not even asking for, much less obtaining, permission from Sorenson to use his material. This demonstrates at the very least poor scholarship.

To me, the book has the appearance of the personal notes one would use for individual study and interest—not what one would print for everyone to see. Many of the references Miner uses demonstrate poor scholarship and are assumptions without data
and as such have been reviewed and discussed for years. Scholar-
ship presupposes the knowledge and judgment to know which
source to use.

On pages 135-6, an illustration and an explanation of Stela 10
from Kaminaljuyu are presented. I see nothing in Stela 10 that
would indicate any connection to the Book of Mormon. Also, the
literature about this stela does not describe anything that would tie
it to a Book of Mormon event.

I am not convinced that Miner’s book is necessary. It is similar
in some respects to the much more reliable FARMS 1992 pub-
lication, Reexploring the Book of Mormon, edited by John W.
Welch.

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1 For example, see Milton R. Hunter and Thomas S. Ferguson, Ancient
America and the Book of Mormon (Oakland, CA: Kolob, 1950); Scot F. Proctor
and Maurine J. Proctor, Light from the Dust (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,
1993); F. Richard Hauck, Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon
(Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1988).

2 For very different interpretations, see S. W. Miles, “Sculpture of the
Guatemala–Chiapas Highlands and Pacific Slopes, and Associated Hieroglyphs,”
in Archaeology of Southern Mesoamerica, part 1, ed. Gordon R. Willey, Hand-
book of Middle American Indians, vol. 2 (Austin: University of Texas Press,
1965), 254, 255–6; and Lee A. Parsons, “Proto-Maya Aspects of Miraflores–
Arenal Monumental Stone Sculpture from Kaminaljuyu and the Southern Pacific
Coast,” in Maya Iconography, ed. Elizabeth P. Benson and Gillett F. Griffin

Reviewed by Marilyn Higbee Walker

This book consists of five papers presented at the 1995 Sidney B. Sperry Symposium at Brigham Young University on the Book of Mormon, as well as an introductory, biographical tribute to Sperry by a former student and colleague, Ellis T. Rasmussen. Rasmussen, an Old Testament scholar, focuses on Sperry’s contributions to Latter-day Saint scholarship in that field particularly, but also gives us insights into the educational and professional pursuits that made Sperry a pioneer of church education as we know it today and of academic approaches to scripture study, of which the five following papers are certainly offspring.

The first of the five papers is Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s keynote address entitled, “Rending the Veil of Unbelief.” Elder Holland begins with a discussion of the Book of Mormon’s unique contributions to our understanding of the premortal Christ, how it provides the “continuity of doctrine and consistent image of divinity” (p. 5) that the Old and New Testaments lack, and then focuses on the encounter that the brother of Jared had with Jehovah, as found in Ether 3 and 4. After a moving narration of the story, a consideration of the potential doctrinal problems, and a list of twenty-five items of knowledge that these Book of Mormon chapters add to our Old Testament understanding of the premortal Christ, it is the brother of Jared and his faith in Christ that emerge the hero. Elder Holland presents this prophet as an “everyman” of faith to whom we all should relate yet who “stands alone . . . in having thrust himself through the veil, not as an unwelcome guest but perhaps technically an uninvited one” (p. 17). Elder Holland closes by challenging us to be willing to “rend the veil of unbelief” in order to behold the revelations—and the Revelation—of God” (pp. 23–4).

The second paper, by Daniel H. Ludlow, is a detailed study of “The Destiny of the House of Israel” as presented through
ancient and modern revelation. To accomplish this, Ludlow uses etymologies, semantics, word counts, and extensive scriptural quotations with helpful lists of major points, and divides his discussion into two parts: past and present truths, and future truths.

Robert J. Matthews addresses the topic of the Book of Mormon as a written document in the third paper, "The Power and the Purpose of the Written Record." Matthews divides his discussion into three parts: what the Lord says about the Book of Mormon, what Joseph says about it, and what the book says about itself. "The Book of Mormon has a mission not only to inform but also to convince. The Lord wants the Book of Mormon written, translated, distributed, read, and obeyed" (p. 96).

The fourth paper is Robert L. Millet's essay entitled, "The Regeneration of Fallen Man," and seeks to correct the common Latter-day Saint avoidance of the topic, for "to fail to teach the Fall is to lessen the effect of the Atonement" (p. 121). Almost without exception, every discussion of the atonement in the Book of Mormon is introduced by a discussion of the fall, Millet notes. In his first section, Millet presents some of the principles of the fall taught in the Book of Mormon, citing ancient prophets like King Benjamin as well as modern prophets like Brigham Young and Bruce R. McConkie. In turning to the principle of redemption from the fall, Millet shares a personal anecdote of the failure of the traditional "Rs" of repentance and then offers his own list of "Rs" that is more Redeemer-focused.

In the fifth and final paper of this collection, "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith," John W. Welch defends himself, Sperry, and others quite well. Welch says in his introduction, "Without diminishing the essential power of the Holy Ghost in bearing testimony, and knowing that we cannot prove anything in absolute terms, I still speak favorably about the power of evidence" (p. 149). Welch presents several examples of ways that archaeology, semantics, word distribution, literary genre study, and other internal and external analyses can enhance our understanding and appreciation of the Book of Mormon, which can then enhance our faith. For some, evidence may be the pathway to faith, he argues. The relationship between reason and revelation is one of perennial concern to faithful scholars, but it is in his discussion of the limitations and subjectivity of evidence and proof
that Welch distinguishes himself from his medieval legal counterparts. He argues that evidence actually enhances our ability to choose faith and good works; "in ultimate matters of faith, ... the individual must decide what configuration of evidence to require" (p. 173). All would-be scholars and would-be faithful would do well to read Welch's closing discussion of the redemption of the mind. "In the end, what we need is not a metaphor, but a metamorphosis" (p. 177).

This book is an engaging, well-balanced collection of essays by six Latter-day Saint scholars who, in the best Sidney B. Sperry tradition, obviously nurture well their own and others' faith through the Book of Mormon.

Reviewed by Richard I. Winwood

The cover of this book has a small note that reads: “Extensively enlarged and revised edition of the book *Teaching with the Book of Mormon*.” It adds, “A penetrating guide to the recommended daily study of the Book of Mormon.” Having never read *Teaching with the Book of Mormon*, I’m not sure how extensively enlarged or penetrating this volume is, but I liked this book and I learned from it. I even feel that it could be used in daily study of the Book of Mormon; however, rather than a study guide, I see it more as a book of catalogued and cross-referenced gospel topics to be used periodically as a study aid—particularly as a pointer to specific study questions.

The contents section contains an index to no less than 87 study topics from Book of Mormon teachings (such as “We Can Avoid Many Errors by Taking Counsel,” “The Foreknowledge of God Is Infinite,” “Works Are Necessary Even When We Are Saved by Grace”). These indexed pages take the reader to an expanded statement of the topic with supporting scriptural references and study questions. Also included in each study topic is a “Take-off Passage,” which can be used for a variety of reasons, including a starting place for a scripture-marking system—a system the authors describe in some detail.

As a nonacademic student of the Book of Mormon, I was impressed by the variety of approaches suggested for Book of Mormon study and the perspectives provided on Book of Mormon messages. The section entitled “Studying the Book of Mormon” is an especially well-ordered and concise overview of study principles that would be well used by any beginning student of the Book of Mormon. On the critical side, I found the acronyms (a system designed to help the reader identify and tag subject matter
in the book) to be awkward, and, for me, unusable. Likewise, the scripture-marking system suggested by the authors, while certainly of some merit to a beginning student, was unworkable for me—I wouldn’t trade my current system of scripture marking for this one. Perhaps that statement reveals my own stubbornness to change. However, I think it safe to say that most people who have labored in their scriptures, marking and notating, would not be up to starting over—even for what may be described as a “superior” system.

In the introduction, Pearson and Bankhead identify their main purpose in writing this book as “to help the reader begin to fill up his ‘bag’ with treasures of knowledge out of the Book of Mormon.” As one who has gleaned many such treasures, I commend the authors for their objective and for their work. To the student of the Book of Mormon, I recommend the inclusion of this book in a personal scripture study library.

Reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes

**A Much-Needed Book That Needs Much**

Although Michael T. Griffith’s book is subtitled “Writings of the Early Christian Fathers as Evidences of the Restoration,” sixteen of its forty-three chapters—more than a third—contain no quotations from or references to the writings of the fathers.¹ Half the chapters (twenty-two) cite modern non-Latter-day Saint theologians. The paucity of references to the church fathers in most of the book’s chapters leads to the anomalous situation in which the author subdivides a subject into two chapters: 6, “The Son’s Subordination to the Father in the New Testament,” and 7, “The Son’s Subordination to the Father in Early Christian Writings.” Following the intent of the book’s subtitle, these should have formed a single chapter. I suspect that the arbitrary subdivision was intended to keep the chapters in the book more equal in length. It is interesting that chapter 7 has the largest number of citations of the early church fathers (I counted 47) of all the chapters. Indeed, I found that chapters 7, 10, 14, 17, 19, 33, and 34 together had more references than all the others put together. I did not count the totally anonymous “early Christian writers,” “ancient Christian writers,” “early Christian fathers,” “early Christian sources,” “other church fathers,” “early church fathers,” or “church fathers” mentioned on pages 60, 107, 119, 181, 196–7, 200–1, and 208.

¹ I have not counted the few references to these earlier writings by modern theologians or Latter-day Saint writers cited in Griffith’s work.
Having said all this, I must be fair to the author and note that the subtitle was added by the publisher. However, it is regrettable that Griffith does not give references to most of the ancient texts he cites. Instead, he usually refers to pages in specific modern translations. Since not everyone uses the same translation (and some prefer to use the Greek), it would have been helpful to give the ancient reference as well. This is particularly true when Griffith merely refers to the text without quoting it. Similar things could be said about non-patristic literature. For example, when citing Philo in chapter 3, Griffith refers us to a book that contains the relevant quotation, rather than to an actual Philo reference. His source is not even a modern translation of Philo.

Griffith informs me that the original subtitle he gave his book was “Ancient Christian Evidence of the Restoration,” which is a bit more accurate, in that the New Testament can certainly be termed “ancient Christian.” Indeed, the book is replete with New Testament quotations that, if not complete, are at least useful.

It seems to me that Griffith’s latest book is intended to build on his earlier works that attempt to refute anti-Mormon criticisms. In some cases, it does well; in others, it falls short. Here are some of the problems I found:

In chapter 1, Griffith speaks of “the major Christian churches” that “claim to be the one and only true church of Jesus Christ” (p. 12). In this, he includes the Latter-day Saint Church, which can hardly be called “major” when compared to such large denominations as the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, and the Baptists, who are not listed because, in Griffith’s view, they don’t claim to be the true church. After the ecumenical movement of the 1960s, I’m not sure one could say that the Roman Catholic Church continues to exclude Protestants from the true church. And as for the “Eastern Orthodox Church,” no such entity exists. There are, however, eastern orthodox “churches,” which are national entities (Russian, Armenian, Greek, Syrian, etc.).

In chapter 3, Matthew 28:19, John 14:26, and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are hardly proof of the chapter title’s implicit contention that “Father, Son and Holy Ghost Are Three Separate Deities.” Prominent by its absence is Acts 7:55–6, in which Stephen sees the Father and the Son as separate beings. Moreover, some of the best
evidences for this proposition, such as the fact that the Father has knowledge not possessed by the Son (Mark 13:32), that the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28), and that Jesus had to “ascend” after his resurrection to be with his Father (John 20:17), are used in other chapters. In my opinion, they should have been cited in both places to strengthen the argument.

Chapter 4 is entitled, “The Tangible Nature, or Corporeality, of the Father and the Son.” Some of the Bible passages cited, however, do not prove that God has a body, only that he can be seen. Indeed, Exodus 24:9–11 refers to Yahweh or Jehovah, whom Griffith identifies in chapter 9 with Jesus rather than God the Father. Since at the time Moses and the elders saw him, Jesus did not yet have a physical body, they could only have seen his spirit, as did the brother of Jared (Ether 3:6–16). This passage clearly does not prove what Griffith intends. In fairness to the author, however, I should point out that he probably learned to misuse these passages while serving a mission, as did I.

In this chapter on the corporeality of the Father and the Son, Griffith does not address the issue of John 4:24, which declares that “God is a spirit.” A good response to those critics who use this against the Latter-day Saint belief in a corporeal deity has been formulated, but Griffith chooses not to deal with the issue. And while he discusses the meaning of the Hebrew word tselem (rendered “image” in Genesis 1:26 and elsewhere), he does not mention its parallel word, demut (“likeness” in Genesis 1:26 and

2 We believe that man is also spirit (D&C 93:33–4; Numbers 16:22; Romans 8:16) and is, like God, housed in a physical body. We were, after all, created in the “image” of God (Genesis 1:26–7). It is interesting that, in 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul wrote about “the spirit of man and the Spirit of God.” Elsewhere he spoke of the resurrection of the body and then noted that it is a “spiritual” body (1 Corinthians 15:44–6), though, rising from the grave, it is obviously composed of flesh and bones, as Jesus made clear when he appeared to the apostles after his resurrection (Luke 24:37–9). Paul also told the saints in Rome, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Romans 8:9). Similarly, in Alma 11:45, Amulek defines resurrected bodies as “spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal.” The parallel between “God is a Spirit” and worshipping him “in spirit and in truth” in John 4:24 is identical to the parallel in 1 John 4:7–16, in which “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and we must have love in order to worship him properly. It should be obvious that God is not an emotion; similarly, he is not merely a spirit.
elsewhere), which also provides evidence that mankind is in the physical likeness of God.

A few of the references used in chapter 6 do not support its contention about "The Son's Subordination to the Father in the New Testament." For example, I fail to see how the fact that Stephen saw Christ on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55–6) does more than prove that they are separate beings. In one case, Griffith goes too far in his interpretation, claiming that Philippians 2:5–11 refers to Christ’s "pre-mortal life" (p. 37). Yet the context of Paul’s admonition is that mortal members of the church should have the same attitude he attributes to Christ in this passage. Actually, this scripture is one of the strongest evidences that we can become like God and should have been used in chapter 14.

Chapter 9 is designed to provide evidence that Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and includes a good list of relevant New Testament quotations of Old Testament passages. But it ignores others that provide evidence for this view. Griffith conveniently omits most of the Old Testament passages in which Jehovah speaks but which New Testament writers interpret as the Father speaking to Christ (e.g., Psalm 2:7, cited in Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). He does, however, refer to Psalm 110:1 (although not its New Testament quotations in Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42–3), but notes that "Latter-day Saints assert that this verse should have Elohim speaking to Jehovah" (p. 60). While this may be true of some Latter-day Saints, the generalization is unfounded. Moreover, if we have to make such changes to a Bible text, the passage loses its evidentiary value.

In this same chapter (p. 57), Griffith postulates a deliberate attempt to blur the distinction between Elohim and Jehovah in ancient times. He could have provided evidence directly from the Bible for this contention, but instead he referred us to modern theological works without citing them (and significantly omitted some of the more important studies, such as those by Margaret Barker).³

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Chapter 10 is intended to show “Jesus as the Firstborn of the Father.” None of the six Bible passages cited provide evidence for this idea, and only three of them even use the term firstborn or firstbegotten. (Griffith omits Romans 8:29, which does call Jesus the “firstborn.”) In light of Revelation 1:5, in which Christ is “the first begotten of the dead” and 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23, in which he is “the firstfruits” of the resurrection, one could argue that the term firstborn in the Bible refers to his resurrection, not his premortal status. We have, of course, evidence of his status as the firstborn spirit child of God from revelations given to Joseph Smith, but the Bible itself is hardly proof of this. From the Bible, one can only conclude that Jesus was the first person resurrected from the dead. As for Hebrews 1:6, Griffith is evidently unaware that the original story, found in a number of early pseudepigraphic works, makes Adam, not Christ, the firstbegotten whom God commanded the angels to worship.4 Here as elsewhere, the author of Hebrews, in typical Jewish fashion, borrows a passage unrelated to his current topic as a “proof text.”

In the section on “A Heavenly Mother” (p. 67), Griffith cites Latter-day Saint researcher Eugene Seaich, but fails to mention some of the principal non–Latter-day Saint sources, such as Raphael Patai and Margaret Barker.5 In the next section, “Satan,” Griffith indicates the possibility of evidence that “the ancient Hebrews and Christians believed” (p. 68), like the Latter-day Saints, that Satan was a spirit child of God; while he gives several modern references, however, he fails to tell us who these ancient writers were or to cite their works. This seems strange for a book whose stated purpose is to provide early Christian evidences for the restoration.

In chapter 13, Griffith makes a number of declarations regarding “The Grand Council in the Pre-Earth Life” (p. 78). While Latter-day Saints would accept his assertions, he does not support them with any references, either in Latter-day Saint

4 The story is told in Life of Adam and Eve 14–5; 2 Enoch 31:3–6; Gospel of Bartholomew 4:25, 52–6; Apocalypse of Sedrach 5; Koran 2:34; 7:11–8; 15:28–50; 17:61–3; 18:50–3; 20:116–7; Book of the Rolls 1.93a–94a (ct. 92a–b); Discourse on Abbatôn 13a–14a.

scriptures or in the Bible or early Christian works, though such evidence is available.

Chapter 14 discusses "Godhood: Man's Divine Potential." Following earlier Latter-day Saint writers, Griffith cites Jesus' statement from the Sermon on the Mount, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This is, however, a weak argument, since the context of Jesus' statement is not becoming like God, but loving our fellowman as God loves us. In fact, other Bible statements better support the idea that we should strive to be like God. For example, the Lord declared, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44-5; cf. 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1 Peter 1:15-6). Yet Griffith includes none of these passages. Nevertheless, this is one of his best chapters and one that includes a number of references to the church fathers.

Of the seven Bible passages listed at the beginning of chapter 15, "'Except There Come a Falling Away First': The Apostasy of the Ancient Church," only one (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3) clearly prophesies concerning an apostasy of the early church. Most of the others merely indicate that some people would fall away, not that the church would be lost. Matthew 21:43 could readily be interpreted—and is by most Christians—as meaning that the church would be taken from the Jews and given to the gentiles, not that there would be an apostasy. As for Revelation 13:7, it refers to the last days, not to an apostasy that took place nearly two millennia ago. The list of scriptures cited at the bottom of page 89 merely shows that some people were falling away and, again, does not provide evidence that the church itself would be lost.

The best evidence for the apostasy is the necessity of a restoration. In chapter 16, Griffith provides evidence that this restoration was prophesied anciently. He cites Acts 3:19-21, regarding the restitution or restoration of "all things," but fails to note 1 Peter 4:7, in which Peter used the same phrase when he declared that "the end of all things is at hand." Griffith's use of Isaiah 2:2 and Ephesians 1:10 as evidence for the restoration is not justified, however. The former refers to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (see Isaiah 1:1), not to the restoration of the church. The latter can be understood as a restoration passage only by reference to the Latter-day Saint use of the phrase dispensation of
the fulness of times. To most Christians, this would refer to the
time of Christ, not to the latter days, and the passage contains no
internal evidence that a restoration is intended.

But what disappoints me most in chapter 16 (and, perhaps, in
the entire book) is Griffith’s treatment of Acts 3:22–4 (see also
Acts 7:37), which he misinterprets as meaning that Peter was refer-
ing to “a prophet who would be similar to himself” (p. 94). This
leads him to identify the expected prophet with Joseph Smith.
Actually, the passage is a quotation from Moses (as Peter clearly
qualifies), found in Deuteronomy 18:15, and the prophet is hence
to be like Moses, not Peter. Moreover, during his visit to the
Nephites, the risen Christ cited Deuteronomy 18:15 and declared,
“Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake” (3 Nephi 20:23). In-
deed, the context of Peter’s quotation of the passage is his discus-
sion of Christ, not of the restoration, as Griffith claims. The resto-
ration is mentioned only peripherally in Acts 3:21, the real subject
of which is Christ’s second coming.

Having laid the foundation that Peter referred to Joseph Smith
rather than Jesus, Griffith then goes on to speak of the prophet of
the restoration as the messiah of Joseph of the Jews and the re-
storer of the Samaritans. The discussion is a worthy one, but the
foundation that led to it is based on an incorrect interpretation of
scripture. Griffith also fails to cite much of the evidence for the
tradition and relies entirely on secondary sources.

Griffith’s contention that the church should be named after
Jesus Christ has merit (p. 99), but nowhere in the New Testament
can that be shown to be the case.

In chapter 21, Griffith includes a brief section entitled
“Bishop and Elder: Two Different Offices” (p. 119). His justifi-
cation for this is that “some churches believe the offices of bishop
and elder are the same position.” Perhaps he has information that
has not come to my attention. More likely, he has confused the
issue, for the argument is that priests and elders are the same, be-
because the Greek term presbyteros, which means “elder,” later
came to denote priests in the early churches.

In chapter 26, Griffith lists Acts 15 as evidence that “the
apostles overrule an important provision of the Law of Moses”
(p. 129). The question was whether non-Jewish converts to the
church should be required to undergo circumcision, and the
council of apostles and elders ruled that this would not be necessary, but that they would be required to refrain from sexual sin and from consumption of blood. Actually, the law revealed to Moses in Sinai does not provide for circumcision, which was instituted at the time of Abraham. But the Jews came to believe that converts, too, should undergo circumcision. Consequently, the Christian council held in Jerusalem did not overrule a revelation given to Moses, but a ruling made by the rabbis. However, it upheld the rabbinic teaching that certain laws had been given to Noah and were therefore incumbent on Jew and non-Jew alike. This included the two provisions mentioned in Acts 15, abstention from sexual sin and consumption of blood. The leading elders made a decision regarding what parts of Jewish tradition they would impose on converts, not about the law of Moses.

In some cases, Griffith cites only one or two ancient texts to prove his point, when, in fact, many others would better support his argument. A case in point is his citation of Justin Martyr in chapter 30 on the mixing of wine and water for the sacrament. A fair number of passages actually do support this, so Justin is not the sole witness.

Griffith’s comments about the cross in chapter 32 are generally correct, but he fails to address the obvious symbolism of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1:17–8 and Galatians 5:11; 6:12, 14, which are the real basis for Christian veneration of that symbol. How should one respond to those who quote Paul’s statement in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”? Many Christians would classify Latter-day Saints among “the enemies of the cross of Christ” to whom Paul referred (Philippians 3:18). Griffith has obviously not adequately addressed this issue.

In chapter 35, Griffith dogmatically declares that “according to the Protestant doctrine of infant baptism, if an infant dies without baptism he is condemned” (p. 178). Most Protestant churches have no such belief, and it is even an overstatement of the Catholic doctrine.

Griffith’s discussion of secret teachings in ancient Christianity is woefully inadequate. He could have given more references to support his case.
Chapter 39 is also inadequate. For example, Griffith could have cited many more ancient texts in the section he entitles "Apocryphal and Rabbinic Evidence," in which he is content to cite Eugene Seaich. In his discussion of Matthew 22:23–30, Griffith seems unaware of the story (perhaps "fictional") in the Apocrypha in which we read of a young woman, Sara, who had been married to seven husbands (all brothers), each of whom was killed on the wedding night by a demon. But in the story (Tobit 6:10–8:9), Sara ultimately marries an eighth husband, Tobias, son of Tobit, who, following instructions from the archangel Raphael, manages to chase the demon away and is therefore not slain. Of special interest is the fact that the archangel (who, according to Tobit 3:17, had been sent to arrange the marriage) tells the young man that his wife had been appointed to him "from the beginning" (Tobit 6:17). This implies that she had not been sealed to any of her earlier husbands, which would explain why none of them would claim her in the resurrection, as Jesus explained. But if she were sealed to Tobias, the situation changes. Assuming that the Sadducees (whose real issue was one of resurrection, not of eternal marriage) were alluding to this story but left off part of it, this would explain why Jesus told them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

Chapter 42 was also a disappointment. Many ancient documents talk about baptism for the dead, and one would expect that Griffith might have cited at least some of them.

The book has some more general problems, such as the failure to give adequate biblical references. For example, Griffith asks, "But how, then, could Jesus say in John 14:9 that to see him was to see the Father? Very easily," he concludes, "the Savior is 'the express image of his Father'" (p. 30). While the statement is certainly accurate, Griffith's point fails because he neglects to give us the scriptural reference for the statement that Jesus is "the express image" of his Father (Hebrews 1:3). Consequently, he doesn't really respond to the question.

Another problem is that Griffith's evidences are sometimes much too superficial. For example, he notes that "Trinitarians also cite such verses as Matthew 1:23 (Jesus is Emmanuel, which means 'God with us')" (p. 32). He summarily dismisses this as evidence that Jesus was God the Father. It would have been better
to point out that a number of Old Testament personalities bore theophoric names but were also not God. For example, Isaiah's name means “Yahweh (Jehovah) saves,” while Jonathan means “Jehovah gives.” No one would argue that these names imply that the men were God (either Elohim or Jehovah), so why would the term Emmanuel (which is best translated “God is with us”) prove that Jesus was God?

What this book really needed was prepublication peer review, which would have helped weed out Bible passages unrelated to the topic at hand and provided additional materials to support the propositions in the various chapters. It also could have used a good editor—a perennial problem with Horizon Books.6 In my opinion, we really need a book like this. Michael Griffith has made a decent start, but his book falls far short of what it could be.

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6 I refer to the hyphenated words in the middle of the line, misspellings, and the like. A really serious editor would also have checked sources and noted that the passage ascribed to Ephesians 2:14–6 is really in Philippians. This and a few other errors were noted by Robert Durocher, who brought this one to my attention.

Reviewed by John Gee

**Who Was Not the Pharaoh of the Exodus**

The year 1994 saw the publication of many important studies in Egyptian chronology, some better than others.¹ The study under review, however, was clearly the worst. Chronological studies normally are tedious reads. This one is not. The lucidity of the prose, however, comes not from the author’s ability, like A. E. Housman, to take a boring subject and make it interesting,² but from a complete absence of a detailed examination of evidence and close reasoning, such as one finds in the work of K. A. Kitchen³ or Edward Wente and Charles Van Siclen.⁴ The average

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reader need not worry about Williams’s erudition overwhelming him.

There have been important recent studies in chronology that have radical implications for not only Egyptian chronology but all ancient chronology. It is worth looking at the volume under review as an inferior but typical version of an infamous genre that includes such dubious works as Centuries of Darkness, Ages in Chaos, Worlds in Collision, and Pharaohs and Kings.

Jeff Williams’s work, while it certainly has implications as sweeping as any recent effort, demonstrates how not to revise ancient chronology, since the crucial insights it relies on do not stand up to careful scrutiny. Williams has noticed that the number of years of the pharaoh of the oppression, according to the Book of Jasher, matches only that of Pepy II (pp. 30, 96–7). Therefore the pharaoh of the exodus was the following pharaoh, Nemtyemsaf II. This forces him to conclude that ancient Egyptian chronology as presented by the scholars is not reliable (pp. 31, 52–6). Scholars, he claims, base their work on Manetho (pp. 80–6) and Manetho is unreliable (p. 31). His novel insight requires him to somehow compress the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, the Second Intermediate Period, the New Kingdom, and the Third Intermediate Period into about six hundred years

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5 See, for example, Jürgen von Beckerath’s study pointing out the complete absence of evidence for the Sothic cycle before the Ptolemaic period, which removes the basis for almost all astronomical dating, and thus for almost all absolute dates from the ancient world before about 701 B.C. Jürgen von Beckerath, “Bemerkungen zum ägyptischen Kalendar,” Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde 120 (1993): 7–22. The opposite position is taken by Leo Depuydt, “On the Consistency of the Wandering Year as Backbone of Egyptian Chronology,” Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 32 (1995): 43–58. Depuydt’s study was done specifically to refute more intelligent but certainly as radical redatings as Williams proposes.

instead of the approximately fourteen hundred years usually allotted. He does this by relegating to nonexistence the Nineteenth through Twenty-fifth Dynasties (by adopting the work of Immanuel Velikovsky wholesale) and consequently produces a series of startling conclusions.

The great thing about doing history with documents you cannot read is that your conscience is never constrained by such things as grammar, syntax, or script. Something Williams does not indicate is that although ancient historians certainly have their share of biases and disagreements, they are generally swayed by a body of evidence and reasonable assumptions that makes the standard chronology fit (more or less). The chronological black holes that some individuals wish to see either simply are not there or simply are not of the size imagined. Because Williams plays around with king lists rather than the thousands of extant dated business documents and memorial decrees, he feels free to propound assertions that have no basis in the evidence. It is not difficult to draw up a random list of documents where both the year and pharaoh are documented and see that not much room is present to compress ancient chronology. And what do we do with all the kings that are attested, although without any year dates? Are they fictitious? Granted that coregencies and some overlapping dynasties exist—for example, the Twenty-second Dynasty runs concurrently in northern Egypt with the successive Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Dynasties in southern Egypt—other criteria

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7 Williams’s handling of philological matters is ill informed and taken from Velikovsky. Take his equation of Egyptian ṭḥw with Hebrew ṭṣwy (p. 64): In words which are cognate, Egyptian ṭ = Hebrew k (e.g., Hebrew kap, Old Egyptian ḫbw “soles,” Egyptian ṭḥw “sandals”; Akkadian -ku, Egyptian ṭw “you”). In the Middle Kingdom, Egyptian ṭ = Hebrew ẓ; see James E. Hoch, Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 493, example F3. In the New Kingdom, Hebrew ẓ is always transcribed in Egyptian asḏ (ibid., 433) not ẓ, which is used to transcribe Hebrew ẓ or ḫ (ibid., 436). The aleph, though weakening in Egyptian by the Third Intermediate Period, was still transcribed and would not be simply left off.

8 Granted that the First and Second Intermediate Periods leave much to be desired in chronology, the lights go dim, but they do not completely go out.

9 I had drawn up just such a list as an appendix to this review but its bulk made it prohibitive.
are at work, such as artistic styles, king lists, prosopography, and the fact that monuments of these dynasties are found in different parts of the country. These factors help us determine that the dynasties are synchronic. Williams would like to say that the Nineteenth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties are identical, but the artwork they produce is dramatically different, and in that artwork the proportions of the human figure are not only different, but also consistently different. Handwriting styles also vary; no abnormal hieratic documents exist for the reign of Ramses II, but they do for Necho II. And what do we do about the documented year dates? Do we believe that Necho II/Ramses II was schizophrenic the first sixteen years of his reign, but that the Ramses II personality won out for the next fifty years? And did all the courtiers and scribes in the country somehow go along with it by writing the documents in different handwriting and artistic styles for the separate personalities? Or do we have the megalomaniac “Ramses the Ubiquitous” actually masquerading as Necho II during the battle of Qadesh and then going back and changing all his official propaganda on such things as temple walls and ostraca?

Williams justifies ignoring the existence of Ramses II by asserting that “there are no Greek or scriptural accounts of this mighty pharaoh” (p. 69). Why should there be? The Bible only mentions three pharaohs by name—Taharqa (2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9), Necho II (2 Kings 23:29, 33–5; 2 Chronicles 35:20, 22; 36:4; Jeremiah 46:2), and Apries (Jeremiah 44:30; KJV “Pharaoh Hophra”)—all within the last hundred and fifty years of Judah’s existence; and the Egyptians give Israel the same courtesy and rarely mention it. According to the conventional chronology,

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12 For the epithet, see Edna R. Russmann, Egyptian Sculpture: Cairo and Luxor (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 150.
13 The conspicuous exception is the “Israel” stela, for which see, now, Thomas von der Way, Göttergericht und “Heiliger” Krieg im alten Ägypten: Die Inschriften des Merenptah zum Libyerkrieg des Jahres 5 (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1992); an English translation of this document is conve-
Rameses II lived somewhere around the same time as the fall of Troy (assuming it occurred), which is already a distant memory at the time of Homer, one of the earliest Greek authors. The Greeks first appear in large numbers in Egypt with the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (almost 600 years later). The oldest Greek inscription in Egypt is a graffito left by the mercenary Archon, son of Amoibichos on the leg of a statue of Ramses II at Abu Simbel during the campaign of Psammetichus II into Nubia in 593 B.C.\(^\text{14}\) (If that had really been the father of Psammetichus II, would Psammetichus have stood for it?)

Williams also concludes that there were no Hittites! Even though the Bible mentions Hittites,\(^\text{15}\) Williams thinks that the reference should refer instead to the Chaldeans: “In order to form a true picture of ancient times, many ‘ghost’ nations will have to be eliminated, such as the ‘Hittite Empire’” (p. 112). Williams would dismiss the rock carvings at Yazilikaya with a wave of the hand as Lydian (p. 72). But Williams needs to explain not just the rock carvings at Yazilikaya (and presumably those of Alaja Hüyük), but the thousands of tablets from nearby Bogazköy,\(^\text{16}\) tablets that incidentally discuss Ramses II and the battle of Qadesh as well as provide Hittite copies of the treaty between the two countries.\(^\text{17}\) His syncretizing kings becomes almost comical: “Since we have already identified Necho as Ramses II and Kadesh as Carchemish, we must conclude that Hattusilis was Nebuchadnezzar” (p. 71).


\(^{15}\) Genesis 15:20; 23:10; 25:9; 26:34; 36:2; 49:29–30; 50:13; Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23, 28; 33:2; 34:11; Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 7:1; 20:17; Joshua 1:4; 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; 24:11; Judges 1:26; 3:5; 11:3; 1 Samuel 26:6; 2 Samuel 11:3, 6, 17, 21, 24; 12:9–10; 23:39; 1 Kings 9:20; 10:29; 11:1; 15:5; 2 Kings 7:6; 1 Chronicles 11:41; 2 Chronicles 1:17; 8:7; Ezra 9:1; Nehemiah 9:8; Ezekiel 16:3, 45. Apparently, if Williams thinks that something did not exist, it does not matter whether it was mentioned in the Bible or not.

\(^{16}\) Discussed in Oliver R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin, 1990), 3–4. This readily available overview should have been in Williams’s bibliography before he so glibly dismissed the existence of the Hittites.

His simplistic equation of Hattusilis III with Nabu-kudurri-usir II\(^ {18}\) ignores several important facts, not the least of which is that although Nabu-kudurri-usir II defeated Necho at Carchemish, Muwatallis II—and not his brother Hattusilis III—defeated Ramses II at Qadesh.\(^ {19}\) Hattusilis III wrote an apologetic account in Hittite of his taking the throne from his nephew Urhi-Teshub,\(^ {20}\) while Nabu-kudurri-usir II, who succeeded his father on the throne, wrote his inscriptions in Akkadian.\(^ {21}\) No one having read from either of these in the original could possibly make the mistake of merging these two kings, since the two languages are not mutually intelligible—they do not even use the same form of the script. The Hittites are coincidentally the ones who may perhaps give evidence for the existence of the Achaean hosts outside of Homer (in the reign of Mursilis II, the father of Muwatallis II and Hattusilis III).\(^ {22}\) Score one for the conventional chronology.

Once one starts relegating well-attested individuals and empires like Ramses II and the Hittites to nonexistence, surely one is on the wrong track. Williams’s problems actually start before the adoption of Velikovsky. Williams assumes that modern scholars rely heavily on Manetho in working with chronology. Yet read what Wente and Van Siclen say in working out their chronology:

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\(^ {18}\) The name is given in Akkadian as Nabu-kudurri-usir (“Nabu protect the heir!”), producing biblical Nebuchadrezzar; this was altered by Jews opposed to Babylonian rule to Nabu-kudani-usir (“Nabu protect the jack-ass!”) producing biblical Nebuchadnezzar. One can tell the opinion of the writer of the Bible by the spelling of the name. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that anyone ever called him Nebuchadnezzar to his face.


\(^ {22}\) See the discussion in Gurney, *The Hittites*, 38–47.
It cannot be denied, however, that the important Eighteenth Dynasty is somewhat confused in the surviving excerpts from Manetho’s history, and it has become something of a parlor game to try to reconcile Manetho’s kings and the lengths of their reigns with ancient Egyptian data. Because of the extreme difficulties presented by that portion of Manetho that treats the New Kingdom, the chronology that we are proposing relies as little as possible upon data supplied by the excerpts or by modern interpretations of them.\(^{23}\)

Or consider Kitchen’s discussion of Manetho in his careful chronological study of the Third Intermediate Period (that Williams claims is nonexistent): “It is vain to expect total confirmation from the monuments for all our extant ‘Manetho’; nor should we manipulate the evidence of the monuments merely to fit the extant text of the Epitome of Manetho.”\(^{24}\)

Donald B. Redford, in his thorough survey of the various sources to which Manetho might have had access, concludes the following of Manetho: “The Aegyptiaca of Manetho is the response to the second Ptolemy’s policies of political conciliation and scholarly patronage. . . . In the main he worked from Demotic sources in temple libraries, not from the monuments themselves.”\(^{25}\) Do Egyptologists rely on Manetho? Generally, no.

This brings us to the reign of Pepy II. How do we know that he reigned for 94 years? The highest dates attested for Pepy II are the somewhat doubtful year 65 (biannual cattle count, ḫḥb ṭ 33?) found in the chapel of Queen Udjebten, and the year after the thirty-first count (year 62) at the Hatnub quarries.\(^{26}\) Where do we learn about the other twenty-nine years? From Manetho!

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\(^{24}\) Kitchen, Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, 448; cf. 448–54, where the problem is discussed in detail.


“Manetho tells us that he came to the throne at the age of six and lived to be one hundred.”27 Thus Williams’s theory rests on the foundation of a date from a source that he himself tells us is untrustworthy. Williams’s other source, the Book of Jasher, is an even later and less trustworthy compilation of sources that may or may not have any validity.28 Thus no reasonable basis for Williams’s thesis exists, nor for his book.


With their latest combined effort, authors John R. Farkas and David A. Reed have undertaken an impressive task. They have, as they explain in their preface, taken up Joseph Fielding Smith’s challenge to detect errors and contradictions of Mormonism through the “accepted standards of measurement, the scriptures.”¹

Such an undertaking would be impressive for any scholar. At the minimum, a writer or writers would need a thorough background of Latter-day Saint history and an understanding of the complexities of an open canon and evolving doctrine. Indeed, something of this magnitude would encompass numerous primary and secondary works discussing not only Latter-day Saint but primitive Christian history and theology. It would also have to be an honest, unbiased, scholarly work, probably encompassing several volumes. Unfortunately, Farkas and Reed have fallen far short on all counts.

As the reviewer, I do not question their effort and desire to produce a good work. Both men are obviously well-read and sincere in their efforts to prove to both Mormons and non-Mormons alike that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is wrong. The fact that we have differing views concerning theology and the Bible is, quite honestly, beside the point. While I disagree with their interpretation of scripture and the nature of Christ, I respect their opinions as legitimate in their belief system. No argument is presented that their conception of Christ and the Father is very different from the Latter-day Saint conception. Again, philosophically speaking, that is okay. It does not automatically prove

or disprove the truthfulness of "Mormonism" nor "mainstream Christianity."

Because it is possible to look at the same biblical scripture and have different interpretations, I will not even attempt to bang my head against the wall of semantics in an endless argument over whose interpretation is best. Culture, upbringing, education, personal spiritual experiences, and general worldview all play a part in how people view God, religion, and the scriptures. Very rarely can this chasm of thought be bridged by simple esoteric argument over a scripture. Rather, the problems with this book have to do with scholarship.

What is inherently problematic with this book is that its approach to the subject is unapologetically biased, simplistic, and unprofessional. What could and should be a thoroughly thought-out and scholarly approach to a very interesting question—i.e., does Mormon doctrine stand the scrutiny of analysis?—quickly turns into a pseudoacademic platform from which to attack the Latter-day Saint Church and trumpet the authors’ interpretation of Christianity.

Unfortunately, while both these men are well-educated and well-read in their respective fields, neither appears to have had any training in history or comparative religion. For example, John R. Farkas holds a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering. His only expertise in Mormon doctrine and history appears to derive from his nine-year membership in the church and subsequent study of literature critical of the church. David A. Reed has even less firsthand experience with the Latter-day Saint Church. A former Jehovah’s Witness, Reed was never a member of the church. Both men now spend their time working in their respective ministries.

Farkas is president of Berean Christian Ministries, located in Webster, New York. This small ministry’s raison d’être appears to

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2 Farkas’s B.S. in mechanical engineering was earned at the University of Connecticut in 1962. Between 1962 and 1991 he worked at Xerox Corporation as a project engineer and a project engineering manager (p. 202).

3 Reed and his wife were both members of the Watchtower Society for a number of years. While Reed never graduated from a university, he did study both math and government at Harvard on a National Merit scholarship. In a telephone interview with David A. Reed on 30 August 1996, he explained that he left Harvard on a leave of absence, during which time he joined the Watchtower Society and was discouraged from pursuing a higher education.
be its annual distribution of approximately 13,000 pieces of anti-Mormon literature at the Hill Cumorah Pageant. Farkas and his wife, Phyllis, hand out literature at the annual City of Joseph Pageant held in Nauvoo, as well as at various temple open houses.\footnote{Telephone interview with John R. Farkas, 30 August 1996. According to Farkas, who now belongs to an Assembly of God congregation, Berean Christian Ministries is a nonprofit organization with a board of directors that includes two members from the Assemblies of God, one Baptist, and a Presbyterian. The ministry’s annual budget is around $4,500. A small tract, “Berean Christian Ministries” (Webster, N.Y.: Berean Christian Ministries, n.d.), states that the purpose of the ministry is to educate, to equip people to “effectively witness and share the real Jesus to those lost in the cults,” and “to actively witness to those involved in the cults via seminars, personal visits, mailings, and tracting.”}

Reed is president of Gospel Truth Ministries, a small ministry located in Assonet, Massachusetts. This small ministry, which should not be confused with the larger, wealthier ministry located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is dedicated to ministering to Jehovah’s Witnesses and those associated with the Watchtower Society. The ministry’s main publication is \textit{Comments from the Friends}, which Reed edits.

Reed appears to be a prolific writer; he has published at least eight books concerning Jehovah’s Witnesses. While he himself is apparently well versed in Jehovah’s Witness history and doctrine, his books have not always met with approval from the literary community. In a recent review of \textit{Blood on the Altar: Confessions of a Jehovah’s Witness Ministry}, which appeared in \textit{Library Journal}, Reed’s book was described in the following terms:

[Reed’s] work is a strange (and thematically elusive) interweave of three motifs: Reed and wife Penni’s 13-year involvement in Jehovah’s Witnesses; the history of the sect; and a recital of well-worn mockeries such as failed end-of-the-world Jehovah’s Witnesses predictions. . . . Nothing new is revealed in this tedious secondary source.\footnote{“Book Reviews,” \textit{Library Journal} 121/10 (1 June 1996): 116–7. Interestingly enough, Reed’s book was published by Prometheus Books (1996), a press which pushes humanism to the limits. Indeed, it is a press that appears to disdain Christianity in general and has published an array of books that have attempted to undermine the tenets of Christianity.}
Reed was quite hurt by Library Journal’s review and commented that it was the most negative review of his work that he had ever read. However, he has not been dissuaded by this criticism and has already arranged with Prometheus Books to publish yet another book about the Jehovah’s Witnesses.6

Reed’s publications also extend into the realm of Mormonism. Reed and Farkas, as a team, have written Mormons Answered Verse by Verse7 and How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism.8 All three of their collaborative works have been published by Baker Book House, a conservative Christian publishing firm.

Baker Book’s publications cover the usual Christian-oriented literature on topics including biblical studies, Christian living, evangelism, pastoral helps, and theology, as well as “cults.” The books address Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Christian Scientists, New Ageism, UFOs, even Catholicism. Also listed in that section are nine books concerning the Latter-day Saint Church.9

In other words, it appears that if various religious denominations and sects have doctrines other than Baker Book House’s and its authors’ view of “mainstream” Protestant theology, they are, at best, pseudo-Christians, and, at worst, the devil’s minions. Although harsh, it is incredible that their categorization of “cults” can span such a wide spectrum of historical background, ideology, and doctrine.

The book quickly reveals that branding Mormonism a “cult” because of different interpretations of Jesus Christ is the approach the authors have taken. Indeed, they are careful to distinguish

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6 Telephone interview with David A. Reed, 30 August 1996.
8 David A. Reed and John R. Farkas, How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1994). Farkas has also written at least eight tracts concerning Mormonism and edits a newsletter titled The Berean Report.
9 Complete Catalog (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1996): 108–9. Interestingly enough, Baker Book House, which publishes under five different publishing names, has eleven titles about Jehovah’s Witnesses compared to the nine about the LDS Church.
between what they define as real Christians and Mormons. Moreover, the ultimate goal of this book is as a tool in witnessing to Mormons. In fact, one chapter is entitled “Witnessing to Mormons.”

Perhaps one of the best examples in the book of an apparent lack of understanding of Latter-day Saint history is the accusation that Joseph Smith and other church leaders did not adhere to the Word of Wisdom. What is ironic is that Farkas and Reed begin this section with a long quotation from the Doctrine and Covenants explaining that the instruction Joseph Smith received in 1833 was given “not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom” (D&C 89:2).

Farkas and Reed quickly expound on this scripture by using several quotations to prove that members have to obey the Word of Wisdom fully in order to enter the temple and the celestial kingdom (pp. 87–8). However, the authors are either unaware of or have chosen to ignore the fact that the revelation was originally given “not by commandment” and was not strictly enforced for most of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was not uncommon for early members to partake of alcoholic beverages, coffee, or tea, as can be attested to in numerous journal entries. This was also the case with the sacrament, where the use of both water and wine was common in various congregations until after the turn of the century. It was not until the administrations of Joseph F. Smith (1901–18) and Heber J. Grant (1918–45) that the Word of Wisdom was strictly enforced and adherence to its precepts became necessary for temple worthiness.10

Three of the four sources from which the authors quote concerning the Word of Wisdom were written and published after the Smith and Grant administrations. Thus the authors have made a serious mistake which most historians learn to guard against in their freshman year at college, i.e., projecting contemporary values on historical people and events. Unfortunately, using modern quotations to judge nineteenth-century people is a very foolish foundation for an argument.

Another example of historical ignorance can be found on page 136. After describing the use of code names in the early Doctrine and Covenants, the authors then quote the Lord, "Nothing is secret . . . neither any thing hid" (Luke 8:17). Obviously they do not take into account the fact that even Jesus kept some things from people for certain periods of time. For example, he charged his disciples that they should tell no one that he was the Christ (Matthew 16:20). Students of early Christianity will also remember that because of persecution, early followers of Christ met together in secret and identified each other with secret signs and symbols. Some of these symbols have remained popular among some Christian groups to the present, such as the X and the line-drawn fish.11

Unfortunately, this ignorance of, or intentional decision to ignore, basic meanings and information is not limited to the previous examples. A second problem with this book is the authors' tendency to ignore parts of quotations and pertinent information. On page 38 the authors take the church to task for having two different phrases in the baptismal prayer. The first prayer is given as follows, "Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (3 Nephi 11:25), while the second reads, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (D&C 20:73).

However, rather than these two phrases contradicting each other, their meanings are one and the same. According to Webster's dictionary, one of the definitions of the term commissioned is "authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another."12 Desire for a certain point or historical incident to be a certain way does not excuse ignoring proof to the contrary. 

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11 In terms of scripture and ancient writings, what has become known as the Apocrypha has, at different times during the Christian era, been accepted as holy scripture. Interestingly enough, apocryphon (singular for the plural apocrypha) is a Greek word meaning "hidden" and is applied to writings believed to contain "secret teachings." Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Apocrypha: An American Translation (New York: Vintage, 1959), xvi.

can giving a partial quote or taking one out of context be excused.

Probably one of the more blatant examples of their using only part of a quotation to help their argument can be found on page 51. In their argument that LDS scriptures contradict each other concerning the practice of plural marriage, the authors quote from the Book of Mormon as proof that plural marriage should not have been practiced:

Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none. (Jacob 2:27)

However, the authors do not continue to verse 30 of the same chapter, nor do they include the cross-reference (D&C 132:63) that has been provided in the scriptures, both of which put not only this scripture but the whole discussion into historical and doctrinal context:

For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things. (Jacob 2:30)

... for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment. (D&C 132:63)

When these scriptures are read together and placed within both a scriptural and historical context, any scholar can see that they do not contradict each other but show a God who gives and takes as he feels necessary for the personal growth and betterment of his children and for the building up of his kingdom. Indeed, the only apparent contradiction is that put forth by the authors.

While they willingly condemn the plural marriages of early church leaders such as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the authors ignore the facts that Abraham and the other patriarchs took plural wives (Genesis 16:1–3, 29:23, 28; 30:4, 9) and that plural marriage was common among the early Israelites. Even so, God saw fit to speak to them and bless them with visions and other miracles. Thus, in their attempt to condemn one aspect of
Mormon doctrine, the authors have left the foundation of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam open to the critical question of whether or not God would deal with people who were living in adultery (according to the authors’ narrow interpretation of scripture).

This leads to the third and final problem with this book. The book is flawed because of an illogical and biased thought process and analysis, leaving very little room for rational discourse. While the other two points are frustrating to readers with any background in church history and doctrine, the third point is by far the most serious for those who approach the book with the hope of a thoughtful, intelligent discussion.

For example, on pages 149–52 the authors attack the idea of Zelph the Lamanite’s grave being located in Illinois. First they quote from History of the Church:

His name was Zelph. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Onandagus, who was known from the Hill Cumorah, or eastern sea to the Rocky mountains. . . . He was killed in battle by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites.13

They then ridicule Joseph Smith’s assertion with the following statement:

How likely is it that a man who got an arrow between his ribs at Hill Cumorah in New York would then travel over 700 miles to die? No, the man Joseph Smith dug up must have been killed near where Smith found him. It does not seem likely that Zelph’s friends or comrades carried him to the banks of the Illinois River. They would be looking out for their own lives. Moreover, according to Mormon 6:15 and 8:2, the Nephites as they escaped went southward, not west to the banks of the Illinois River over 700 miles away. (p. 152)

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While this example is readable and amusing, it is based on a fallacious assumption. Nowhere did Joseph Smith claim that Zelph killed in the final battle described in Mormon 6.

However, an even more significant example of biased and logical reasoning is the assertion by the authors that “Jesus prayed for those who would believe in him through the word of his disciples. It is not logical that he (Jesus) would let his disciples’ word [scriptures] be lost and diluted” (pp. 49–50). With one dismissive statement, the authors assume that the problem is with Mormon teachings and not with the Bible.

At no time do Farkas and Reed address the problem of the missing biblical books of Jasher, the Acts of Solomon, Nathan, and Gad, Samuel the Seer, and the Acts of Uzziah. Nor do they mention the Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, the Acts of Andrew, Acts of Paul, and Acts of John, and the Apocalypse of Peter from the time of the New Testament. All these books were viewed as sacred by early Christians but were rejected by Eusebius in the standardization of the scriptures at Constantine’s command in the fourth century.

Just as troubling is the authors’ apparently illogical analysis when comparing Mormon scriptural experiences with biblical experiences. Although the authors question how King Limhi’s people could have escaped into the wilderness without the Lamanites being able to follow their tracks (Mosiah 22:10-2, 16), they do not question the unexplained biblical miracle of the Egyptians giving up their chase after the Red Sea incident (Exodus 14:21-30), even despite the access to boats to cross the sea for the rest of the army. Neither do they question the scientific improbability of Joshua’s having the sun stand still, or the children of Israel’s shouting to cause the walls of Jericho to fall down (Joshua 10:13; 6:20).

Obviously, an important aspect to believing that these incidents really did occur in the Bible or the Book of Mormon is faith. It is a very naive and unsophisticated approach to a topic to

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14 For references to the mentioned lost books of the Bible, see the following: Joshua 10:13; 1 Kings 11:41; 1 Chronicles 29:29; and 2 Chronicles 26:22.
15 As cited in Reader’s Digest, “Establishing the Christian Canon,” in The Bible through the Ages (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader’s Digest, 1996), 212-5.
randomly allow credence to one unexplainable experience or concept and then to turn around and attack another for having the same level of credibility. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the authors do. Thus a large number of people not being tracked by their enemies is ridiculous whereas the sun standing still is not.

In that same light, Joseph Smith’s revelation of 1832 concerning the Civil War was seen by these authors as problematic, while Jesus’ prophecy on the Mount of Olives was not. Joseph Smith’s prophecy in December 1832 concerning the outbreak of war starting in South Carolina is described as resting merely upon common knowledge due to the nullification controversy at the time. Which it indeed was. However, Farkas and Reed only mention in passing that the revelation was published in Liverpool, England, in 1851. That was well before the Civil War and was actually at a time of relative peace between the North and South before the war.

Also, according to the authors, the revelation did not come to pass because war was not poured out upon all nations during or after the war. Nor has there been an end to all nations (p. 171). Apparently, the authors are unaware of the fact that the Confederate States of America did indeed ask for aid from Great Britain, which seriously considered openly supporting them. Also, between 1861 and 1961 the Italian struggles for unification took place (1866–71), as did the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71); the Ashanti War in Africa (ended in 1874); the Russian-Turkish War (1877–78); the Zulu War (1879); the Chinese-Japanese War (1893–95); the Spanish-American War (1898); the Boer War (1899–1902); the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5); the Turkish-Italian War (1911); the Chinese revolution (1911); World War I (1914–18); the Spanish Civil War (1931–39); World War II (1939–45); the Korean conflict (1950–53); Israeli conflicts (1955–56); and the Cuban Revolution (1959), not to mention the numerous little revolutions, coups d’etat, and border skirmishes.\footnote{16 Bernard Grun, \textit{The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People and Events}, 3rd ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 424–548.}

When Jesus Christ prophesied of events that would occur, he apparently spoke of a great span of time. First, he promised that
Jerusalem would be "compassed with armies" and that the people would

fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:24-27)

Even to the novice Bible student, it is obvious that the destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent scattering of the Jews occurred around A.D. 70. Even more obvious is the fact that not only has the Savior not come in glory, but the signs in the skies have not appeared. In keeping with the authors' faulty reasoning, the prophecy of Jesus Christ should be discarded because a part of it has not yet happened. Sadly enough, the authors apparently have forgotten that many biblical prophecies followed a format of mixing present, near future, and distant future into the same revelation.

Unfortunately, the authors appear to be so intent on their goal to undermine the doctrinal, historical, and scriptural foundation of the church that they have allowed shoddy analysis and unrestrained bias to turn their work into nothing more than a superficial anti-Mormon book.

It really is not too strong to refer to this work as an anti-Mormon book. The authors tell their readers to "contend for the faith" and to do so by reasoning and disputing with Mormons (p. 188). As already stated, the book contains a chapter on how to witness to Mormons, as well as suggestions on how people can avoid praying about the validity of the Book of Mormon (pp. 195-6). However, try as they might, the authors do not offer any new argument nor have they been able to build on the arguments of other anti-Mormon works.
A much more intelligent discussion of the nature of God can be found in T. W. P. Taylder’s “The Materialism of the Mormons,” and John Bowes’ “Mormonism Exposed” (now almost 150 years old) offers just as good an attack against the Book of Mormon with just about as much proof as do the present authors. Regrettably, the book is not nearly as interesting reading as any of the Van Deusens’ or John Benjamin Franklin’s highly far-fetched but entertaining exposés.17

In other words, when it comes to the realm of anti-Mormon literature, to use a clichéd expression, there is nothing new under the sun. This is certainly the case with Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions, and Errors. The authors have failed in their attempt to produce a scholarly work concerning the so-called problems of Mormonism. Indeed, they have even failed to produce an interesting anti-Mormon work.

17 T. W. P. Taylder, “The Materialism of the Mormons, or Latter Day Saints, Examined and Exposed” (Woolwich: Jones, 1849) and John Bowes, “Mormonism Exposed, in its Swindling and Licentious Abominations, Refuted in Its Principles, and in the Claims of Its Head, The Modern Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Who Is Proved to Have Been a Deceiver, and No Prophet of God” (London: Ward, 1850?). For an excellent rebuttal to Taylder’s arguments, see Orson Pratt’s “Absurdities of Immaterialism.—Or, a Reply to T. W. P. Taylder’s Pamphlet, Entitled, ‘The Materialism of the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints, Examined and Exposed,” The Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star 11/11–20 (1 June–15 October 1849): 161–307. The pamphlets written by Increase and Maria Van Deusen focused on sensationalized accounts of the temple ceremony. John Benjamin Franklin’s pamphlets, one of which is “The Mysteries and the Crimes of Mormonism; or, A Voice from the Utah Pandemonium” (London: Elliot, 1860?), give an even more sensationalized and somewhat ribald description of the temple ceremony, as well as of plural marriage.

Reviewed by Andrew H. Hedges

At first glance, the scene seems strangely incongruous: Brigham Young University’s Religious Studies Center publishing a book that several generations of church critics have fingered as the true source of inspiration—rather than gold plates and the Urim and Thummim—for the Book of Mormon. The incongruity appears even more pronounced in light of the fact that, as the present edition’s preface informs us, the book has not been reprinted since 1825, and copies are hard to come by. Why, one might legitimately ask, put what has been such a fruitful source of attack against the church back on the shelves now, just when it is on the verge of crumbling to dust? Is there a real need for a new printing of *View of the Hebrews*?

Indeed there is. One need only spend an afternoon reading through the most recent crop of books and essays dedicated to explaining away Joseph Smith and the church he restored as mere products of the nineteenth century to realize that the need for accessible copies of Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* has perhaps never been greater than at present. An afternoon thus spent would reveal the unfortunate fact that the increasing unavailability of this book has not been matched by an increasing scarcity of authors claiming that Joseph Smith borrowed, to one degree or another, from Ethan Smith’s work when he “wrote” the Book of Mormon. Indeed, it is apparent from Charles D. Tate Jr.’s introduction to this new edition that the number of authors making this claim has been steadily increasing since I. Woodbridge Riley first propounded it in 1903 (p. ix). Given the 1825 edition’s relative rarity, however, very few scholars—let alone laymen—who have wanted to compare the two books for themselves have had the opportunity to sit down with a complete, readable copy of Ethan
Smith’s work. Hence the present edition: the chance for anyone who is interested to decide for him- or herself “whether the claim that [View of the Hebrews] is a source of the Book of Mormon can be substantiated” (p. vii).

This effort on the part of the Religious Studies Center to bring its readers face to face with one of the “opposition’s” chief sources represents a significant departure from the accustomed practice of some presses devoted to defending the rise and progress of the Latter-day Saint Church. This is not to suggest, however, that the end product is any less valuable for the student of the restoration than a more traditional type of book—indeed, those who take the time to read Ethan Smith’s oft-cited but rarely seen opus and compare it with the Book of Mormon will find the experience to be wonderfully faith promoting. This is because the further one reads in View of the Hebrews, the clearer it becomes that the Book of Mormon did not—indeed, could not—have its origin in it.

Allow me to explain. The tradition in which Ethan Smith was writing was a long and venerable one—as Richard Bushman has reminded us, English scholars were identifying the American aborigines with Jews as early as the sixteenth century.¹ The idea reached American shores in the mid-1640s when John Eliot, the famous Puritan “Apostle to the Indians”; Daniel Gookin, the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s Indian Superintendent; and other Puritan divines found the similarities between the Algonquin culture and ancient Israelite practices so compelling that they modified the then popular view—which held that the Indians were gentile “Tartars” from Asia—to suggest that, at the very least, the Indians were descendants of Hebrews who had made their way to America via a land bridge from Asia and were quite likely descendants of the lost tribes who had come the same route.²


Subsequent generations discussed and promoted the idea until 1775, when James Adair fully developed it in his History of the American Indians.\(^3\) Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews was just one of several books and pamphlets written on the topic in both England and America following the publication of Adair’s book, all of which echoed the earlier Puritan contention that the Indians were unchurched descendants of the lost tribes who had come to America from Asia via a land bridge or, at most, “by canoes, or other craft” (p. 84) across the Bering Straits.\(^4\)

A close reading of View of the Hebrews suggests that, while some aspects of this reconstruction could be debated, it is generally so complex as to be quite inflexible, based as it is on a relatively conservative reading of the biblical text and a number of suppositions so interdependent that if one should prove false, the whole model would collapse. Any modifications would have to be relatively small and insignificant, which explains why the basic outlines of the model remained virtually unchanged over the course of two centuries’ worth of discussion. For example, churchmen over the centuries could (and did) debate how much of the Mosaic law the Indians as the lost tribes had retained after arriving in America. They could do this because such debates did not alter in the least the basic structure of the paradigm, which posited a pre-Christian migration of Israelites who had some knowledge of Old Testament practices. The churchmen did not, however, at any time debate the possibility that the Indians’ ancestors knew of Christ’s birth before the event, had engaged in such New Testament practices as baptism in Old Testament times, and had been visited by Christ after his resurrection. This was because the mere suggestion of these things would have done violence to their understanding of the Bible, contemporary evidence from Indian cultures themselves, and other parts of the model. For such a suggestion to be true in the context of early America’s understanding of the Bible, for example, the Indians’ ancestors would have to have been believing Christians who left the Old

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3 Bushman, Joseph Smith, 134.

4 For a discussion about the identification of the Native Americans with the Jews, see Bushman, Joseph Smith, 136–8.
World after the time of Christ, since early American scholarship emphatically held that the ancient Israelites completely misunderstood their own messianic prophecies and that ordinances like baptism had not been practiced in Old Testament times. This reconstruction would have flown in the face of all existing anthropological evidence, however—none of the practices in the native cultures studied resembled New Testament practices—and, unlike the lost tribes thesis, had no basis in scripture. Given the parameters in which they had to work, the suggestion that the Indians’ ancestors engaged in New Testament practices would have created rather than solved problems and would have required an entirely new reconstruction of events—based on a new reading of the text and other evidence—to be taken seriously. In short, keeping with our example, either the suggestion that the Indians’ ancestors practiced baptism or the model proposed by Adair, Smith, and others would have to be false; they could not both be true, nor—and this is important—could the former be considered an unimportant, inconsequential, and perfectly logical modification of the latter.

The Book of Mormon, of course, makes precisely this claim about baptism, along with several others that likewise cannot be reconciled with the nineteenth-century model explaining Indian origins. Thus it was that the further I read in View of the Hebrews, the greater the distance between it and the Book of Mormon appeared. Superficially, of course, the two resemble each other, and it was easy to see how someone with an ax to grind against the LDS Church could, with a little creative negligence, make a case against the Book of Mormon. But as I came to understand the complexity and inflexibility of Smith’s model, it became increasingly clear to me that the Book of Mormon’s teachings concerning Indian origins and destinies were something entirely new on the American scene and represented far more than mere

5 Thus it was that Alexander Campbell, Joseph Smith’s famous contemporary, ridiculed the Book of Mormon for suggesting that “the Nephites . . . for many generations were good Christians . . . preaching baptism and other Christian usages hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was born!” See Alexander Campbell, Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon; with an Examination of Its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretences to Divine Authority (Boston: Greene, 1832), 7.
modifications of the existing explanation. They were, to borrow a phrase, a “strange thing in the land” in every respect.

In republishing View of the Hebrews, the Religious Studies Center has provided valuable aids for anyone wishing to pursue this question further. Charles D. Tate Jr.’s introduction, wherein he traces the development of the debate surrounding Joseph Smith’s alleged borrowing from View of the Hebrews, is a masterpiece in historiography and deftly introduces the reader to all that Joseph’s critics and defenders have written on this topic over the years. The scripture index is equally valuable; not only does it facilitate an understanding of the scriptural basis for Ethan Smith’s arguments, it also makes it much easier to compare scriptures used in the Book of Mormon with those employed by Ethan Smith. For those wishing to learn more about Ethan Smith himself and his ideas, the Religious Studies Center has also included a complete list of his publications in this edition. And finally, the center’s willingness to publish his work in toto, including the contemporary “testimonials in favour of this work” that Smith appended to his book, renders us a great service. While some of what Ethan Smith included in his 1825 edition—such as these “testimonials”—may not seem immediately pertinent to Latter-day Saint Church history, all of it forms a part of the cultural context into which Mormonism was introduced. This context, for which sources can be difficult to obtain, is not well understood generally, and anything that can shed further light on it will help us better appreciate the challenges faced by the early church, its distinctiveness, and the importance of its doctrines.

I hope that the Religious Studies Center and other presses will publish more books of this nature. If they do, I have only two suggestions they might consider, based on my reading of View of the Hebrews. First, I found the absence of a subject index in this book rather frustrating. The problem was not as bad as it might have been; Ethan Smith’s table of contents is very well organized and thorough and identifies the various topics he addresses in enough detail that I could generally find at least one reference to what I was looking for. It is, nevertheless, no substitute for a good index, one which can quickly direct the reader to all the references a book may contain on any given topic or related topics. This is especially true of a book like this, in which the arguments are
sophisticated and involved and a variety of related issues are discussed; more likely than not the book will be used by specialists seeking insights into very specific questions.

Second, I was somewhat frustrated by the fact that this edition is paginated differently from Smith’s original 1825 edition, and that no attempt was made to key the original pagination into this volume. This presented no small problem when I tried to look up references cited by various authors who were using Smith’s original 1825 edition as their source, for the topics addressed on the pages to which they referred me are different in the Religious Studies Center’s edition than in the 1825 edition. This made it virtually impossible for me in a reasonable amount of time to verify the accuracy and context of the quotes these authors used and hindered my efforts to evaluate the validity of their claims. This problem is easily avoided; even if printing constraints require the pagination of a new edition to be different from that of the old, one can indicate the original pagination by placing the appropriate page numbers in brackets in the text of the new edition. Should the Religious Studies Center publish more such historical sources, a little extra effort on its part in this regard would pay great dividends for the researcher.

These two suggestions aside, I can only applaud the Religious Studies Center’s willingness to publish View of the Hebrews. Not only has it made available an important primary source for those studying early Mormonism and its detractors, the center has, by publishing this book, demonstrated confidence in Joseph Smith’s calling and mission as the prophet of the restoration, as well as in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

Yet More Abuse of B. H. Roberts

James R. Spencer’s small brochure has been circulating since the early 1990s. In and of itself, the pamphlet is of little importance. The points it raises are not original; others have argued the same case for well over a decade. And, indeed, Mr. Spencer’s arguments have long since been answered (although his brochure betrays no awareness of that fact).

Replying to such anti-Mormon materials as “The Disappointment of B. H. Roberts” is somewhat frustrating. First, it obliges an advocate of the restored gospel to take time off from the pleasant duty of affirmatively teaching the truth. One is tempted to respond much the way Nehemiah did, when Sanballat and Geshem the Arabian tried to distract him from his rebuilding of the temple: “I am doing a great work,” Nehemiah replied, “so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3). Answering such attacks as this requires, rather, that the discussion take place on ground chosen, often rather arbitrarily, by the critic. It distracts from the impressive quantity and quality of evidence now

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available in support of the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Second, and perhaps even more frustrating, it involves responding, yet once more, to objections that were successfully answered years ago and that, therefore, do not really merit renewed discussion—objections, moreover, that will almost certainly continue to be raised no matter how often and how convincingly they are settled.

Nevertheless, since Mr. Spencer’s arguments are superficially plausible, and since questions and sometimes even concerns continue to surface from those who have been exposed to them, it seems to me advisable (not to say efficient) to respond to Mr. Spencer in print.

His clear intent is to showcase “The Five Questions Roberts Couldn’t Answer” and to imply that the Latter-day Saints of today are equally unable to find satisfactory answers to these problems. He is evidently less interested in the particular case of B. H. Roberts himself, whose supposed slide into disbelief is assumed rather than proved. Because he was a prominent General Authority and writer of an earlier period, Elder Roberts serves merely as a striking (and, to Latter-day Saints, presumably a shocking) illustration. The implication of Mr. Spencer’s brochure is clear:

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2 Much of this is surveyed in the many important works of Professor Hugh W. Nibley. But it is not limited to his writing, and more such evidence accumulates with each passing year. The richest contemporary clearinghouse for it is, no doubt, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). Readily available books such as Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982; repr. 1996); Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994); Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990); John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985); John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991); and John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), give some indication of the direction of current research and writing on the subject. (The latter two volumes are especially “user-friendly” and are available in paperback.)
Honest and intelligent believers in the Book of Mormon should abandon it, as the honest and intelligent B. H. Roberts did.\textsuperscript{3} But this, in its turn, raises its own questions. Essentially, they are two: Did he? Should they?

The answer to both questions is a plain No.

First, let us briefly examine “The Five Questions Roberts Couldn’t Answer.” (We shall break them down slightly further, into seven categories, for ease of treatment.)

1a. Why is there such diversity in the Amerindian languages if the American Indians were all descendants of Lehi?

This question misses the mark entirely, for the Book of Mormon nowhere claims that “the American Indians were all descendants of Lehi.” Never. And, in fact, the best contemporary Latter-day Saint scholarship on the Book of Mormon argues that the Jaredites and the people of Lehi were not alone in the Americas.\textsuperscript{4} Furthermore, it might be noted that the remarkable linguistic complexity of the pre-Columbian New World is rather difficult to explain on the basis of any unitary theory of Indian origins, including the one that has them all coming across a Siberian land bridge. As one recent discussion of the subject observes, “Of the world’s approximately 3000 languages, that is tongues that are mutually unintelligible, about 400 were spoken in the Western Hemisphere.” But it is not merely the number of languages that impresses; far more than that, it is their variety and distinctness:

Linguists, beginning with Major John Wesley Powell in the 19th century, have classified these languages into about 100 “families” of genetically related tongues,


similar in scope to the Indo-European family (which includes most of the languages of Europe, Persia and India).\(^5\)

In other words, there were approximately one hundred language families in pre-Columbian America that were as distinct from one another as the Indo-European family (which is made up of such varied languages as English, Sanskrit, Russian, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Norwegian, Persian, Irish Gaelic, and Hindi) is distinct from Chinese, Sumerian, and Arabic. Furthermore, even in the view of those most committed to an Asian origin for the American Indian, at best only a few languages of the New World can be even tentatively linked with Asian tongues:

With the exception of Eskimo, speakers of which are found on both sides of the Bering Straits, no native American language has been found to have positive connections with any in the Old World, although some arguments have been advanced for the affinity of Athapascan (spoken in northwestern North America and by the Navajo and Apache of the American Southwest) and certain languages of eastern Asia.\(^6\)

Thus, despite the uncontested fact that mainstream anthropological opinion overwhelmingly agrees that the ancestors of the American Indians came from Asia, even very establishment discussions of pre-Columbian linguistics acknowledge that “one cannot point out Asiatic origins for New World languages.”\(^7\)

All of which goes to say that the diversity of Amerindian languages presents no greater a puzzle to believers in the Book of Mormon than it would to Mr. Spencer, were he to consider the matter carefully. (Incidentally, it is rather amusing to see fundamentalist Protestants, in their efforts to discredit the Book of Mormon, making use of anthropological theories about Ice Age Asiatic immigrants crossing a land bridge at the Bering Straits


\(^6\) Ibid., 13, 15.

\(^7\) Ibid., 15. On the same page, the authors express their strong belief in the solely Asiatic, Mongoloid origin of the Amerindians.
twenty thousand years ago. How do they reconcile such theories with their typically literal reading of the first chapters of Genesis? Contemporary anthropology, they should note, is a sword that can cut both ways.)

1b. Why is there no indication of Hebrew in any of the Indian languages?

On the unwarranted assumption that "the American Indians were all descendants of Lehi," this is a difficult question. Without that assumption, it poses far less of a problem.

It is not at all uncommon for a language to disappear quite completely when it is covered up by foreign invasions or colonization, or when its speakers are assimilated into another, often larger, population. Very little Etruscan, for instance, survived into Latin, and even less exists in modern Italian, Spanish, or French. Indications of the ancient pharaonic language are quite rare in Egyptian Arabic. No Sumerian lives on in the Arabic dialects of Iraq. American English preserves only a few American Indian terms. English has virtually eliminated Irish Gaelic. The Greek of such great Hellenistic cities as Antioch and Alexandria is irretrievably gone. These examples could be multiplied indefinitely. Few things are better attested in human history than the death of languages.

But the question, as stated, appears to rest on a debatable presupposition in any case. It is not universally conceded that "there [is] no indication of Hebrew in any of the Indian languages." One recent study presents 108 equivalences between Semitic languages (particularly Hebrew), and the languages of the Uto-Aztecan family (which include such tongues as Paiute and Shoshone, Hopi, and the language of the Aztecs, Nahuatl). The similarities do not demonstrate that the Uto-Aztecan languages descend from Hebrew alone, but they certainly hint, if they are genuine, that Hebrew may have been among the ancestors of those languages. Given that the Book of Mormon does not require all

American Indians and their languages to descend only from Hebrew stock, such a conclusion, if accurate, is entirely consistent with Latter-day Saint belief.

2. The horse is mentioned in the Book of Mormon as existing among the Nephites of America, but the horse did not exist in the pre-Columbian New World.

Even if one assumes that the true horse (*Equus* *equus*) was absent from the Americas during Book of Mormon times, it remains possible that the term *horse* in the Book of Mormon—which, by the way, does not occur very often, and even then in rather puzzling contexts—refers simply to deer or tapirs or similar quadrupeds thought by the Nephites to be analogous to the horse. (It should be noted, incidentally, that no Book of Mormon text speaks of people *riding* their “horses.”) Both Mayan and Aztec texts, for instance, appear to refer to Spanish horses as “deer” and to their riders as “deer-riders.” But there is archaeological reason to believe that horses may, in fact, have existed in the Americas during Book of Mormon times. The question remains very much open.

3a. Nephi is said to have had a “bow of steel.” But the Jews did not know steel in Nephi’s time.

We understand much less than might be guessed about references to “steel” in the ancient Old World, to say nothing of the far less well-known New World. The terminological difficulties are considerable. Nevertheless, recent evidence appears to “show that

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steel was indeed well known in the ancient Near East to such an extent that the ‘Iron Age’ may be considered a misnomer: it was really a Steel Age.”¹⁰ So Mr. Spencer’s confidence about the limits of ancient metallurgical knowledge seems highly exaggerated.

Military historian William J. Hamblin’s discussion of Nephi’s “steel bow” has been widely available since 1990 and was circulated in various forms even earlier. A specialist on the Near East, Hamblin suggests that the “steel bow” fits rather well into the ancient world of Nephi and his contemporaries.¹¹ “I have found weapons and armor in the Book of Mormon to be consistent,” he writes, “with patterns in the ancient Near East and Mesoamerica.”¹²

3b. There was no iron smelted in the Americas until after the Spanish conquest.

The verb to smelt does not occur in the Book of Mormon, in any of its forms, so it is not entirely clear what we are to conclude from this “question.” Only once, in early Jaredite history, do we seem to find a reference to the process (Ether 7:9). Iron was, evidently, relatively rare in the ancient New World, as the Book of Mormon itself attests.¹³ But iron of one origin or another was indisputably present and used in pre-Columbian America, and the question of whether or not iron was ever smelted in Mesoamerica is by no means closed.¹⁴ Several tons (tons!) of worked iron ores


¹³ See Welch, Reexploring the Book of Mormon, 133–4, and Welch, “Finding Answers,” 10.

¹⁴ Consult Sorenson, An Ancient American Setting, 284–6. That iron ores were available in the Olmec region is explained in Michael D. Coe and
were very recently found at the Olmec site of San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán, in southern Mexico.\textsuperscript{15}

Amusingly, one piece of carefully fashioned iron ore recovered from ancient Mesoamerica appears to function as a compass needle, from what Professors Michael D. Coe and Richard A. Diehl identify as perhaps the "world’s first compass."\textsuperscript{16} I call this discovery amusing because critics of the Book of Mormon have misguidedly mocked Lehi’s Liahona for many decades, on the unexamined assumption that compasses originated in China and only emerged from that ancient nation during the period of the European Middle Ages. (Latayne Colvett Scott’s The Mormon Mirage will serve to illustrate the argument, with her complacent allusion to “the fact that compasses weren’t used in the western world until the twelfth century A.D. according to history

\textsuperscript{15}Professor Ann Cyphers Guillén, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, shared information on the San Lorenzo find during an October 1996 visit to Brigham Young University. Her site report is forthcoming, but preliminary information on the discovery is available in her article on “San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán,” in Los olmecas en Mesoamérica, ed. John E. Clark (Mexico City: El Equilibrista, 1994), 43–67 (see especially fig. 4.26, on p. 63). I am grateful to Dr. William J. Hamblin for initially bringing Professor Cyphers Guillén’s work to my attention.

\textsuperscript{16}Coe and Diehl, In the Land of the Olmec, 245, 394.
But the apparent Olmec compass needle, like the Olmecs themselves, dates to a period several centuries before Christ.

Furthermore, recent evidence suggests, contrary to conventional theories that denied the use of metals in Mesoamerica before A.D. 900, that metals may have been known in Mexico and Guatemala at least as early as 1000 B.C.\(^1\) The notion that “New World archaeology reveals a complete absence of metals,” and that “no iron . . . [has] ever been recovered from pre-Columbian archaeological sites” appears to be nothing more than an element of anti-Mormon mythology.\(^2\)

4. The Book of Mormon mentions “cimeters” (scimitars). But scimitars are unknown until the rise of Islam in the seventh century A.D.

This is simply untrue. “There can be no question,” says Assyriologist Paul Y. Hoskisson, “that scimitars, or sickle swords, were known in the ancient Near East during the Late Bronze Period, that is, about six hundred years prior to Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem.”\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Latayne L. Scott, The Mormon Mirage (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 65. Of course, it isn’t entirely clear that the Liahona was a compass at all, in the usual understanding of the term. For it worked according to the faith, diligence, and obedience of those to whom it was given (1 Nephi 16:28–9; Mosiah 1:16; Alma 37:40); it ceased to function when they were unrighteous (1 Nephi 18:12–3; Alma 37:41–2); and it resumed functioning when they repented (1 Nephi 18:21). I am grateful that my Boy Scout compass didn’t behave that way. (Otherwise, our troop would certainly have perished miserably in the wilderness.)


\(^3\) The quoted phrases are from Peter Bartley, Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book and the Cult (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, 1989), 49–50. Compare White, Letters to a Mormon Elder, 139. Former British prime minister Harold Macmillan is said to have remarked that, in a lifetime of politics, he had never found criticism to be inhibited by ignorance.

\(^4\) Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Scimitars, Cimeters! We Have Scimitars! Do We Need Another Cimeter?” in Warfare in the Book of Mormon, ed. Ricks and Hamblin, 352–9. See also William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon” and “Notes on the Cimeter (Scimitar) in the Book of
The Book of Mormon says that the Nephites had silk. However, silk did not exist in pre-Columbian America.

If, by “silk,” we are required to understand only the fiber spun into a cocoon by the Asian moth *Bombyx mori*, there may well have been none in the Nephite New World. However, many cloths are known to have existed in the Americas, deriving from both plant and animal sources, that are virtually indistinguishable from silk proper. (Furthermore, few Americans—emphatically including the uneducated frontier farm boy Joseph Smith—would have had even the slightest clue as to their precise actual names. “Silk” would be about as close as they could come.) As one account of the question summarizes the available data, “Mesoamerica . . . exhibits almost an embarrassment of riches for the ‘silk’ . . . of Alma 1:29. All but the most trivializing critics should be satisfied with the parallels.”

B. H. Roberts and the Book of Mormon

Mr. Spencer informs his readers that B. H. Roberts “eventually concluded that Joseph Smith . . . produced [the Book of Mormon] . . . by drawing upon his own natural talent and materials like Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*.” Really? We shall discuss Elder Roberts’s opinion of the origins of the Book of Mormon in a moment, but it is important to say that the link between that book and *View of the Hebrews* is, at best, weak. There are many, many differences between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*—one widely available essay comments upon 84 striking and fundamental disagreements.

Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 164. Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* correctly notes that the original Arabic term *silk* properly signifies *any* thread, coming, as it does, from the verb *salaka* (“to enter,” “to insert,” “to pass [a thread through something]”). Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1968), 1:676–7, gives as one of the meanings of *silk* the French word *tissu* (“tissue,” “textile,” “fabric”).
between the two texts—and the similarities are vague and unimpressive.22

Clearly, B. H. Roberts should not have fallen into serious doubt over five questions such as these. They do not constitute serious objections to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Nor does Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews represent a plausible source from which Joseph Smith could have stolen the book. The question remains, however. Did B. H. Roberts, relying on the inadequate knowledge of the “experts” of his day, lose his faith?

Mr. Spencer writes, throughout his brochure, as if B. H. Roberts’s loss of trust in the Book of Mormon after the early 1920s were an unambiguous, established fact. He mentions, without qualification, Roberts’s supposedly “waning confidence in the Book of Mormon.” “Roberts eventually concluded,” says Mr. Spencer, “that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself . . . that the Book of Mormon was not of divine origin . . . [but] of obvious human origin.” He “had to admit the evidence proved Joseph Smith was a plagiarist.” Roberts, says Mr. Spencer, “now knew [the Book of Mormon] was a fraud.” It should be noted, though, that, in each and every case, these words are Mr. Spencer’s, and not Elder Roberts’s. This is very important. If Elder Roberts had explicitly declared his supposed loss of belief, Mr. Spencer would eagerly have included so damning a statement. He did not, because no such statement exists.

22 Welch, Reexploring the Book of Mormon, 83–7, and n.a., A Sure Foundation: Answers to Difficult Gospel Questions (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 69–71, offer good, brief surveys of the question. For more detailed treatments, see John W. Welch, “An Unparallel” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1985), which is the essay listing the 84 differences, and Welch, “Finding Answers,” as well as Spencer J. Palmer and William L. Knecht, “View of the Hebrews: Substitute for Inspiration?” BYU Studies 5/2 (1964): 105–13. Latter-day Saint scholars are so unconcerned about its supposed parallels to the Book of Mormon that Brigham Young University has recently published Ethan Smith’s work, thus making it available to what is almost certainly (by far) the widest audience it has ever enjoyed. See Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews, ed. Charles D. Tate Jr., 1825 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1996). Professor Tate’s useful “Introduction” to the volume discusses the history of attempts to link the Book of Mormon with Ethan Smith. See also Andrew H. Hedges’s review of the book in this issue, pages 63–8.
Mr. Spencer offers no hint that anybody holds a contrary opinion. The implication is that all who know the facts agree that B. H. Roberts ended his life denying the historical existence of Lehi and Lehi’s descendants. But, in fact, a number of highly informed people do hold contrary opinions. Even the editor of Elder Roberts’s controversial studies of the Book of Mormon—which Elder Roberts himself never published, and never intended to publish—admits that the evidence for B. H. Roberts’s alleged loss of faith is, at most, “mixed.”

But even so weak a declaration may be mere wishful thinking on the part of those who would like B. H. Roberts to have denied Mormonism. In fact, the evidence seems overwhelming that he did not lose his faith. And this evidence is fortified by the fact that Elder Roberts was a man well-known for his willingness to speak his mind openly and frankly. “He was,” as Professor Davis Bitton has observed of him,

a fighter. . . . Shaped by a life of challenges that developed his toughness, Roberts moved through a series of controversies. His life can be fruitfully considered as a series of confrontations: in the mission field he faced not merely verbal denunciation but the murder of fellow missionaries; he opposed female suffrage at the Utah Constitutional Convention in 1895; he spoke out for his political convictions, often at variance with other Church leaders; he precipitated the “political manifesto” by which General Authorities were required to

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24 This is the word used by Brigham D. Madsen in his “Introduction” to B. H. Roberts, Studies of the Book of Mormon, ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 29. (Professor Madsen’s volume is the chief source used by Mr. Spencer in his brochure.) Even D. Michael Quinn, who can scarcely be dismissed as an apologist for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its leaders, appears to doubt that the evidence indicates a loss of faith on the part of Elder Roberts. See D. Michael Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, in association with Smith Research Associates, 1997), 688. See, too, the discussion of this issue by Matthew Roper on pages 98–110 of the present Review.
receive permission from the First Presidency before running for political office; he won an election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1898 and then fought unsuccessfully to retain his seat; he defended the role and authority of the Seventy within the councils of Church governance. In addition, he frequently jumped into the theological fray, defending “the faith and the saints” against outside critics.25

He can hardly be described as shy in expressing his opinions, however much those opinions might jar or irritate those around him. It was, for instance, largely Elder Roberts’s stubborn refusal to alter certain assertions in what he himself thought to be his magnum opus, The Truth, the Way, the Life, despite requests from leaders of the church to do so, that blocked its publication during his lifetime.26 The book was not published, in fact, until more than six decades after his death.

It is decisively significant, therefore, that this frank and plain-spoken man continued to testify to the truth of the Book of Mormon right up to his death in 1933. Roberts was called to be a mission president in April 1922, for instance, after he had done substantially all the work he would ever do on the essays that were eventually published in 1985 as Studies of the Book of Mormon—the very essays used by James Spencer to cast doubt on his testimony. Of the period of Elder Roberts’s mission presidency, Professor James B. Allen notes that, “Despite the still-not-answered intellectual questions relating to its origins, he had complete faith in the Book of Mormon and used it as his most important missionary tool.”27

A few of the statements that Elder Roberts made subsequent to April 1922 can profitably be cited here.28 In May 1922, he wrote

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26 On this, see Allen, “The Story of The Truth, the Way, the Life,” clxxvi–clxxxii, clxxxix, clxxx, clxxxviii (698–9, 701, 702, 709).
27 Ibid., clxvii (689).
28 The following statements are cited from Welch, Reexploring the Book of Mormon, 89–90.
of its "tremendous truth." In 1924, he remarked that the Latter-day Saints build upon the Book of Mormon, "wherein is no darkness or doubt." He spoke in April 1928 of the "glorious things that have come to the world in that book to enlighten the children of men." On Easter Sunday of that year, he praised God for the account of the visitation of Jesus to the Nephites, which he clearly took to have been a literal, historical event:

And now, O Lord Jesus, if thou couldst but come into the consciousness of our souls this day, as thou didst come into the vision of the ancient Nephites in the Land of Bountiful, we would join their great song of praise and worship, saying—"Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!" And we, like them, would fall down at the feet of Jesus and worship him this Easter day! Amen."

On 16 June 1928, when asked whether "common knowledge and general discussion in the time and the vicinity of Joseph Smith when the Book of Mormon was undergoing production" would have been enough to account for it, Roberts responded, "Emphatically no." 29 As James Allen points out, Elder Roberts concluded his final testimony to the world, given in his last discourse in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, by reminding his listeners that God gave to Joseph Smith "power from on high to translate the Book of Mormon, and thence followed all which brought forth the New and Last Dispensation." He listed the translation of the Book of Mormon among the many events "and nu-

merous revelations to the Prophet which brought forth a development of the truth, that surpasses all revealed truth of former dispensations."

Finally, on or about 1 September 1933, just a few weeks before his death, B. H. Roberts told Jack Christensen, "Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon. You accept Joseph Smith and all the scriptures." Such statements have been available to both friends and enemies of the Book of Mormon for decades and should have ensured that questions about the survival of B. H. Roberts's testimony never even arose. Oddly, these questions have been asked, and continue to be asked—especially by opponents of the church like James Spencer. Fortunately, though, the long-delayed publication in 1994 of Elder Roberts's *The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology* has supplied a definitive answer to them. "Surely this final treatise from the prolific career of B. H. Roberts should also be the final word on his belief in the truth of this 'ancient volume of scripture known as the Book of Mormon.'"

When Roberts's term as a mission president came to a close in 1927, he took a period of study leave, during which he first intended to gather evidences relating to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. But eventually he came to work on *The Truth, the Way, the Life* (*TWL*), instead. "*TWL,*" observes Professor Allen, "was Roberts's ultimate statement of his own beliefs." Accordingly, because this final work dates to the period following B. H. Roberts's intensive study of the Book of Mormon, which was supposedly lethal to his faith, "readers can now determine that Roberts did not waver in his belief because of that study."

Despite whatever questions he may have considered," James

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31 Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith," 27, from an interview between Truman G. Madsen and Jack Christensen.
32 John W. Welch, "Introduction," to *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, xxvii.
33 Allen, "The Story of *The Truth, the Way, the Life,*" clxix (691).
34 Ibid., clxv (687).
35 Welch, "Introduction," to *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, xxvi.
Allen points out, "he retained his faith in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and he let it guide much of what he said in TWL, which he completed after those three manuscripts." 36 "TWL pointedly asserts the antiquity of the Book of Mormon." 37

For example, Elder Roberts used the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the Nephites as one of his key evidences for the Savior’s resurrection, which would scarcely make any sense if he regarded that appearance as a piece of American frontier fiction. 38 Likewise, Roberts’s final work identifies the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi as having lived a number of centuries before Christ. 39 Summarizing the situation, Professor John W. Welch, the editor of The Truth, the Way, the Life, observes that "TWL contains several statements that necessarily assume the antiquity and literal truthfulness of this ancient American scripture. For example, Roberts speaks literally of the words that the resurrected Jesus spoke ‘to the assembled Nephites to whom he appeared on the Western Continent.’" 40 Roberts repeatedly and unmistakably refers to the Book of Mormon as an “ancient” volume of American scripture 41 or as a volume that "contains the revelations of God to the ancient inhabitants of America." 42 He describes one of the prophecies recounted in the book of Mosiah as “one written near the close of the second century B.C.” 43 Having listed the four standard works of the church, expressly including the Book of Mormon, Elder Roberts declares that “these scriptures are all of equal authority, all of them dependable sources of knowledge." 44

Surely Professor Welch is correct when he declares that “these unequivocal statements will disappoint anyone who has imagined Roberts as a closet doubter or late-in-life skeptic." 45 "In TWL,
Roberts goes out of his way to identify the Book of Mormon as an ancient record written by prophets who lived long ago. He repeatedly reaffirms its divine origin and antiquity.  

Consider too, for example, Elder Roberts's description of an angelic revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Three years after this first revelation an angel of God named Moroni was sent to the prophet to reveal the existence of an ancient volume of scripture known as the Book of Mormon, a book which gives an account of the hand-dealings of God with the people whom he brought to the continents of America from what we now call the 'Old World.'" Can there really be any doubt that B. H. Roberts regarded Moroni and the Nephites as literally historical personalities?

Such sentiments do not seem, even remotely, to imply any loss of faith in the Book of Mormon. Indeed, B. H. Roberts may have foreseen that some, willfully or otherwise, might misunderstand his studies of the Book of Mormon. "Let me say once and for all," he wrote in a letter relating to those studies, "so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine." He took the position, he said, that "our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon." Speaking in October of 1929, he apparently sought to correct such mistaken notions as those now advanced by Mr. Spencer. He asserted his belief in Mormonism, and then concluded, "I hope that if anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life's work be a correction of it."

The conclusions to be drawn from our brief survey of the questions raised by Mr. Spencer's brochure are plain: B. H. Roberts should not have lost his faith in the Book of Mormon over the issues Mr. Spencer cites. What is more, he did not. Nor

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46 Ibid., xxvi.
47 Roberts, The Truth, the Way, the Life, 469.
50 Welch, Reexploring the Book of Mormon, 90.
has Mr. Spencer given contemporary Latter-day Saints any reason to abandon *theirs*. This tired issue, so often raised and so often settled, should now finally be put to rest.
Unanswered Mormon Scholars

Answering Mormon Scholars is the sequel to an earlier volume by that name, which received detailed review in the 1994 Review of Books on the Book of Mormon. After some preliminary observations, I will discuss the propriety of occasional responses to critics of the church, Joseph Smith's role as a seer and translator, the issue of B. H. Roberts's faith in the Book of Mormon, nineteenth-century parallels with the Book of Mormon discussed by the Tanners, and several additional issues of geography, archaeology, and language as they may relate to the Book of Mormon.

Are Mormon Scholars “Anti-anti-Mormon?”

The Tanners complained for years that their writings were unjustly ignored by Latter-day Saint scholars. Beginning in 1991, though, a number of LDS scholars began responding to their anti-Book of Mormon propaganda. The Tanners, clearly befuddled at

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1 Matthew Roper, “A Black Hole That’s Not So Black,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/2 (1994): 156–203; John A. Tvedtnes, review of Answering Mormon Scholars: A Response to Criticism of the Book “Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon,” by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/2 (1994): 204–49. Longer versions of each of these articles were also made available at the time and can be obtained from the authors or from FARMS.

their inability to formulate satisfactory responses to these reviews, now complain that those who criticize them are out of step with church leaders. “A Mormon apostle,” the Tanners assert, “publicly urged members of the Church not to contend with critics of the Church” (p. 2). In October 1982 Elder Marvin J. Ashton delivered a talk in which he advised the Saints to refrain from retaliating against those who mock their religious beliefs, and he encouraged all members of the church to exercise patience and Christian charity when confronted by those who belittle the sacred teachings of the gospel. We should, he advised, “refuse to become “anti-anti-Mormon.”3 A big difference exists, however, between retaliating in anger and responding to fallacious claims. One sets a bad example; the other merely sets the record straight. The Tanners’ attempt to twist Elder Ashton’s words to mean that members of the church should never respond to falsehoods or

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3 Marvin J. Ashton, “Pure Religion,” Ensign (November 1982): 63. Robert and Rosemary Brown have published several books responding to false claims of several anti-Mormon writers. They recently shared an experience with me. Shortly after Elder Ashton gave this talk several of their friends wondered if Elder Ashton was referring to them. Not wanting to go against the counsel of the Brethren, the Browns contacted Elder Ashton and asked if he had reference to them. Elder Ashton’s response was “Heavens no!” He then made it clear that he was not condemning those who defend the church or respond to falsehoods. As those who visit Temple Square know, anti-Mormon writers sometimes pass out literature at the gates of Temple Square. Sometimes these critics make demeaning and mocking comments. The Browns were informed that before this talk was delivered, several members had responded to these taunts in anger, by physically attacking one of these critics. This, he explained, was what he meant by becoming “anti-anti-Mormon.”
defend the church and LDS beliefs from attack seems desperate and amusing and underscores the weakness of their position.

Fortunately for the church, the Latter-day Saint practice of defending the church, its scripture, and its teachings against the attacks of its enemies has a long and venerable history. In 1831 the apostate Ezra Booth wrote a series of articles published in the Ohio Star. These received wide circulation throughout Ohio and elsewhere. In a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord called on the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon to go on a special mission to both preach the gospel and respond to the falsehoods that were then circulating. “Wherefore,” the Lord said, “confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful their shame shall be made manifest. Wherefore, let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord” (D&C 71:7–8). Early Latter-day Saint missionaries frequently responded to critics of the church. Many of the articles found in early LDS publications such as the Times and Seasons and the Millennial Star would even cite the criticisms of attackers along with Latter-day Saint defenses of the church. Regarding the importance of correcting falsehoods, Elder Charles W. Penrose wrote,

It is not necessary to publish everything of a scurrilous character that is said against us, as it would engross too much of our attention to the exclusion of subjects that are more profitable. It is necessary that the Saints should know what is said against them, and that some one should show the other side. When the Church is belied there ought to be a refutation of the mis-statements.4

In an October 1923 conference message, Anthony W. Ivins of the First Presidency read excerpts from an article critical of the church, which contained inaccurate and biased information. After reading from this article he noted,

To this congregation of Latter-day Saints I suppose it would appear unnecessary—in fact I have heard the word ridiculous used—that attention be paid to such statements as these which I have just quoted, and in fact that is true, but it nevertheless does at times become necessary for the Church to make response to statements of this kind, for there are people, many of them good people, people who love the truth and desire it, who are misled and strongly prejudiced because of statements such as this that I have quoted being made by men in whom they have confidence. 5

It is not often that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints pays attention to misrepresentations, but when their doctrines are ridiculed, when they are misrepresented, when they are spoken of with contempt, and when these things are published and sent broadcast to the world, by which men and women follow after falsehoods which are told, it becomes necessary, sometimes, to correct them, and expose the false basis upon which men reached conclusions in regard to the faith of the Latter-day Saints. 6

Consequently, as others have remarked, "Sometimes it is wise to ignore the attacks of the wicked; at other times it is necessary to meet them, fearlessly and with ability." 7 Those who respond should respond well. "Let us be articulate," advised Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "for while our defense of the kingdom may not stir all hearers, the absence of thoughtful response may cause fledglings among the faithful to falter. What we assert may not be accepted, but unasserted convictions soon become deserted convictions." 8

George MacDonald once observed that "it is often incapacity for

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5 Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, October 1923, 140.
6 Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, October 1910, 42.
8 Neal A. Maxwell, "'All Hell Is Moved,'" in 1977 Devotional Speeches of the Year (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 179.
defending the faith they love which turns men into persecutors."9

"Happily," notes Elder Maxwell, "defenders beget defenders. Unhappily, dissenters beget dissenters, and doubters beget doubters." Yet, "Some of the latter may be able to be helped."10

Many people will remember Elder Maxwell’s speech at the annual FARMS banquet in 1991, during which he expressed the hope that we not underestimate the significance of what we do as defenders of the faith. He then quoted a well-known statement from Austin Farrer: "Though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish."11 He then expressed appreciation to those who, by defending the church, helped to provide that needed climate.

Book of Mormon Witnesses

The Tanners spend eleven pages essentially repeating an earlier discussion of the Book of Mormon Witnesses (pp. 38–50). I anticipated and responded to most of these arguments in an article published three years ago.12 The Tanners’ recent rebuttal does not so much as mention this article and never addresses the issues I raised there. Accordingly, my arguments still stand.

Was a Bible Used During the Translation of the Book of Mormon?

In the past I have noted an inconsistency in the Tanners’ use of early Mormon sources that describe the translation of the Book of Mormon. The Tanners are perfectly willing to cite David Whitmer’s or Emma Smith’s description of seeing Joseph Smith

using the seer stone when they want to link him with "magic" and the "occult," yet they arbitrarily dismiss other significant elements of their testimony when those elements contradict their theory of "plagiarism" from the Bible during the dictation of the Book of Mormon. A good example of this can be seen in the authors' recent treatment of Emma Smith's testimony (p. 53). Emma, who was interviewed by her son Joseph Smith III shortly before her death, makes several significant statements that contradict the Tanners' theory of how the Book of Mormon was produced:

A. . . . In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he . . . dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.
Q. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read, or dictated to you?
A. He had neither manuscript nor book to read from.
Q. Could he not have had, and you not know it?
A. If he had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me. . . .
Q. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book?
A. Joseph Smith . . . could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired . . . it is marvelous to me, "a marvel and a wonder," as much so as to any one else.13

The Tanners respond to these statements by saying that Emma's statement is unreliable because she later denied that her husband practiced plural marriage (p. 53). Yet the Tanners obviously accept at least part of Emma's testimony regarding the use of the seer stone. On what historical basis do they accept only this portion and not the other elements she witnessed in relation to the

dictation? Since the Tanners are already committed to accepting at least part of Emma Smith’s testimony regarding the translation, they cannot logically dismiss her testimony regarding the lack of source materials without some sound historical justification. They provide none. Fortunately, the careful historian can compare Emma’s testimony with that of others who witnessed the same thing. David Whitmer, for example, who also witnessed much of the dictation, repeatedly affirmed, as did Emma, that the Prophet did not make use of book, notes, or manuscript during the dictation.

Whitmer emphatically asserts as did Harris and Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had no manuscript notes or other means of knowledge save the seer stone and the characters as shown on the plates, he being present and cognizant how it was done.14

We asked him the question: Had Joseph Smith any manuscripts of any kind by him at the time of translating the Book of Mormon that he could read from?

His answer was: “No Sir. We did not know anything about the Spaulding manuscript at that time.”15

Father Whitmer, who was present very frequently during the writing of this manuscript affirms that Joseph Smith had no book or manuscript, before him from which he could have read as is asserted by some that he did, he (Whitmer) having every opportunity to know.16

The Tanners also dispute the claim of some witnesses that sometimes words were spelled out and sometimes corrected. The authors correctly note that some words in the original manuscript are misspelled. Such references by the witnesses to the dictation most likely refer to the first spelling of names during the process.

15 Ibid., 92.
16 Ibid., 139–40.
Textual support for that possibility has been discussed by Royal Skousen.  

Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial

The Tanners want desperately to portray Joseph Smith as a dishonest and disreputable fellow who defrauded others through the use of the seer stone. In support of this argument they cite the evidence discovered by Wesley P. Walters that Joseph Smith was brought to trial at Bainbridge, New York, on charges of being a disorderly person (pp. 57–62). However, they continue to ignore Gordon Madsen’s important treatment of the issue, which shows that Joseph Smith was acquitted at that proceeding.

Joseph Smith and “Magic”

Apparently the idea of God’s revelation coming by means of stones set apart for divine purposes reminds the Tanners of crystal balls and other “occultic” practices (pp. 56–7). They claim that Mormon scholars have not addressed the implications of such similarities. In fact, several scholars have addressed the issue of

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18 Walters discovered a mitimus and a bill of costs in the basement of the Chenango County Jail, establishing the existence of a legal proceeding against Joseph Smith in 1826. Chenango County historian Mae Smith recalled, “He was not under constant supervision and the Sheriff Joseph Benenati and I learned later that Mr. Walters had taken with him the audits concerning Joseph Smith and possibly more. We were very upset and asked him to return them. He sent us copies but the County Lawyer, James Haynes, had to write him before we got them back. The records are in a secure place now. The last time Mr. Walters came here Sheriff Benenati told him to leave his office and not to return. It is against the law to take records to use for any reason without permission.” Mae Smith to Ronald Jackson, 6 February 1986, photocopy in reviewer’s possession. For a reflection on the difficulties such practices cause for responsible historians, see Larry C. Porter, “Reinventing Mormonism: To Remake or Redo?” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 7/2 (1995): 138–43.
magic in some detail, although the Tanners continue to ignore their work.20

A major problem inherent in the Tanners’ argument is that biblical prophets under clear divine authority frequently participated in a variety of practices which under the Tanners’ terms would be considered “magical” or “occultic” in nature. “Interpreters generally agree that Deut 18:10–11 provides the most basic and inclusive list of magic terminology in the OT,” notes one recent scholar. “However, understandings of these terms frequently differ since it is difficult to determine the precise practices to which the terms refer.” This problem is accentuated by the fact that modern translations “frequently project back into biblical times practices seen as ‘magical’ at the time of the translation.”21 The same is true for post-Reformationist interpreters who anachronistically read back into these Old Testament practices any that they do not consider normative. Such interpretations tell us little about the nature of the practices referred to by biblical writers.

Of particular interest in regard to the translation of the Book of Mormon are biblical divination practices.

The three divinatory instruments that are regularly associated with the Israelite cultus—lots, Urim and Thummim, and ephod—have a distinct vocabulary associated with them. . . . these terms are used primarily in connection with Israelites, only occasionally of non-Israelites, and almost invariably in a favorable context,


leading one to conclude that these instruments of determining God's will "are acceptable because they are Israelite, while others are rejected because they are not." I recently cited evidence suggesting that Joseph Smith's method of receiving revelation through the interpreters or the seer stone closely resembles current scholarly reconstructions of the biblical use of the Urim and Thummim. In a recent study on the subject, Cornelis Van Dam examined the nature and function of the oracular device known to ancient Israel as the Urim and Thummim. Before this study, many scholars assumed that the Urim and Thummim was simply a lot device that provided only a yes or no answer. On the basis of historical, linguistic, and textual evidence, however, Van Dam rejects the view that portrays the Urim and Thummim as a lot oracle. He marshals numerous passages to support his point (Judges 1:1; 20:18, 23, 27–8; 1 Samuel 10:22; 14:36–7; 22:9–10, 13, 15; 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19, 23–4). Van Dam also shows how phrases similar to inquire of the Lord or inquire of God (Judges 1:1; 18:5; 20:18, 23, 27–8; 1 Samuel 10:21–2; 14:36–7; 22:10; 23:6; 30:8) indicate the use of the Urim and Thummim.

He further argues that the element of "prophetic inspiration" was involved in the process by which revelation came through the Urim and Thummim (UT): "Thus, when revelation was requested of Yahweh, Yahweh would speak to the high priest or enlighten him and give him the decision that was necessary. If this inspiration was not forthcoming, the high priest would know that he was in no position to make use of the UT and provide divine direction." Similarly, several accounts from Latter-day Saints indicate that Joseph Smith could not translate without the Spirit. Use of the Urim and Thummim, according to Van Dam, involved much more than inspiration, since in some way, "the material object(s) that made up the UT had to be used." Van Dam

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22 Ricks and Peterson, "Joseph Smith and 'Magic,'" 134.
24 Cornelis Van Dam, The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997).
25 Ibid., 215–32.
26 Ibid., 221–2.
27 Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 86, 199.
28 Van Dam, The Urim and Thummim, 223.
suggests that “a special or miraculous light was somehow involved in the functioning of the UT,” possibly through some kind of stone, “in order to verify that the message given by the high priest was from Yahweh.” If, when the high priest removed the Urim and Thummim from the ephod there was no special light worked by God, then one would know that divine revelation was not being given.\textsuperscript{29}

In another recent article C. Houtman agrees with Van Dam in rejecting the lot theory, but feels that one cannot assign a minor role to the Urim and Thummim in the oracular process. Houtman suggests that the Urim and Thummim was a “precious stone” of some kind such as “crystal” or some other gem.\textsuperscript{30} He suggests that it was “an object by which God’s purpose with men was made visible or audible to the priest, either by revealing future events in the form of one of more pictures or by announcing it by means of a heavenly messenger, who manifests himself in it.”\textsuperscript{31} The device could not function without the power of God, however. Houtman argues that in order for the Urim and Thummim to function as a means of revelation it was necessary for the “divine power” of God to be manifest through it. This divine power had “to penetrate into the heart, the intellectual centre of the high priest, in order to enable him to ‘read’ the will of YHWH from the UT,” thus making the high priest “YHWH’s real representative and mouth.”\textsuperscript{32} The Tanners’ arguments against Joseph Smith seem very arbitrary since it is not clear how they would reconcile their views of the seer stone with Old Testament practices which, under their own definitions, would be considered “magical.” I believe that Stephen Ricks and Daniel Peterson have concisely summarized the issue:

In the final analysis the designation “magic” or “occult” in the Bible or in the lives of Joseph or his associates has less to do with the nature of the act or

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{31} Houtman, “The Urim and Thummim,” 230.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 231.
acts—which, based on the instances they cite and their commentary on them, seem to exercise the authors so much—*but the power by which those acts are performed*. There is no clear indication that Joseph, his family, or any others associated with him, believed that the “rod of nature,” the seerstone, or any other object they might have used operated except through the power of God. . . .

. . . we accept Samuel as prophet and judge, who was able to find things hidden; so too, we believe in and accept the gifts of Joseph, who was known, from an early age, to have the gift of seeing. Just as we accept as divinely authorized the use of lots, the ephod, and the Urim and Thummim in the Bible to determine God’s will, we accept too Joseph’s use of the Nephite interpreters and the seerstone to know what could not be determined by merely human power. We see magic or the occult in none of these instances. We do not presume to dictate what means of determining God’s will are acceptable for a prophet to use, so long as the origin of that inspiration is God. The authors’ thesis notwithstanding, it appears to us that they see “magic” in Joseph’s activities because they reject him as a prophet, rather than rejecting him as a prophet because they object to his alleged involvement in the “occult.”

**B. H. Roberts and the Book of Mormon**

In 1922 Elder B. H. Roberts prepared several informal studies dealing with potential criticisms that might be raised against the Book of Mormon. One of these, entitled “Book of Mormon

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33 Ricks and Peterson, “Joseph Smith and ‘Magic,’” 140.
Difficulties,” dealt with a number of issues relating to language, Book of Mormon animals, weapons, and several other issues relating to archaeology. Roberts undertook these studies as part of a committee assignment to respond to several inquiries. He presented these problems to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve on 4–5 January 1922 in the hopes of formulating better responses to these questions, but was disappointed at their inability to help him. Over the next several months he completed a second analysis entitled “A Book of Mormon Study,” in which he presented certain naturalistic arguments that a potential critic of the church might one day raise and which he felt would be of use to future defenders of the church. In May 1922 he was called to preside over the Eastern States Mission, where he served for five years. After his release in 1927 he wrote up a brief list of similarities between View of the Hebrews and the Book of Mormon entitled “A Parallel.” On 24 October 1927, he sent a copy of this brief list to Elder Richard R. Lyman.35 We find no evidence that he ever returned to the study.

In their recent rebuttal, the Tanners attempt to portray these studies as something on which Roberts secretly labored for years, something which reflected Roberts’s true views about the Book of Mormon (pp. 68–84). I will show below that (1) the conclusions expressed in “A Book of Mormon Study” do not reflect Roberts’s own conclusions about the Book of Mormon’s historicity but do provide certain arguments that a naturalistic critic of the Book of Mormon might raise under strictly naturalistic assumptions; (2) the study, with the exception of the short parallel, was essentially complete by 1922; and (3) while selected statements made by Roberts, cited by the Tanners, portray his dissatisfaction over what he felt were inadequate responses to potential Book of Mormon criticisms, they do not constitute personal doubts over its historicity as the Tanners claim. We will now look at each of these issues in turn.

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Does “A Book of Mormon Study” Reflect Roberts’s Own Conclusions?

According to Roberts himself, the document entitled “A Book of Mormon Study” did not and was never intended to reflect or present his own views and conclusions about the Book of Mormon. In a cover letter addressed to President Heber J. Grant, Roberts wrote:

Since the matter was already so far under my hand, I continued my studies, and submit herewith the record of them. I do not say my conclusions, for they are undrawn.

In writing out this my report to you of those studies, I have written it from the viewpoint of an open mind, investigating the facts of the Book of Mormon origin and authorship. Let me say once and for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine. This report herewith submitted is what it purports to be, namely a “study of Book of Mormon origins,” for the information of those who ought to know everything about it pro et con, as well as that which has been produced against it, and that which may be produced against it. I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it.36

It is noteworthy that Roberts contrasts the opinions and conclusions presented in the study with his own. The study represents arguments past critics had made and future critics might make. Roberts’s own feelings, however, are unmistakable: “I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it.” He had often expressed and would continue to express his personal views elsewhere until his

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36 B. H. Roberts to Heber J. Grant, 15 March 1923 [1922], in Madsen, B. H. Roberts, 57–8, emphasis added.
death in 1933. The view that the questions and statement in the study represent potential criticisms and not Roberts’s own conclusions finds further support from the study itself, in which questions and conclusions are phrased in terms of certain assumptions.

This study supposes that it is more than likely that the Smith family possessed a copy of this book by Ethan Smith. (155)

All this, it could be said by one disposed to criticize the Book of Mormon . . . (182)

Having in mind now Ethan Smith’s book as suggesting outlines of the Book of Mormon . . . (193)

It will be thought by some . . . (197)

The tentative suggestion of Ethan Smith’s book—being the ground plan of the Book of Mormon . . . (197)

The possibility of it, on the theory of a merely human origin for the Book of Mormon, is quite thinkable. (211)

On the assumption that View of the Hebrews formed the ground plan of the Book of Mormon . . . (219)

If one was free from the notion that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin, and could accord it mere human origin, he would say . . . (220)

Assuming for the sake of the inquiry that the author of the Book of Mormon was Joseph Smith . . . (226)

If . . . the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin . . . (251)

If it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said . . . (251)

37 For a preliminary summary of B. H. Roberts’s statements about the Book of Mormon during the last ten years of his life, see Truman G. Madsen, comp., “B. H. Roberts’s Final Decade: Statements about the Book of Mormon (1921–33)” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1985).

38 Emphasis has been added in the following quotations from Madsen’s edition of Roberts’s papers in B. H. Roberts.
They are made to indicate what may be fairly regarded as just objects of criticism under the assumption that the Book of Mormon is of human origin, and that Joseph Smith is its author. (277)

The upshot of all this would be that if the Book of Mormon is of merely human origin, and Joseph Smith is its author, then all these facts here considered would be reflected in the Book of Mormon. (309–10)

The Tanners uncritically cite statements from the study as if they represented Roberts's own views, when, in fact, Roberts specified that they are arguments which might be used by those already predisposed to view the Book of Mormon as a modern product of Joseph Smith's creative imagination.39 “Such a question as that may possibly arise some day, and if it does, it would be greatly to the advantage of our future Defenders of the Faith, if they had in hand a thorough digest of the subject matter.”40 By providing an in-house case for the opposition, future defenders of the Book of Mormon would be better prepared to face and respond to attacks and sophistries of future critics.

**Dating “A Book of Mormon Study”**

The Tanners believe that Roberts continued to work on “A Book of Mormon Study” long after 1922. As evidence for this they note that on 24 October 1927 Robert sent “A Parallel” to Richard R. Lyman. “It undoubtedly took,” the Tanners argue, “a great deal of time for Roberts to set up this parallel between the View of the Hebrews and the Book of Mormon” (p. 81). To the contrary, it can be easily shown that the “Parallel” was not based on any new research, but was essentially extracted from the 1922

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39 While visiting the Tanners’ Salt Lake City bookstore with two friends of mine on 9 May 1996, I witnessed an interesting conversation between Sandra Tanner and Louis Midgley. When Midgley tried to explain how assumptions play a role in the way historians and other scholars frame and present their arguments and evidence, she brushed it aside with the comment, “Jerald doesn’t think in those terms.”

40 Roberts to Lyman, 24 October 1927, in Madsen, B. H. Roberts, 60
document. Thus one cannot accurately portray the “Parallel” as a new and vigorous foray into the Ethan Smith material by a Roberts immersed in doubt over the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It is essentially a rehash of the earlier material already compiled in 1922.

Oddly, the only other piece of evidence mustered by the Tanners to support the idea that Roberts continued to work on the study is the letter which Roberts wrote to Elder Richard Lyman of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time he sent his “Parallel.” That letter not only fails to support their claim, but in fact confirms Welch’s argument that the study was essentially finished by the spring of 1922, before Roberts took charge of the Eastern States Mission. In 1927 Roberts reviewed his experience in presenting his “Book of Mormon Difficulties.” On 24 October 1927 Roberts wrote:

And the other day I told you, if you remember, that I had continued my investigations and had drawn up a somewhat lengthy report for the First Presidency [sic] and the Council of the Twelve. Then came my call to the Eastern States and the matter was dropped, but my report was drawn up nevertheless together with a letter that I had intended should accompany it, but in the hurry of getting away and the impossibility at that time of having my report considered, I dropped the matter, and have not yet decided whether I shall present that report to the First Presidency or not.42

First, it is clear from the letter to Lyman that Roberts’s report, “A Book of Mormon Study,” was drawn up before his call to the

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41 Specific parallels in Roberts’s list in Madsen, B. H. Roberts, 323–44, should be compared with similar ones raised in the study. See, for example, the place and title of the books (155); the existence of a book (158); origin of the Indians (156–61); the hidden book revealed (158–60, 215–7); inspired seers and prophets, Urim and Thummim and breastplate (207–8); engraved characters (217–8); barbarous and civilized people (188–90); destruction of Jerusalem (170); Israel (171); Isaiah passages (171–3); role of the gentile nation (174–82); pride and love of riches (211–2); polygamy and Indian virtues (212–4); and Quetzalcoatl (228–36).

42 Roberts to Lyman, 24 October 1927, in Madsen, B. H. Roberts, 59, emphasis added.
Eastern States Mission. He received that call on 22 May 1922 and was set apart by President Grant on 29 May. Roberts also says that the matter of the study was dropped at the time of his call to the Eastern States Mission. Moreover, as of 24 October 1927 he had made no attempt to present that report to the First Presidency. These facts also find confirmation in a letter Roberts wrote to his daughter Elizabeth on 14 March 1932, ten years after the study was done. Speaking of his document, "A Book of Mormon Study," Roberts explained, "It was from research work I did before going to take charge of the Eastern States Mission." As with "A Book of Mormon Study" itself, "the letter of submission to President Grant was made previous to leaving the E.S.M."

The letter of submission was written at the time the study was completed in the spring of 1922. This means that the document, "A Book of Mormon Study," with the exception of a few minor editorial changes, was completed and set aside in 1922 just as Welch argued.

Second, it is also clear from the letter to Lyman that the cover letter was drawn up at the time the study was completed and that Roberts intended that it should accompany the document. The Tanners, desperate to save a bad argument, now maintain that the letter is "irrelevant" to the issue of Roberts’s testimony because it was never sent. Their argument implies that the letter was not sent because Roberts changed his views and became convinced that the Book of Mormon was false. Thus the Tanners dismiss Roberts’s cover letter and cite "A Book of Mormon Study" as reflecting Roberts’s true views on the historicity of the Book of Mormon. But this is a misleading argument since both the Lyman letter and the letter to Elizabeth tie Roberts’s disclaimer to the study. Moreover, to dismiss the disclaimer as not reflecting Roberts’s views simply on the basis that it was not sent, while continuing to cite the study as if it did, is also deceptive since "A Book of Mormon Study" was never sent to President Grant either!

44 B. H. Roberts to Elizabeth, 14 March 1932, in Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith?", exhibit 8.
45 Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith?", 1–16.
The Tanners' recent rebuttal points out a careless error I made in a book review published in 1992 (pp. 70–6). On 8 August 1993 I was a guest on Martin Tanner's radio program "Religion on the Line." Just before the end of the program Jerald Tanner drew my attention to that error, in which I cited a portion of Roberts's disclaimer. As I did not have the relevant sources with me at that time, I offered to check it out later. The Tanners, clearly eager to find anything to discredit me, pounce on this mistake as if it were some dark and dirty secret. What their rebuttal does not point out is that I called in to the radio program one week later on 15 August 1993 in order to correct that error publicly. Shortly afterward I also published a correction in print in which I reproduced the entire letter in question, indicating how the error occurred.

During a recent Salt Lake City radio program, Jerald Tanner suggested that I had misrepresented a statement by B. H. Roberts in which the former Church leader explained the purpose of his unpublished presentation of Book of Mormon criticisms. After checking the citation in my review with the source in question, I realized that I had inadvertently cited a secondary source, when I should have cited the letter itself, a copy of which was readily available. While I regret the mistake, the citation, even as it stands in the review, accurately demonstrates Roberts's position on his unpublished study....

Although the Tanners are familiar with this statement, they have until now remained strangely silent about it. While Roberts's studies have been available in published form since 1985, the Tanners failed to mention Roberts's statement in their 1987 revision of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? In their 1989 work Major Problems of Mormonism they are also strangely silent concerning the statement. Even their most recent discussion of B. H. Roberts's studies says nothing about the cover letter which Roberts always intended should accompany the manuscript. Their continuing silence
regarding evidence for Roberts’s continuing belief in the Book of Mormon is inexcusable.46

In their recent rebuttal the Tanners note that they have been aware of this letter since 1980, when they initially published Roberts’s documents without permission. Since they published Roberts’s letter to Heber J. Grant along with the other three documents, they feel that I have been unfair. “We included a photographic reproduction of the two-page letter written by Roberts in our book *Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed*” (p. 69). While the Tanners believe that this somehow vindicates them, it actually makes matters worse. In 1992 I did not have a copy of *Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed* and simply assumed that the authors had only been made aware of the letter in 1985. Now it is clear that the Tanners knew about that document as early as 1980, but have remained silent about it in subsequent publications for sixteen years while publicly proclaiming Roberts’s alleged rejection of the Book of Mormon’s historicity! I am confident that readers will be able to tell the difference between a careless mistake and the knowing and deliberate suppression of a key historical document which contradicts their questionable thesis.

The Wesley Lloyd Journal

The Tanners argue that an excerpt from the journal of Wesley Lloyd vindicates their claim that Roberts lost his testimony of the Book of Mormon. “It is clear from this journal,” they assert, “that B. H. Roberts had grave doubts about the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon” (p. 69). However, the Tanners uncritically confuse Roberts’s understandable frustration over what he felt were superficial and inadequate responses to potential criticisms of the Book of Mormon with serious personal doubts about its historicity and divine authenticity. Lloyd does not claim that Roberts now rejected it. Lloyd never claimed that Roberts ever rejected the Book of Mormon or that he doubted its historicity.

Lloyd reports that Roberts’s study “swings to a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon” (p. 80). Roberts’s study is “psychological” in the sense that it portrays the Book of

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46 Roper, “Comments on the Book of Mormon Witnesses,” 183–4, 186.
Mormon as the sole product of Joseph Smith’s creative mind, as opposed to the Spaulding theory of its origin. Lloyd reports a line of “psychological” argument against the Book of Mormon which attempts to show “that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience . . . and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective” (p. 80). The psychological argument reported by Lloyd is almost certainly that raised by I. Woodbridge Riley in 1902 in a work with which Roberts was familiar and sometimes cited.47 Riley was the first twentieth-century critic to advocate a “psychological” explanation of the Book of Mormon. In Roberts’s day most members of the church would have been familiar with the Spaulding hypothesis, but few would have been aware of Riley’s naturalistic explanation, which would not really take hold until Fawn Brodie’s popularization of it in 1945. Riley claimed that Joseph Smith was the sole author of the Book of Mormon and had the creative ability to produce it. Several factors indicate that Lloyd is reporting Roberts’s description of a potential nineteenth-century explanation, not his own conclusions about the Book of Mormon’s validity or historicity.

1. The argument that “the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith” and that “the plates and the Urim and Thummim were not objective,” parallels Riley’s claim that the Three Witnesses’ vision of the plates was “subjective hallucination” and was “subjective, not objective.”48 Riley likewise speaks of the Prophet’s “subjective ‘glass looking’” while translating the plates,49 and claims that “Joseph’s condition, under the influence of his ‘Urim and Thummim,’ was semi-hypnotic.”50

2. Roberts had already rejected the “subjective” psychological explanation in 1909.51 Roberts’s primary argument

48 Ibid., 226.
49 Ibid., 204.
50 Ibid., 86.
against this explanation was the testimony of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon who each handled the plates. Yet the 1922 study never addresses the issue of the witnesses or the objective reality of the plates—a significant omission if the study truly represented Roberts’s own conclusions about the Book of Mormon. Obviously it did not.

3. Lloyd never reports or claims that Roberts rejected the Book of Mormon. If Roberts had openly expressed such doubts to Lloyd it seems reasonable that he would have reported it.

4. Lloyd reports that Elder Roberts’s inability to formulate satisfactory responses to certain potential Book of Mormon criticisms, “has made Bro Roberts shift his base on the Book of Mormon. Instead of regarding it as the strongest evidence we have of Church Divinity, he regards it as the one which needs the more bolstering” (p. 79). The Tanners emphasize Lloyd’s statement that Roberts “shifted his base”; however, one who shifts his base does not abandon the battle but merely takes up a more defensible position until control of the battlefield can be regained. Welch shows how Roberts “shifted his base” by emphasizing the doctrinal evidences for the Book of Mormon as opposed to external evidences such as archaeology or linguistics, with which Roberts had little experience.

5. Incidentally, why would Roberts say that the Book of Mormon needed more bolstering if he was already convinced that it was a product of Joseph Smith’s creative imagination? Why bother? And why, as Welch observes, would he consider the Doctrine and Covenants revelations to be the “greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph” if the revelations of the plates were a simple hallucination? That would be absurd. Obviously he is describing potential problems that critics might raise, not explaining his own views of Book of Mormon origins.

6. Since it can be shown that (a) “A Book of Mormon Study” can be solidly dated to 1922, (b) Roberts’s cover letter to Heber J. Grant can be dated to the same time as “A Book of Mormon Study,” and (c) the study was never intended to reflect Roberts’s own conclusions about the Book of Mormon, Roberts’s abundant and very specific public statements during his final decade become extremely relevant to the issue of his own faith and testimony of the Book of Mormon. In an earlier review, I cited
several statements made by Roberts over the last decade of his life in which he consistently bore testimony to the Book of Mormon’s divinity and historicity. The Tanners’ reluctance to deal with this evidence is most illuminating. Words in bold indicate those portions of my argument from the review which the Tanners have omitted in their recent rebuttal.

A review of Roberts’s talks and addresses over the last eleven years of his life shows that he used the Book of Mormon extensively and frequently bore testimony of its divinity. In October 1923 he called the Book of Mormon “the sublimest message ever delivered to the world.” In 1924 he stated that the Book of Mormon helped to provide Latter-day Saints with a foundation “built up of living stones wherein is no darkness or doubt.” Roberts actively continued to use the Book of Mormon in his writing and teaching throughout the next nine years. In 1928, after asking if “common knowledge and general discussion in the time and vicinity of Joseph Smith when the Book of Mormon was undergoing production” would have been enough to account for the production of the Nephite record, he responded, “Emphatically no.” In October 1929, desirous that no one misunderstand his own convictions, Roberts stated, “I hope that if anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life’s work be a correction of it. In November 1930 he asserted that “surer recognition of Jesus being God may not be found in sacred writ [than in the Book of Mormon].” Roberts continued to be impressed by the depth and scope of Book of Mormon doctrinal teachings and thought. Concerning the sacramental prayers in the Book of Mormon, he told the San Francisco Stake in April 1932 that “this was not the work of an unlettered youth . . . but evidence of divine inspiration. When this prayer is thoughtfully considered, it gives great weight to [the] claims of the modern prophet.” In April 1933, he described the Book of Mormon as “one of the most valuable books that has ever been
preserved.” Just weeks before he died, he advised Jack Christensen, “Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon. You accept Joseph Smith and all the scriptures.”\(^5^2\)

In their attempt to portray a doubting Roberts, the Tanners have omitted all but the weakest of the statements affirming his testimony of the Book of Mormon. Ironically they claim, “We have never deliberately changed any text to make it fit our conclusions” (p. 45), but it seems to me that such omissions require studied effort. “We did not contest the fact that B. H. Roberts continued to quote the Book of Mormon after he wrote his critical assessment” (p. 78). They did not contest it? In fact, they ignored it altogether, as they have a tendency to do when the evidence contradicts their questionable thesis. This is simply inexcusable. “Although he [Roberts] may have started out merely playing the ‘Devil’s Advocate,’ we feel that he played the role so well that he developed grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon” (p. 78). The evidence the Tanners present in support of this theory simply does not support that conclusion. Their obvious frustration over the evidence for Roberts’s testimony of the Book of Mormon’s divinity and historicity is understandable, even if their blatant use of distortion is inexcusable. Unfortunately for the Tanners, repetition of an intellectually incoherent argument does not make it true.

**Nineteenth-Century Sources**

The Tanners’ rebuttal discusses several parallels between the Book of Mormon and a book by Josiah Priest, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, which was published in

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1825. The Tanners produce no evidence that Joseph Smith knew of or had read this book before the publication of the Book of Mormon, yet they feel that the existence of parallels alone shows it to have been an influential resource for Joseph Smith. The Tanners note, for example, that the phrase narrow neck of land is used by both Josiah Priest and the author of the Book of Mormon. But does so weak a parallel really demonstrate literary dependence? How many ways are there to describe an isthmus, anyway? In his 1828 dictionary, Noah Webster defines the word neck as “a long narrow tract of land projecting from the main body, or a narrow tract connecting two larger tracts; as the neck of land between Boston and Roxbury.” Since the Book of Mormon was a translation into the English language, these and similar examples do not amount to much.

The Great Destruction in 3 Nephi

The Tanners suggest that Joseph Smith derived most of the ideas for 3 Nephi 8–9 from either the New Testament or portions of Josiah Priest’s book, The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed. I responded to this claim in an earlier review. As I noted there, neither of these sources explains all the elements found in the Book of Mormon account of the destruction in the New World at the death of Christ. In addition, many of the parallels mentioned by the Tanners between Priest’s book and 3 Nephi can also be found in the biblical accounts of the Exodus, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and other biblical events and prophecies. Here I would add that while the parallels referenced by the Tanners show that some information about natural disasters might have been known to Joseph Smith if he had read the book, they also undermine the argument of many critics that the 3 Nephi event cannot be historical. One of the Tanners’

55 For other examples of the Tanners’ muddled thinking see Roper, “Noah Webster and the Book of Mormon,” 142–6.
mentors, M. T. Lamb, called the disaster described in 3 Nephi 8–9 one of the most "foolish and physically impossible" stories ever described.\textsuperscript{57} Recent Book of Mormon scholarship, however, suggests that all the elements of this event can be reasonably explained and best understood in the context of an ancient Mesoamerican volcanic disaster.\textsuperscript{58}

Bruce Warren has discussed evidence for volcanic activity in Mesoamerica around the time of Christ.\textsuperscript{59} Archaeology provides evidence for such volcanic activity in the Valley of Mexico, where the volcano Xitle is believed to have erupted anciently, covering much of the southern portion of the valley.\textsuperscript{60} Cummings, the archaeologist who originally excavated at Cuicuilco, believed that Xitle erupted around 5000 B.C.\textsuperscript{61} Based on more recent evidence, scholars now know that this disaster occurred nearly 2,000 years ago.\textsuperscript{62} At that time the site of Copilco was buried under more than thirty feet of lava, as was much of the nearby site of Cuicuilco. Archaeological evidence from the sites indicates that the lava flow was preceded by a heavy rainfall of ash.\textsuperscript{63} Both of these sites are

\textsuperscript{57} M. T. Lamb, The Golden Bible, or, the Book of Mormon: Is It from God? (New York: Ward & Drummond, 1887), 83.
\textsuperscript{59} Bruce Warren and Thomas S. Ferguson, \textit{The Messiah in Ancient America} (Provo, Utah: Book of Mormon Research Foundation, 1987), 40–4. I would like to thank Bruce Warren for providing me with several key sources on this issue.
\textsuperscript{60} Byron Cummings, "Cuicuilco and the Archaic Culture of Mexico," \textit{University of Arizona Bulletin (Social Science)} 4/8 (15 November 1933): 8–12.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 14.
located on the southwestern end of the Valley of Mexico. About thirty miles northeast is the massive site of Teotihuacan. There a layer of volcanic ash, apparently blown from that eruption, covers structures from the Tzacualli phase (A.D. 1–150). Carbon-14 tests of material directly below the ash layer yielded a date of A.D. 30 ± 80.64

Additional evidence for volcanic activity in Mesoamerica near the time of Christ can be found further south in the Tuxtla region of southern Veracruz, a region many Latter-day Saint scholars associate with the Book of Mormon “land northward.” In the 1940s archaeologists Matthew Stirling and Phillip Drucker found that a heavy layer of ash covered what appeared to be Late Preclassic pottery and other material at the site of Tres Zapotes. Michael Coe notes that while this pottery has “strong continuities with the Middle Preclassic, . . . in general most resemblances lie with other Late Preclassic phases of Mesoamerica, such as Chi-canel of the lowland Maya area, Chiapa IV and V at Chiapa de Corzo, and terminal Preclassic manifestations in the Valley of Mexico. Olmec and other Middle Preclassic phenomena are either absent or very weak.”65 Coe then notes that “the famous Stela C,” found directly below the ash layer in question, “if read in the Goodman-Martinez-Thompson correlation, would read 31 B.C., exactly within the period with which we are concerned.”66 If Coe’s argument holds, then this would place the San Martin eruption some time after 31 B.C.

Archaeologist Payson Sheets has published evidence for several major volcanic eruptions further south in El Salvador over several millennia. One of these probably occurred during the late second century A.D. While this is much later than the event described in 3 Nephi, other evidence of earlier volcanic activity in this region has been found. In 1955 Muriel Porter described several sites in El Salvador that were covered by thirty to sixty-five

66 Ibid., 696.
feel of volcanic ash around the time of Christ.67 In a more recent work Sheets has published additional evidence for a lesser volcanic eruption in the region of Costa Rica "about the time of Christ."68 While such evidence is very tentative and preliminary in nature, it does lend plausibility to the account of the destruction in 3 Nephi.

Shakespeare

In an earlier review I responded to the Tanners' claim that the Book of Mormon borrowed a paraphrase of Shakespeare by Josiah Priest. I cited research done by Robert F. Smith showing that Lehi's dying words to Laman and Lemuel parallel similar ideas and phrases common in the ancient world and predating Lehi. The Tanners complain that none of the examples I cite contain "the vital four-word parallel" (p. 85). I did not argue, however, that Lehi was directly dependent on any of these ancient sources any more than I believe Joseph Smith deliberately borrowed the phrase from Shakespeare. My point, as the reader of that article will see, was simply to show that the phrase and the concepts surrounding it were so common anciently as to make the "vital four-word parallel" worthless as proof of modern borrowing. To further illustrate this point we can compare 2 Nephi 1:13–5 with passages taken from the Old Testament.

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep
Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion (Isaiah 52:1)
For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep (Isaiah 29:10)

Yea, even from the sleep of hell
The sleep of death (Psalm 13:3)

And shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound which are the chains which bind the children of men. That they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. Awake! and arise from the dust and hear the words of a trembling parent. Whose limbs ye must soon lay down in the cold and silent grave. From whence no traveler can return. A few more days and I go the way of all the earth. But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from the power of the grave. I have beheld his glory. And I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.

He bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land (Psalm 68:6). They that carried us away captive (Psalm 137:3). Awake. . . . Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down (Isaiah 52:1–2). Let them be silent in the grave (Psalms 31:17). I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death (Job 10:21). I shall go the way whence I shall not return (Job 16:22). And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth (Joshua 23:14). But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave (Psalms 49:15). As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness (Psalms 17:15). To behold the beauty of the Lord (Psalms 27:4). For he shall receive me (Psalms 49:15).
Lehi’s Desert Journey

In a previous article, I noted that the recent discovery of an ancient place name, *Nehem*, poses difficulties for the Tanners since they would like to dismiss the Book of Mormon and particularly 1 Nephi as a shallow forgery, lacking any significant historical information. Work by recent Latter-day Saint scholars such as Ross Christensen and Warren and Michaela Aston has established that in fact a site with that rare name existed in what is now northern Yemen, at a point where the ancient trade routes would turn eastward. The Tanners’ recent rebuttal fails to come to grips with the evidence provided by the Astons. “Actually, there are two different locations which Mormon scholars have set forth as the ‘place which was called Nahom’ . . . Nehhm is over 350 miles from Al Qunfudhah!” (p. 181). This point, as the Tanners must surely know, is completely irrelevant since Lynn and Hope Hilton’s research, to which they refer, was done before the Christensen article or the Astons’ more complete analysis. The Hiltons were unaware at the time they did their research that there was in fact a place name from the root *N*ḤM along the western Arabian trade route. In the absence of such evidence, they simply suggested Al Qunfudhah as a possible location. Obviously, the Hiltons’ earlier views must now be superseded by more recent data. Shortly after the Hiltons published their articles, Ross Christensen reported that in 1763 Carsten Niebuhr had published a map of Arabia showing a place called “Nehhm,” which Christensen suggested might be equated with the Book of Mormon site. This place name finds confirmation in numerous other maps published since then. Warren and Michaela Aston have

69 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 12–27.
demonstrated that this place name is very rare, occurring only once in the entire Arabian Peninsula.

According to the Tanners, "only three of the five letters in Nehhm agree with the spelling Nahom. The second letter in Nehhm is e rather than a, and the fourth letter is h instead of o. The variant spellings of Nehem, Nehm, Nihm, Nahm and Naham, do not really help to solve the problem" (p. 183). But the Tanners' criticism is not valid since, in Semitic languages such as Hebrew or Arabic, it is the consonants and not the vowels that have lexical value. The vowels have nothing to do with the meaning of the root. Thus it makes little difference whether the name is spelled Nehem, Nehm, Nihm, Nahm, or Naham—the root is the same.73

The Tanners believe "it would have been very easy for Joseph Smith to write a story about a trip through Arabia" (p. 183). Any old map, they reason, would show the would-be forger that if he followed the eastern shore of the Red Sea this would lead him in a south-southeasterly direction. The Tanners simply assume that such a choice would be inevitable, but why choose that direction anyway? Lehi might also go north or east or west across the Mediterranean.74 If he had a map, a writer might have chosen to send Lehi's family along a south-southeasterly direction, but it was certainly not the only choice. "The only other important thing Joseph Smith would have to know," the Tanners assert, "is that although Arabia contains a great deal of barren land, there was a more fertile land in the southern portion of the country" (p. 183). As I have already explained, no American geographical sources published before 1830 mention the site Nahom, although we now know that it is an authentic ancient place name, which occurs only once in the entire region, and that in a location

73 The second h in Niebuhr's anomalous rendering Nehhm finds no support in any other map of the region; it was apparently based upon a misprint or misreading of the name. All other maps support the basic Hebrew root *NHM.

74 "Why," asked Daniel P. Kidder in 1842, "were they not directed to the Mediterranean Sea, which was so near Jerusalem, instead of being made to perform the long and perilous journey to the borders of the Red Sea?" Daniel P. Kidder, Mormonism and the Mormons: A Historical View of the Rise and Progress of the Sect Self-Styled Latter-day Saints (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1842), 265.
consistent with Nephi’s description. Joseph Smith could not have learned about Nahom from early nineteenth-century sources.

Suppose for a minute that Joseph might have had access to the works of Jedidiah Morse, as the Tanners suggest. If that were so, he might pick up on the idea of a fertile area somewhere in the south, but he would place that region along the southeastern shore of the Red Sea: "Arabia Felix, or the Fruitful Arabia, situated on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, and Arabia Deserta, or the Desert Arabia, occupying the rest of the country between the Arabian and Persian gulfs."\(^{75}\) Other geographies would have been equally superficial and misleading: "Arabia Felix, or the Happy Arabia, in the south-western extremity, towards the shores of the Red Sea."\(^{76}\) In order to reach the Bountiful region Lehi would have to go east from Nahom, not south, as Morse would lead one to believe. Nahom, the southernmost location mentioned in Nephi’s account, is never said to be a fruitful or happy place, but a place of death and mourning at which Lehi’s family almost perishes from hunger (1 Nephi 16:39). This does not sound like the Arabia Felix of nineteenth-century geographies.

Even if we were to suppose that Joseph might have learned of a bountiful region on the southeastern shores of the Arabian Peninsula, the Book of Mormon goes further by specifying various characteristics of that region:\(^{77}\)

1. Bountiful is "nearly eastward" from a place which was called Nahom (1 Nephi 17:1).

2. The text implies that the terrain and water sources from Nahom eastward permitted reasonable access from the interior deserts to the coast (1 Nephi 17:1–3).

3. Bountiful was a fertile region (1 Nephi 17:5–6).

4. It was a coastal location (1 Nephi 17:5–6).

5. Fruit and wild honey and possibly other food sources were available (1 Nephi 17:5–6; 18:6).

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75 Jedidiah Morse and Sidney E. Morse, *A New System of Geography, Ancient and Modern* (Boston: Richardson & Lord, 1824), 354, emphasis added.

76 A System of Geography: or, A Descriptive, Historical, and Philosophical View of the Several Quarters of the World (Glasgow: Niven, Napier and Khull, 1805), 273, emphasis added.

6. The availability of natural fruit (1 Nephi 17:5-6; 18:6) and the bountiful nature of the region suggest the availability of fresh water at this location.

7. Timber was available that could be used to construct a ship (1 Nephi 18:1).

8. A mountain was nearby (1 Nephi 17:7; 18:3).

9. Substantial cliffs, from which Nephi’s brothers might attempt to throw him into the sea, are near the ocean (1 Nephi 17:48).

10. Sources of flint (1 Nephi 17:11) and ore (1 Nephi 17:9-10) were available in the region.

11. Suitable wind and ocean currents were available to carry the vessel out into the ocean (1 Nephi 18:8-9).

Nephi provides some very specific information on Lehi’s journey, which exceeds what could have been known from nineteenth-century sources antedating the Book of Mormon. The Astons have demonstrated that (1) the Wadi Sayq on the southeastern coast of Oman meets all the textual criteria for the Old World Bountiful, (2) it is the only site in that region which does, and (3) that fertile location is “nearly eastward” from an attested site called Nahom just as Nephi says it was. These characteristics surpass the information available in even the most informed geography books and gazetteers of Joseph Smith’s day.

**Book of Mormon Names**

In a past review I chided the Tanners for failure to address some of the scholarship relating to Book of Mormon names. I find it most significant that many of the names frequently appear in a context that clearly reflects their Old World usage, and I cited several examples I felt were significant.78 The Tanners, apparently unable to address this issue in a coherent fashion, have simply ignored what I said there (pp. 139-41). In any case, here are several additional examples, discovered by other scholars, which are not easily explainable under the assumption that the Book of Mormon is a shallow forgery.

*Jershon.* The Book of Mormon name *Jershon* can be traced to a Hebrew root meaning “to inherit.” In the Book of Mormon we

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read "Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea . . . and this land of Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance" (Alma 27:22).

Sheum. "And we began to till the ground, yea, even with all manner of seeds, with seeds of corn, and of wheat, and of barley, and with neas, and with sheum" (Mosiah 9:9). Sheum is a perfectly good Akkadian cereal name (šē'um) dating to the third millennium B.C., which in ancient Assyria referred to wheat, but in other regions of the Near East could be applied to other grains. Since the Book of Mormon passage mentions sheum in addition to wheat and barley, this suggests that Book of Mormon people who came from the Old World probably applied this term to some species of New World grain. This raises an interesting question for the Tanners, who would simply dismiss the Book of Mormon as a shallow forgery by Joseph Smith. Incidentally, the term sheum is not found in early nineteenth-century sources because Akkadian could not be read until 1857, twenty-seven years after the Book of Mormon was published and thirteen years after the death of the Prophet. So if Joseph Smith really made this name up, how did he just happen to choose this peculiar term sheum and just happen to use it in an agricultural context? I find it easier to believe that this is an indication of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon record.

Shilulm. Alma 11:5–19 describes various monetary units that the Nephites used at one point in their history. Alma 11:16 in our current edition of the Book of Mormon records that one of these units was a "shiblum." However, both the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon and the printer's manuscript indicate that this originally read shilulm. Significantly, shilulm is a perfectly good Hebrew word, meaning literally "retribution . . . a fee: recompense, reward." That makes excellent sense in a monetary context.

Nahom. Nephi recorded, "And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom. And it came to pass that the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly, because of the loss of their father" (1 Nephi 16:34–5). Bib-

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lichal scholars suggest that the root *N JM means to “comfort” or “console.” In some forms the word “comes simply to mean ‘suffer emotional pain’. The sense ‘be comforted’ is retained in contexts of mourning for the dead.”80 Damrosch notes that all references to the root *N JM in the Hebrew Bible are associated with death. “In family settings, it is applied in instances involving death of an immediate family member (parent, sibling, or child); in national settings, it has to do with the survival or impending extermination of an entire people. At heart, naham means ‘to mourn,’ to come to terms with a death; these usages are usually translated ... by the verb ‘to comfort,’ as when Jacob’s children try to comfort their father after the reported death of Joseph.”81 The events in 1 Nephi 16:34–5 fit this context quite well since we are told that Ishmael, a close family member, died and his daughters mourned and murmured.

Alan Goff has written an important article on the meaning of the root *N JM as it relates to 1 Nephi 16:34–9.82 Goff was apparently the first to note that the significance of this term may go beyond the obvious context of mourning for the dead. Nephi related,

And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi.... And it came to pass that the Lord was with us, yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them, and did chasten them exceedingly; and after they were chastened by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger, and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food, that we did not perish. (1 Nephi 16:37, 39)

According to one scholar, the root *NHM can also be “extended to describe the release of emotional tension involved in performing a declared action (executing wrath), or retracting a declared action (such as sin, punishment or blessing).” Damrosch notes that the Hebrew term naham is sometimes applied to contexts involving “cases of regret or change of heart,” frequently when the repenter is meditating murder. “Repentance” [or change of heart] then involves either the decision to kill, or conversely, the decision to stop killing. The term can then be used in quite ignoble circumstances, as when Esau comforts himself for the loss of his birthright by deciding to kill Jacob (Gen. 27:42), but usually it is God who repents, either negatively or positively; negatively, by deciding to destroy his people; positively, by commuting a sentence of destruction.

Again, this explanation clearly fits the context of 1 Nephi 16:34–9, where Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael contemplate the murder of their father Lehi and their brother Nephi, the Lord is angry with them, and after being chastened by the Lord they turn away their anger and repent of their sins. The Lord also apparently turns away his wrath and does not destroy them with hunger. It is interesting, furthermore, that while they had up until this time been traveling southward (1 Nephi 16:13), they now turn and travel eastward (1 Nephi 17:1).

Archaeology, Geography, and Language

The Tanners attempt to portray the limited geographical view, espoused by most current Book of Mormon scholars, as inconsistent with the teachings of Latter-day Saint leaders. According to the Tanners, “Joseph Smith and the other early Mormon leaders identified North and South America as the lands of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites... modern scholars have apostatized from the traditional teachings of the church on the subject”

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84 Damrosch, The Narrative Covenant, 129.
The Tanners then cite several references from early Latter-day Saint writers in support of this claim.

However, aside from the claim that the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were found in a hill near Manchester and the general claim that Book of Mormon events occurred somewhere in the Western Hemisphere, no "official" position on Book of Mormon geography exists. In fact, as John Sorenson has recently shown, Latter-day Saint leaders since Joseph Smith's day have entertained a variety of theories regarding Book of Mormon geography.85

Joseph Smith himself seems to have speculated on the location of Book of Mormon events and changed his mind several times. Six months after Joseph assumed editorial responsibility for the Times and Seasons, an editorial suggested that "Lehi ... landed a little south of the Isthmus of Darien, and improved the country according to the word of the Lord."86 Several weeks later, the church paper reviewed the book, Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan, by John Lloyd Stephens. The Times and Seasons gave it enthusiastic reviews and, in commenting on the book, the reviewer asserted "Central America, or Guatemala, is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south." Then, based on Alma 22:32, the writer expounded, "The city of Zarahemla, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, stood upon this land." Since according to the Book of Mormon the land of Zarahemla was in the land southward, the above model would exclude the Isthmus of Darien as the narrow neck of land. The only isthmus that would qualify would be the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The reviewer then speculated that some of the ruins Stephens encountered might be of one of those cities described in the Book of Mormon.87 Whether Joseph Smith personally endorsed these views or not, these references suggest that even at this early date no established or official church position on Book of Mormon geography existed.

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86 Times and Seasons 3 (15 September 1842): 922.
87 Times and Seasons 3 (1 October 1842): 927.
Later statements by church leaders also support this view. In 1890 President George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency noted that some members of the church had asked church leaders to prepare some sort of map detailing where Book of Mormon events occurred. He declared that in the absence of direct revelation on the subject the First Presidency was not prepared even to make suggestions. “The word of the Lord or the translation of other ancient records is required to clear up many points now so obscure.” Cannon then suggested that clarification on such points of geography could be gained by “drawing all the information possible from the record which has been translated for our benefit.”

President Joseph F. Smith was once asked to approve a map which someone had prepared and which purported to show exactly where Lehi and his company landed. He declined, saying that “the Lord had not yet revealed it.”

In 1909 B. H. Roberts noted, “The question of Book of Mormon geography is more than ever recognized as an open one by students of the book.” He then expressed doubts regarding the authenticity of the so-called “Frederick G. Williams Statement,” suggesting the possibility that the previous hemispheric view may have been incorrect since it was based on this questionable statement. According to Roberts, this alleged “revelation” has dominated all our thinking, and influenced all our conclusions upon the subject of Book of Mormon geography. Whereas, if this is not a revelation [as he suspected], the physical description relative to the contour of the lands occupied by the Jaredites and Nephites, that being principally that two large bodies of land were joined by a narrow neck of

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89 Frederick J. Pack, “Route Traveled by Lehi and His Company,” Instructor (April 1938): 160.
90 Roberts, New Witnesses for God, 3:501–2; see also Frederick G. Williams III, “Did Lehi Land in Chile? An Assessment of the Frederick G. Williams Statement” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988).
land—can be found between Mexico and Yucatan with the isthmus of Tehuantepec between. 91

By placing the Book of Mormon in a Mesoamerican setting, Roberts suggested “many of our difficulties as to the geography of the Book of Mormon—if not all of them in fact, will have passed away.” 92 In 1929 Anthony Ivins of the First Presidency asserted, “There is a great deal of talk about the geography of the Book of Mormon. Where was the land of Zarahemla? Where was the city of Zarahemla? and other geographic matters. It does not make any difference to us. There has never been anything yet set forth that definitely settles that question. So the Church says we are just waiting until we discover the truth.” 93 Elder James E. Talmage agreed. “It matters not to me just where this city or that camp was located,” although he called for further research and cautious speculation. 94 “As far as can be learned,” wrote John A. Widtsoe in 1950, “the Prophet Joseph Smith, translator of the book, did not say where, on the American continent, Book of Mormon activities occurred. Perhaps he did not know.” 95 Citing the well-known Zelph story, Elder Widtsoe noted that the known account “is not of much value in Book of Mormon geographical studies, since Zelph probably dated from a later time when Nephites and Lamanites had been somewhat dispersed and had wandered over the country.” 96

While we know the hill at which the Prophet Joseph Smith recovered the Nephite record, Elder Widtsoe remarked,

There is a controversy . . . about the Hill Cumorah—not about the location where the Book of Mormon plates were found, but whether it is the hill under that name near which Nephite events took place. A name,

92 Ibid., 3:503.
93 Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, April 1929, 15–6, emphasis added.
94 James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, April 1929, 44.
says one, may be applied to more than one hill; and plates containing the records of a people, sacred things, could be moved from place to place by divine help.\(^{97}\)

He then cited the 1 October 1842 *Times and Seasons* article mentioned above, in which “under the Prophet’s editorship Central America was denominated the region of Book of Mormon activities.” In light of such information, he hoped that “diligent and prayerful study” might yield further insight.\(^{98}\)

### Is the Isthmus of Tehuantepec Too Wide?

In their attempt to portray the limited geographical view as heretical, the Tanners cite a statement made by Hugh Nibley in 1957 to support their argument that the Tehuantepec model is too wide (p. 99). However, when that statement is read in context, Nibley is not referring to the narrow neck of land, as the Tanners mistakenly assume, but to the *narrow passage* within that more general region.

Nor is the “narrow passage” the same thing as the much-mentioned “narrow neck of land.” A passage is a way through, “an entrance or exit,” says the dictionary—a pass. Here it is specifically stated to be such: “the narrow passage which led into the land southward” (Mormon 2:29). Now the Isthmus of Panama,

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\(^{97}\) Widtsoe, “Is Book of Mormon Geography Known?” 547. Even in the Book of Mormon, evidence reveals that several sites possessed the same name, as in the case of Manti (Alma 1:15; 16:7) and Onidah (Alma 32:4; 47:5). While the Tanners are critical of those who favor a Mesoamerican location for Cumorah, they fail to address the scriptural basis on which those views are based. For a good summary of this view see Sidney B. Sperry, “Were There Two Cumorahs?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (Spring 1995): 260–8. Moroni wandered for years following the battle at Cumorah and could easily have traveled to the New York region where he then deposited his father’s abridgment. “Certainly no adherent of the Middle-American view of Ramah-Cumorah would object to the suggestion that Moroni himself may have called the [New York] hill Cumorah in honor of the one in Middle America. He may have even told the Prophet Joseph Smith about it, but of this we have no proof. We do know, however, that the name Cumorah has been applied to the hill from Joseph Smith’s day to this” (ibid., 268). Sperry adopted this view in 1964.

\(^{98}\) Widtsoe, “Is Book of Mormon Geography Known?” 597.
never less than thirty miles wide, is not a "narrow passage" for an army of less than two divisions.99

Contrary to the Tanners’ interpretation, Nibley’s observation regarding this distinction is consistent with Sorenson’s model placing the narrow passage along the narrow elevated ridge near the northern coast of the Isthmus.100 David Palmer correctly noted that Mormon describes the fortified line either “from the east to the west sea” (Alma 22:32) or “from the west sea, even unto the east” (Helaman 4:7). Since Mormon does not specify that this line extended to the east sea, Palmer’s suggestion that the day-and-a-half journey was “from some strategic point within the isthmus to the west sea” is reasonable, although not the only interpretation. Even if we assume that “the east” on this line refers to the eastern sea, that point could be as much as 15–20 miles inland, depending on the extent of inundation and where the Bountiful-Desolation fortified point began.

The Tanners complain that Sorenson uses slower estimates of speed when speaking of Limhi’s group or the Nephite wars, but longer estimates when discussing the narrow neck of land. We must take into account, however, that groups, especially with small children and flocks, would travel at a much slower pace than unencumbered individuals. The same could be said for armies, although they might be able to move at a fairly rapid pace.101 Mormon defines this as the speed “for a Nephite.” Mormon is speaking of an individual, not a group of Nephites. Presumably for a group or for a non-Nephite it might take longer. Moreover, since Mormon is speaking of a fortified line of defense along which communication would be desirable, the term “for a Nephite,” may refer to the time it would take a messenger or courier to travel that distance. Sorenson documents examples of runners traveling distances of between nine and one hundred miles in a day.102 Given the terrain along the Isthmus of Tehuantepec we would presume, however, that the speed of a runner or messenger

102 Ibid., 396.
traveling on foot would be much slower, although this would depend on whether or not established trails were available for such a messenger.

We need not assume, as the Tanners do, that the entire journey was by foot. More than half this distance could have been traveled by water, which would speed up the journey considerably. "Traveling by sea," notes Ross Hassig,

from Veracruz to Coatzacoalcos, canoes were employed to go up the Coatzacoalcos River to Antigua Malpaso, where land transport was employed for the remaining 12 leagues to Tehuantepec. This route was also employed in traveling between Mexico City and Tehuantepec or Huatulco, for the Mexico City-Veracruz road was the best in New Spain, and water transportation was easier than overland travel.103

"The products of the Pacific side, destined for the Gulf coast, are first brought down to this place for embarkation; and occasional cargoes of goods from Vera Cruz ascend the river to this point, from whence they are carried to the Pacific plains on mules."104 A similar route used in the mid-nineteenth century followed this route to Suchil at the head of the Coatzacoalcos River and from there down to the city of Tehuantepec.105 Balsa rafts are frequently hewn out of trees and used for transportation along water routes in this region.

The dexterity with which the Indians manage these balsas (often heavily laden), in passing over terrible rapids and through narrow passages filled with rugged rocks, where even a canoe could not possibly live, is truly surprising. These rafts are rudely constructed from the

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104 John J. Williams, The Isthmus of Tehuantepec (New York: Appleton, 1852), 240.
105 Miguel Covarrubias, Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec (New York: Knopf, 1947), 168.
jonote, an exceedingly light wood, which grows in great quantities.\textsuperscript{106}

Kamar Al-Shimas notes that various kinds of canoes are also used in this region.

When ascending the river the boat is kept within arm’s length of the bank, and fifteen miles with a heavily loaded canoe or \textit{thirty miles} with a light traveling-canoe is accounted a good day’s work. In descending the stream, paddles are used, the canoe is kept to the center of the stream to take advantage of the current, and \textit{fifty miles} is \textit{easily} accomplished between daylight and the set of the sun.\textsuperscript{107}

It was a journey of a day and a half on this defensive line “from the east to the west sea” (Alma 22:32); however, it was only a day’s journey “from the west sea unto the east” (Helaman 3:7). The Tanners assume this is a contradiction, but it makes sense if part of that journey was by water since those traveling eastward would be going downstream and could move much faster with the current than would those journeying upstream.

Population Sizes in the Book of Mormon

Most Book of Mormon scholars accept the idea that other peoples besides the Lehetes, Jaredites, and “Mulekites” were present in the Americas in Book of Mormon times. The Tanners inaccurately claim a lack of scriptural support for this view; in fact, they have simply chosen to ignore it.\textsuperscript{108} In 1929 Anthony W. Williams, \textit{The Isthmus of Tehuantepec}, 247.

\textsuperscript{107} Kamar Al-Shimas, \textit{The Mexican Southland} (Fowler, Ind.: Benton Review Shop, 1922), 149, emphasis added.

Ivins of the First Presidency counseled readers of the Book of Mormon,

We must be careful in the conclusions that we reach. The Book of Mormon teaches the history of three distinct peoples, or two peoples and three different colonies of people, who came from the old world to this continent. *It does not tell us that there was no one here before them. It does not tell us that people did not come after.* And so if discoveries are made which suggest differences in race origins, it can very easily be accounted for, and reasonably, for we do believe that other people came to this continent.109

The Tanners claim that no “living General Authority of the Mormon Church” has ever publicly supported the limited geographical view of the Book of Mormon” (p. 106). Of course, the question is largely irrelevant, since most Latter-day Saint leaders tend to focus their time and concern on weightier matters. The Tanners, however, are mistaken in their claim. In 1994 I attended a talk given by Elder Dallin H. Oaks on the subject of “The Historicity of the Book of Mormon.” While not endorsing anyone’s particular theory, Elder Oaks spoke quite favorably of the limited geographical view. “If one is willing to acknowledge the importance of faith,” he said, “and the reality of a realm beyond human understanding, the case of the Book of Mormon has a stronger case to argue” since, as he put it, “the case against the history of the Book of Mormon has to prove a negative.” Elder Oaks recalled taking a class at BYU on the Book of Mormon in the 1950s.

Here I was introduced to the idea that the Book of Mormon is not a history of all of the people who have lived on the continents of North and South America in all ages of the earth. Up to that time, I had assumed that it was. If that were the claim of the Book of Mormon, any piece of historical, archaeological, or linguistic evidence to the contrary would weigh in against the Book

109 Ivins, in *Conference Report*, April 1929, 15, emphasis added.
of Mormon, and those who rely exclusively on scholarship would have a promising position to argue.

In contrast, if the Book of Mormon only purports to be an account of a few peoples who inhabited a portion of the Americas during a few millennia in the past, the burden of argument changes drastically. It is no longer a question of all versus none; it is a question of some versus none. In other words, in the circumstance I describe, the opponents of historicity must prove that the Book of Mormon has no historical validity for any peoples who lived in the Americas in a particular timeframe, a notoriously difficult exercise.110

Naming Animals

In a section entitled "Horses Are Deer?" the Tanners ridicule the idea that the names of animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon text could possibly refer to anything other than their modern scientific classifications (pp. 109–14). They dismiss John Sorenson’s approach to the animal question as "a desperate attempt to explain away a serious problem" (p. 109). The Tanners’ criticisms reveal an unawareness of the wide disagreement among biblical scholars about the definitions of many of the animal names mentioned in the Hebrew text of the Bible itself. "The identification of the animals in the Bible has given rise to divergent views, some contending that it is possible to identify them in a few cases only. Others, however, hold that this can be done in most instances."111 According to Edward R. Hope, "In the Old Testament it is extremely difficult to decide with any certainty the animals (or birds) referred to by their Hebrew names. In some cases the range of suggestions is staggering."112 How do biblical scholars and translators deal with this problem? One method has been to follow precedent of tradition. "The problem with this

approach,” Hope notes, “is that it sometimes introduces into the
text animals which were not found in Biblical times in the ancient
middle east, as far as we know.”113 A second approach consists in
associating the animal with the meaning of the Hebrew root for
that name. While this can sometimes be helpful it can also be
problematic since many animal names are often derived from the
sound the animal makes rather than from a description of what it
looks like or what it does.114 In yet another recent approach,

one would start from animals known to have lived in
the area and period as evidenced from the archaeological
findings. Then a Hebrew name would be associated
with an appropriate animal, bearing in mind the known
habitat, characteristics and behaviour of the animal
chosen. Another important factor in making the choice
would be the relative “prominence” the animal was
likely to have had.115

While none of these approaches has proved entirely satisfactory in
regard to the Bible, they have been and continue to be used by
scholars as a reasonable approach to a difficult scriptural question.

The approaches of these scholars to the animal question in the
Bible are similar to those suggested by John Sorenson in reference
to the Book of Mormon.116 Although there are other possibilities,
Book of Mormon scribes may have applied Old World terms to
New World species for which they had no Old World equivalent.
This difficulty is often a concern for zoologists and historians who
wish to evaluate literary sources from other cultures. According to
Lawrence Kiddle,

The adoption of a new domestic animal into one’s
own culture causes a linguistic problem of what name
to give the newcomer. Four solutions to the problem
are common:

1. to give the animal a descriptive name (loan crea-

113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid., 129.
2. to give the animal the name of a familiar animal which the receiving speakers believe it resembles (loanshift or loan extension);

3. to combine the foreign name of the animal with a native term that indicates its origin or some other characteristic (loanblend); or,

4. to adopt, frequently in a distorted form, the foreign name of the animal (loanword).  

Kiddle notes that "The first two naming procedures are hard to study because they require an intimate knowledge of the receiving languages in order to comprehend the thought processes of their speakers." This is, of course, extremely relevant in the case of Book of Mormon animal names, which may have similar complexities, since the book purports to be a document translated from another language and deals in part with Old World cultures encountering New World cultures for the first time. What, for example, would Nephi have called a Mesoamerican tapir if he had encountered one? Could he have called it a horse? The tapir is considered by zoologists to be a kind of horse in unevolved form. Although the Central American tapir, the largest of the New World species, can weigh up to 300 kilos, it can move rather quickly at a gallop and can jump vertical fences or walls by

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118 Ibid., 273-4. "It should be mentioned that at this early period, before the newcomers became better acquainted with the resources of the ‘Indies,’ many European terms were applied to things which had no exact counterpart in the Old World." H. B. Nicholson, "Montezuma’s Zoo," Pacific Discovery 8/4 (July-August 1955): 5.


rising on its hind legs and leaping up.\footnote{121} Zoologist Hans Krieg notes, "Whenever I saw a tapir, it reminded me of an animal similar to a horse or a donkey. The movements as well as the shape of the animal, especially the high neck with the small brush mane, even the expression on the face is much more like a horse's."\footnote{122} The tapir can also be domesticated quite easily if captured when young.\footnote{123} Young tapirs who have lost their mothers are easily tamed and can be fed from a bowl. They like to be petted and will often let children ride on their backs.\footnote{124} When the Spanish arrived in the Yucatan, the Maya called European horses and donkeys \textit{tzimin}, meaning "tapir," because, according to one early observer, "they say they resemble them greatly."\footnote{125} After the spread of horses, tapir were still called \textit{tzimin-kaax}, which means literally "forest horse."\footnote{126} Some observers have felt that the tapir more accurately resembles an ass. In fact, among many native Americans today, the tapir is called \textit{anteburro}, which means "once an ass."\footnote{127} In Brazil some farmers have actually used the tapir to pull ploughs, suggesting potential as a draft animal.\footnote{128} So tapirs could certainly have been used in ways similar to horses.

\section*{Botanical Questions}

The Tanners cite Nephi's statement that when his family arrived in the New World they planted the seeds which they had brought from the Old World, "And it came to pass that they did grow exceedingly; wherefore, we were blessed in abundance" (1 Nephi 18:24; see also 16:11; 18:1, 6, 24). The Tanners reason from this passage that these products survived. "One would expect, then, that we would find these plants in abundance in Mesoamerica" (p. 117). One might, but this is not always the case. "We have set them to raising millet," wrote Landa of the

\begin{thebibliography}{128}
\bibitem{121} Ibid., 20.
\bibitem{122} Ibid., 19, emphasis added.
\bibitem{123} Al-Shimas, \textit{Mexican Southland}, 112.
\bibitem{124} Frädrich and Thenius, "Tapirs," 29.
\bibitem{125} Ernest Noyes, trans., \textit{Fray Alonso Ponce in Yucatan, 1588} (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1932), 308.
\bibitem{126} Ibid., 308 n. 19.
\bibitem{127} Al-Shimas, \textit{Mexican Southland}, 112; Navarrete, "El Hombre," 238.
\bibitem{128} Frädrich and Thenius, "Tapirs," 29.
\end{thebibliography}
Yucatan Maya, "and it grows marvelously well and is a good kind of sustenance." Yet apparently no trace of this crop which grew so "marvelously well" has survived.\textsuperscript{129} The same may have been the case for Lehi's party, whose crops "did grow exceedingly" in abundance, but could easily have died out after the first generation.

\textit{Grains.} As Sorenson has shown, a variety of New World grains were known to pre-Columbian peoples, which could easily fit the ambiguous Book of Mormon references to "grain."\textsuperscript{130} Two grains, however, which are mentioned by name, barley and wheat, suggest at least two possibilities: (1) The terms \textit{wheat} and \textit{barley} could refer to certain New World grains identified by Old World names, even though they were another species of grain, or (2) they could refer to barley and wheat of a New World variety. We will look at each of these possibilities.

1. "It is a well known fact," writes Hildergard Lewy, a Near Eastern specialist, "that the names of plants and particularly of [grains] are applied in various languages and dialects to different species." Lewy notes the challenge this poses in interpreting references to Assyrian cereals in Near Eastern documents. When doing so, "the meaning of these Old Assyrian terms must be inferred from the Old Assyrian texts alone without regard to their signification in sources from Babylonia and other regions adjacent to Assyria."\textsuperscript{131} In the Western Hemisphere, many Spanish names were applied to New World plants following the Conquest because of their apparent similarity to European ones, even though, botanically speaking, these were often of a different species or variety. A similar practice may have occurred when the Nephites or the Jaredites encountered New World culture for the first time.

2. In addition to the above suggestion, Book of Mormon references to "barley" and "wheat" may indeed be to varieties of those species which were found in the New World by Book of

\textsuperscript{129} This is discussed and documented by Sorenson in \textit{An Ancient American Setting}, 139.


Mormon peoples. For example, while it has been generally assumed that barley was first introduced to the New World by Europeans after 1492, we now know that pre-Columbian Americans knew of and domesticated barley long before this time. Daniel B. Adams, in describing recent discoveries at the Hohokam site of La Ciudad near Phoenix, Arizona, reports, "Perhaps the most startling evidence of Hohokam agricultural sophistication came last year when salvage archaeologists found preserved grains of what looks like domesticated barley, the first ever found in the New World."  

John Sorenson, who first brought this fact to the attention of the Latter-day Saint community, has reported additional samples that have turned up in Illinois and Oklahoma.  

So here was a domesticated barley in use in several parts of North America over a long period of time. Crop exchanges between North America and Mesoamerica have been documented by archaeology making it possible that this native barley was known in that tropical southland and conceivably was even cultivated there. The key point is that these unexpected results from botany are recent. More discoveries will surely be made as research continues.  

Still, as already mentioned above, an Old World term for wheat may simply have been applied to one of several other New World grains.  

Wine  

The Tanners believe that Book of Mormon references to "wine" are a problem for the Book of Mormon (p. 118). While the Book of Mormon mentions "wine," that New World beverage is never said to have been made of grapes. The Book of Mormon never claims that grapes were cultivated in the Americas, although grapes were known in the New World. Landa noted that in the

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132 Daniel B. Adams, "Last Ditch Archaeology," *Science* 83 (December 1983): 32. The Book of Mormon never claims that the grains barley or wheat were of an Old World variety.  
133 See Sorenson, "Viva Zapato!" 341, for references.  
134 Ibid., 341–2.
Yucatan, "there are certain wild vines bearing edible grapes; we
find many of these on the Cupul coast." The Tanners assume
that references to wine in the Book of Mormon must imply grape
cultivation, yet this is not necessarily so. Alcoholic beverages do
not have to be made from grapes. "There is no reason why the
term 'wine' should not be retained to include the many varieties
of liquor made by savage or semi-civilized races from the sap of
trees. The latex of vegetable stems is sufficiently homologous with
the juice of fruits, as that of the grape, to be classified with it in a
genus [of beverages] distinct from fermented grain."

Various wines made from such things as bananas, pineapples,
the palm, and balche were described by early Europeans in
Mesoamerica. "About Mexico more than in any other part
growth that excellent tree called metl [maguey], which they plant
and dress as they do their vines in Europe. . . . From the root of
this tree cometh a juice like unto syrup, which being sodden will
become sugar. You may make of it wine [pulque] and vinegar.
The Indians often become drunk with it." In one important
study of the subject, La Barre found abundant evidence for the
pre-Columbian knowledge and use of a surprising variety of these
native American beverages. "There is ample evidence of the wide
distribution both in North and in South America of native
undistilled alcoholic liquors, or beers and wines."

The Tanners note that King Noah and his people planted
"vineyards" (Mosiah 11:15). They assume that term refers exclu-
sively to grapes, but this is not necessarily so. As John Tvedtines
has shown, the meaning of kerem is not confined to grape vines,
but can often refer to other crops as well. Similarly, "wine-
presses" need not suggest grapes either, since other fruits and

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135 Friar Diego de Landa, *Yucatan before and after the Conquest*, trans.
136 A. E. Crawley, "Drinks, Drinking," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and
137 J. Eric S. Thompson, ed., *Thomas Gage's Travels in the New World*
(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 76.
138 Weston La Barre, "Native American Beers," *American Anthropologist*
40/2 (April-June 1938): 224, emphasis added.
139 John A. Tvedtines, "Vineyard or Olive Orchard?" in *The Allegory of the
Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret
Book and FARMS, 1994), 477-83.
vegetables were squeezed or crushed in making fermented liquors in pre-Columbian times. According to La Barre, the Mexican beverage "Colonche is made of the fruit of several species of Opuntia. . . . The fruit is peeled and pressed, the juice passed through straw sieves, to ferment near a fire, or in the sun."140 The Huichol, another Mexican tribe, "make a 'wine' from corn-stalks, another from the juice of the mashed guayabas fruit, and still another from sotol."141 Anthropologists unashamedly describe many of these drinks as "wines." Noah did not need grapes to be described as a wine-bibber.

**Metals and Reformed Egyptian**142

Citing several passages from different periods in the Book of Mormon, the Tanners argue that the Nephites had no shortage of gold and other metals to require the use of a "reformed Egyptian" script that would presumably take up less room (Mormon 9:32–3) (pp. 125–7). They cite passages from the days of Nephi and Jarom in the land of Nephi (1 Nephi 18:25; Jarom 1:8), the land of Zarahemla in Alma’s day (Alma 1:29), and around A.D. 300, when the Nephites were driven out of their own lands in Mormon’s day. Moreover, Mormon compiled his record at a time when his people were fleeing from the Lamanites, and the Gadiantons robbers infested the land (Mormon 2:8). Treasures were scarce and resources would have been limited (Helaman 13:20, 31–6; Mormon 1:18). During periods of continual warfare, extensive trade would not have been practical or necessarily possible. It is reasonable to understand how Mormon’s supply of ore for additional plates was limited.

Mormon notes that because they had to write in reformed Egyptian their record contained certain imperfections (Mormon 9:33). "If writing in Egyptian was the cause of imperfection in

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140 La Barre, "Native American Beers," 225, emphasis added.
141 Ibid., 230, emphasis added.
the record,” the Tanners ask, “why would Nephi begin writing the book in Egyptian in the first place and why would Mormon, who engraved most of the plates, follow that practice?” (p. 125). The Tanners mistakenly assume that Nephi wrote in reformed Egyptian, but this is not what Mormon says.

And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record. (Mormon 9:32–3)

In other words Nephi originally wrote in some form of Egyptian script; however, as the language and script were handed down from generation to generation they were “reformed” or “altered by us, according to our manner of speech” (Mormon 9:32). The imperfection in language derives not from the original Hebrew and Egyptian, but from the subsequent mixing of these languages with New World languages that occurred during the nearly thousand years of Nephite history.

The Bat Creek Inscription

In 1889 the Smithsonian Institution excavated a hitherto undisturbed burial mound at Bat Creek, Tennessee. This mound disclosed nine skeletons. Directly under the head of one of these skeletons, they found several artifacts, including what appeared to be two copper bracelets, several small pieces of polished wood, and a stone bearing an inscription. In 1971 Cyrus Gordon showed that the script found on the stone was paleo-Hebrew and could be translated “For Judah.”143 In 1972 the Tanners published an appendix to their book Archaeology and the Book of Mormon in

which they cited a number of scholars who disagreed with Gordon’s interpretations. 144

In 1988 J. Huston McCulloch discovered that the so-called “copper” bracelets were in fact brass. In support of the claim that the Bat Creek inscription and associated artifacts are modern, the Tanners cite a 1971 statement issued from the Smithsonian Institution claiming, on the basis of the chemical composition of the brass, that the bracelets had to be eighteenth- or nineteenth-century artifacts (p. 134). However, McCulloch showed that this earlier reasoning was faulty. In 1978, P. T. Craddock demonstrated that, contrary to popular belief, this kind of brass was indeed known to the ancient Mediterranean world during the very period in question. 145 Consequently, the chemical composition of the brass bracelets, once assumed to be a modern anachronism, actually supports the notion of antiquity, since it was in use during the first and second centuries A.D. I doubt that the Tanners would have cited the 1971 letter if they had read McCulloch’s article with sufficient care. Moreover, radiocarbon tests on the wooden fragments yielded a date of A.D. 427. McCulloch also published a persuasive defense in support of Gordon’s original claim that the inscription could be read as paleo-Hebrew. 146 In a review of the Tanners’ book in 1992, I cited McCulloch’s important article in response to the claim that no Old World pre-Columbian inscriptions have been found in the New World. 147 In the summer of 1993 Biblical Archaeology Review published an article by McCulloch in which he summarized his finds. 148 This article was accompanied by a brief and somewhat sarcastic retort by P. Kyle McCarter. 149 McCarter’s criticisms of McCulloch were based on a

144 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Archaeology and the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1969), 84–92.
147 Roper, review of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? 212–3.
The 1991 article by Robert Mainfort and Mary Kwas.\textsuperscript{150} The Tanners' recent book cites several excerpts from McCarter's article in order to cast doubt on the inscription's authenticity (p. 135). However, the Tanners were unaware that these arguments had been thoroughly refuted by McCulloch.\textsuperscript{151} Since the Tanners cite, and apparently accept and wish others to accept, these arguments, I will respond briefly to those claims as quoted in their book.

1. McCarter's claim that the inscription was not paleo-Hebrew was based on Frank Moore Cross's evaluation published by Mainfort and Kwas. McCulloch, however, clearly demonstrates that "Professor Cross makes no less than three elementary and readily documentable errors of Hebrew paleography" in his criticisms of the inscription, which undermine his argument, and that his other criticisms had already been resolved by Gordon.\textsuperscript{152}

2. McCarter also claimed that dating on the wood fragments does not establish the antiquity of the stone since the tree from which the wood was taken could have been much older (p. 135). "The tree growth," writes McCulloch, "could well have been several decades, or conceivably even a century or two old, if the wood was taken from the heart of a very old tree, at the time of the burial. But even if we add 200 years to the upper end of the 2\sigma band, we are still left with a pre-Norse, not to mention pre-Columbian, date for the burial."\textsuperscript{153}

3. An additional argument offered by McCarter and apparently favored by the Tanners is that the wood fragments "may well have been contaminated with other materials in the wet environment of the mound" (p. 135). This argument does not hold up either, since, prior to testing, careful steps were taken to eliminate any potential contamination. The wood fragment sample was "given a hot acid wash to eliminate carbonates. It was repeatedly rinsed to neutrality and subsequently given a hot alkali soaking to take out humic acids. After rinsing to neutrality, another acid wash followed and another rinsing to neutrality." Consequently, as

\textsuperscript{150} Robert C. Mainfort Jr. and Mary L. Kwas, "The Bat Creek Stone: Judeans in Tennessee?" \textit{Tennessee Anthropologist} 16/1 (Spring 1991): 1-19.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 12.
McCulloch explains, “Contamination by either calcium carbonate or humic acid from groundwater has therefore already been eliminated as a possibility, to the best of the laboratory’s ability.”

4. McCarter, who finds the inscription much too close to paleo-Hebrew to have been an accident, but is unwilling to take seriously the possibility that it is genuine, argues that it must have been forged or planted by those who found it. The Tanners, to their credit, admit that McCarter “produces no hard evidence” to support these particular allegations (p. 135). In fact, as McCulloch points out, “there is absolutely no indication that the inscription is a forgery, in the first place, other than the circular, and therefore unscientific, argument that being Hebrew, it must surely be fake.”

In short, the arguments cited by the Tanners against the antiquity of the inscription simply cannot be sustained on the basis of the evidence. The evidence for the inscription shows: (1) The Hebrew inscription was found in a hitherto undisturbed burial mound that was not opened until the Smithsonian Institution opened it in 1889. (2) The inscription can be read as paleo-Hebrew and is similar to other examples dating to the period of the Second Temple. (3) Wood fragments from the tomb yielded a Carbon-14 date between A.D. 32 and A.D. 769, making it not only pre-Christian but pre-Viking as well. (4) Brass bracelets from the tomb were tested and found to contain a percentage of lead comparable with a form of Roman brass produced only between 45 B.C. and A.D. 100. (5) Based on the above evidence, it is most reasonable to view the inscription as genuine, pre-Columbian, and pre-Viking. “The battle cry of the die-hards,” observes Cyrus Gordon, “was that no authentic pre-Columbian example of an Old World script or language has been excavated on American soil; and until such a one is discovered by bona fide archaeologists, the diffusionists do not have a leg to stand on.”

The apparent authenticity and pre-Columbian nature of the Bat Creek inscription changes this situation significantly because “it does

154 Ibid., 13.
155 Ibid., 16, emphasis added.
show that an Atlantic crossing was made ca. A.D. 100 and consequently it can no longer be said that no authentic pre-Columbian text in an Old World script or language has ever been found in the Western Hemisphere.” Accordingly,

We shall have to re-examine the other inscriptions and artifacts found in America, that are possibly of Old World origin. Some are doubtless fakes, but others will turn out to be genuine. Each case will have to be re-evaluated on its own merits. But, here and now, we know that trans-Atlantic crossings were not only possible before Columbus and the Vikings, but did actually take place and we can prove a specific crossing in Imperial Roman times.157

Critics and Crows

I find it remarkable that the criticisms raised by enemies of the church have inadvertently had the tendency to bring Latter-day Saints to a deeper understanding and appreciation for the Book of Mormon by highlighting significant elements in it that might otherwise have been ignored. While I find their work to be redundant, frequently superficial, and sometimes misleading, the Tanners do occasionally raise interesting questions, which if carefully and thoughtfully explored suggest new insights into the complexity of the Book of Mormon. One recent example illustrates the case.

In support of their so-called “Black Hole” theory, the Tanners recently argued that the section of the Book of Mormon containing Mormon’s abridgment shows little evidence of having been influenced by the teachings on the small plates of Nephi, which the Tanners believe were fabricated after the dictation of Mosiah through Moroni. “The obvious lack of citations to Nephi’s words in the last nine books of the Book of Mormon is certainly not consistent with what one would expect to find if the Book of Mormon were a true record.” The Tanners believe that this is easily explained by their “Black Hole” theory: “Since the

157 Ibid., 65.
first 116 pages of Joseph Smith’s manuscript were either stolen or lost and Smith did not know exactly what material he would use to replace the missing section, he could not cite anything from Nephi as he wrote the last nine books of the Book of Mormon because there was nothing to quote.”

As I examined the Tanners’ claim, however, I found over seventy examples to the contrary, showing that Mormon in his abridgment and Nephite prophets such as Alma appear to cite and refer to the writings and teachings of Nephi and Jacob on the small plates. More recently I have discovered that even this is only the tip of the iceberg. I would probably never have thought to consider this possibility had the Tanners not made it an issue. By focusing on what they view as weak elements in the research of Mormon scholars who study the scriptures, the Tanners and other critics inadvertently allow Latter-day Saints to refine their case and more adequately and persuasively defend the kingdom of God. For that I think we can be grateful.

My sentiments about the Tanners’ criticisms can perhaps be summarized by an observation once made by Elder Orson Hyde, that even crows, doleful creatures that they are, sometimes do mankind a service by devouring the garbage. Then he drew an analogy with the anti-Mormon critics of his own day.

He had often thought that there was [a] very great resemblance between the priests of the day and these crows. For they were continually picking up all the dirt, filth, and meanness of the [Mormons?], feasting on it [as] if it was a precious morsel. But offer them any good and sobriety /from/ among the Mormons, they have no appetite and will turn away from it. I think for the same reason the Legislature lets the crows live. We ought to let the priest live, gather and eat up all the filth

159 Roper, “A Hole That’s Not So Black,” 186–95. Many additional examples are given in the longer version of this article.
160 See my forthcoming article, “The Influence of the Small Plates of Nephi on Mormon’s Abridgment of the Nephiite Record.”
and rubbish from the Mormon people that they may be healthy.161

161 Joseph Smith Journal, 2 April 1843, in Scott H. Faulring, ed., An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 339. Reed Durham once related the following incident. ‘In the mid-1960s, Sandra Tanner came to see me at the LDS Institute at the University of Utah and said, ‘Reed’ (we have always been on good terms and called each other by first name), ‘I just don’t understand you. You know all the stuff that we write and yet you keep firing away with a view that is inconsistent with ours.’ I explained to Sandra that I look at revelation as a process and that line upon line a church or a prophet or anyone for that matter can learn and improve. I told her that we all make mistakes and errors and said, ‘But Sandra, you look at it differently. If you find one little mistake with a church or a prophet you believe they cannot be of God. I see a process of growing and learning. God sometimes has trouble helping us because of our limitations, not his. Oh sure, he could coerce us, but he doesn’t and so we can only progress as fast as our limitations let us.’ After listening to me, Sandra then said, ‘If I had learned or been taught these concepts from the beginning, things might have been different with me.’ It was quite an admission on her part.” Telephone conversation with Martin S. Tanner, 12 March 1992, 4:00 p.m. These notes were typed by Martin S. Tanner during the phone call itself.

Reviewed by Matthew Roper

**On Cynics and Swords**

The *Christian Research Journal* is published by the Christian Research Institute, a California-based “cult-watching” organization founded by the late Walter Martin. The Summer 1996 issue contained a contribution by James White, who heads an anti-Mormon ministry based in Arizona. White complains that Mormon apologists are nasty, sarcastic, and unscholarly. He refers to a lighthearted review by Tom Nibley in which that writer poked fun at Jerald and Sandra Tanner and their book *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (p. 32). I personally found Nibley’s style quite funny, although it is understandable that critics like White and the Tanners would not. Perhaps they should lighten up. While White criticizes Nibley for his satirical tone, our somber critic fails to address any of the substantive issues Nibley raised in response to the Tanners’ book. Neither does he address the more sober and detailed criticisms raised by John Tvedtnes and myself.

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3. I think that Nibley’s assessment of the Tanners’ claim of deliberate “plagiarism” was particularly astute; see ibid., 286–8.
While White asserts that recent Latter-day Saint scholarship on the Book of Mormon is unscholarly, his article suffers from its own problems. In a brief section on Latter-day Saint views of Book of Mormon geography (pp. 33-4), White refers to John Sorenson’s book, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, as one “which presents maps of where cities theoretically might be located, where battles took place, and so on” (p. 33). While this description may aptly refer to Sorenson’s book *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, which attempts to place such events in a real-world Mesoamerican setting, it is not an entirely accurate characterization of *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, which reviews the history of Latter-day Saint treatments of Book of Mormon geography. In that book Sorenson does not attempt to place Book of Mormon events at specific New World sites, but simply analyzes and develops an *internal* map based on textual references alone. Readers will also be surprised by White’s erroneous claim that, “FARMS apologists . . . come up with two different Central America locations for ‘Cumorah’” (p. 34, emphasis added). Oddly enough, White accuses Latter-day Saint writers of using “faulty arguments and inadequate evidence” (p. 34). According to White, “A careful reading of the sources used [by those associated with FARMS] will reveal support outside the LDS community for only non-disputed issues that are not, therefore, at issue when it comes to the historicity of the Book of Mormon” (p. 33). White does not offer much by way of evidence for this blanket assertion; however, he does discuss a recent study by William Hamblin and Brent Merrill on swords in the Book of Mormon, which presumably supports that claim. In responding to each of White’s criticisms, it will be

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7 I have addressed the geography question myself in another review in this issue, pages 122–9.
necessary to restate significant points raised by Hamblin and Merrill but not addressed by White; however, lest I be accused of citing only Latter-day Saint scholars, I will also document evidence supportive of those views from relevant non-Mormon scholarly sources.

When Is a "Sword" a "Sword"?

Several recent studies by Latter-day Saint scholars suggest that the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican weapon known as the macuahuitl or macana best fits the criteria for the Book of Mormon "sword."8 White dismisses this equation as an act of desperation by Mormon apologists. The macuahuitl, argues White, cannot be a sword, but "a war club with sharp rocks imbedded in it!" (p. 35). To call such a weapon a sword constitutes, in White’s view, "the most egregious redefinition of terms" (p. 35). White’s criticisms of the macuahuitl are seriously misinformed. In a recent article I showed that the earliest Spanish sources almost universally describe the macuahuitl as a "sword."9 Many contemporary Mesoamerican scholars call it a sword.10 White is simply wrong.

Laban’s Sword

Nephi records that Laban, a powerful military official in Jerusalem around 600 B.C., possessed a sword with a blade "of the most precious steel" (1 Nephi 4:9).11 White admits that he finds no problem here (p. 34). It is worth noting, however, that many critics of the Book of Mormon have cited this passage as evidence

10. For references, see ibid., 151 n. 6.
11. Noah Webster’s 1828 English dictionary defines steel as "iron combined with a small portion of carbon; iron refined and hardened, . . . particularly useful as the material of edged tools." Noah Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828 ed., s.v. "steel."
against the Book of Mormon's historicity. "Steel," it is argued, "was not known to man in those days."\(^{12}\) Today, however, it is increasingly apparent that the practice of "steeling" iron through deliberate carburization was well-known to the Near Eastern world from which the Lehi colony emerged. "It seems evident that by the beginning of the tenth century B.C. blacksmiths were intentionally steeling iron."\(^{13}\) A carburized iron knife dating to the twelfth century B.C. is known from Cyprus.\(^{14}\) In addition to this,

A site on Mt. Adir in northern Israel has yielded an iron pick in association with 12th-century pottery. One would hesitate to remove a sample from the pick for analysis, but it has been possible to test the tip of it for hardness. The readings averaged 38 on the Rockwell "C" scale of hardness. This is a reading characteristic of modern hardened steel.\(^{15}\)

Quenching, another method of steeling iron, was also known to Mediterranean blacksmiths during this period. "By the beginning of the seventh century B.C. at the latest the blacksmiths of the eastern Mediterranean had mastered two of the processes that make iron a useful material for tools and weapons: carburizing and quenching."\(^{16}\) Archaeologists recently discovered a carburized iron sword near Jericho. The sword, which had a bronze haft, was one meter long and dates to the time of King Josiah, who would likely have been a contemporary of Lehi.\(^{17}\) Hershel Shanks recently described the find as "spectacular" since it is the only complete sword of its size and type from this period yet

\(^{12}\) Stuart Martin, *The Mystery of Mormonism* (London: Odhams, 1920), 44.


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 131.

Such discoveries lend a greater sense of historicity to Nephi’s passing comment in the Book of Mormon.

White reasons that since Nephi possessed Laban’s “sword of most precious steel,” all subsequent “swords” mentioned in the Book of Mormon must also resemble Laban’s. After his arrival in the land of Nephi, he wrote,

And I, Nephi, did take the sword of Laban, and after the manner of it did make many swords, lest by any means the people who were now called Lamanites should come upon us and destroy us. (2 Nephi 5:14)

White insists that this passage proves that all subsequent Book of Mormon swords were made of steel. This, however, is an erroneous claim since at the very most it might indicate that the swords Nephi made in the sixth century B.C. to defend his small colony were made of steel. It is of course possible that Nephi’s “swords” were metal weapons modeled after the sword of Laban, but this is not the only or even the most plausible interpretation. Whatever metallurgical knowledge Nephi had of “steel” could have been subsequently lost. Macuahuitl style blades might then have replaced earlier ones made of steel. This argument for subsequent loss of steel and iron technologies among the Nephites finds support in the Book of Mormon text. Chronologically speaking, steel is never mentioned after Jarom’s day (Jarom 1:8). And iron, although known to some of the Zeniffites in the land of Nephi, is never mentioned after Noah’s day (Mosiah 11:3, 8). This tends to support the idea that some metallurgical technologies possessed by Nephi and others may have been lost over time. Other interpretations are also possible. For instance, the phrase “after the manner of” is ambiguous and could simply mean that subsequent Nephite blades were made after the general pattern of Laban’s sword—a straight double-edged blade.

18 Ibid., 33.
20 Webster’s 1828 An American Dictionary of the English Language offers a variety of definitions for “manner,” including: “1. Form; method; way of performing or executing. . . . 3. Sort. . . . 4. Certain degree or measure. It is in a manner done already. . . . This use may also be sometimes defined
blades from Nephi’s day were of the sickle-sword variety. Nephi may mean that he followed the straight-sword variety as opposed to the cimeter. While these New World blades might have been steel, they could just as easily have been of meteoric iron, obsidian, flint, jade, or even fire-hardened wood. The obsidian blades of some macuahuitl were often placed closely together, forming an almost continuous cutting edge similar in many respects to metal swords.

Stains and “Brightness”

White does not address one of the more interesting reasons for equating Book of Mormon swords with a macuahuitl-like weapon. King Anti-Nephi-Lehi admonished his fellow converts, “Since God hath taken away our stains, and our swords have become bright, then let us stain our swords no more with the blood of our brethren” (Alma 24:12). Concerning this passage, Hamblin observes,

> Although today we speak of “stainless steel,” in Joseph Smith’s day, metals were not generally thought of as becoming stained. Staining was a term that generally applied to wood, cloth, or other substances subject to discoloration. Reference to staining swords with blood is not found in the Bible. Thus, although not impossible, the metaphor of staining metal swords with blood is somewhat unusual. However, if the Nephite

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by sort or fashion; as we say, a thing is done after a sort or fashion, that is, not well, fully or perfectly.”

21 Ixtlilxochitl affirms that the Toltecs had “clubs studded with iron.” Alfredo Chavera, ed., Obras Historicas de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl (Mexico: Editora Nacional, 1952), 1:56. The Aztecs possessed knives and daggers made of meteoric iron, but another West Mexican tradition relates that Cuanoomat and Ceutarit, the pre-Columbian cultural heroes of several native west Mexican groups, “taught them to make fire and gave them also machetes or cutlasses of iron.” Robert H. Barlow, “Straw Hats,” Tlalocan 2/1 (1945): 94, emphasis added. These were primarily possessed by the elite. H. Hensoldt, “Meteorites and What They Teach Us,” American Geologist 4 (1889): 28–38.

22 The Lamanites are often said to fight without armor and nearly naked (Enos 1:20; Mosiah 10:8; Alma 43:20).

23 See Hassig, Aztec Warfare, 82, fig. 10.
sword were the Mesoamerican *macuahuitl* with a wooden shaft, blood would naturally stain and discolor the wood when an enemy was wounded. Furthermore, if a metal weapon becomes bloody, the blade can be easily wiped clean. Removing a bloodstain from wood is virtually impossible since the blood soaks into the fibers of the wood. Thus the metaphor of the great mercy of God in removing bloodstains from the swords becomes much more powerful and understandable if it refers to wood stained with blood, which only a miracle would remove, rather than if it refers to metal stained with blood, which a piece of cloth would clean.  

White asserts without evidence that the reference to Lamanite weapons being made “bright” can only make sense in terms of steel swords (p. 35). Hamblin notes, however, that “brightness can refer to any object that shines—metal, stars, or stone. Many types of obsidian have a fine luster and the stone edges of the *macuahuitl* could easily be described as bright.”  

Torquemada, for example, described obsidian as “a stone which might be called precious, more beautiful and brilliant than alabaster or jasper, so much so that of it are made tablets and mirrors.”

**Drawing a Sword**

White argues that since Laban’s Old World sword had a sheath, all other Book of Mormon swords must have had one (p. 34); yet, as Hamblin indicated, Laban’s sword is the only Book of Mormon weapon said to have had a sheath. White assumes that subsequent references to men “drawing” their swords imply a sheath; however, weapons could just as easily be “drawn” from a bag or basket in which weapons were stored or carried. Hamblin and Merrill noted that the mural from Chichen Itza shows a Toltec soldier carrying a bag or basket holding several *macuahuitl* on his

25 Ibid., 343.
back. The Maya in highland Guatemala had portable ammunition carts that carried weapons. Mesoamerican soldiers sometimes wore belts in which weapons could be carried. The Toltecs, for example, had a round shield which they carried into battle, “and the swords were fastened with belts.” While the Nephites may have had sheaths, they could also have “drawn” their swords from a bag, basket, or belt. Another possibility is that “these references could describe grasping or brandishing a sword before combat rather than actually ‘drawing’ it from a sheath.” Support for this view can be found in several accounts from Spanish chroniclers that describe native American *macuahuitl* as being “drawn.”

And he flattered himself, that his Sword being once drawn, he might have a Chance to reach the Crown.

None of the caciques dared to draw a sword against them.

Using White’s reasoning, we would have to conclude that these historians had reference to steel swords with sheaths, yet they refer to the stone-bladed *macuahuitl*. If these historians can describe warriors brandishing the *macuahuitl* as “drawing their swords,” then why must there be a problem when Mormon, the Nephite chronicler, uses similar language?

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33 Francis A. MacNutt, ed. and trans., *De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D’Anghera* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 2:360, emphasis added.
Sharpness of Blades

White cannot understand how Ammon could cut off the arms of his Lamanite enemies at the waters of Sebus (Alma 17:37), or how the Nephite soldier could cut off a part of Zerahemnah's scalp with one defensive blow, if they were using a *macuahuitl* which White thinks was just a club (p. 34). Those familiar with Mesoamerican warfare and historical descriptions of this weapon would not view this as a problem. Those Spaniards who encountered Mexican "swords" in battle were deeply impressed by their deadly cutting power and razorlike sharpness.34 Here are a few statements that adequately illustrate this point:

These swords cut naked men *as if they were steel.*35

Their swords, which were as long as broadswords, were made of flint which cut worse than a knife, and the blades were so set that one could neither break them nor pull them out.36

They slashed at his mare, cutting her head at the neck so that it only hung by the skin.37

They killed the mare *with a single sword-stroke.*38

There were shields large and small, and a sort of broadsword, and two-handed swords set with flint blades *that cut much better than our swords.*39

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37 Ibid., 145.
38 Ibid., 158, emphasis added.
39 Ibid., 228, emphasis added.
Pointed Swords

White cites two Book of Mormon references which suggest that at least some Nephite swords were pointed (p. 34–5). In Alma 44:12–3 Mormon describes Zerahemnah’s unsuccessful attempt to kill Moroni in which a Nephite soldier wounds the Zoramite, taking off part of his scalp. White correctly notes that the soldier’s weapon in this case definitely has a “point,” yet it may be significant that the scalp is apparently not spitted as one might expect, but picked up and “laid” on the point of the soldier’s sword. The second passage cited by White (Alma 57:33) may suggest that some Nephites had pointed swords, but it is more ambiguous. White unfortunately only cites a part of the passage in support of his point; however, the full passage may suggest another possibility:

And it came to pass because of their rebellion we did cause that our swords should come upon them. And it came to pass that they did in a body run upon our swords, in the which, the greater number of them were slain; and the remainder of them broke through and fled from us. (Alma 57:33)

Contrary to White’s assertion, it is not clear that these prisoners were impaled, since they were attempting to escape while the Nephites were already using their weapons. Even if we assume that some of these prisoners were impaled on the end of the Nephite swords, those weapons would not necessarily have to be pointed, since the top edge may have been sharpened without coming to a point.

Be that as it may, some pre-Columbian “swords” were clearly pointed, as several Mesoamerican codices clearly show. According to Hassig, “Drawings indicate rectangular, ovoid, and pointed designs.” The Mendoza Codex, for example, shows Aztec and

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40 It is worth noting that not all swords, even in the Old World, were pointed. See Yang Jwing-Ming, *Introduction to Ancient Chinese Weapons* (Burbank, Cal.: Unique, 1985), 9.
41 Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 83.
Tlaxcalan warriors with pointed, wood-bladed swords.\textsuperscript{42} One of the most impressive battle scenes portrayed in Maya art can be found at the three-room palace of Bonampak in Chiapas, Mexico. On the west wall of room 2, "A large leaf-shaped blade with a short handle is brandished by a warrior at the top center left of the battle." This weapon is clearly pointed.\textsuperscript{43} Some Mesoamerican stone-bladed swords were definitely pointed as well. According to Solis, when marching to battle, the Tlaxcalans "carried their Macanas, or two-handed Swords, under the Left Arm, with their Points upward."\textsuperscript{44} White ignores evidence for this in Hamblin’s original article, which shows an early representation of a pointed \textit{macuahuitl} in the right hand of the warrior figure at the Loltun Cave.\textsuperscript{45} The structure of this weapon is very similar to the obsidian-pointed \textit{macuahuitl} held in the hand of a Tlaxcalan noble during Aztec times.\textsuperscript{46} Examples of the curved Mesoamerican blade, which Hassig calls a "short sword,"\textsuperscript{47} are also known to have had points of obsidian. Clearly, Book of Mormon references to pointed swords can be easily explained in terms of the \textit{macuahuitl}.

**Hilt**

White notes that the Book of Mormon contains several references to sword "hilt,”\textsuperscript{48} but makes the erroneous claim that this poses a problem in equating Book of Mormon "swords" with Mesoamerican blades such as the \textit{macuahuitl} (pp. 34–5). Again he simply ignores Hamblin’s discussion of this issue: "Struct-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Kurt Ross, ed., \textit{Codex Mendoza: Aztec Manuscript} (Barcelona, Spain: Miller Graphics, 1978), 97–8.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Solis, \textit{History of the Conquest of Mexico}, book V, chap. 9, emphasis added.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Hamblin and Merrill, "Swords in the Book of Mormon," 339, fig. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Hassig, \textit{Aztec Warfare}, 84, fig. 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Ross Hassig, \textit{War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 243 n. 121. For additional representations see my article on Mesoamerican cimematics in a forthcoming issue of the \textit{Journal of Book of Mormon Studies}.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} The term \textit{hilt} simply refers to a handle.
\end{itemize}
turally, the *macuahuitl* does have a hilt. The lower portion of the weapon lacks obsidian blades so it can be held, which thus functionally distinguishes the handle or hilt from the blade." Zerahemnah’s sword, it will be remembered, “broke by the hilt.” Concerning this passage Hamblin notes, “If a *macuahuitl* were to be broken when struck by another weapon, one expected place for such breakage would be where the obsidian blades did not protect the wood of the shaft, leaving the wood directly exposed to the blades of the other sword.”⁴⁹ According to Gomara, “The swords could cut cleanly through a lance or the neck of a horse, and even penetrate or nick iron, which seems impossible.”⁵⁰ This seems to have been what occurred to Zerahemnah’s sword.

In any case, Mesoamerican swords definitely had “hilts.” According to one conquistador, the Mexicans “have swords that are like broadswords, but their *hilts* are not quite so long and are three fingers wide.”⁵¹ According to the Spanish historian Solis, Montezuma possessed “Two-handed Swords, and others of extraordinary Wood with flint Edges, and most curious and costly *Handles.*”⁵² Ross Hassig, a historian who specializes in Mesoamerican warfare, also notes, “Some swords had thongs through which the user could put his hand to secure the weapon in battle.”⁵³ Mexican codices frequently show the *macuahuitl* as being knobbled at the bottom of the handle, a feature which would obviously help keep the weapon from slipping out of the hand during combat.⁵⁴

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⁵⁰ Lesley B. Simpson, ed. and trans., Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary Francisco Lopez de Gomara (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 152, emphasis added.
⁵³ Hassig, Aztec Warfare, 83.
L. Ara Norwood recently observed that White "evidently didn't read Hamblin's work on the subject carefully." That also seems clear to me, based on my own examination of White's arguments on the sword issue, which I have discussed above. He also suggests, "Perhaps White can be excused for commenting on fields in which he has no training." I am not so sure. After all, White himself argues that he and fellow Christians should seek "the highest level of accuracy and integrity" in their scholarly endeavors. "In a culture accustomed to sound bites and surface-level thinking, we need to learn to look below the surface and ask logical, insightful questions" in order to avoid a hollow "veneer" of scholarship (p. 35). With that statement at least I can agree. Unfortunately, the author's recent article falls far short of that worthy goal.

In an out-of-the-way corner of the computer software market is found the class of “computerized story” programs. These programs target an audience of preschool and young elementary school students with stories often adapted from popular printed books, supplemented with animation, sound, and interactivity. It’s a small niche, though still large enough to have some established conventions, classic titles, and respected publishers. *Book of Mormon Stories* is a Latter-day Saint entry in this category—it presents events from the Book of Mormon in computerized story fashion.

The essence of the story is threaded through a series of pictures accompanied by a simple, brief narration. The narration appears in written form on each frame, as it would in a printed book, but is also spoken aloud for children who cannot yet read. Going straight through the story, the pictures seem mostly static, with only occasional bits of animation as you go from frame to frame. The fun comes by clicking on things in the picture before moving on. Something different happens for almost each part of the picture. Occasionally the story is fleshed out—when you click on the people listening to Lehi preach in Jerusalem, you discover their reactions to his message. Usually the interaction fits the scene, such as clicking on a tree and seeing a bird fly out. Often something fun or even silly happens, such as a hut roof that turns into a pinwheel and flies away. Adhering to one of the conventions of computerized stories, a common element can be found in each frame—in this case a gray rabbit—to encourage children to keep clicking on things until they find it.

The artwork is simple and colorful without being too “cartoony”—people have four fingers, not three. The settings are
reasonable and consistent even if they don’t match everyone’s mental picture of Book of Mormon lands—no borrowing from Friberg here. The voices, although not professional (the authors’ family and friends, from the look of the credits), are clear, distinctive and appropriate—Laman’s slightly nasal whine is just right! The musical interludes between frames are mostly arrangements of hymn tunes and Primary songs that serve to set the mood for the next frame and nicely fill the delay while the program loads from disk.

*Book of Mormon Stories* is clearly no substitute for the real scriptural text, nor even for most printed adaptations of the Book of Mormon for children. The stories are greatly simplified—one section covers the move to Zarahemla, King Benjamin, Zeniff, King Noah, Abinadi, and even Alma at the waters of Mormon in only nine frames! But an icon of the gold plates at the bottom of each picture links to the underlying scriptural text passage, which a parent can then expand into the whole story when the child is ready. *Book of Mormon Stories* comes on a self-contained CD-ROM disk that will run on either a Macintosh or Windows system without installation. The publisher recommends a 2x or faster CD-ROM drive, but I successfully ran it on slower hardware with only occasional sound glitches. The user interface is straightforward, with spoken prompts as well as text labels in most places. Even preschool children will learn to use it quickly.
Mormonism on the Internet: Now Everybody Has a Printing Press

Reviewed by Gregory H. Taggart

What to do? The information superhighway is true to its name. It is loaded with information, both good and bogus. The amount of information clogging the highway is worse than a busy freeway interchange and increases daily. Unfortunately, the ratio of good to bad, or at least valuable to worthless, is not very good. And that ratio holds true when searching websites pertaining to Mormonism. Yes folks, the Christian Research Institute, Bill McKeever, and any other html-literate with time on his hands and a bone to pick with the Latter-day Saint Church can set up shop right across the superhighway from the Church Office Building. Sadly, there is no way to eradicate this blight on the highway, so you are going to have to deal with it or learn to ignore it. If you can disregard the bad, there are some wonderful resources on-line, from doctrinal to practical, from inspiring to illuminating.

The purpose of this article, then, is to help you do a little sifting of wheat from chaff, maybe even point you in the right direction. Be advised though that what follows is not an endorsement of any of the websites mentioned. For one, each website can go on and on, page after page, with no end in sight. Nobody would claim to have read an entire website. For another, websites have none of the permanence of printed material. They are amorphous and can and do change daily. What one day could be a certifiable doctrinally correct website, might be anti-Mormon the next. Caveat surfer!

With that little admonition out of the way, let's go surfing now. You will soon discover that Mormon websites fall into two main categories: those that are simply a collection of links to other

All facts and figures are correct at the time of printing, but the dynamic nature of the Internet may lead to changes by the time you access the sites. The website addresses are case-sensitive.
websites and those that have something substantive to offer. Sometimes the two categories mix it up a bit. But it doesn’t take too long to discover when a site has something really valuable or interesting to offer.

The next breakout occurs between those that are offering something entirely new—for example, a forum for discussion of things Mormon or a collection of personal essays on the Mormon experience—and those that have collected previously published material together at one site. The material may be readily available in your own book collection or it may be something arcane or out of print. For me, the net becomes valuable when the old, arcane, or out of print is found there. I also appreciate the attempts of various faithful members of the church who have used their access to the Internet to publish their defenses of the church. Even when their defense is a simple testimony, it is wonderful to see that testimony online and available to those who may otherwise only find anti-Mormon material on the Internet.

Ah, the anti-Mormons. They are a busy little bunch. Give them anything resembling a printing press, and they’ll inundate you with helpful hints to recovery and everlasting life. A word of warning: You get on the wrong page—literally—on the Internet, and you will soon find that you have spent hours linking through and reading some very dispiriting stuff. And believe me, you will feel dispirited. Take care. Answers exist to everything you read out there. Take the time to link back to a site developed by a faithful Mormon to refresh your memory of that fact.

Substantive Websites

Church Doctrine

Deseret News Conference Talks (http://www.desnews.com/confer/talks.htm)

To my knowledge, this is the source for almost immediate access to general conference talks. One link to this site claimed that the talks were online within two hours after they were given. For the really hungry among you, this site is a must!

FARMS Home Page (http://www.farmsresearch.com)

This site is a great improvement over the initial effort. You can now find current issues of the monthly newsletter, Insights. You
will also find articles from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, *FARMS Review of Books*, various criticism papers, numerous transcriptions of talks from the Book of Mormon lecture series, and monthly specials.

**Joseph Smith’s Documentary History of the Church, 1935 Edition** ([http://www.math.byu.edu/~smithw/Lds/LDS/History/History_of_the_Church](http://www.math.byu.edu/~smithw/Lds/LDS/History/History_of_the_Church))

Do you think somewhere in there he said something that could be interpreted to mean that he would someday be published in html language?

**BYU Department of Religious Education** ([http://reled.byu.edu](http://reled.byu.edu))

Apparently, you will find all kinds of information here. For example, the information on the General Authorities discussed below comes from this site; unfortunately, the search engine for the site is currently disabled.

**Standard Works of the Church** ([http://erdos.math.byu.edu/~smithw/Lds/LDS/LDS-scriptures](http://erdos.math.byu.edu/~smithw/Lds/LDS/LDS-scriptures))

The complete Standard Works are online; however, they are not formatted well.

**BYU Religious Studies Center** ([http://reled.byu.edu/relstctr/relstctr.htm](http://reled.byu.edu/relstctr/relstctr.htm))

Other than their free newsletter, which you can order from the site, not much is here.

**Jeff Lindsay’s Unofficial Introduction to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** ([http://www.athenet.net/~jlindsay/LDS_Intro.shtml](http://www.athenet.net/~jlindsay/LDS_Intro.shtml))

Jeff, a research scientist for Kimberly-Clark, lives in Appleton, Wisconsin, with his family. He is a 1986 graduate of BYU with a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. Kimberly-Clark apparently isn’t keeping him too busy because he obviously spends a lot of time on his website. Much of the site is devoted to an introduction to the church; however, a wealth of well-researched and well-written answers to some of the more interesting questions a critic of the church might ask is included. Of particular interests are Jeff’s answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). For example, there is an excellent discussion of the temple ceremony and
Masonry, as well as the age-old grace/works controversy. All in all, Jeff’s is one of the better LDS websites. My favorite spot on his site is semicommercial, Jeff’s *CultMaster 2000 Software*. As Jeff warns, it is not for the “comically impaired.” To develop his revolutionary software, Jeff used the powerful concept of “Semantic Redefinition for Exclusivity,” a marvelous programming technique.

**WWW LDS Visitors Center** (http://www.mich.com/~romulans/lds.html)

The creator of this site has brought together a lot of previously published material about the church under the title of *Online LDS Institute*. Included are the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Doctrine*.

**Book of Mormon** (www.hti.umich.edu/relig/mormon)

Topical/searchable Book of Mormon by word or phrase. Very useful.


Among other links and information, you will find seven separate accounts of the first vision.

**World Wide Web Links Related to Mormonism** (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dbowie/mormwww/mormonwww.html)

This site, run by David Bowie, has its share of links to Mormon sites, including a passel of those anti-Mormon critters (euphemistically called “sites unfriendly to Mormonism”). But my reason for coming to Bowie’s site is his *Disputed Mormon Texts Page* (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dbowie/dispute/dispute. html), which contains all sorts of documents purporting to be authentic and inviting a response from someone as to their authenticity. Another reason to visit is *Lighten Up!* (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dbowie/armlc/armlc.html), a site that says it represents the best in LDS humor. No, I don’t think this is the cartoon page of the *New Era*. Check it out and let David know what you think.
Religious and Sacred Texts (http://webpages.marshall.edu/~wiley6/rast.htmlx)

If you are looking for links to most of the world’s religious texts online, look no further. And of course, you will find Mormon texts here too. Lots of the “best books” to “seek ye out of.”

Facets of Religion, Virtual Library of Religion (http://sunfly.ub.uni-freiburg.de/religion)

An award-winning site, providing a wide array of interesting and informative material on the world’s religions, including Mormonism, which is found under Christianity.

LDS Index (http://www.cyberhighway.net/~vchopine/ldsindex.htm)

This is another link site, but with a difference: The creator of the site links only to articles on another site. So instead of a link to FARMS, for example, you go to a topic on the LDS Index site and click on the topic. An index of articles on the web on that topic appears with links to the various articles. I found it very easy to use, quite well-organized, and useful.

Allen Leigh’s Mormon Page (http://www.shire.net/mormon)

Another effort by a faithful member of the LDS Church to help people understand LDS beliefs. You will find Allen’s book The Immortality and Eternal Life of Man here.

History


What a resource! Here you will find links to the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, to journals, and to short biographies of important Mormon people. You will find a link to David Kenison’s Church History Stories Collection, also found at www.xmission.com/~dkenison/lds/ch_hist/chron.html. The story of Mary Fielding Smith and the blessing of her oxen is here. So is the inspiring journal entry of Joseph Millet, “the Lord knew there was such a person . . . .”
Joseph Smith Daguerreotype (http://www.comevisit.com/lds/js3photo.htm)

Maybe I have been on another planet. Maybe I have seen it and just failed to pay attention. Visiting this site and actually paying attention, for the first time I saw what is supposed to be the only actual photograph of the Prophet. It stirred my blood to look into the eyes of the man I have known and loved, but have never actually seen. A must visit.

Dave’s LDS Resources (http://www.xmission.com/~dkenison/lds/index.html)

I really enjoy this site for two reasons: Dave Kenison created the LDS-Gems Listserver, and you can sign on here. He has also collected over 280 church history stories, all available here.

Genealogy

Cyndi’s List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet (http://www.oz.net/~cyndihow/sites.htm)

This lady is not about to let you forget to redeem the dead. At the time of printing, her web page advertises over 16,550 genealogy links, “categorized and cross-referenced, in over 60 categories.” If you are into redeeming your dead, you cannot pass up this website.

Kindred Konnections (http://www.kindredkonnections.com)

This is another incredible genealogical site with free downloadable software and extensive databases. This site is already getting over 11,500 hits a day, and that is just from this side of the veil.

The Genealogy Lady (http://www.new-jerusalem.com/genealogy/questions.html)

Go ahead and ask her. She promises answers within three working days. I have talked to very knowledgeable genealogists who give her high marks.
Missionary

The Official Home Page of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (http://www.lds.org)

If you know nothing about the LDS Church, you may find this site interesting. If you want to know the top ten languages spoken by members or which countries have the largest membership, you may want to visit this page, which also features a Global Media Guide with basic information about the church. If you hope that this page will grow and someday take advantage of the Internet as a publishing medium, you may want to visit this page to be there when it happens.

General Authorities of the Church (http://reled.byu.edu/pres/genauth/genauth.htm)

Photographs and biographies of all current General Authorities of the church. Just click on the picture and read away.

World Wide Web 1st Ward (http://www.uvol.com/www1st)

A fun site with some good resources, built around the theme of “Proclaim the Gospel, Perfect the Saints, Redeem the Dead.” You will find resources here, whatever your calling in the church, from ideas for ward Christmas parties to inspiring testimonies.

New Jerusalem (http://www.new-jerusalem.com)

This is one of the most complete LDS sites on the Internet, with links galore. The Book of Mormon Answerman (Walter Martin reincarnated and repentant?) is a fun place to stop for the weird question and the appropriate answer. Home of the Genealogy Lady.

The LDS Second Coming of Christ Research Group (http://users.aol.com/clintg777/private/lastdays.html)

A list, with scriptural references, of events leading up to the second coming.

Gene’s LDS Page (http://wymple.gs.net/~gene/lds.html), which includes the “Anti” Rebuttal Page (http://wymple.gs.net/~gene/anti.html)

One of many pages on the Internet devoted to answering the numerous Mormon critics who have set up shop in cyberspace.
All about Mormons (http://www.mormons.org)

A well-constructed site with excellent introductions to basic Mormon beliefs, most of which come from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism. There are also attempts by unidentified writers to answer critics. I think it was at this site where I first became a little frustrated that very few websites on Mormonism identified the people behind them.

LDS Evidences Home Page (http://www.geocities.com/WallStreet/1777/ldsstuff.html)

I like this page; it is one man’s attempt to meet the critics head on. Most of the material is written by Gerald Smith, the creator of the site.

Mission.net (http://www.mission.net)

If you are looking for the place on the net where you spent the best two years of your life, this is the place. It links to five different sites of indexes of mission home pages, describing the advantages of each.

Mormon Investigator/New Member Home Page (http://www.nettally.com/lds/chur.html)

The site is almost entirely home spun by Richard Hardison of Tallahassee, Florida. In the main, it seems to do a pretty good job of explaining the church to its intended audience. He even points out that new members should soon expect home teachers to show up. One unintended funny spot: In his questions and answers on Mormonism, he responds to the following question: Do Mormons dress funny? “No, just modestly. Perhaps you are confusing us with the Amish of Pennsylvania.” So it is the Amish who dress funny? Now, I remember.

Testimonies and Personal Essays

Nauvoo (http://nauvoo.com)

Nauvoo is an effort of Orson Scott Card and others to create, among other things, an online forum for discussion of issues of interest to faithful Latter-day Saints. Originally only available on America Online, it recently moved to the Web. Having used the AOL site, I can say that the new website has potential if it follows in the footsteps of its predecessor. You will find the Nauvoo
Forum for discussion and Vigor and the Red Brick Store for Mormon fiction and essays.

Calcum Fides (http://members.visi.net/~atom/totally/TEST_MAIN.html)
This site is worth visiting to read the fervent testimonies and thoughtful conversion stories of faithful Mormon websurfers.

Miscellaneous

LDS Statistics Center (http://www.webcom.com/gutches/statist.html)
Drew Gutches, the creator of this site, makes no claims to accuracy; nevertheless, this is a fun site for those interested in the growth of the church, viewed from many different angles. Unfortunately, the site is in transit. You can reach Drew at gutches3@aol.com to get the new address.

Brigham Young University Home Page (http://www.byu.edu/newhome.html)
Ricks College (http://www.ricks.edu)
BYU—Hawaii (http://www.byuh.edu)
BYU Athletics (http://www.byu.edu/~byusport)
These sites include just about anything you need to know about church colleges and universities, including faculty and student directories, program descriptions, and coming events.

FatherWork (http://fatherwork.byu.edu/fathrwrk.htm)
An interesting site developed by Drs. Dollahite and Hawkins, together with Family Science students at BYU, to promote good fathering. Here you will find the stories of fathers in all kinds of circumstances, as they do their best to be fathers to their children.

Bonneville LDS Radio Network (http://www.bonneville.com/lds)
Just what the name says. You will find all you need to know about what, where, and how to receive their signal.

Nick’s done his homework. This site includes every published temple dedicatory prayer. He has even worked with the webmaster of the online version of the Billings Gazette to have a link to that paper, so members can keep up on the Billings, Montana, temple news.


Prepared jointly by Jared Demke and Scott Vanatter, this site contains one of the most comprehensive discussions of chiasmus I have seen. I am not an expert on chiasmus, but if the breadth of this site and its organization are any indication of content, this is worth a stop, but bring a lunch. You may be here a while.

The LDS Deaf Connection (http://www.bolingbroke.com/LDC/deaflds.html)

Hats off to Drew Gutches. This is apparently the second site developed by him, each filling an important niche. The first is the LDS Statistics Center, devoted to an interesting array of church statistics. The LDS Deaf Connection, on the other hand, is devoted to deaf church members. Symposia, meetings, missions, and the like, all pertaining to the deaf, are listed here. This site also includes Mormon’s Story,1 an adaptation of the Book of Mormon “written for anyone who has difficulty understanding the Book of Mormon.”

LDS Hymns-MIDI Page (http://www.uleth.ca/~anderson/midi.htmlx)

I cannot vouch for the contents of this page. I can only tell you it is here. [Ed. note: the midi files are good quality.] My browser is not set up to listen to music. If your browser is set up properly and you have the right equipment, you can listen to LDS hymns, the children’s songbook, and other music stored here.

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LDS Scouters Page (http://www2.dtc.net/~mpearce/scouts/scouts.htm)
   For you who think scouting came first and then the Book of Mormon, this is the place.

LDS-Singles Connection (http://www.singles.lds.net)
LDSingles.com (http://www.ldssingles.com)
LDS Singles.online (http://www.lds-singles.com)
LDS Friends Worldwide(http://www.downtown-web.com/cfw)
   You can track the divorce rate in the church by the number of websites devoted to matchmaking for the heartbroken. These are my four favorites (I am divorced). The first two give you a trial membership and then charge for the service thereafter. The third is free.

Around the Punchbowl (http://members.aol.com/itstessie/sngl/index.htm)
   This is not another dating service. Instead, it tries to fill the needs of the LDS singles community with talks to singles by General Authorities, singles conference announcements, and other things of interest to single members of the church.

Zarahemla Book Shoppe (http://www.xmission.com/~zarahmla)
   The Amazon.com of Mormonism.²

Links to Websites of Faithful Mormons

Eby's CyberScroll (http://www.teleport.com/~arden/religium.htm)
   Maintained by Arden L. Eby, this site has links to websites pertaining to most of the world’s religions, including a large number of LDS links. A very good place to start.

LDS Info (http://www.ldsinfo.org/index1.html)
   Another, of many, comprehensive link sites. Links to LDSSA, ward and stake homepages, the Book of Mormon. And on and on and on.

² Amazon.com is arguably the largest source of books on the Internet, currently at 2.5 million in and out of print.

The Yahoo list of resources on the LDS Church on the Internet. This fairly extensive list includes what Yahoo labels as opposing views, which include much of the same anti-Mormon information you are familiar with and a new stripe you may not know about: Recovery from Mormonism.

LDS World (http://www.ldsworld.com)

Brought to you by Infobases, the company that brings you so many of the LDS CD-ROM on the market. Though this site has its commercial aspects, it provides well-organized links to a variety of Mormon sites, including news sites such as KBYU and Bonneville International, and mission homepages. It also purports to have 493 links to other Mormon sites.

Pearls, The Best LDS Websites (http://drzeus.cache.net/lds)

Pearls appears to be the unofficial judge of LDS sites, based on suggestions to and the opinion of Pearls’s creator, John Visser (DrZeus@cache.net). Visit his site first and you are assured of the best on the net, maybe. By the time I reviewed Pearls, I had already written about 34 websites and had visited many more. The color of hypertext on the Pearls site tells me that I have visited only half of the 37 sites listed there. Better get a move on!

Mike Pearce’s LDS Church Page (http://www2.dtc.net/~mpearce/church.htm)

Yet another page of links to LDS sites with a nice addition: Mike has a link to his page of LDS Graphics.

And Now for Something Completely Different

I have held off as long as I can. There is another side to Mormonism on the Internet, and it looms large. I even read one post in the Nauvoo Forum (http://nauvoo.com) where an LDS web surfer complained that all he found on the Internet was anti-Mormon material. You get into the wrong set of links, and you will begin to think the same thing. If you are just dying to get mad at the distortion, the misrepresentation, or the condescension (this is the only word that describes the Recovery from
Mormonism movement) of the anti-Mormon faction on the Internet, then let me be your guide. But I will only take you so far because I cannot stand it any more. Your first stop should be the Yahoo Search site at (http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion/Christianity/Denominations_and_Sects/Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter_day_Saints). Click on Opposing Views, and you are off. The first site, Alpha Internet Ministries (http://www.alphamin.org) asserts their objective pretty clearly:

We cordially invite you to come in and find a seat in the Main Reading Room. We have built our site entirely in the spirit of a statement made by Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt, who, in 1853 said these words: “... convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you will ever have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds.” The Seer, pp. 15–16 (1853).

If that is all they are doing, no problem. But of course, the cordiality goes out the door as quickly as you can say, “Fawn M. Brodie,” and it is all down hill from there.

Mormon Matter (http://www.rainfrog.com/bill/mormon.shtml) gets rave reviews on the anti-Mormon circuit. This site is where the word condescension came to mind as I prepared this article. I guess if you are going to expose my religious beliefs as a fraud, it is nice to be cute.

Mormon Links (http://www.california.com/~rpcman/MORMON.HTM) is about as good as it gets for comprehensive links to what is “wrong” with Mormonism. The creator of the site brings B. H. Roberts to do battle for him and takes on FARMS (“the Foundation for Acquiring Rich Mormons’ Salary,” he calls them) by out ad hominemizing them. He even provides you with a link to the definition of ad hominem (in case you are Mormon and don’t know what it means, I suppose).
Of course, this is just a short list of all the websites dealing with Mormonism, pro- and anti- alike. Remember, Infobases's site claims to link to over 493 sites, and that was just the so-called faith-promoting sites. Still, in my opinion these are the best of the lot. If you wander the web enough, you will discover that many, if not most, of those 493 sites are little more than links to other sites (now you know why they call it the Web) with little new and substantive added. Besides, you should be studying your scriptures anyway.

If I have left a great site off the list—and I am positive I have—please feel free to e-mail me at gtaggart@fiber.net. And remember, spamming (offensive practice of sending unsolicited e-mail to vast numbers of individuals) is not good Internet etiquette.

Reviewed by Shirley S. Ricks

This fictional approach to a very specific section of the Book of Mormon, Mosiah 17–23, reminds us that the Book of Mormon is filled with drama and truths that don’t get stale in the retelling. The eleven-page prologue to the book introduces the setting and most of the main characters. We see King Noah scrambling with his men as they seek to save their own lives by abandoning their wives and children: “Many of the men turned to flee as King Noah showed them how simple a task it was to sacrifice others for one’s self” (p. 1). Below them on the hill, a great slaughter is taking place, while the Lamanites are butchering those who are too slow to escape. In a desperate bid to save at least their own lives, the beautiful Nephite daughters move toward the enemy to plead for mercy. Fearing a brutal death, Kheronai leads these young women toward the fearsome Lamanite warriors.

Never had Kheronai known such fear. Never had she imagined such a terrifying image of death. She knelt before the fearsome warrior and turned her eyes pleadingly toward him. . . . His dark eyes studied her, his impassive face appearing to be carved of stone. . . .

. . . [Zeram’s] head pounded and his chest heaved as he gasped for air. Never had he fought so noble a battle against his hated foe, but now he felt uncertain with what he saw before him. At his feet knelt a maiden whose fair face looked up at him beseechingly. (p. 4)

This bold and courageous action saves many Nephite lives, but the ensuing Lamanite bondage and captivity brings bitterness and despair. The Nephites promise to give up one half of their possessions and subsequently one half of their annual gain to their captors in exchange for their lives. This brings a hardness of soul to the Nephite people under King Limhi.
The prologue introduces us to several familiar characters: King Noah and his priests; Gideon, the Nephite captain; and Alma, one of the king’s priests, who believed Abinadi’s words and fled with his group to the waters of Mormon. Other Book of Mormon characters include Amulan, one of King Noah’s priests, and King Limhi, Noah’s son. Amid a cast of supporting characters, the main figures of the story emerge—Kheronai, who at the death of her beloved grandfather renames herself Mara, “for my soul is bitter” (p. 10); Zeram, the fearsome, handsome Lamanite warrior; Saphira, his twin sister; and Samuel, son of one of King Noah’s priests who fled with them.

The complex action of the story continues in the city of the Nephite captivity and in the surrounding wilderness. We see the guilty priests, afraid to return home, seizing the twenty-four Lamanite daughters from the “place in Shemlon where [they] did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry” (Mosiah 20:1). The intricate nature of the wilderness is made clear through the wanderings of various groups as they seek specific locations or other groups of peoples.

This novel does the reader the service of separating fact from fiction. Approximately twenty-five footnotes leading the reader to specific Book of Mormon verses, mostly from Mosiah 17–23, are sprinkled throughout the text. While the reader may not choose to look them up during the reading of the book, the references serve as a comforting assurance that the main plot is based on the Book of Mormon account. In addition to specific references, the author weaves other familiar Book of Mormon motifs and facts into the telling of her story—Nephite units of value are mentioned (p. 24), the plant neas is mentioned (cf. Mosiah 9:9), sacred space is recognized (p. 98), and the tree of life, or Lehi tree, with its fruit is shown to be a symbol of

God’s merciful plan for his children. The tree represents his love for us.

The fruit is God’s greatest gift, Eternal Life. The Lehi Tree is reverently called the Tree of Life by believers in Christ. It reminds us that we have been offered Eternal Life through God’s love for us. But it is up to us to live so as to be worthy to partake of the fruit of the tree. (p. 175)
This gospel message of peace and love is shown to be the only way to overcome the traditions that have long separated the Nephites and Lamanites. Only by accepting the gospel's precepts and challenges can individuals be rid of the effects of generations of hatred. The book ends on this note, but one is led to believe that a sequel is forthcoming to pursue further the activities of these individuals and discover how lives can be changed through gospel living.

This Book of Mormon drama has been fleshed out with believable characters who experience a range of emotions from love, hope, peace, acceptance, and compassion to hate, despair, anger, rejection, and fear. This fast-paced novel makes compelling reading as it creates a plausible world in a Book of Mormon setting. In a fictional medium, which may not be fully acceptable to all people, the author has developed gospel themes of eternal value.
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