

THE BOOK OF MORMON:

INSPIRED SCRIPTURE OR A WORK OF FICTION?

The battle began in the year 1830 when the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon. Smith proclaimed that an angel had revealed that the ancient inhabitants of the New World had written a religious history on gold plates and that God had given him the power to translate the record. Moreover, the prophet maintained that “**the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth**, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get **nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book**” (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 461).

Besides his assertion that the Book of Mormon was far superior to the Bible, he charged that the Bible had been changed by “Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or **designing and corrupt priests . . .**” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 57).

Furthermore, Joseph Smith boldly proclaimed that all other churches were false and that Mormonism was the only true religion. He claimed, in fact, that both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to him bringing the message that all other churches “were wrong”: “I was answered that I must **join none of them, for they were all**

wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that *all their creeds were an abomination in his sight . . .*” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

No Middle Ground

Joseph Smith’s uncompromising attack on traditional Christianity led to a great deal of conflict with those who did not accept his beliefs. Not surprisingly, Smith’s adversaries began to study the Book of Mormon and protested that they found some serious errors in the book. The Mormon Church, on the other hand, continued to proclaim that the Book of Mormon was the most important and accurate book on earth. For example, Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

The Book of Mormon claims to be a divinely inspired record . . . **If false**, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, **calculated to deceive and ruin millions . . . if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it: if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it . . .**

If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated. . . .

But on the other hand, if investigation should prove the Book of Mormon true . . . the American and English nations . . . **should utterly reject both the Popish and Protestant ministry**, together with **all the churches** which have been built up by them or that have sprung from them, as **being entirely destitute of authority . . .** (*Orson Pratt’s Works*, “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” Liverpool, 1851, pages 1-2)

After the death of Joseph Smith and the first apostles, the Mormon Church continued to proclaim the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The church has greatly prospered since the days of these early leaders and now claims to have about **9,000,000** members [1994].

Like other believers in the Book of Mormon, we originally accepted the work at face value and felt that the book contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.” In fact,

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we were convinced that it would be the tool God would use to bring sincere people throughout the world to **true** Christianity. When we began our research with regard to Mormonism, we sincerely wanted to silence the critics and prove that the Book of Mormon came from the hand of God. Although it was very painful at first, our eyes were eventually opened to perceive that there were some serious problems in Joseph Smith's major work.

Our study led us to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon is **not** an ancient or divinely-inspired record, but rather a product of the nineteenth century. Since the early 1960's we have published a number of books following Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt's advice to state "clearly and logically" the "evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected."

LDS Scholars Very Upset

In 1990, we published a book entitled, *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 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 *Review of Books*, vol. 5. Prior to this time virtually all church scholars connected with BYU and F.A.R.M.S. refused to review our publications.

An article written by David Merrill pointed out that the Mormon leaders tried to restrain church 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 Jan. 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-five 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 evidently believe that the less people know about our publications the better. Consequently, they have maintained a conspiracy of silence for thirty-five 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 almost silent for over three decades, 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*. All of these articles were specifically written to counter our work regarding 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)

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 our new book, *Answering Mormon Scholars*. Furthermore, we have also been working on a second volume which will respond to other accusations made against our work. Our 179-page response, *Answering Mormon Scholars*, regularly sells for \$6.00 but is now available at a **special price of \$5.00** if ordered before August 15, 1994.

A Condescending Review

The most condescending review of our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, was done by Tom

Nibley. This review, which was published in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, was recommended in the F.A.R.M.S. publication, *Insights: An Ancient Window*, July 1993: “Reviews in volume 5 cover a wide range of topics . . . Several of the reviews examine works critical of the Book of Mormon. One of the most engaging of these reviews is a spirited look by Tom Nibley at the Tanners’ *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon.*”

On page 274 of this rebuttal, Tom Nibley goes out of his way to make it clear that he is the son of noted Mormon scholar Dr. Hugh Nibley: “Shortly after the papyri were turned over to the Church they were given over to the tender mercies of one Hugh Winder Nibley (yes, the one sometimes **referred to by me, my brothers and sisters as ‘Daddy’**) . . .”

In his article Tom Nibley has a number of terms which he uses to refer to us in a mocking manner:

“our sagacious swamis” page 275
 “our super sleuths” page 275
 “our learned mentors” page 276
 “our gallant pedagogues, the Tanners” page 278
 “the febrile brains of our dedicated cognoscenti”
 page 278
 “our honored exegetes” page 279
 “our meritorious mentors” page 280
 “our learned oracles” page 282
 “our revered gurus” page 283
 “our perspicacious pedagogues” page 283
 “our canny counselors” page 283
 “our erudite educators” page 284
 “professorial pedagogues such as, well—the Tanners!!!” page 284
 “our formidable savants” page 285
 “our transcendent tutors” page 287

Although we feel that Mr. Nibley has every right to ridicule us, we wonder why the editors of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, which is supposed to be a scholarly publication, would allow such disdainful material to appear in their publication.

Tom Nibley acknowledges that he is not really a scholar and is not familiar with much of the material we deal with:

In my ramblings through Hollywood and environs in search of employment I occasionally encounter a gentleman named Robert Pierce (we’re actors who often audition for the same parts) who has made something of an avocation out of studying anti-Mormon literature. As I have taken exception to some of the things he has said, he provided me a copy of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Of the Tanners, he informed me, “They are specifically known for their thoroughness and non-ad hominem approach.” And he challenged me to examine their work.

The gauntlet having thus been thrown, I thought, “I

might as well pick it up.” So let’s take a look at the Tanners and their thrilling expose. . . . **I make no claim to being a scholar and am not familiar with much of the literature with which the Tanners work**, but there are some things they bring up that I do know something about. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, page 273)

Tom Nibley’s own admission that he is “not familiar with much of the literature” which we deal with is certainly true. A very good example of his lack of knowledge regarding our work is found on page 288 of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*. He strongly asserts that we grab on to “any straw that they think might break the Church’s back, although they take pains to **distance themselves** from things like the Spalding manuscript and **Mark Hofmann**, things that have been completely debunked.”

Tom Nibley, of course, is referring to the Mormon forger Mark Hofmann, who sold many forged documents to the Mormon Church and other collectors. His statement would give the reader the impression that **after** Hofmann’s documents were “debunked” we distanced ourselves from the forgeries. The truth of the matter, however, is that we were the first ones to publicly cast doubt on Mark Hofmann’s documents.

About eighteen months before the police and federal officials began investigating Mr. Hofmann, we printed the fact that we had serious reservations about his Salamander letter. Under the title, “Is It Authentic?” we published the following in our newsletter, *The Salt Lake City Messenger*:

At the outset we should state that we have some **reservations concerning the authenticity** of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. . . . We will give the **reasons for our skepticism** as we proceed with this article. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1984, page 1)

We went on in the same newsletter to reveal disturbing parallels between the Salamander letter and E. D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled*, published in 1834, and then noted:

While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, **we do not feel that we can endorse** it until further evidence comes forth. (*Ibid.*, page 4)

The Salamander letter was supposed to have been written by Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon in 1830, just months after the Book of Mormon was first published. The contents of this letter were very embarrassing to the Mormon Church. In Joseph Smith’s official story of how he received the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was “translated” he said that the Angel Moroni (the name was given as Nephi when Joseph Smith printed the story in the *Times and Seasons*) appeared to him and revealed the location of the plates. In Hofmann’s forgery, however, Harris claimed that Smith told him that when he went to get the plates, instead of an angel appearing, a “**white**

salamander” in the bottom of a hole “transfigured himself” into a “spirit” and “struck me 3 times.”

While we expected that some anti-Mormon critics might be upset with our insinuation of forgery, we were surprised to find that some of the top Mormon scholars opposed our research. On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the *Los Angeles Times*:

. . . unusual caution about the letter’s genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon Church. . . . The Tanners’ suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

On September 1, 1984, the Mormon Church’s own *Deseret News* reported:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document **is a forgery**, they told the *Deseret News*. . . . Jerald Tanner . . . says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful.”

In the months that followed, we printed a great deal of material questioning the authenticity of the Salamander letter (see the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for September 1984, January 1985, June 1985, August 1985). On August 22, 1984, we published the first part of a booklet entitled, *The Money Digging Letters*. In this pamphlet we made it clear that we were investigating all of Mark Hofmann’s major discoveries. The next day Mr. Hofmann came to our bookstore to defend his documents. He appeared to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. It was about fourteen months later that Hofmann committed two murders that led to his arrest.

On February 23, 1987, Mark Hofmann appeared in court and confessed he had murdered two people and forged documents. When Mr. Hofmann later made a more detailed confession of his crimes for the County Attorney’s Office, he admitted that he had indeed used Howe’s book, *Mormonism Unveiled*. This, of course, vindicated the theory we had proposed three years earlier in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*.

If Tom Nibley really did not know what happened in the Hofmann case before, he should have found out when he read *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 1-7, where we discussed both Mormon and anti-Mormon forgeries. The facts regarding Mark Hofmann’s forgeries were clearly set forth in that part of the book. Whether Mr. Nibley misunderstood the material presented, or deliberately distorted the facts is hard to determine. What is clear, however, is that his appraisal of the situation is not supported by the facts. He claims that we are “**naive and credulous** when it comes to grabbing **any straw** that they think might break the Church’s back . . .” (page 288). The Mark Hofmann affair, however, demonstrates just the opposite.

A Fierce Battle Within

While there have always been people in the Mormon Church who had doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, most of them have been afraid to publicly express them for fear they might be ostracized or even excommunicated from the church. Significantly, even the noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts became very skeptical of the Book of Mormon during the last decade of his life. Although he did not publicly express his doubts, Roberts did prepare two important manuscripts that were suppressed for many years because of the fear that the contents would prove harmful to the Mormon Church.

We were able to obtain copies of Roberts' secret manuscripts and published them in 1980 under the title *Roberts' Manuscripts Revealed*. Five years later the University of Illinois Press printed these manuscripts in a book entitled, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, and in 1992 Signature Books published a paper-back edition. Mormon scholar Truman G. Madsen acknowledged that the manuscripts were indeed prepared by B. H. Roberts but maintained that Roberts was merely playing "the 'Devil's Advocate' approach to stimulate thought" (see *Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1979, pages 440-42).

We cannot agree with Professor Truman G. Madsen's assessment of this matter. A careful reading of Roberts' manuscripts leads one to believe that he was in the process of losing faith in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. Although Roberts may have started out merely playing the part of the "Devil's Advocate," he seems to have played the role so well that he developed grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In his secret manuscripts B. H. Roberts made these revealing comments:

One other subject remains to be considered in this division . . . viz.— **was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon** from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters . . . That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; **that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question.** . . .

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of **a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith**, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, **given the suggestions that are found in the "common knowledge"** of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, **would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is.** (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 243, 250)

If from all that has gone before in Part 1, the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin . . . if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then

it could be said **there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.**

In the first place there is **a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin.** The narrative proceeds in characteristic **disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency.** (*Ibid.*, page 251)

There were other Anti-Christ among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators . . . they are all of one breed and brand; **so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history**, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America. (*Ibid.*, page 271)

A careful reading of the material cited above leads one to the inescapable conclusion that B. H. Roberts had serious doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It is hard to believe that a sincere believer would make the comment concerning Book of Mormon stories which we cited above: "The evidence I sorrowfully submit, **points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history . . .**"

These revealing words did not come from the lips of an uninformed and bias "anti-Mormon" writer, but rather they are the carefully-worded pronouncements of the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts — believed by many to have been the greatest defender of the faith that the church has ever produced.

B. H. Roberts' opinion regarding the Book of Mormon must carry a great deal of weight because he had access to some of the most important records in the church archives. According to Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, Roberts "Became senior president of the First Council of Seventy" and was appointed "assistant Church historian in 1901 . . ." (*A Book of Mormons*, 1982, pages 246-247). James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard inform us that "In May 1901 President Joseph F. Smith appointed B. H. Roberts to edit Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* for republication" (*The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 1976, page 447). Roberts also wrote the six-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church*.

The book, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, set forth a document which contains compelling evidence that Roberts was struggling with serious doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon right up until the time of his death in 1933. This information comes from the "Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd, former dean of the Graduate School at Brigham Young University and a missionary under Roberts in the Eastern States Mission."

(We obtained photographs of part of the handwritten journal from F.A.R.M.S. and have transcribed the material printed below from Lloyd's own journal.) Lloyd claimed that he had a "surprising" conversation with B. H. Roberts and the revealing information which Roberts related to him was recorded in his journal on August 7, 1933 — less than two months before Roberts' death. Wesley P. Lloyd's journal contained the following:

The conversation then drifted to the Book of Mormon and this surprising story he related to me. . . . a Logan man by the name of Riter persuaded a scholarly friend who was a student in Washington to read thru and to criticize the Book of Mormon. . . . Riter sent the letter to Dr[.] Talmadge who studied it over and during a trip east ask[ed] Brother Roberts to make a careful investigation and study and to get an answer for the letter.

Roberts went to work and investigated it from every angle but could not answer it satisfactorily to himself. At his request Pres. Grant called a meeting of the Twelve Apostles and Bro. Roberts presented the matter, told them frankly that **he was stumped** and ask[ed] for their aide [*sic*] in the explanation. In answer, they merely one by one stood up and bore testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. George Albert Smith in tears testified that his faith in the Book had not been shaken by the question. . . . No answer was available. Bro[.] Roberts could not criticize them for not being able to answer it or to assist him, but said that **in a Church which claimed continuous revelation, a crisis had arisen** where revelation was necessary. After the meeting he wrote Pres. Grant expressing **his disappointment at the failure** . . . It was mentioned at the meeting by Bro[.] Roberts that there were other Book of Mormon problems that needed special attention.

Richard R. Lyman spoke up and ask[ed] if they were things that would help our prestige and when Bro[.] Roberts answered no, **he said then why discuss them.** This attitude was too much for the historically minded Roberts[.] . . .

After this Bro[.] Roberts made a special Book of Mormon study. Treated the problem systematically and historically and in a 400 type written page thesis set forth a revolutionary article on the origin of the Book of Mormon and sent it to Pres[.] Grant. It[']s **an article far too strong for the average Church member but for the intellectual group he considers it a contribution to assist in explaining Mormonism.**

He swings to a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon and shows that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience which he had in presenting to the word the Book of Mormon and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective.

He explained certain literary difficulties in the Book . . .

These are some of the things which 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 most bolstering. His greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph lies in the *Doctrine and Covenants*." ("Private Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd," August 7, 1933, transcribed from photographs of the handwritten journal reproduced in the F.A.R.M.S.' publication, *Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* 1986, by Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch)

This appears to be the **last important statement B. H. Roberts made on the Book of Mormon before his death.** Although Roberts had spent a good portion of his life defending the Mormon Church, he became very disturbed with the church's suppressive policy as he reached the end of his life. According to Lloyd's journal, Roberts even "**offered to resign**" his position as a General Authority of the Mormon Church over the problems he was having with the church.

That B. H. Roberts did not have faith in all of Joseph Smith's claims has been verified by some significant information which came to our attention in 1992. One of the most important declarations that Joseph Smith made was that John the Baptist appeared to him and Oliver Cowdery in 1829 and restored the Aaronic Priesthood. According to D. Michael Quinn, a noted authority on Mormon history who had access to sensitive church documents, Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the church, claimed that Roberts doubted the reality of this important tenant of the church. Dr. Quinn also demonstrated that Roberts had a serious dispute with Heber J. Grant, the seventh prophet of the church, regarding the alteration of church history:

. . . B. H. Roberts, a seventy, had problems directly involved with the writing of Church history. In November 1910, Church President **Joseph F. Smith told the Salt Lake Temple fast meeting that Elder Roberts doubted that Joseph had actually received a priesthood restoration from John the Baptist.** Church president Heber J. Grant also required B. H. Roberts **to censor some documents** in the seventh volume of the *History of the Church*. Elder Roberts was furious. "I desire, however, to take this occasion of disclaiming any responsibility **for the mutilating of that very important part of President Young's manuscript,**" Roberts replied to President Grant in August 1932, "and also to say, that while you had the physical power of eliminating that passage from the *History*, **I do not believe you had any moral right to do so.**" (*Sunstone*, February 1992, pages 13-14)

Many years ago we were amazed to learn that a prominent Mormon scholar stated she believed in the Book of Mormon but did not accept the story of the gold plates. We felt that such a thing could not be possible because it would mean that Joseph Smith's story concerning how he obtained and protected the plates would be fraudulent. In our way of thinking, if Joseph Smith did not actually receive gold plates from an angel of God, it would be unreasonable to accept the "translation" that is printed in the Book of

Mormon. We have since learned that many Mormons who say they believe the Book of Mormon, actually feel that there were not any ancient Nephites or Lamanites in the New World, but that Joseph Smith himself authored the book. They feel, however, that although the Book of Mormon is not historical, it does contain many good teachings and therefore can be considered as “scripture.”

Just a few months ago, we were very surprised to hear Van Hale, a noted defender of the Mormon Church, express doubts about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Hale, who co-hosts a radio show on KTKK in Salt Lake City, was asked what he really believed about the story of the Nephites and Lamanites mentioned in the Book of Mormon. In response, Hale affirmed that he believed that the Book of Mormon is inspired scripture, but then went on to explain that when he served on a mission for the church, he had a book containing pictures of ancient American ruins which he felt proved the Book of Mormon to be historically true. Later, however, as he began to study the matter he realized that the evidence did not prove the Book of Mormon to be true. After many years of diligent study he finally came to lean toward the view that the Book of Mormon is “**an inspired parable**” (KTKK Radio, February 6, 1994).

During the past few years a number of Mormon scholars have become increasingly vocal about their doubts regarding the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Even though they know they may face excommunication, they continue to publicly express their views.

Wolves In Sheep’s Clothing?

While we knew that Mormon scholars were very upset with us, the treatment we received was mild compared with the wrath 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. have been very disturbed with Mormon scholars who expressed doubts about the Book of Mormon. In 1991, F.A.R.M.S. launched a vicious attack against some of the more liberal scholars who were expressing doubts about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. They were accused of being wolves in sheep’s clothing and of even offering “a Trojan horse” to an unsuspecting Mormon audience. Stephen E. Robinson, chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU, was incensed with the book, *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, published by Signature Book. He compared the views expressed in the work to those of Korihor, the notorious “Anti-Christ” who was “struck dumb” because of his unbelief (see Book of Mormon, Alma, chapter 30). Professor Robinson declared:

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, *The Word of God*, precisely these same naturalistic assumptions of the Korihor agenda in dealing with current Latter-day Saint beliefs. . . . this is a propaganda piece . . .

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. 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. . . .

I suppose by now it is clear that I did not like this book. . . . **Give me a Walter Martin 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, pages 312, 314, 317-318)

The following year, Professor Daniel C. Peterson, editor of *Review of Books*, warned of an “anti-Mormon” movement within the church itself:

We have seen that George D. Smith and Signature Books reject the title “anti-Mormons.” . . . Are “anti-Mormons” mere mythical beasts, the stuff of persecution-fixated Latter-day Saint imaginations? If not, how would we recognize an “anti-Mormon” if we saw one? . . .

Nobody would suggest for a moment that George D. Smith and Dan Vogel fit the traditional “anti-Mormon” mold in all respects. There are a number of differences between them and the late “Dr.” Walter Martin, and between them and the Tanners. . . .

In the past, anti-Mormon attacks almost invariably came from outside the Church; for the most part, they still do. For the first time since the Godbeite movement, however, we may today be dealing with a more-or-less **organized “anti-Mormon” movement within the Church**. With “anti-Mormon Mormons,” as Robert McKay puts it. . . .

Should we be concerned about the possibility of unwholesome opinions, even **enemies, within the Church**? Jesus certainly seemed to think that internal enemies were a possibility. “Beware of false prophets,” he said, “which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). . . . So the possibility of enemies among the membership of the Church seems established. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, pp. liv-lvi)

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 the Mormon scholar 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.

Sometime around 1979, 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.

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 — 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*.

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.

While Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley was 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)

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology normally sells for \$26.95, but if it is ordered from Utah Lighthouse before August 15, 1994, the price will be **only \$23.95** plus postage. (Note—this book is written in scholarly language and may be difficult for some people to understand.)

Vern Anderson, a reporter for The Associated Press, noted that the response prepared by F.A.R.M.S. to *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* 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)

As the battle between liberal Mormon scholars and those supporting F.A.R.M.S. became more intense, some of the rhetoric became very harsh. Since Brent Metcalfe was the editor of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, he became a special target of ad hominem attacks by Mormon scholars. Consequently, a good deal of innuendo and ridicule were heaped upon him.

For example, Brigham Young University professor Daniel C. Peterson, who edits the *Review of Books*, ridiculed Mr. Metcalfe for what he perceived to be his gullibility in promoting the documents forged by Mark Hofmann (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pages 528-529, 544-545, 551). Unfortunately, in his attempt to castigate Brent Metcalfe, Peterson failed to tell his readers that the Mormon Church itself bought many of Hofmann's documents and church leaders supported him until the very end.

Furthermore, some of the church's top scholars helped validate the very documents which later turned out to be forgeries. How, then, can Professor Peterson single out Brent Metcalfe for failure to detect Hofmann's deceit? One would think that Peterson would be far more concerned that the leaders of the church, who are supposed to be inspired by God to detect evil conspiracies, would fall for Hofmann's nefarious deception. It is clear, therefore, that Peterson has used a double standard in making his accusation against Metcalfe.

Moreover, we should also point out that Daniel Peterson, who serves on the Board of Directors of F.A.R.M.S., fails to tell his readers that F.A.R.M.S. itself was deeply involved with promoting Hofmann's forged documents. In fact, the staff at F.A.R.M.S. accepted the Salamander letter as an authentic document. This, of course, is understandable since Mark Hofmann was a very clever forger. The problem,

however, is that these scholars went much further. While it should have been obvious to anyone who carefully read the letter that it contained a devastating blow to the Mormon Church, the scholars at F.A.R.M.S. became apologists for the letter. The Foundation proceeded to whitewash the contents of the letter so that it would appear acceptable to the Mormon people. In a F.A.R.M.S. Update entitled *Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander*, we find the following:

Martin Harris' letter [the Salamander letter] . . . has dismayed some people. **Harris talks of a "white salamander" which was "transfigured" into "the spirit" otherwise known to us as the Angel Moroni** . . . as new research is showing, the salamander has been thought for millennia to have supernatural and extraordinary powers . . .

Obviously, much has changed culturally since 1830. **Some of us may wince at the suggestion that an angel of God should be associated with, or described as, a salamander.** But to people then, no image or description would better fit the appearance of a brilliant white spiritual being, once a valiant soldier, now dwelling in a blazing pillar of light, shockingly pure and glorious, speaking with the voice of God while flying through the midst of Heaven, **than the salamander! Moroni should be flattered** . . .

Still, it was predictable that **people would not understand this.** (*Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander*, June 1985)

While Brent Metcalfe clearly recognized that the contents of the Salamander letter discredited the Book of Mormon, scholars at F.A.R.M.S. went so far as to suggest that the Salamander letter provided additional support for the Book of Mormon! In the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, June 2, 1985, the following was printed:

The recently discovered Martin Harris letter . . . **adds evidence to support Harris' account of his interview with Prof. Charles Anthon**, according to researchers at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) . . .

John W. Welch, president of the foundation, said the phrase "short hand Egyptian" is a scholarly term that Harris probably would not have learned on his own.

"The phrase almost certainly came from Anthon," declared Welch. "It is a very precise term that was used by scholars in the 1820s and would have been known to just a few students of ancient languages. . . . it is highly unlikely that the phrase was part of Harris' vocabulary."

In the F.A.R.M.S. publication, *Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel With a Salamander?* page 1, footnote 1, the staff reported that they had found "**further evidence in favor of the authenticity of the [Salamander] letter**" in the portion of the letter which mentioned short hand Egyptian. Actually, the appearance of these words in the Salamander letter did **not** help establish its authenticity. On the contrary, it only demonstrated that the forger of the

letter plagiarized these words from a letter by W. W. Phelps which was published in *Mormonism Unveiled*, page 273.

In our opinion, F.A.R.M.S.' unusual response to the salamander scandal raises the question of how far its researchers will go to save Joseph Smith. The fact that they tried so desperately to explain away the obvious occultic implications of the Salamander letter causes us to have serious apprehension concerning their work.

In view of the failure of church leaders, F.A.R.M.S., and Mormon historians to detect that Hofmann was forging documents and selling a "nonexistent" McLellin collection, it seems incredible that Professor Daniel Peterson would point his finger at Brent Metcalfe.

A Disgusting Joke?

Brigham Young University professor William J. Hamblin, who also serves on the Board of Directors at F.A.R.M.S., was very upset with Brent Metcalfe. His anger against Metcalfe led him into making a very offensive mistake. When he prepared his response to Mr. Metcalfe, he included what he termed "a joke" which eventually caused embarrassment to F.A.R.M.S., Brigham Young University and the Mormon Church. Associated Press writer Vern Anderson wrote an article concerning the matter which was published in the church's own newspaper:

The salvos contained in the 566-page "Review of Books on the Book of Mormon" come as no surprise, given the longstanding animus between scholars associated with FARMS, many of them professors at church-owned Brigham Young University, and those published by the independent Signature Books. . . . Recently a review by BYU history professor William Hamblin containing an **encrypted message "Metcalfe is butthead"** — was hastily edited out after the "Review" had gone to press. (*Deseret News*, March 22-23, 1994)

As we understand it, "Butthead" is an animated character that appears on MTV and is known for his crude and stupid behavior.

After reading that the demeaning comment "was hastily edited out after the 'Review' had gone to press," we closely examined our copy of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, to see if any remnants of the acrostic remained in the book. To our surprise, we found that even after the article was revised, twelve of the original eighteen characters remained (see pages 434-442 of the F.A.R.M.S. publication). In this particular acrostic the first letter of each paragraph was used to form the words. (It should be noted, however, that if a paragraph was part of a quotation from another source, it was not counted as part of the acrostic.)

Below we show the original message Professor William Hamblin wrote and the way it was later altered in an attempt to cover up his vindictive attitude toward Brent Metcalfe. The reader will note that in the modified version we have shown letters that have been changed with asterisks:

METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD
MET *FE I* BUT* HEA***

It seems evident that those who were more sensible at F.A.R.M.S. realized that Hamblin's so-called "joke" could have a very serious effect on the foundation and scrambled to correct the problem. According to Brent Metcalfe, the book **had already gone to press** when the encrypted message was discovered. William Hamblin seems to have realized that he made a very serious error in judgment and tried to pacify Mr. Metcalfe by claiming it was only a joke:

I am writing to apologize for my **private practical joke**. Whenever I write a paper Dan Petersen [Daniel C. Peterson] will be editing, I always include a joke or two for **his enjoyment** — fake footnotes, comments about space aliens and the golden plates, etc. The acrostic was simply a **light-hearted joke** for Dan's amusement. . . . (Computer message by William Hamblin, dated March 14, 1994)

Brent Metcalfe wrote the following concerning Professor Hamblin's attempt to belittle him:

When I heard rumors that William J. Hamblin, FARMS board member and BYU historian, had a caustic encryption in his review . . . I summarily dismissed them. Surely no legitimate scholar would stoop to such an inane level. However, it seems that I underestimated Hamblin's "scholarly" prowess. In the latest "Review of Books on the Book of Mormon" Hamblin had the first letter of succeeding paragraphs spell out the message: "METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD"

I say "Hamblin HAD" because the "Review" has gone back to press to rectify Hamblin's demeaning remark. I have been told that Daniel C. Peterson, FARMS board member and "Review" editor, approved its inclusion — I am unaware of other FARMS board members who may have known. Frankly, I'm stunned. Hamblin and Peterson's behavior is contrary to all Mormon ethics I was taught.

Do Hamblin and Peterson's methods typify the brand of "scholarship" FARMS, BYU Department of History, and BYU Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages cultivates and endorses? Evidently some have shifted from apologist to misologist. (Computer message by Brent Metcalfe, dated March 8, 1994)

If BYU professor Daniel C. Peterson did approve the publication of the rude statement, as Metcalfe claims, this would mean that at least two members of the F.A.R.M.S. Board of Directors were involved in the so-called "joke." In this regard, it should be remembered that Professor Hamblin acknowledged that he always included "a joke or two for his [Peterson's] enjoyment. . . . The acrostic was simply a light-hearted joke for Dan's amusement." Hamblin apparently believed that Professor Peterson would find the "joke" amusing.

On March 9, 1994, *The Daily Herald*, published in Provo, Utah, printed an Associated Press article concerning the bizarre incident:

SALT LAKE CITY—Independent Mormon scholar Brent Metcalfe is shaking his head over a practical joke . . .

Metcalfe edited the 1993 "New Approaches to the Book of Mormon," published by Signature Books, which raised the hackles of many traditional scholars into the scripture that is foundational of the Mormon faith.

Indeed, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, or FARMS, planned to release on Wednesday a 600-page book rebutting the essays in Metcalfe's book.

And thereby hangs the tale.

According to Metcalfe, the rude message was to have been spelled out in the first letter of the first words of the opening paragraphs of an article written for the FARMS book by William Hamblin, a history professor at Brigham Young University.

The coded message was to have read, "Metcalfe is butthead," Metcalfe said. He said he learned about it from someone who had seen the article.

Metcalfe said that according to the, er, scuttlebutt, FARMS learned about the encryption just as the volume was going into print, quickly halted the press run and **rewrote and reprinted the offending pages**.

But FARMS editor Brent Hall would not confirm that Tuesday.

"The book will be out tomorrow. The book that will come out tomorrow **will not have that**," Hall said. "We had **some problems with the book** — footnote problems, binding problems, and an article that **we thought needed some revision**, which was done."

Was the article Hamblin's?

"**That was the article**," Hall said. . . .

Both Hamblin and Peterson seem to be very skillful in making *ad hominem* attacks on those with whom they differ. Since Professor Peterson serves as editor of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, he sets a very bad example for contributors to that publication. Anyone who examines the articles written by Daniel C. Peterson, William Hamblin, Louis Midgley, and some of the other Mormon scholars will see that they have sometimes been mean spirited in their attempt to save the church.

Although Metcalfe is a powerful debater, in the book he has edited he has not used the vitriolic type of approach which appears so frequently in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*. Professor William Hamblin accused Metcalfe of "academic immaturity" on page 522 of his response. We feel that Hamblin should take a careful look at his own writings. If we had written the tasteless acrostic mentioned above and had directed it at William Hamblin or Daniel C. Peterson, we would never hear the end of it. These scholars certainly use a double standard when they deal with those they perceive to be enemies of the church.

Plagiarism From John?

On page 76 of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, we printed photographic proof that Joseph Smith plagiarized from a New Testament book in writing his Book of Mormon. The material was taken from the eleventh

chapter of the book of John. This portion of John's book relates the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

The parallels between the two stories are astounding:

One — In both stories a man seems to die and a period of time elapses:

And it came to pass that after two days and two nights they were about to take his body and lay it in a sepulchre. . . . (Book of Mormon, Alma 19:1)

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. (Bible, John 11:17)

Two — Both Martha and an unnamed queen use the words "he stinketh":

. . . others say that he is dead and that "he stinketh . . ." (Alma 19:5)

. . . by this time he stinketh . . . (John 11:39)

Three — Both Ammon and Jesus use the word "sleepeth" with regard to the man:

. . . he sleepeth . . . (Alma 19:8)

Lazarus sleepeth . . . (John 11:11)

Four — Both Ammon and Jesus say that the man will rise again:

. . . he shall rise again . . . (Alma 19:8)

Thy brother shall rise again. (John 11:23)

Five — As we will show below, the conversation between Ammon and the queen contains phrases that are strangely similar to those used by Jesus and Martha.

Six — In both cases the man arose:

. . . he arose . . . (Alma 19:12)

he that was dead came forth . . . (John 11:44)

The fact that there are so many parallels between Alma 19 and John 11 is almost impossible to explain unless one admits that plagiarism is involved. There are not only many similar thoughts, but even the use of uncommon words and expressions. It seems obvious, too, that the author of the Book of Mormon was plagiarizing from the Bible rather than the other way around. The Nephites could not have had the King James Version of the New Testament, and the Apostle John certainly did not have the Nephite scriptures. The only logical conclusion, therefore, is that sometime after the King James Bible was published in A.D. 1611, someone borrowed from it to create the story in the Book of Mormon. Not surprisingly, the evidence clearly points to Joseph Smith the Mormon prophet.

Unfortunately, John Tvedtnes, who has criticized our work in the F.A.R.M.S. publication *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, could not accept what should be obvious to unbiased observer and protested as follows:

The Tanners compare four verses (Alma 19:1, 5, 8, 12) from the account of the raising of King Lamoni with the story of the raising of Lazarus in John 11, from whence they believe it was plagiarized. There are, to be sure, **some similarities**, since, in each case, someone was brought back from the dead. But the Tanners have gone too far. Even a cursory glance at their schematic comparison (p. 76) shows that the order of events is quite different in the two accounts. There are also substantive differences. For example, while Lamoni had been lying (presumably dead) on his bed for two days and two nights (Alma 19:1), Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days (John 11: 17). The Tanners' use of selected verses from both accounts stacks the evidence of plagiarism in their favor. When one compares the complete accounts from Alma and John, the parallels seem **insignificant indeed**.

Nevertheless, one can say that **if the parallels are all valid**, because of their number alone, they could be taken **as prima facie evidence that the account in Alma 19 was taken from John 11**. It behooves us, therefore, to examine each of the supposed parallels to determine their validity.

The Tanners point, for example, to the fact that Lazarus had "lain in the grave" (John 11:17) and that the people were about to "lay [Lamoni's body] in a sepulchre" (Alma 19:1). But where else would one lay a dead body? (Or do they expect Joseph Smith to have written "toss it"?) If Joseph Smith copied from John, why didn't he use the word "grave," rather than "sepulchre"? . . .

The idea of the dead stinking (Alma 19:5; John 11:39) is not exclusive to John; it is found in Isaiah 34:3. So, too, the use of the term "sleep" in the sense of "die" (Alma 19:8; John 11:11) is found in several Old Testament passages (Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21; Psalms 13:3; Jeremiah 51:39, 57; Daniel 12:2).

The words "he shall rise again," common to Alma 19:8 and John 11:24, are **the only strong point** in the Tanner's case. Though the phrase is used six times in the Old Testament, **it is never used of the dead**. But its very existence in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.

There are several weak parallels which are made even weaker by virtue of the fact that the ones we have noted above are invalid. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 226-227)

John Tvedtnes' first comment concerning the charge of plagiarism from the book of John contains an error. He states "The Tanners compare **four verses** (Alma 19:1, 5, 8, 12) from the account of the raising of King Lamoni with the story of the raising of Lazarus . . ." Actually, as those who examine our photograph will see, we used **five verses** from Alma, chapter 19.

While we would not even mention this matter under normal circumstances, John Tvedtnes has criticized us for minor mistakes even claiming that we have either "covered up" evidence or that our "attention to detail is surely to be questioned." In this case, however, Tvedtnes has failed to notice that in our photograph we have included Alma 19:9, a verse which contains thirty-nine words. Significantly, this one verse has four extremely important parallels which Joseph Smith took from John 11:25-27.

In the three verses from the book of John we find the following:

Jesus said unto her . . . **Believest thou this? She saith unto him . . . I believe that . . .**

Alma 19:9 reads:

. . . Ammon said unto her: **Believest thou this? . . . she said unto him . . . I believe that . . .**

While we have never claimed that our comparison of the stories regarding Lazarus and Lamoni uses only words found in the book of John or the New Testament, it is very interesting to note that the words “Believest thou this,” cited above, are only found **once** in the entire Bible and this is in John 11:26!

As we have shown above, in John Tvedtnes’ criticism of our work he commented: “The idea of the dead stinking (Alma 19:5; John 11:39) is not exclusive to John; it is found in Isaiah 34:3. So, too, the use of the term ‘sleep’ in the sense of ‘die’ (Alma 19:8; John 11:11) is found in several Old Testament passages (Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21; Psalms 13:3; Jeremiah 51:39, 57; Daniel 12:2).”

John Tvedtnes seems to be skirting around something very important here. Notice that while he uses the words “stinking” and “sleep,” he fails to cite the actual words found in our study — i.e., “stinketh” and “sleepeth.” The word “stinketh” is only used twice in the entire Bible. Furthermore, what we actually have is a two word parallel, “**he stinketh.**” These two words are never used together in the entire Bible except in John 11:39! Furthermore, Joseph Smith never used the word “stinketh” again in the Book of Mormon. The word “sleepeth” is only used seven times in the Bible. It seems incredible to believe that by coincidence the phrase “he stinketh” and the word “sleepeth” would appear in one chapter of the book of John and later be found together in just one chapter of the Book of Mormon.

In his response John Tvedtnes asked: “If Joseph Smith copied from John, why didn’t he use the word ‘grave,’ rather than ‘sepulchre’?” Tvedtnes seems to have a very simplistic view of plagiarism. Clever plagiarists, of course, try to be careful not to make their writings so similar to the source material that they are detected. The Mormon forger Mark Hofmann, for example, borrowed heavily from a book written by E. D. Howe when he wrote his notorious Salamander letter. The book stated that when Joseph Smith described his trip to acquire the gold plates which contained the Book of Mormon, he claimed that he “looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit . . .” In the Salamander letter, however, Hofmann wrote that Joseph Smith said that “when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole . . .” In view of this information, we might ask Tvedtnes the following question: “If Mark Hofmann was copying from a book which

mentioned a toad, why didn’t he use the word “toad,” rather than the words “white salamander?”

In his confession Mr. Hofmann explained that “the idea for the White Salamander [was] derived from the toad in . . . Howe’s book. Salamander, from my reading of folk magic, seemed more appropriate than a toad.” He went on to say he “decided to spice it up.” Hofmann also explained that “not wanting to sound like I was plagiarizing from a book, I used the word transfigured rather than transformed” (for a more complete statement about the plagiarism involved see our book, *Confessions of a White Salamander*, pages 12-13).

As noted above, in his criticism of our work regarding Lazarus and Lamoni, John Tvedtnes charged that “There are also substantive differences. For example, while Lamoni had been lying (presumably dead) on his bed for two days and two nights (Alma 19:1), Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days (John 11:17).” This, of course, could easily be explained by comparing Hofmann’s method of slightly modifying the language in his forgeries. On the other hand, however, it should also be pointed out that the words “two days” are also found in John 11:6: “. . . he [Jesus] abode **two days** in the same place.” It is certainly possible that Joseph Smith borrowed these words when he wrote Alma 19:1 and 5.

In his review of our work John Tvedtnes asserted:

The words “**he shall rise again,**” common to Alma 19:8 and John 11:24, are **the only strong point** in the Tanner’s case. Though the phrase is used **six times** in the Old Testament, **it is never used of the dead.** But its very existence in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.

John Tvedtnes has made a serious mistake with regard to this matter. The words “he shall rise again” appear only once in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament (a total of four times in all). This phrase, however, is **never found in the Old Testament!** We carefully checked this matter with the church’s computer program, *The Computerized Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. We do not know how Tvedtnes was able to discover the phrase “six times in the Old Testament.” Exodus 21:19 and Isaiah 24:20 have the two words “rise again,” but the four-word parallel, “he shall rise again,” is never found in the Old Testament. We even checked this matter in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. This study also yielded no occurrences of that phrase in the Old Testament. In addition, Michael Marquardt checked out the matter on his computer and was unable to find the references John Tvedtnes mentioned.

It is obvious, then, that John Tvedtnes saw six references, containing twenty-four words, that are just not there. The reader will remember that Tvedtnes argued that the “very existence” of the four-word phrase “in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.” Now that the facts are known, it is obvious that it is Tvedtnes’ argument that has been weakened. Contrary to his assertion, this phrase never appears in “pre-Nephite texts.”

As noted above, on page 226 of his rebuttal, John Tvedtnes charged: “The Tanners’ use of selected verses from both accounts stacks the evidence of plagiarism in their favor.” Those who take the time to carefully examine the evidence will see that this charge is without foundation. Because of Tvedtnes’ assertion that we have stacked the deck in our favor we decided to do a more detailed study of the matter.

We reasoned that if Joseph Smith was borrowing from the book of John when he wrote the material concerning the raising of king Lamoni in the book of Alma, there might be supporting evidence in other material which appears near Alma, chapter 19. Consequently, we made a careful examination of chapters 18, 19 and 20 of the book of Alma. This study provided very strong evidence that our original conclusions were correct: Smith had indeed relied heavily on the Gospel of John when he wrote these three chapters of Alma in the Book of Mormon.

We searched for phrases of two or more words which are **not** found in the Old Testament. Although we were particularly interested in finding phrases from the book of John, we also included many other references from other New Testament books which may have been borrowed by Joseph Smith in writing these three chapters which are found in the Book of Mormon. While we would not claim that we discovered every parallel in our study, we found 166 parallels! We have published this study in our new book, *Answering Mormon Scholars*.

Since the two-or-more-word phrases which appear in the study are not found in the Old Testament, it seems clear that there has been a great deal of plagiarism from the New Testament. Although it is true that some of the 166 examples may only be coincidences, there are far too many strong parallels to brush the matter aside. The 166 examples, of course, were found in just three chapters of the Book of Mormon. It is very significant that the events mentioned in the Book of Mormon were supposed to have occurred about 90 B.C., which is about 120 years before Jesus even began his public ministry. Moreover, the books of the New Testament were **not** written until years after that time.

Among the 166 examples we noted in the three chapters of the Book of Mormon, we found **forty-seven** parallels to the book of John. Some of them provide strong evidence of plagiarism. Our discovery of significant parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Gospel of John led us to make an extensive comparison between the writings of John and the Book of Mormon. What we found was really astounding: the Book of Mormon is **filled with quotations from the book of John**. In addition to the Gospel of John, the epistles of John (found toward the end of the New Testament) were also plagiarized in Joseph Smith’s work. Significantly, even Smith’s *Doctrine and Covenants* is permeated with material from the writings of John. Although we do not have the room to present this significant material here, we hope to be able to print it sometime in the future.

In *Answering Mormon Scholars* we demonstrate that time after time defenders of Mormonism who have written for F.A.R.M.S. have utterly failed to understand our arguments and have reached erroneous conclusions. We highly recommend this book to those who want to know our side of the debate.

Mormon Prophet Dies

Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth prophet of the church, died on May 30, 1994. Howard W. Hunter, who is 86 years old and in poor health, was chosen to be the fourteenth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church. Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson have been retained as counselors in the First Presidency.

Inventing Mormonism

We are pleased to announce that the long-awaited book, *Inventing Mormonism*, by Wesley P. Walters and H. Michael Marquardt is now available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

Many years ago it became evident to us that Walters and Marquardt were two of the most knowledgeable researchers on Mormonism that we had ever encountered. Because of their expertise on the subject we constantly sought their advice. Without the insights, material and encouragement they freely gave us, we would have had a far more difficult time preparing our own work on Mormonism.

After years of painstaking research on Mormon history and doctrine, Walters and Marquardt decided to write a book on the origin of Mormonism. Unfortunately, however, before the work was completed Wesley Walters passed away. Since that time, H. Michael Marquardt has worked diligently with Walters’ widow, Helen Walters, to complete this important project. Mrs. Walters had helped Wesley in his research and had developed a good understanding of his thinking about early Mormonism.

The reader may remember that Wesley Walters made two of the most important discoveries regarding Mormonism. First, that the revival which supposedly led Joseph Smith to pray and receive a visitation from God and Jesus Christ in 1820 **did not** occur at that time. Walters found historical evidence that the revival actually occurred in 1824-25! This, of course, undermined the whole story of the First Vision and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Second, Walters discovered Justice Albert Neely’s bill showing the costs of a court case involving Joseph Smith which took place in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826. This remarkable discovery of the original bill verified a transcript of the examination which was printed in 1873. Mormon

officials had always claimed the transcript was a forgery. Before the discovery Dr. Hugh Nibley was especially adamant that the transcript was not authentic. In his book *The Myth Makers*, we find this revealing statement: “. . . **if this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.**” Dr. Nibley’s book also states that if the authenticity of the court record could be established, it would be “**the most devastating blow to Smith ever delivered . . .**” (*The Myth Makers*, 1961, page 142). Mormon scholars now accept the evidence concerning Joseph Smith’s run-in with the law. The testimony given at the examination was especially devastating because it linked Joseph Smith to money-digging and proved that he was involved in the occultic practice of looking in a seer stone to find buried treasure. Justice Neely, in fact, referred to Smith as “Joseph Smith **The Glass Looker**” in the bill he wrote. Some years after Wesley Walters discovered the Neely bill, H. Michael Marquardt went back to New York and discovered additional evidence verifying the authenticity of the document Walters had found.

We highly recommend the book *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* to those who want to know the truth about the origin of Mormonism.

Mormon Purge Continues

Since we published the last issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, the Mormon Church has continued to excommunicate those who publicly express dissenting opinions. For example, on April 9, 1994, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported: “David P. Wright, a professor of Biblical Studies and Hebrew at Brandeis University who questioned the origins of the Book of Mormon, has been excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Wright had formerly taught at the church’s Brigham Young University before he was dismissed. He wrote a very interesting article for the book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, in which he argued that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Bible to create the Book of Mormon. He also noted that “there is evidence that Smith’s other ‘ancient’ compositions are not actually ancient but arise out of his interactions with biblical texts and religious ideas of his period” (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 207).

Two weeks after David P. Wright’s excommunication was revealed in the *Tribune*, the *Washington Post* reported:

A Fairfax County man who works as a lawyer for the Central Intelligence Agency was excommunicated from the Mormon church yesterday for conducting a newspaper letter-writing campaign about the history and teachings of his religion. . . . Barrett said he has done nothing wrong. “It is kind of ironic. I’m fairly well-received at the CIA when I counsel them we have to tell the truth. When I try

to tell these same principles to church leaders, I have a big problem.” (*Washington Post*, April 23, 1994)

Is There Something Better?

About thirty-four years ago we became acquainted with the noted Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham. On July 22, 1960, Dr. Kirkham gave us a copy of his book, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, and inscribed the following on one of the pages: “To newly found friends and believers in the Book of Mormon. Mr. & Mrs. Jerald Tanner.”

As noted earlier, at that time we were zealous believers in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It all seemed so simple: we would spend our days proclaiming the genuineness of the book, and God would vindicate his own work by bringing many people to the knowledge of the truth. As it turned out, however, we began to encounter problems in the Book of Mormon which made it increasingly difficult to continue on the course we had planned for our lives. Surprisingly, the more familiar we became with the Bible, the more questions we had concerning the Book of Mormon. While the basic doctrines of the Book of Mormon seemed to be in agreement with the Bible (we cannot say this for many of the doctrines Joseph Smith later brought into the church), the wording found in the Book of Mormon appeared to be so strikingly similar to that found in the Bible that it raised the specter of plagiarism.

As we carefully examined the issue, it became evident that the author(s) of the Book of Mormon had copied from the King James Version of the Bible. This, of course, presented a serious problem to our faith because the King James Version was not printed until 1611 A. D. It troubled us deeply that the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, who lived almost 600 years before Christ, parroted some of the language of Apostle Paul, who lived after the coming of the Lord.

We had an extremely difficult time dealing with what we had discovered. When we began our research, we sincerely wanted to prove the Book of Mormon true and to silence the critics. The Book of Mormon itself admonished us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Moroni 10:4) Consequently, we spent a great deal of time praying for God’s direction in the matter, but he did not “manifest the truth of it” to us. In fact, the more we looked into the matter, the more evidence we found against its authenticity. God seemed to be telling us something we did not want to hear, and we found it extremely painful to face the facts which we encountered. With God’s help, however, we carefully examined the issue and concluded that the Book of Mormon is not authentic. Our study, which

has stretched over a period of more than thirty years, has brought forth a mountain of evidence substantiating our conclusions regarding the Book of Mormon (see our books *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*).

While many people tried to talk us out of our decision to lay aside the Book of Mormon, we found a peace and joy in biblical Christianity that is far greater than anything we sacrificed in giving up the Book of Mormon. Many years have passed since we mustered up our courage to face the facts. Even though we had to make a number of adjustments in our lives and thinking, we have **never** regretted our decision.

While we still have trials and disappointments, our belief in Christ has given us strength and peace in knowing that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Those of us who have turned our hearts over to Christ, know that he provides the light we need for guidance in our lives in this world. We would encourage all those struggling with the problems of Mormonism to lay aside that burden and put their trust in Christ. Jesus Himself gives this invitation in Matthew 11:28-30:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.



Building A Home For the Lighthouse

In the March, 1992, issue of our newsletter we reported: “As the ministry has continued to expand we have become increasingly aware that Utah Lighthouse Ministry desperately needs a home of its own so that it can effectively meet the needs of the growing number of people who are searching for the truth. At the present time, in fact, all of the work is done in our own house and in the garage! . . . the bookstore is far from adequate for the number of people who come in to talk or browse. . . . The room often becomes so crowded that customers leave before they are able to obtain all the publications or information they need.”

Since the time we wrote the above, we were able to fix up another garage to work in. Nevertheless, we are rapidly running out of space. Fortunately, the ministry already owns a piece of land next door and we have decided to move out in faith and begin the building. The architect has completed

the blueprints and a number of companies have given us a bid. The high bid was \$200,000, but the three lowest bids were around \$153,000. The electrical work, which will be done by another company, and other expenses will probably run the bill up to about \$160,000. At the present time, Utah Lighthouse Ministries has only \$25,000 set aside for building and another \$43,700 has been promised by the end of Summer. Fortunately, the ministry can borrow \$86,000 to complete the project. Perhaps some of those who believe in this ministry might be interested in donating to our building project. Although we do not like to face it, we realize that we will not be around forever and would like to see the Lighthouse have its own home so that the ministry can continue after we are gone.

Utah Lighthouse is a non-profit organization which ministers to many people and provides support for **44 children** through World Vision. Those who are interested in helping our ministry can send their **tax deductible** contributions to **UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-8894) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% - Minimum postage \$1.50)

Answering Mormon Scholars, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Shows conclusively that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document. **Special Price: \$5.00**

Inventing Mormonism, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. An important discussion of Joseph Smith's early years and the origin of Mormonism. **Special Price: \$24.95**

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, edited by Brent Metcalfe. BYU professor Louis Midgley says this is “the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon” that is currently available. **Special Price: \$23.95**

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews with Sandra. The first deals with the 1990 changes in the LDS temple ceremony. The second discusses problems in the translation of the Book of Abraham. **Price: \$3.00**

Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestion. **Price: \$24.00**

By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Charles Larson. Demonstrates conclusively that Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian papyrus. **Price: \$11.95**

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Continued from page 15)

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage \$1.50)

Faithful History, edited by George D. Smith. This book contains D. Michael Quinn's speech which infuriated Mormon officials. **Price: \$18.95**

The New Mormon History, edited by D. Michael Quinn. Mormon leaders are very distressed with historians who write "New Mormon History. Contains 15 essays. **Price: \$18.95**

The Mormon Purge, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A revealing account of how the LDS Church is attempting to silence its historians and other dissidents with threats of excommunication and other reprisals. Includes information from secret church documents. **Price: \$3.00**

Christian Institute for Mormon Studies. Eight papers from 1991 conference. **Price: \$6.95**

Divergent Paths of the Restoration, by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. **Price: \$14.00**

Mormon Polygamy: A History, by Richard Van Wagoner. Paperback (with index). **Price: \$12.95**

Why We Left Mormonism, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. **Price: \$8.00**

Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. **Price: \$5.00**

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse, by David Reed and John Farkas. **Price: \$7.00**

New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. **Price: \$5.95**

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. **Price: \$8.00**

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. **Price: \$11.00**

Know What You Believe—A Practical Discussion of the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith, by Paul E. Little. **Price: \$8.00**

Know Why You Believe—A Clear Affirmation of the Reasonableness of the Christian Faith, by Paul E. Little. **Price: \$9.00**

After Mormonism What? Reclaiming the Ex-Mormon's Worldview for Christ, by Latayne Scott. **Price: \$8.00**

Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism, by Robert Hullinger. Shows that Joseph Smith himself authored the Book of Mormon to settle the theological arguments of his time. **Price: \$18.95**

Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Re-Examined, by Rodger I. Anderson. Good response to LDS authors Hugh Nibley and Richard L. Anderson on early statements by Joseph Smith's neighbors. **Price: \$9.95**

The 1838 Mormon war in Missouri, by Stephen C. LeSueur. Paperback. **Price: \$14.95**

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