

Sample

ANSWERING MORMON SCHOLARS

A Response to Criticism of the Book
“Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon”



Volume One

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

1994

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CONTENTS

1. Is There Something Missing?.....	1
The Battle Within	3
A Disgusting Joke?.....	7
The Black Hole	12
Tanners' Dishonesty?	12
Chasing Salamanders	15
F.A.R.M.S. and Salamanders	41
Apologists or Scholars.....	43
The First Becomes Last	45
Tvedtnes Speaks of Mix-Up	58
"All is Lost! All is Lost!"	60
Light vs. Darkness?	64
No Real Answers.....	71
Women Missing?	72
The Missing Kings	74
Still a Lost People!.....	79
Book of Mormon Wars.....	186
2. Jews or Christian?	91
A Giant Error?.....	92
No Passover or Festivals	94
Mormon's Mistake	99
Fabricated Evidence?.....	118
Blowing Horns?	123
The Elephantine Papyri	124
Feast or Revival?	134
Tanners' Double Standard	135
3. The Question of Plagiarism.....	137
The Dead Sea Scrolls	141
"Leap of Faith"	145
From John's Gospel?	145
Tanners' "Ludicrous Idea"	155
Stan Larson's Study	160
Alleged Plagiarism?.....	164
A Black Hole Remains.....	172
Appendix: Tvedtnes' Attempt to Save the Book of Abraham.....	174

1. Is There Something Missing?

In 1990, we published the book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. This book certainly agitated some of the scholars at the Mormon Church's Brigham Young University and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.). The following year, 1991, F.A.R.M.S. published no less than three reviews of our book in one issue of its *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3. Even this extraordinary response, containing seventy-five pages attacking our work, did not seem to satisfy F.A.R.M.S. In 1993, a fourth review appeared in the same publication.

Prior to this time virtually all church scholars connected with BYU and F.A.R.M.S. refused to review our publications. While it is true that one noted scholar from Brigham Young University, D. Michael Quinn, wrote a response to our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* it had to be printed anonymously. This rebuttal had no significant effect on our work, and recently the author himself was excommunicated from the church for publishing information Mormon leaders deemed embarrassing to the church.

An article written by David Merrill pointed out that the Mormon leaders tried to restrain the church's scholars from dealing with our publications:

The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy towards the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners. . . . (*Utah Holiday*, February 1978, page 7)

A spokesman from the church's Deseret Bookstore wrote:

We do not have a specific response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response. (Letter written January 19, 1977)

A man who talked to Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards claimed that Richards "told me to quit studying materials put out by the Tanner's. . . . I told him 'surely some day there will be an answer to these questions.' He told me there never would be an answer and I should stop my inquiries" (Letter dated August 13, 1978).

Since we began publishing in 1959, the LDS Church has never put forth any official rebuttal. We have waited in vain for thirty-four years for the church itself to make a response to our work. Although a large number of people have left the Mormon Church because of our publications and many others have been very concerned because their church has not published a rebuttal, Mormon leaders seem to feel that their best policy is silence. Since they apparently cannot find a way to successfully refute our allegations, they believe that the less people know about our publications the better. Consequently, they have maintained a conspiracy of silence for thirty-four years while we have continued to distribute books throughout the world.

Prior to the publication of our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, church scholars at Brigham Young University and F.A.R.M.S. followed the church leaders' advice and studiously avoided dealing with our publications. With the publication of our work on the "black hole," however, they apparently realized that our ideas were having a significant impact upon some Mormon scholars and that it was time to speak up.

After remaining virtually silent for over thirty years, Mormon scholars suddenly came out like an army to attack us. The plan was to have a number of scholars simultaneously tear into our work. Between 1991 and 1993 there were seven critical reviews which appeared in F.A.R.M.S. publications. Besides the four responses to *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, there were two rebuttals to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and a response to our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*.

In one of the reviews BYU scholar Matthew Roper showed deep concern over the effect our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* has had upon the reading public:

The first edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* was published by the Tanners in 1963 under the title, *Mormonism: A Study of Mormon History and Doctrine*. Since that time the Tanners' *magnum opus* has been published in no less than five editions, the most recent being in 1987. In 1980, in an attempt to facilitate wider distribution of their work, they published a condensed version [*The Changing World of Mormonism*] through Moody Press. Since their debut as vocal anti-Mormons in the early 1960s, the Tanners have produced and distributed numerous other works attacking various aspects of Mormon history, scripture, and doctrine.

There are several reasons why this book merits review. First, the Tanners are considered by their fellow critics to be among the foremost authorities on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. Their arguments are central to most anti-Mormon attacks on the Book of Mormon today. One recent critic describes *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* as "the heavyweight of all books on Mormonism." Even some of the more sophisticated Book of Mormon critics will often repeat methodological errors exemplified in the Tanners' work. . . . This review will focus only on the Tanners' criticisms of the Book of Mormon in chapters five and six of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (pp. 50-125). (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, pages 169-170)

It is interesting to note that in the quotation above Matthew Roper said the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* "merits review." This, of course, is in sharp contrast with what church officials have said in the past.

Although Daniel C. Peterson, editor of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, denied that F.A.R.M.S. had an organized campaign directed against our work, he did acknowledge that something had to be done to keep our work from spreading:

Ah, they will respond, but why "three reviews, containing seventy-five pages"? . . . The Tanners are manifestly impressed by the sheer bulk of the reviews, and by the number of reviewers. . . . To set the record completely straight on the issue at hand here, I originally asked two reviewers to look at the Tanners' book. . . . a third, unsolicited review arrived, which I happened to like. So I published it, as well. However, the Tanners will probably see the lengthy review [of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*] appearing at pp. 169-215 of the present volume as evidence that I speak with forked tongue, and that there is indeed a new F.A.R.M.S. campaign against them. Why, otherwise, review a book published in 1987? But, again, the piece printed here was an unsolicited submission. I accepted it because I thought it made a number of important points, and because most contemporary anti-Mormon writers depend heavily upon the Tanners. Attending to the roots seemed an efficient way of dealing with the branches. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, p. lxxiv)

The reader will notice that Professor Peterson is suggesting that it is now necessary to try to destroy our work ("the roots") so that it will not be spread abroad by other "anti-Mormon writers," whom he refers to as "the branches." One would think that an organization with the initials F.A.R.M.S. would have been more attentive to getting rid of "the roots." Astute farmers usually go after the roots of unwanted trees before the branches proliferate and get out of control. F.A.R.M.S. had been in existence for over a decade before its scholars decided to do anything about the problem.

It is significant to note that Daniel Peterson was very careful not to mention the fact that our work has had a significant effect upon thousands of members of the church.

Be this as it may, in our newsletter, *The Salt Lake City Messenger*, for August 1991, we announced we were preparing a detailed rebuttal to the F.A.R.M.S. articles. Unfortunately, after we began working on this book, a number of important matters came up which delayed the publication of

our response. Consequently, scholars at F.A.R.M.S. began to boast that we were not able to deal with their scholarship. For example, Professor Daniel C. Peterson triumphantly proclaimed that the book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, “and other books by the Tanners dealing with the Book of Mormon have been subjected to lengthy and devastating criticism . . . but the Tanners have failed to reply. One suspects they cannot.” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994)

Contrary to Peterson’s assumptions, we have no reason to fear the criticism set forth by Mormon scholars and feel we have successfully answered their objections in this book. Furthermore, we have also been working on a second volume which will respond to other accusations made against our work.

The Battle Within

While we knew that Mormon scholars were very upset with us, the treatment we received was mild compared with the wrath that was poured out on some of the church’s own scholars by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. For a number of years it has been evident that many of those associated with F.A.R.M.S. are very disturbed with Mormon scholars who express doubts about the Book of Mormon. In 1991, F.A.R.M.S. launched a vicious attack against some of the liberal scholars who were expressing doubts about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. These scholars were accused of being wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Although the controversy had been simmering for a number of years, it boiled over after Signature Books published a book edited by Dan Vogel entitled, *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*. This book, which contains contributions from a number of Mormon scholars, did not set well with some of the Mormon professors at the church’s Brigham Young University and others who are involved with F.A.R.M.S. Stephen E. Robinson, chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU, was incensed with the book. He compared the views expressed in the work to those of a Book of Mormon character named Korihor. He was a notorious “Anti-Christ” who was “struck dumb.” Korihor later went forth among a people known as the Zoramites and “as he went forth amongst them, behold, he was run

upon and trodden down, even until he was dead (see Book of Mormon, Alma, chapter 30). In any case, Professor Robinson warned:

Korihor’s back, and this time he’s got a printing press. Korihor, the infamous “alternate voice” in the Book of Mormon, insisted that “no man can know of anything which is to come” . . . In its continuing assault upon traditional Mormonism, Signature Books promotes with its recent and dubiously titled work . . . precisely these same naturalistic assumptions of the Korihor agenda in dealing with current Latter-day Saint beliefs. . . . this is a propaganda piece . . .

Variations on a single theme recur, offered like a Trojan horse, in most of the essays . . .

For years anti-Mormons have hammered the Church from the outside, insisting that Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saint scriptures he produced were not what they claimed to be. By and large the Latter-day Saints simply ignored these attacks. Whether Signature Books and its authors will convince the Saints of the same hostile propositions by attacking from the inside remains to be seen. . . . What the anti-Mormons couldn’t do with a frontal assault of contradiction, Signature and Vogel would now accomplish with a flanking maneuver of redefinition. . . .

The uniformity of perspective among the essays, the pervasive use of the straw man, and the absence of any opposing viewpoint identify *The Word of God* as a work of propaganda. . . .

I suppose by now it is clear that I did not like this book. . . . Give me a Walter Martin [a Protestant opponent of Mormonism] anytime, a good stout wolf with his own fur on, instead of those more timid or sly parading around in their ridiculous fleeces with their teeth and tails hanging out. Give me “Ex-Mormons for Jesus” or the Moody Bible Tract Society, who are at least honest about their anti-Mormon agenda, instead of Signature Books camouflaged as a “Latter-day Saint” press. I prefer my anti-Mormons straight up. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 312, 314, 317-318)

Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley also leveled his sights at Dan Vogel and Signature Books. He charged that Vogel has not

demonstrated “that his stance involves more than a murky sentimentalism or a confidence game aimed at accomplishing covertly what has not been done directly—namely, eradicating by radical transformation the faith resting on Joseph Smith’s prophetic claims” (*Ibid.*, page 296). On page 299, he charged that Dan Vogel “found a new patron in George D. Smith, owner of Signature Books . . . part of Smith’s effort involves showing that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient history, that is, not simply true.”

The articles printed by F.A.R.M.S. eventually led to the brink of a law suit in which Mormon scholars on both sides of the question might have to face each other in court. Eventually, however, F.A.R.M.S. decided to back down and issue a carefully worded “Correction or Clarification” in its newsletter. The following appeared in that statement:

In the May 1991 issue of *Insights*, reference was made to *Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Re-examined* as “expressly anti-Mormon.” Whereas affidavits reprinted and analyzed in this book may be considered “anti-Mormon,” F.A.R.M.S. expresses no position about the book.

Also, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, volume 3, statements are made that could be construed as calling unspecified contributors to *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* and Signature Books, Inc., “dishonest” and “hard-core anti-Latter-day Saints.” These statements were the reviewer’s interpretation of portions of the book, and no personal connotation was intended.

The opinions expressed in the reviews are those of the reviewers alone and do not necessarily represent the position of F.A.R.M.S. (*Insights: An Ancient Window*, July 1991, page 6)

In an Associated Press story, Vern Anderson reported:

To his critics, George D. Smith is a shadowy figure of considerable wealth bent on reshaping Mormonism by digging through its past. To colleagues, he’s a shy man of principle in pursuit of truth.

As president of Signature Books, an independent publisher of Mormon-related history and literature, Smith is committed to unfettered historical inquiry. . . .

Mormon Church-owned Deseret Book this month pulled two of Signature’s titles from its

shelves. One of them, “Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reexamined,” by Rodger Anderson, had been named the Mormon History Association’s best first book. The other was “The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture.”

At the same time, F.A.R.M.S. at Brigham Young University issued a “correction or clarification” . . .

Signature’s founding in 1981 grew out of the church’s decision to cancel a planned 16-volume history of the faith and to muzzle its own historical department. Smith . . . and his Mormon wife jumped at the chance to publish some of the rejected work. . . .

But if the so-called “apologists” and “revisionists” are merely at odds on the field of Mormon history, they are locked in a relative death grip over what most church members see as the cornerstones of Mormon doctrine. . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 22, 1991)

Although F.A.R.M.S. seemed to have pulled in its horns for a short time, when volume 4 of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* appeared in 1992, it was evident that the war was still on and that F.A.R.M.S. was prepared to fight to the bitter end. The editor, Daniel C. Peterson, used over seventy pages of his “Introduction” to justify the stand F.A.R.M.S. had taken against Signature books and other “anti-Mormons.”

In 1993 a book was published which caused a great deal of consternation among scholars at Brigham Young University and F.A.R.M.S. They obviously feared that it could have a profound effect on those who believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, was edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe.

Brent Metcalfe had formerly served as a missionary for the Mormon Church and later worked for Church Security. Ironically, like us, Mr. Metcalfe started out as an apologist for the Book of Mormon. Metcalfe not only believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, but he strongly supported the leaders of the church. For example, in a response to Wesley P. Walters’ tract, *Oops—There Goes the Priesthood*, Metcalfe complained that the “tract quickly deteriorates into a typical anti-Mormon polemic. Typical, because like many others of its kind, it is riddled with inconsistencies, errors, and conclusions that cannot be supported by the evidence.

. . . The Lord has set Prophets in all ages, human prophets, to guide His Church. The Lord has called a Prophet *today* for *today*, to whom we should look for guidance” (*Opps—There Goes Christianity, A Reply To: Opps—There Goes the Priesthood*, June 26, 1981).

Sometime around 1980, after he had returned from his mission, Brent Metcalfe began coming to our bookstore to argue with us about the truthfulness of Mormonism. Although he was just a young man at that time, it did not take long for us to perceive that he was one of the strongest defenders of the Mormon Church that we had encountered. It was obvious, in fact, that if he kept up his research, he would soon be a formidable opponent. While we had complete confidence that our work would meet the test of time, it was apparent that Metcalfe had a brilliant mind and was a very good debater. Furthermore, he appeared to be very confident about his position and almost seemed to feel he had a calling to refute our work and that of other critics of the church. As early as June, 1980, a writer for the *Mormon History Association Newsletter* referred to Metcalfe as “ ‘an avid student of Mormon History.’ ”

Unfortunately for Mormon scholars, as Brent Metcalfe continued his research, he began to see serious problems in the Book of Mormon and finally concluded it was not an actual historical account written by the ancient Nephites.

When *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* was published, defenders of the Mormon Church realized that they were confronted with a very serious problem indeed. Consequently, F.A.R.M.S. reacted in an unprecedented manner by launching a massive attack—a rebuttal containing 566 pages (see *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994). This volume of *Review of Books* has fourteen authors dealing with the ten scholars who wrote essays for *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*. The reviews in the F.A.R.M.S. rebuttal are not equal in size, but if they were, about 56 pages would be devoted to each author.

Since this two-pound tome contains 120 pages more than the book it is answering, it is obvious that F.A.R.M.S. is deeply concerned about the effect the work edited by Brent Metcalfe will have on the public. Furthermore, the response indicates that this may only be the beginning. In the past *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* was only published

once a year, but the new issue is set forth as “volume 6, number 1,” indicating that a second volume may appear this year. Moreover, the F.A.R.M.S. response contains a statement suggesting that more space may be devoted to *New Approaches* in the future.

While Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley is very displeased with both Brent Metcalfe and *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, he made this revealing comment about the book:

The most imposing attack on the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon has been assembled by Brent Lee Metcalfe. . . . the publication of *New Approaches* is an important event. It marks the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon currently available either from standard sectarian or more secularized anti-Mormon sources, or from the fringes of Mormon culture and intellectual life. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pages 211- 214)

Vern Anderson, a reporter for the Associated Press, noted that the response prepared by F.A.R.M.S. seemed to be rather spiteful in tone:

When Brent Metcalfe compiled a book of essays last year suggesting that Mormonism’s founding scriptures wasn’t the ancient history it purports to be, he expected some criticism.

Nearly a year later, he’s getting it, in a vitriolic volume that exceeds his own book by 100 pages and seeks to expose him as a faith-destroying secularist masquerading, badly, as a well-meaning pursuer of historic truth. . . .

“Pseudo-pious,” “shoddy pseudoscholarship,” “deceptive and specious” and “distorted” are just some of the barbs aimed at Metcalfe and other contributors to *New Approaches to The Book of Mormon* . . .

Metcalfe and the nine other essayists in *New Approaches*—most of them at least nominal Mormons—place *The Book of Mormon* squarely in the 19th century. Most, including Metcalfe, see it as entirely Smith’s creation. A few agree it is frontier fiction but believe it contains inspired truths.

The essayists . . . question the book’s authenticity on a variety of levels—textual, archaeological, demographic and linguistic. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, March 19, 1994)

Unfortunately, some of the F.A.R.M.S. writers evidently feel that one of the best ways to nullify the

influence of the book is to destroy the credibility of Brent Metcalfe. Realizing that Mr. Metcalfe does not have a college degree, they decided to use this in their attack. In their zeal to demonstrate Metcalfe's inability to deal with problems in the Book of Mormon these scholars seem to have overlooked what Hugh Nibley once said about the matter. Dr. Nibley, of course, is acclaimed by F.A.R.M.S. as a great scholar. In fact, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 2, 1990, page 1, Richard Dilworth Rust commented that Nibley "might be called the patron saint of F.A.R.M.S. . . ." In any case, Nibley pointed out that at one time a Protestant minister wanted to know about the credentials of a man known as "Robert C. Webb," who was chosen by the Mormon leaders to defend Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham. Dr. Nibley strongly asserted that degrees and academic positions were not as important as what a person actually knows:

Thus reassured, Bishop Spalding proceeded to demolish R.C. Webb: "We feel that we should be in a better position to judge the value of the opinions of Robert C. Webb, PhD . . . if we were told definitely who he is. . . . If Dr. Talmage . . . would inform us what the author's real name is, where he received his degree, and what academic position he holds, we should be better able to estimate the value of his opinions." Here it is again: The bishop is not interested in Webb's arguments and evidence, but in his status and rank—considerations that are supposed to bear no weight whatever with honest searchers after truth—*Nullus in verba!* What on earth have a man's name, degree, academic position, and of all things, opinions, to do with whether a thing is true or not? (*Improvement Era*, January, 1968, page 22)

Actually, in this particular case there was a real problem: although "Robert C. Webb, Ph.D." set himself forth as an expert on Egyptology, in reality he was a pretender. He was actually a professional writer the Mormon Church paid to defend the church. In 1960, the noted scholar Dr. Sidney B. Sperry acknowledged that Dr. Webb was actually "J. C. Homans" and that he did not have a Ph.D.:

He wrote a wonderful book, *Case Against Mormonism*, under the name of Robert C. Webb, Ph.D. I regret that the brethren let him put down Robert C. Webb, Ph.D., because he was no Ph.D.

(*Pearl of Great Price Conference*, December 10, 1960, 1964 edition, page 9)

For more information on this matter see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 300.

While we feel that Dr. Nibley glossed over the deception used in the case of "Robert C. Webb, Ph.D.," we do agree with the rest of his statement: "What on earth have a man's name, degree, academic position, and of all things, opinions, to do with whether a thing is true or not?"

Unlike J. C. Homans, Brent Metcalfe has never claimed that he has a degree. It seems petty, therefore, that Mormon scholars would try to exploit this matter. The continual pounding on Brent Metcalfe's lack of credentials tends to distract readers from the fact that a number of the other authors who wrote chapters for *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* are very well educated. Stan Larson, for example, "holds a Ph.D. in New Testament studies from the University of Birmingham." Deanne G. Matheny "holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Utah," and David P. Wright "holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern studies from the University of California at Berkeley." Other authors also have impressive credentials.

The editor of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, Daniel C. Peterson, sets the pattern for the attack on Brent Metcalfe's lack of credentials in a very cunning way. Instead of directly stating that Metcalfe does not have a degree, Dr. Peterson makes this comment in the Introduction:

The editor of *New Approaches*, Brent Lee Metcalfe, a graduate of Salt Lake City's Skyline High School, is currently a technical writer for a Utah computer company. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, page x)

Since Professor Peterson is so critical of Brent Metcalfe's writings, it might be good to point out that he himself has made two mistakes in the sentence cited above. Brent Metcalfe did not graduate from Skyline High School; he actually is a graduate of East High School. Moreover, he is not "a technical writer for a Utah computer company." He is actually "a technical editor" (see *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 446). This would be somewhat like referring to Professor Peterson as merely a writer for *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, when he is actually the editor of the publication.

In any case, Peterson did get two things right in the sentence cited above: Metcalfe did graduate from high school, and he does work for a computer company.

In looking through the book Professor Peterson edited we find that some of the authors follow his example and keep harping on Metcalfe's lack of education. On page 58 of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, John Gee wrote:

... Metcalfe, being "without the apprenticeship that graduate training provides" (Jan Shipps, quoted in Turley, *Victims*, 93), does not seem to have learned that one does not simply invent new abbreviations at whim . . .

Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley's article contained these comments:

Lindsey reports that when Metcalfe "returned from his mission, he lacked the academic credentials needed to enroll in college" (Lindsey, p. 107), hence he is "untrained as a scholar" (Lindsey, p. 108). . . . One item from Turley's book is worth contemplating: Turley reports that "Metcalfe lacked the graduate training in history that the others Shipps mentioned [Ronald W. Walker, Dean C. Jessee, and Marvin S. Hill] had, and "without the apprenticeship that graduate training provides," she said, "his interpretations of the data in the historical record were generally very wide of the mark." (*Ibid.*, pages 211-212, footnote 36)

On page 214, Midgley again belittles Brent Metcalfe by referring to his lack of scholarly ability:

In fact, most of the proof-texting provided by Metcalfe (pp. x-xi) to add authority and legitimacy to his book is irrelevant to its contents. He can be excused for botching such matters, since he has no academic experience or training—in fact, he has no training beyond his high school diploma. He is an autodidact. Unfortunately, it shows. (*Ibid.*, page 214)

Professor William J. Hamblin, of Brigham Young University, seems to reecho the same monotonous information given by Peterson, Gee and Midgley:

By comparison, Metcalfe himself is an autodidact who never attended college. (*Ibid.*, page 445, footnote 26)

In the last paragraph of his article (page 522) Hamblin remarked:

In conclusion, Metcalfe's writing betrays an academic immaturity which could benefit from a healthy dose of disciplined tutelage in a good undergraduate program. His entire article has the form of scholarship, but denies the power thereof. . . . it raises serious questions as to whether any of Metcalfe's work should be taken seriously.

Daniel C. Peterson, who started the attack on Brent Metcalfe by pointing out his lack of education at the beginning of the book, could not resist taking a final parting shot at him by again reminding readers of his lack of credentials:

Or consider Professor Shipps's comment that Mr. Metcalfe's "interpretations of the data in the historical record were generally very wide of the mark" owing to his lack of academic training, although he was nonetheless "clearly intoxicated . . . with the idea that he possessed knowledge that would alter the world's understanding of the beginnings of Mormonism." Intoxication is hardly an asset to accurate scholarship.

From the above, it is clear that a significant number of F.A.R.M.S. scholars seem bent on convincing their readers that Brent Metcalfe is not capable of writing or editing anything critical of the Book of Mormon because he is uneducated and biased. Furthermore, they tend to look down on the other nine authors who wrote articles for the book.

A Disgusting Joke?

As the battle between liberal Mormon scholars and those at F.A.R.M.S. has become more intense, the rhetoric has often become very harsh. Brigham Young University professor William Hamblin, who also wrote an article attacking our work, has been at the forefront in the war of insulting words. Hamblin started a computer bulletin board known as Morm-Ant which deals with Mormonism and antiquities. On August 27, 1993, Hamblin posted some derogatory "stories" he had heard regarding F.A.R.M.S. and

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