

BOOK OF MORMON CHALLENGE

Some years ago a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave us the following outline. (Several variants of this have been circulated through the years but all seem to contain the same major points.)

While no author is given on this copy, we have another copy that was distributed in 1976 at the St. George, Utah, LDS Temple Visitor's Center that bears the name of Hugh Nibley. We have been told that Nibley used to hand out copies of this paper in some of his classes at Brigham Young University.

Since this challenge has once again been sent to us for our comments, we present the following critique.

The original "Challenge" text appears in bold type, with our comments following in regular type.

The Challenge the Book of Mormon Makes to the World

If one scoffs at the missionary's explanation of the Book of Mormon, he is in so many words claiming it to be false: That it is a deceiving fraud formulated through the efforts and talents of a common man. What is produced by one man can always be duplicated by another. The challenge that the Book of Mormon makes to the world is that of duplication. Because the book complies with every one of the following conditions, in order to produce a similar record, one must comply with the same conditions.

Here is the challenge: Can you accept it?

1. Write a history of ancient Tibet covering a period from 600 B.C. to 450 A.D. Why ancient Tibet? Because you know no more about Tibet than Joseph Smith (or anyone else) knew about ancient America.

Ancient American ruins were already known in Joseph Smith's day. In the early 1800's there was high interest in the American Indian culture and artifacts resulting in many books and newspaper articles. Also, there were a number

of books printed before the Book of Mormon discussing the origin of the American Indians specifically claiming that they descended from Israel—the very idea put forward in the Book of Mormon.

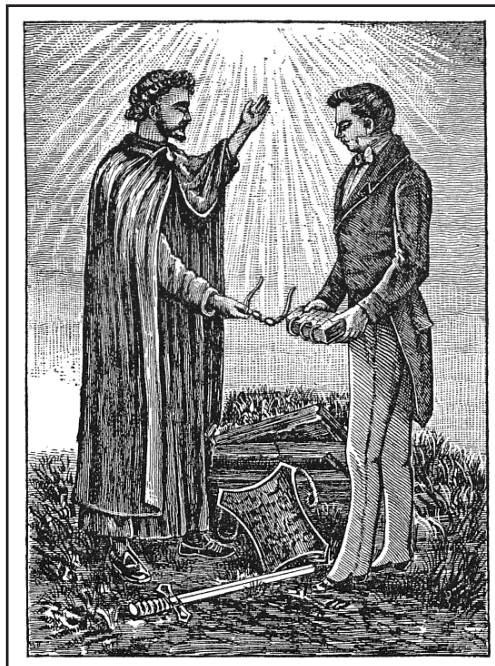
In 1652 Menasseh Ben Israel's *Hope of Israel* was published in England. This Jewish rabbi was a firm believer that remnants of the ten tribes of Israel had been discovered in the Americas (*Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, by Dan Vogel, 1986, p. 117, www.signaturebookslibrary.org/indian/preface.htm).

In 1775 James Adair published *The History of the American Indians*. He theorized that there were twenty-three parallels between Indian and Jewish customs. For example, he claimed the Indians spoke a corrupt

form of Hebrew, honored the Jewish Sabbath, performed circumcision, and offered animal sacrifice. He discussed various theories explaining Indian origins, problems of transoceanic crossing, and the theory that the mound builders were a white group more advanced than the Indians (*Indian Origins*, page 105).

A popular book of Smith's day was *View of the Hebrews*, by Rev. Ethan Smith, printed in 1823, with a second edition in 1825.

LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts wrote extensively about the parallels between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon (see *Studies of the Book of Mormon*).



The angel Moroni delivering the golden plates and the Urim and Thummim to Joseph Smith, Jr.

Rev. Robert Hullinger gave the following summary of B. H. Robert's parallels:

According to Roberts's later studies, some features of *View of the Hebrews* are paralleled in the Book of Mormon. (1) Indians buried a book they could no longer read. (2) A Mr. Merrick found some dark yellow parchment leaves in "Indian Hill." (3) Native Americans had inspired prophets and charismatic gifts, as well as (4) their own kind of Urim and Thummim and breastplate. (5) Ethan Smith produced evidence to show that ancient Mexican Indians were no strangers to Egyptian hieroglyphics. (6) An overthrown civilization in America is to be seen from its ruined monuments and forts and mounds. The barbarous tribes—barbarous because they had lost the civilized arts—greeting the Europeans were descendants of the lost civilization. (7) Chapter one of *View of the Hebrews* is a thirty-two page account of the historical destruction of Jerusalem. (8) There are many references to Israel's scattering and being "gathered" in the last days. (9) Isaiah is quoted for twenty chapters to demonstrate the restoration of Israel. In Isaiah 18 a request is made to save Israel in America. (10) The United States is asked to evangelize the native Americans. (11) Ethan Smith cited Humboldt's New Spain to show the characteristics of Central American civilization; the same are in the Book of Mormon. (12) The legends of Quetzacoatl, the Mexican messiah, are paralleled in the Book of Mormon by Christ's appearing in the western hemisphere. . . . Roberts came to recognize that, at least in the case of Ethan Smith's book, such works were widely available (*Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism*, by Robert N. Hullinger, Signature, 1992, pp. 183-184).

For more information the similarities between the Book of Mormon and *View of the Hebrews*, see *Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon*, by David Pursuitte.

2. You are 23 years of age.

Why this age would be necessary is unclear. Many young people have accomplished things that seem beyond their years. Alexander the Great led an army at age 18 and Mozart was composing music by the age of 6. In his late teens Joseph Smith showed signs of being a creative and charismatic leader, as evidenced by his leadership in various money-digging schemes. According to his mother, Lucy Smith, he was a creative storyteller as well:

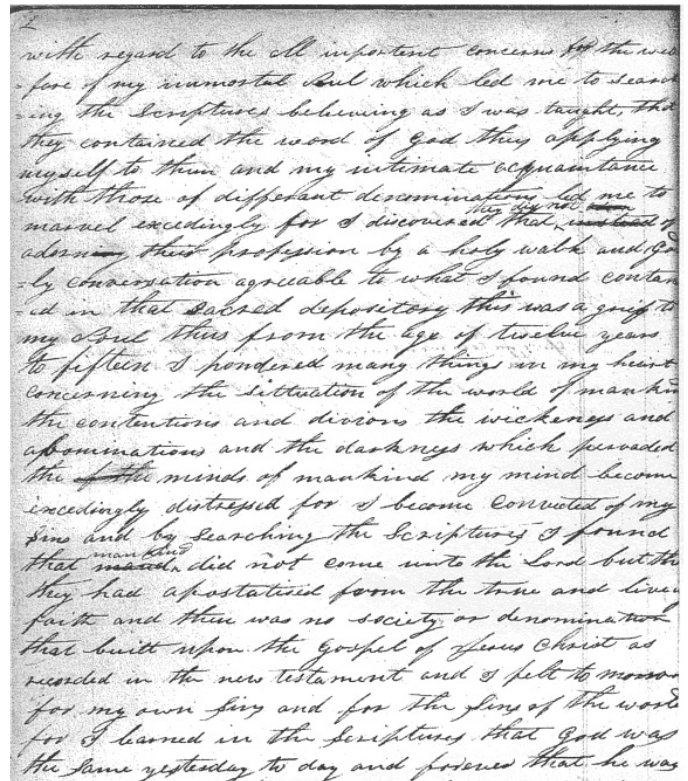
During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their

religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith*, by Lucy Smith, 1853, p. 85; reprinted under the title *Joseph Smith's History by His Mother*).

3. You have had no more than three years of formal school education, and have spent your life in backwoods farming communities.

Simply because Smith did not spend a number of years in a formal school setting does not mean that he was uneducated. He even enrolled in school when he was 20. Further instruction could have come from Smith's father, who had been a school teacher and subscribed to the local newspaper (*Inventing Mormonism*, by Marquardt and Walters, pp. 43-45).

Below is a sample of Smith's handwriting in 1832 which shows that he had been instructed in writing and penmanship.



Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, 2002, page 16

Author Dan Vogel observed:

Certainly, Smith had less schooling than his wife, but he managed to write reasonably well. After examining several letters from the early period of Smith's life (1831-32), historian Dale Morgan concluded that they exhibit "a flair for words, a measure of eloquence, and a sufficient degree of schooling" (*Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, by Dan Vogel, 2004, Signature Books, p. 119).

Similar claims of no education have been made for Muhammad. He had limited schooling, received visions, started a new religion and produced the *Koran*, a book considered scripture by over a billion people. (For more comparisons, see *Joseph Smith & Muhammad*, by Eric Johnson.)

Another similar claim has been made for Ellen White (1827-1915), of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has grown to over 14 million members in less time than it has taken the LDS Church to reach 12 million. One Seventh-day Adventist writer gave the following summary of White's life:

One morning four women gathered in a humble home in New England for their regular season of earnest prayer. After the three older women had prayed, Ellen Harmon, **a shy girl of eighteen**, began to pray. Suddenly she stopped praying and after a few moments of silence the women turned to Ellen and noticed that her eyes were wide open. . . . And Ellen told them that she must have been in **a vision**, but it seemed like she was right there. . . . Later, Ellen received another vision and this time **the Lord asked that she tell her visions to the people**.

A meeting was arranged for in Portland, Maine. About 200 people gathered to hear this young woman tell her vision. . . . She married James White a year after her first vision and she lived 70 more years, dying at the ripe old age of 87. During her lifetime she had more than 2,200 visions from the Lord. . . .

Though Ellen White had **less than four years of formal education**, she was instructed by the Lord to write and give counsel to the Church. If we had one copy of each book she has written placed one upon another, they would make a stack of books over seven feet high. She has, no doubt, written more than any modern writer. . . . The same God who gave her the vision, has given her the gift of inspired writing (*The Spirit of Prophecy—Modern Prophets: Are They of God?*, by L. E. Tucker, California, nd—possibly 1960's).

Such claims do not prove that Muhammad, Ellen White or Joseph Smith truly received communication from God. But they do illustrate that Joseph Smith is not the only one from humble beginnings to claim the role of a prophet with millions of followers.

4. Your history must be written on the basis of what you now know. There was no library that held information for Joseph Smith. You must use none. There is to be no research of any kind.

Contrary to the above statement, the New England area abounded in literature speculating on the origin of the American Indian. In Smith's neighborhood there was a library, bookstore and newspapers.

Both Palmyra and Manchester had a lending library. Even though there is no evidence that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Manchester library, he could have used the Palmyra library. There were also plenty of other sources for information. Robert Paul, writing for the *BYU Studies*, observed:

Moreover, if Joseph had wished to explore the literary materials of the day, it would have been unnecessary to travel the five miles to Manchester when in Palmyra, only two miles distant, there were several bookstores and at least one library, the contents of which he would have been free to peruse. . . . As early as 1819, and occasionally thereafter, book auctions were held in Palmyra. . . . The availability of bookstores and libraries in Palmyra, together with the fact that the Smith family regularly obtained the *Palmyra Register* and later the *Wayne Sentinel* from the newspaper office which doubled as a bookstore, would have mitigated the need to travel nearly three times the distance to acquire literary materials from the Manchester area (*BYU Studies*, Summer 1982, p. 340).

Robert Hullinger commented on the popularity of *View of the Hebrews*:

View of the Hebrews circulated widely in New York. It was also condensed in Josiah Priest's *The Wonders of Nature and Providence*, one of the more widely circulated books of the Manchester rental library in 1827 (*Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism*, p. 186).

The local newspapers occasionally ran stories about the Indians. The *Palmyra Register* for May 26, 1819, reported that one writer

believes (and we think with good reason) that this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, & that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of Indians in this country (*Palmyra Register*, May 26, 1819).

Furthermore, the following was published in the Smith's local newspaper, the *Wayne Sentinel*, in 1825:

Those who are most conversant with the public and private economy of the Indians, are strongly of opinion that they are the lineal descendants of the Israelites, and my own researches go far to confirm me in the same belief (*Wayne Sentinel*, October 11, 1825).

The Book of Mormon parallels the views of Smith's day; it does not parallel archaeologists' findings today. This is one of the areas which demonstrate that the Book of Mormon was written in the 1820's, not 600 B.C. to 421 A.D.

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5. Your history must be 531 pages and over 300,000 words in length.

There are a number of books of equal or greater length claiming to come from God. Examples are the *Koran*, *A Course in Miracles*, *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, *Oahspe*, the prophecies of Anna Katharina Emmerick and the writings of Ellen G. White. These all claim to come from God.

Another group claiming divine instruction and visions were the Shakers. They published a number of pamphlets and books written in a scriptural style.

One of their books is *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth*. More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the “Sacred Roll and Book.” Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions. On page 304 of this book we find the testimony of eight witnesses. They claim that they saw an angel and the “Roll and Book”:

We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.

Betsey Boothe. Sarah Maria Lewis. Louisa Chamberlain. Sarah Ann Spencer. Caty De Witt. Lucinda McDoniels. Laura Ann Jacobs. Maria Hedrick.

(A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth, 1843, page 304)

Joseph Smith only had three witnesses who claimed to have seen an angel. The Shakers, however, had a large number of witnesses who claimed they saw angels and the *Roll and Book*. There are over a hundred pages of testimony from “Living Witnesses.”

(For more on the Shakers, see www.passtheword.org/SHAKER-MANUSCRIPTS/index.html)

Of particular interest is that Martin Harris, one of the Book of Mormon witnesses, also joined the Shakers. He evidently had a testimony of the Shaker book as well as for the Book of Mormon (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, p. 63).

6. Other than a few grammatical corrections, you must have no changes in the text. The first edition as you dictate it to your secretary must stand forever.

Besides the approximately 4,000 grammatical and spelling changes that have been made in the Book of Mormon, there have been both historical changes and doctrinal changes.

In two places the name of a king has been changed from Benjamin to Mosiah. In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon we read as follows:

... king **Benjamin** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings. . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 200)

In modern editions of the Book of Mormon this verse has been changed to read:

... king **Mosiah** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings. . . (Book of Mormon, 1981 ed., Mosiah 21:28)

The same change was made in Ether:

... for this cause did king **Benjamin** keep them . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 546)

In the 1981 edition, Ether 4:1, we read:

... for this cause did king **Mosiah** keep them . . .

According to chronology found in the Book of Mormon, king Benjamin should have been dead at this time; therefore, the name was changed to his successor, Mosiah.

(For more information on changes, see our web site www.utlm.org/topicalindexa.htm#Changes)

Four important doctrinal changes relating to the godhead were made in the second edition of the Book of Mormon. The original Book of Mormon clearly taught that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost were one God. However, through the years Joseph Smith’s concept of God evolved into three Gods (see chapter 7 of our book *The Changing World of Mormonism*, online at utlm.org).

One of the most significant changes was made in 1 Nephi 13:40. In the 1830 edition it was stated that the very purpose of the Nephite records was to make known that Christ is the Eternal Father:

These last records, . . . shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., p. 32).

In the current edition three words have been interpolated:

These last records, . . . shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is **the Son of** the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world . . . (1 Nephi 13:40)

A second important change was made in 1 Nephi 11:18; this is on page 25 of the 1830 edition. In the first edition it read:

Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.

In modern editions it has been changed to read:

Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the **Son of God**, after the manner of the flesh.

Notice that the words “the Son of” have been inserted in the middle of the sentence. Verse 21 of the same chapter originally read:

And the angel said unto me, behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!

It was changed to read:

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even **the Son of** the Eternal Father!

Verse 32 of the same chapter, which is on page 26 of the original edition, was also changed. In the 1830 edition it read:

. . . the Everlasting God, was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

It was changed to read:

. . . **the Son of** the everlasting God was judged of the world: and I saw and bear record.

While most of the changes in the Book of Mormon were done by Joseph Smith in the 1837 edition, a number of changes were made as recently as 1981. (See www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/3913intro.htm#Major)

7. This record is to contain the history of two distinct and separate nations, along with histories of different contemporary nations or groups of people.

This point assumes that Smith correctly identified the different groups. Strangely missing is any reference to the Maya. Surely the Book of Mormon people would have encountered them.

To date, none of the Book of Mormon people groups have been identified through independent archaeological research. The Introduction to the Book of Mormon declares that

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the **principal ancestors** of the American Indians.

Thus one would assume that it would be easy to identify descendants of the Lamanites. Yet DNA shows that the “principal ancestors” of the American Indians were Asians.

Many writers have produced complicated novels dealing with various fictional groups of people. Just look at the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien (www.tolkiensociety.org).

8. You must describe their religious, economic, political, and social cultures and institutions. Cover every phase of their society, including the names of their coins.

The Book of Mormon does not match any culture here in the Americas. It fails totally in the areas of religion, economics, politics and social culture, including their “coins.”

While the Book of Mormon does not use the term “coins” it is used in the heading of Alma, chapter 11, which describes the Nephite monetary system: “Nephite coinage set forth . . .” The chapter goes on to state:

And the judge received for his wages according to his time—a **senine of gold** for a day, or a **senum of silver**, which is equal to a senine of gold; and this is according to the law which was given. Now these are the names of the different **pieces** of their **gold**, and of their **silver**, according to their value (Alma 11: 3-4).

However, when Europeans landed on the New England coast they did not find the American Indians using gold or silver as money. The first medium of exchange seems to have been shell beads, called Wampum (www.mohicanpress.com/mo08017.html). Later Indians exchanged such items as animal furs for the foreigner’s knives, axes, and other utensils (<http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-9.htm>).

Further south, the Maya did not value gold as part of their trade system. Instead, they traded such items as salt, cacao, quetzal feathers, obsidian, colored shells and jade (*The Maya*, by Michael D. Coe, 2005, seventh edition, p. 206).

Whether or not the Book of Mormon refers to coins or measurements of metals, there is no evidence that gold and silver formed the basis of Native American commerce.

9. Change your style of writing many times. Many ancient authors contributed to the Book of Mormon, each with his own style.

Much of the book has the same long, rambling type of narrative one would expect from one author. Those instances of differences could be accounted for by the fact the book plagiarizes extensively from the various authors of the books of the Bible.

Joseph copied sections from Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, Paul’s letters, etc. For example, in Galatians 5:1 Paul wrote “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.” This same phrase appears in the Book of Mormon, prior to the time of Christ. Alma 58:40 reads “stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has made them free.”

For more examples see our book *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible*.

10. Weave into your history the religion of Jesus Christ and the pattern of Christian living.

Instead of being a proof of divine inspiration, this is evidence that the book is a modern work. The Old Testament has no mention of Jesus Christ by name, or the Christian concept of baptism. Yet these are an integral part of the Nephite religion during the period before Christ. For instance, in approximately 550 B.C. God instructs the Nephites “repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son” (2 Nephi 31:11).

Also, the Book of Mormon repeatedly borrows phrases from the New Testament (King James Version). The problem is that these are found throughout the Book of Mormon prior to Christ’s birth and prior to the writing of the New Testament. Below are three examples of how Smith wove together parts of the Bible to make his new scriptures. The parallel biblical phrases are in brackets. In Alma 5:48 (about 83 B.C.) we read:

... I know that Jesus Christ [John 1:17] shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father [John 1:14], full of grace, and mercy, and truth [John 1:14]. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world [John 1:29], yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name [John 1:12].

Supposedly written about 550 B.C., Jacob declared:

And he commandeth all men that they must repent [Acts 17:30], and be baptized in his name [Acts 19:5], having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel [Isaiah 43:3], or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God [Acts 8:12]. (2 Nephi 9:23)

Compare the following Book of Mormon passage with the Bible:

Mosiah 5:15 [about 121 B.C.] **Therefore**, I would that ye should be **steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works**, that Christ, **the Lord** God Omnipotent, may seal you his, . . .

1 Corinthians 15: 58 **Therefore**, my beloved brethren, be **ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

11. You must claim that your smooth narrative is not fiction with moral value, but true and sacred history.

The Book of Mormon may have a complicated story line but it lacks a “smooth narrative.” Dan Vogel observed:

The book Joseph dictated abounds with examples of his poor grammar and Yankee dialect as well as his penchant for digression, redundancy, and wordiness. Rarely are his characters’ inner moral conflicts reflected. Most often we encounter flat, uncomplicated, two-dimensional heroes and villains. Generally the plots are simple and frequently improbable (*Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, p. 119).

There are a number of religious books claiming to be “sacred history.” Many imitation gospels were written after the New Testament claiming to have been penned years earlier by various apostles (see http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/writings.htm).

12. You must include in your book fifty-four chapters dealing with wars, twenty-one historical chapters, fifty-five chapters on visions and prophecies. Remember, when you begin to write visions and prophecies, you must have your record agree meticulously with the Bible. You must write seventy-one chapters on doctrine and exhortation, and you must check every statement with the scriptures or you will be proven a fraud. You must write twenty-one chapters on the ministry of Christ, and every thing you claim he said and every testimony you write in your book about Him must agree absolutely with the New Testament.

The author of this challenge seemed to be unaware of the fact that the Book of Mormon was not divided into its current chapters and verses until 1879. The original chapters were much longer, resulting in fewer chapter numbers. Regardless of the number of chapters, it is sufficient to show that others have written books claiming to come from God that are equally, if not more, complex than the Book of Mormon.

In fact, there are people on the Internet claiming to have translated other portions of the gold plates. One man claims to have the lost book of Lehi, (<http://losttruthfound.com>). Another person claims to have restored the lost book of Zelph (www.bookofzolph.com). And yet another person claims to have the sealed portion of the plates (www.absalom.com/mormon/mohonri/contents.html).

As for including chapters on the ministry of Christ, Smith plagiarized many portions of the gospels, including the Sermon on the Mount from the book of Matthew with only slight variations (3 Nephi 12).

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Also, by Smith's own admission he had sufficient exposure to Christianity to write the religious material in the Book of Mormon. According to Joseph Smith's 1832 history, he had studied the Bible since he was 12 and had already determined that all churches were in error prior to his first vision:

At about the age of **twelve years** my mind become seriously imprest [p.1] with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to **searching the scriptures** believeing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God thus applying myself to them and **my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations** led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that <they did not adorn> instead of adorning their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository [the Bible] this was a grief to my Soul thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind the contentions and divi[si]ons the wicke[d]ness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the of the minds of mankind my mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that **mankind** <mankind> did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and liveing faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament (*Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, edited by Dean Jessee, Deseret Book, 2002, pp. 10-11; photo on page 2 of this newsletter).

As for "checking every statement with the scriptures" the Book of Mormon contradicts the Bible on a number of points. It does not "agree meticulously with the Bible." For example, the Bible plainly states that the gospel, with its inclusion of Gentiles, was not fully revealed until after Christ's death. In Ephesians 3:3-7 Paul writes:

by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister. (See also Col. 1:26; 1 Peter 1: 1-12; Romans 16:25-26)

However, the Book of Mormon maintains that the knowledge of Gentile inclusion existed in 545 B.C. In 2 Nephi 26:12 we read:

And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus in the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;

And in 2 Nephi 30:2 we read:

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off . . .

For other examples of contradictions, see (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bibleandbomcontradictions.htm) and (www.irr.org/mit/bombible.html).

13. Many of the facts, claims, ideas, and statements given as absolute truth in your writing must be entirely inconsistent with the prevailing beliefs of the world. Some of these worldly beliefs must be the direct opposite of your claims.

If the Book of Mormon's claims contradict anything, it is the current scientific views of American Indian origins, rather than the views of Joseph Smith's time. Nevertheless, it is not clear why such a contradiction with "prevailing beliefs of the world" would necessarily lend proof to the divine authenticity of any claim, as required in the above challenge. The fact that some Book of Mormon claims contradicts other widely accepted claims could be evidence for Joseph Smith's own imaginative, yet inaccurate, thoughts.

When we examine the literature of Smith's day we find that books such as *View of the Hebrews* argued that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. A similar concept is found in the Book of Mormon, where the people are descended from Israel. However, scientists today believe, and DNA confirms, the Indians descended from Asians, not Israelites. (See *Quest for the Gold Plates* by Stan Larson and *Losing a Lost Tribe* by Simon Southerton.)

14. Included in your narrations will be authentic modes of travel; whether or not those ancient people used fire; description of their clothing, crops, mourning customs, and types of government. You must invent about 280 new names that will stand up under scrutiny through the years as to their proper application and derivation.

The Book of Mormon does not describe the "authentic modes of travel." When Lehi and his family landed in the New World they supposedly found "the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse" wandering in the wilderness, animals supposedly brought by the Jaredites years before (see 1 Nephi 18:25; Ether 6:4; Ether 9:17-19). In Alma 18:9-12 we read of the king's "horses and chariots." In 3 Nephi 3:22 we read of the Nephites "horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and . . . their grain." Alma 1:29 specifies that they had "silk and fine-twined linen." Yet there is no archaeological evidence for these things prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas.

Evidently Joseph Smith thought a group of people from the Old World could simply bring their way of life, animals and seeds with them and create the same lifestyle in the New World. For instance, Mosiah 9:9 tells that the people planted “wheat.” However, archaeologists depict a very different lifestyle for the region most favored by LDS scholars as the Book of Mormon lands. Michael Coe, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University, describes the diet of the Maya:

While there are profound differences between the subsistence base of the lowlands and that of the highlands, the ancient foursome of **maize, beans, chile peppers, and squash** formed then, as it still does, the basis of the Mesoamerican diet, . . . (*The Maya*, p. 13)

The Book of Mormon also claims that cattle, sheep, swine and goats were “useful for the food of man” (Ether 9:18). However, the animals most hunted in Mesoamerica were the deer, cottontail and dog (*Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs*, by Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz, 2002, p. 89).

Metallurgy is another problematic claim of the Book of Mormon. It refers to steel swords produced in the New World (2 Nephi 5:14-15; Ether 7:9). It states also that the people worked with both iron and gold. Stan Larson observed:

William J. Hamblin, professor of history at BYU, criticized those who see “large-scale metal ‘industries’” among Book of Mormon peoples, affirming that the text “claims only that certain metals were known to the Nephites.” However, the Book of Mormon attributes advanced metallurgical skills to both Jaredites and Nephites. Glenna Nielsen Grimm said that “sophisticated metallurgical processes were engaged in that involved the mining and refining of both ferrous [i.e., iron] and non-ferrous ores.” Consider the impressive description of metallurgical technology during the time of Kish, a Jaredite king about 1500 B.C.:

And they did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals; and they did dig it out of the earth; wherefore, they did cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of copper. And they did work all manner of fine work (Ether 10:23).

One must keep in mind the important distinction between mere metalworking and true metallurgy. Metalworking means the cold hammering and shaping of metal, while metallurgy requires temperatures of 700° to 800° C and involves some or all of the following technological processes: smelting, casting, gilding, annealing, soldering, and alloying. The Book of Mormon does specify the practice of smelting among the Jaredites, for Ether explained that Shule “did molten out of the hill, and made swords out of steel” (Ether 7:9).

Raymond Matheny described the metallurgical technology needed to produce iron objects:

A ferrous industry is a whole system of doing something. It’s just not an esoteric process that a few people are involved in, but ferrous industry—that means mining iron ores and then processing these ores and casting these ores into irons and then making steels and so forth—this is a process that’s very complicated. . . . In other words, society would have to be organized at a certain level before ferrous industry would be feasible.

The technology of mining is problematical for the Book of Mormon. Where do you find iron ores in sufficient quantity to create an industry? . . . No evidence has been found in the New World for a ferrous metallurgical industry dating to pre-Columbian times. And so this is a king-size kind of problem, it seems to me, for so-called Book of Mormon archaeology. This evidence is absent.

Matheny also pointed out that the extraction of iron from ore needs high temperatures and various fluxing substances which produce slag, which in turn become indestructible rock forms. In the 1920’s B. H. Roberts summarized the situation, saying that “there is nothing on which the later investigators of our American antiquities are more unanimously agreed upon than the matter of the absence of the knowledge of, and hence the non-use of, iron or steel among the natives of America” (*Quest for the Gold Plates*, Stan Larson, pp. 195-196).

Michael Coe gives further background on items used by the Maya:

From the time of their initial contact with the Maya, the Spaniards learned to their bitter disappointment that there were no sources of gold and silver in the Maya lowlands, and the foreign colonizers soon came to look upon the region as a hardship post. Yet the native inhabitants, to whom the yellow metal was of little value and in fact unknown until about AD 800, had abundant resources which were of far greater importance to them in their daily life, in their rituals, and in their trade. . . .

As archaeologist Robert Cobean has noted, **obsidian**—a natural volcanic glass—was to ancient Mesoamerica what steel is to modern civilization. It was turned into knives, lance and dart points, prismatic blades for woodworking and shaving, and a host of other tools. . . .

The Maya elite had their special needs, above all **jade, quetzal feathers, and marine shells** (*The Maya*, pp. 22-23).

Oddly, the Book of Mormon never mentions these items that were so important in Mesoamerica.

In the 1996 statement from the Smithsonian Institution we read:

One of the main lines of evidence supporting the scientific finding that contacts with Old World civilizations, if indeed they occurred at all, were of very little significance for the development of American Indian civilizations, is the fact that **none of the principal Old World domesticated food plants or animals (except the dog) occurred in the New World in pre-Columbian times.** American Indians had no wheat, barley oats, millet, rice, cattle, pigs, chickens, horses, donkeys, camels before 1492. (Camels and horses were in the Americas, along with the bison, mammoth, and mastodon, but all these animals became extinct around 10,000 B.C. at the time when the early big game hunters spread across the Americas.)

Iron, steel, glass, and silk were not used in the New World before 1492 (except for occasional use of unsmelted meteoric iron). Native copper was worked in various locations in pre-Columbian times, but true metallurgy was limited to southern Mexico and the Andean region, where its occurrence in late prehistoric times involved gold, silver, copper, and their alloys, but not iron (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/smithsonianletter.htm) and (www.answeringlds.org/index.html?artSmithsonian.html).

As for the topic of authentic names, almost half of the Book of Mormon names are from the Bible, while many others are variations of biblical names. “Lehi” is a Hebrew place found in the Bible (Judges 15:9, 14, 19). “Nephi” is from the King James translation of the Apocrypha. In 2 Maccabees 1:36 we read:

And Neemias called this thing Naphthar, which is as much as to say, a cleansing; but many men call it **Nephi**.

The main hill in the Book of Mormon is called “Cumorah.” However, the spelling is somewhat different in the first edition. The original text of Moroni 6:2 reads:

... we might gather together our people unto the land of Camorah, by the hill which was called Camorah, and there we would give them battle.

One of the main leaders in the Book of Mormon was “Moroni.” Interestingly, there are islands off the east coast of Africa named the Comoro Islands (also spelled Comora), and the capital is Moroni. A common school book in Smith’s day was *Geography Made Easy*, by Jedidiah Morse, 1813. On page 356 he mentions the “Comora Islands” off the coast of Africa.

Smith could have also heard of these islands in connection with his treasure-digging, as the famous pirate Captain Kidd, along with many other pirates, stopped there. It was rumored that he later buried his treasure somewhere in New England. Ron Huggins informs us:

One day in late March 1697, a ship . . . arrived at the Island of Mohilla, one of the Comoro Islands. . . . It would not depart again until April 18. Its captain, William (a.k.a. Robert) Kidd, did not know he would soon become one of history’s most famous, and notorious, pirates.

In those days pirates, even famous ones, were no oddity in the Comoros. . . .

But it was the rumor of an enormous treasure trove buried somewhere, or scuttled along with the mysteriously missing Qedah, which did most to immortalize the man. The fact that Kidd was arrested so soon after arriving in Boston made it highly likely, or so many believed, that his treasure was still out there, somewhere, waiting to be discovered. Thus, Kidd’s treasure became the most vigorously sought pirate’s prize of all. For Mormons, the fact that the pirate was hanged for crimes allegedly committed in the vicinity of Moroni on Grand Comoro is significant because the hunt for his treasure came to play a part in the story of Moroni on Comorah (“From Captain Kidd’s Treasure Ghost to the Angel Moroni,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 36, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp. 17-19, <http://tinyurl.com/jppjue>).

Further on in the same article, Huggins relates various statements connecting Joseph Smith with an interest in Kidd:

Stories about pirates and, especially, stories about Captain Kidd, played a particularly important role in the young Joseph’s imagination. According to J. H. Kennedy, Joseph “made confession” that the autobiography of Captain Kidd “made a deep impression upon him.” Kennedy does not say in what context Smith made this “confession.” Palmyra native Phietus B. Spear recalled in an 1873 interview that as a boy Joseph “had for a library a copy of the ‘Arabian Nights,’ stories of Captain Kidd, and a few novels.” Pomeroy Tucker also mentions Joseph’s youthful fascination with Captain Kidd, Stephen Burroughs the counterfeiter, and others, noting that such stories “presented the highest charms for his expanding mental perceptions.” . . . E. D. Howe [in his 1834 book, *Mormonism Unveiled*] describes the prophet’s parents as “having a firm belief in ghosts and witches; the telling of fortunes; pretending to believe that the earth was filled with hidden treasures, buried there by Kid[d] or the Spaniards” . . .

Rumors of Kidd’s treasure were not limited to sites on the Eastern seaboard. Nor were the Smiths particularly unique in digging for it. John Hyde, Jr., wrote in 1857: “It was quite common in the western part of New York, about thirty years ago [i.e. 1827], for men to dig for treasure which they supposed had been hidden by Captain Kidd and others.” (“From Captain Kidd’s Treasure,” pp. 37-38; see also www.rochedalss.eq.edu.au/pirates/bart.htm).

Another prominent Book of Mormon name is Mormon. This name was already in use prior to 1830 as the name of a species of puffin birds on the east coast of North America.

For more information on Book of Mormon names, see (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bomnames.htm).

15. You will have to properly use figures of speech, similes, metaphors, narrations, exposition, descriptions, oratory, epic lyric, and parables.

Ideas for parables, figures of speech, etc. could have come from reading the Bible. The book of Revelation speaks of “the four quarters of the earth” (Rev. 20:8), which is echoed in the Book of Mormon, “four quarters of the earth” (1 Nephi 19:16). For other similar copying, see *The Changing World of Mormonism*, chapter 5 and *Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible*.

Another source of ideas is the Apocrypha. It was readily available in Smith’s day and was published in many Bibles. For examples of Joseph Smith’s borrowing from the Apocrypha see our *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 89.

When one considers the effort needed to make the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon and then to engrave them, one would expect a scribe to be as concise as possible, not wordy. Nephi’s brother, Jacob complained:

I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates (Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:1).

However, lengthy sentences abound. Here is just one example:

And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away; And the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face of the land (3 Nephi 8:1-3. For other examples see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 105).

One could more easily imagine such long, rambling descriptions coming from someone spontaneously dictating to a scribe (as Joseph purportedly did) than from someone painstakingly engraving each word of a long historical record.

In order to maintain the impression of “properly using literary styles” the author of the Book of Mormon not only plagiarized verse after verse from the Bible, he also lifted wording from other sources. The Preface to the King

James Bible (prepared for the 1611 printing) uses certain words which do not appear in the Bible, such as “clouds of darkness” and “overshadowed.” Yet the Book of Mormon contains similar wording:

. . . the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse . . . (Book of Mormon, Helaman 5:31)

In fact, Smith repeated these words over and over again in the book of Heleman:

And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness . . . behold the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse . . . the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them . . . he saw through the cloud of darkness . . . the Lamanites said unto him: What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness maybe removed from overshadowing us? And Aminadab said . . . You must repent.. and when you shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you . . . the cloud of darkness was dispersed. And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about, and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, behold, they saw that they were encircled about . . . by a pillar of fire (Helaman 5:28, 31, 34, 36, 40-43).

After this repetitious section of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith never used the words “cloud of darkness” again; instead he used the words “mist of darkness” or “mists of darkness.” It is interesting to note that the word “mists” (plural) is not found in the text of the Bible either, but it does appear in the Preface of the King James Bible (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 84).

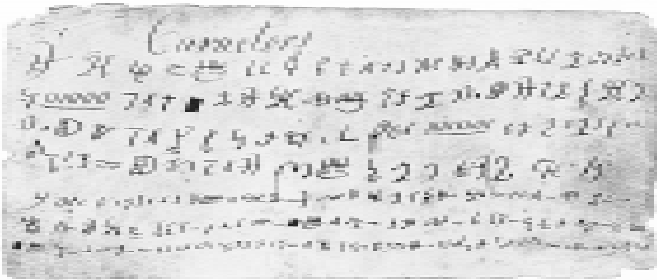
Also, in order to “properly use . . . descriptions” one should not produce any anachronistic references. Yet many items are mentioned that would not have been known in Book of Mormon times, such as candles. In 3 Nephi 8:21 we read:

And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled . . .

16. You must invite the ablest scholars and experts to examine the text with care, and you must strive diligently to see that your book gets into the hands of those eager to prove it a forgery, and who are most competent to expose every flaw in it.

Actually, the first scholar to denounce the Book of Mormon was Professor Charles Anthon in 1828. Martin Harris took a small sample of the text, known as the Anthon Transcript, to Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Anthon. Professor Charles Anthon wrote:

The whole story about my pronouncing the Mormon inscription to be reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is *perfectly false*. Some years ago, a plain, apparently simple-hearted farmer [Martin Harris] called on me with a note from Dr. Mitchell, of our city, now dead, requesting me to decipher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick—perhaps a hoax. . . . I have frequently conversed with friends on the subject since the Mormon excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics (as quoted in *Mormonism Unveiled*, by E.D. Howe, 1834, pp. 270-272)



Anthon Transcript

Also, the Book of Mormon characters bear absolutely no similarity to Mayan characters. Below is a sample of Mayan hieroglyphics.



Mayan Hieroglyphics from *The Golden Bible*, p. 264

Many scholars since Prof. Anthon have looked at the Book of Mormon and have come to the same conclusion. After discussing the Mormon belief in Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, Michael Coe, one of the best known authorities on the Maya, frankly stated:

Let me now state uncategorically that as far as I know there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing the foregoing to be true, . . . nothing, absolutely nothing, has ever shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon . . . is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1973, pp. 42, 46).

17. Thorough investigation, scientific and historical evidence, and archeological discovery for the next 125 years must verify its claims and prove detail after detail to be true, for many of the details you put in your history are still buried beneath the soil of Tibet.

There are no archaeological sites, writing samples or artifacts that can be identified as Nephite, Lamanite, or Jaredite. The LDS Church does not even publish a map designating the location of the Book of Mormon story. In fact, they seem to discourage attempts to designate any place as a Book of Mormon site. In 1978 the *LDS Church News* warned members not to get involved in trying to figure out where the Book of Mormon story took place:

The geography of the Book of Mormon has intrigued some readers of that volume ever since its publication. But why worry about it? . . .

To guess where Zarahemla stood can in no wise add to anyone's faith. But to raise doubts in people's minds about the location of the Hill Cumorah, and thus challenge the words of the prophets concerning the place where Moroni buried the records, is most certainly harmful. And who has the right to raise doubts in anyone's mind?

Our position is to build faith, not to weaken it, and **theories concerning the geography of the Book of Mormon can most certainly undermine faith** if allowed to run rampant.

Why not leave hidden the things that the Lord has hidden? If He wants the geography of the Book of Mormon revealed, He will do so **through His prophet**, and not through some writer who wishes to enlighten the world despite his utter lack of inspiration on the point (*Deseret News*, July 29, 1978, Church News Section, p. 16 and www.utlm.org/onlineresources/cumorah.htm).

This LDS editorial leaves us with several questions:

1. If the Book of Mormon recounts historical events and places, why would it "undermine faith" to search for those sites? Researchers do archaeological studies for biblical sites, why not for LDS scriptures?

According to challenge number 17 it would seem that scientific testing of Book of Mormon geography would be welcomed. Yet the LDS Church leaders discourage it. In a recent LDS student manual is a theoretical map of various Book of Mormon sites. However, the caption states:

No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical locations (*Book of Mormon Student Manual: Religion 121 and 122*, 1996, p. 163).

They evidently know that Book of Mormon sites do not fit the geography of the Americas.

2. Current editions of the LDS scriptures contain maps of the LDS Church migration across America. If maps aid in understanding the *Doctrine and Covenants*, why wouldn't they be important for studies of the Book of Mormon?

3. If only the prophet can determine Book of Mormon geography, why doesn't he?

4. If the prophet is the one who can correctly speak on these issues, then shouldn't Joseph Smith's statement that Lehi landed in Chile be authoritative? (See www.irr.org/mit/bomarch1.html)

5. Are the BYU scholars the ones referred to as challenging the location of the Hill Cumorah? Then of what value are speculations on geography by BYU scholars? (See <http://tinyurl.com/p7hwq>)

One of the LDS Church's official web sites is still promoting the hill in New York as the place Moroni buried the plates. See (www.hillcumorah.org/cumorah.asp).

18. You must publish it to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people declaring it to be the word of God and another witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other books have done the same. James Strang, one of the contenders to succeed Joseph Smith, claimed divine revelation. Strang declared that

he was visited by an angel at 5:30 p.m. on June 27, 1844—the exact moment of Joseph Smith's death—and anointed to be Smith's successor ("*God Has Made Us A Kingdom*": *James Strang and the Midwest Mormons*, by Vickie C. Speek, 2006, p. 22).

Later Strang claimed to find a buried record. Vickie Speek explains:

On September 1, 1845, Strang told followers he had learned by revelation about some ancient plates of brass buried in a nearby hillside. He claimed an angel appeared before him and showed him the plates in vision and gave him his own urim and thummim to translate the records ("*God has Made Us a Kingdom*," p. 24).

For more on James Strang, see (www.vorsoft.com/faith/calendar/strang.htm).

19. The book must not contain any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statements. Your history must not contain any statement that will contradict any other statement elsewhere in the volume.

There are many absurdities in the Book of Mormon, such as the story of the Jaredite barges, in Ether 2:16-21 and chapter 6.

According to the Book of Mormon, after the time of the Tower of Babel, Jared and his brother, together with their extended families, were told to build "barges" to carry them from the Middle East to the promised land (America). These eight barges were to be "small" and "light upon the water." They were to be made the "length of a tree" and "tight like unto a dish." At first God gave no instructions for light or ventilation. But the brother of Jared brought it to His attention and the Lord instructed:

Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood (Ether 2:20).

One wonders how long they would be able to breathe, let alone deal with the problems of pressure, with the boat sealed up and "swallowed up in the depths of the sea" (Ether 2:25)? This sounds like modern submarine capabilities. Also, when did one use the hole in the bottom? Did the boats flip over, thus requiring two holes? How does one transport people, flocks, herds, water and food in rotating vessels?

Then the brother of Jared complained that there was no lighting inside the barges. The Lord instructed him that they couldn't have "windows, for they will be dashed in pieces" (Ether 2:23). Remember, this supposedly took place thousands of years ago before glass windows.

The brother of Jared then suggested that God touch sixteen stones, "molten out of a rock," to make them "even as transparent glass" to provide light in the barges (Ether 3:1-2). This gives them two stone lights for each barge, full of people, animals and supplies.

They are next instructed to prepare "all manner of food" for themselves and "food for their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them" (Ether 5:4). How would they have room on eight small barges the length of a tree to store food and fresh water for a trip that would take a year?

One wonders how these eight small barges stayed together and on course? No instructions are given as to any means of steering the vessels which are "light" and "tight like unto a dish," yet they are driven by furious winds and at times "buried in the depths of the sea." Amazingly, all eight barges arrive at the same spot at the same time. This horrible trip is summed up as follows:

And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water (Ether 6:11).

No such trip could have been made thousands of years ago.

The account of the decapitation of Shiz (Ether 15:29-31) is equally unbelievable. Supposedly the Jaredite civilization came to an end with a terrible battle involving millions of people at the hill Ramah. The Nephites and Lamanites would later choose the very same location for their last battle but named the hill Cumorah.

The last two opponents were Shiz and Coriantumr. After Coriantumr beheaded Shiz, “Shiz raised up on his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for breath, he died.” Did his head struggle for breath or his body? Either situation is impossible.

An important example of anachronistic contradictions in the Book of Mormon is found in the use of the name “Jesus Christ.” Some time around 550 B.C. an angel revealed to Jacob, brother of Nephi, that the Redeemer would be named “Christ” (2 Nephi 10:3).

After this, Nephi had it revealed to him that “Jesus is the Christ” (2 Nephi 26:12). However, according to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Nephi already knew this name years before:

And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and **Jesus Christ**, which is the Lamb of God . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 28).

Since the Book of Mormon states that the name was first made known to Jacob, then to Nephi, Joseph Smith had to change the words “Jesus Christ” to “the Messiah” in the 2nd edition. Thus in the 1981 edition we read:

And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and **the Messiah** who is the Lamb of God. . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12:18).

This change allows Nephi to refer to the “Messiah” without using his name, leaving it to Jacob to later reveal that the Messiah would be called “Christ.”

The same mistake is made when King Benjamin (about 124 B.C.) revealed to his people that the name of the Messiah would be “Jesus Christ” (Mosiah 3:8). According to Book of Mormon chronology, this name would have been known for hundreds of years, having been revealed earlier to Jacob and Nephi (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 74).

In fact, it had already been revealed to the Jaredites hundreds of years before Jacob and Nephi. In the record of the Jaredites is an account of the appearance of Jesus to the brother of Jared:

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son (Ether 3:14).

20. Many theories and ideas as to its origin must arise, and after discovering and examining the facts, they must fail. You have claimed that your knowledge had come from divine origin, and this claim continues to stand as the only possible explanation. The strength of this explanation must not decrease as time passes, but actually increases to the point where it becomes the only logical explanation.

The Book of Mormon has grown less credible through non-LDS scholarly study, not more so.

The Book of Mormon tells of three migrations to the Americas, a land held in reserve for these people. It never mentions other groups occupying the land prior to the arrival of the Book of Mormon peoples. Yet the DNA of the American Indian shows that 99.6% descended from Asians, not Israelites. For more information on DNA problems, see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 103 and the book, *Losing a Lost Tribe*, by Dr. Simon Southerton. For other problems, see (www.lds-mormon.com/bomquest.shtml).

21. Your record is to fulfill many Bible prophecies, even in the exact manner in which it shall come forth, to whom delivered, its purposes, and its accomplishments.

No Bible scholar sees the Book of Mormon as fulfilling prophecy. Mormons often cite Ezekiel 37:15-21 as a prophecy regarding the Book of Mormon. Mormonism claims that the two sticks refer to the Bible and the Book of Mormon. However, the chapter gives its own interpretation of the passage. At that time Israel was divided into two groups. Verse 18 states the people will ask for an interpretation of the joined sticks. In verses 19-22 the Lord declares that the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel shall be joined into one nation. It is a promise from the Lord relating to the restoration of Israel. See (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bomoverview.htm) and (www.mrm.org/articles/the_book_of_mormon).

22. Call down an angel from heaven in the middle of the day and have him bear testimony to four honest, dignified citizens of your community that the record is the word of God. These witnesses must bear the angel's testimony to the world, not for profit or gain, but under great sacrifice and severe persecution, even to their death beds. You must put that testimony to the test by becoming an enemy to these men.

The witnesses to the Book of Mormon were involved in magic and money-digging prior to testifying to the book. They were not the most “dignified” citizens of the area. Several years after Joseph Smith started his church he denounced Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, even calling him a “wicked man”

in two different revelations (*D&C* 3:12-13; 10:6-7). The other two witnesses, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, were accused of uniting

with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property, . . . (Letter quoted in *Senate Document 189*, Feb. 15, 1841, pp. 6-9).

Since Smith himself lost confidence in these men, why should anyone today trust their testimony about angelic visions? For more on the witnesses, see chapter 5 of our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*.

Other movements, such as the Shakers and Strangites, have claimed revelations, angelic visitations and listed various witnesses. In fact, Martin Harris joined both of these groups (*Changing World*, chapter 5, pp.100-101).

Besides this, many Catholics and Protestants have recounted visions. Two famous Catholic visions were the appearance of Mary in 1531 to Juan Diego in Mexico and her appearance in 1858 to Bernadette at Lourdes. Two Protestants claiming visions of Christ were Rev. Elias Smith, in 1816 and Asa Wild in 1823 (*Changing World of Mormonism*, pp. 159-160). Thus Smith's claim of visions is not as unique as many LDS people believe.

23. Thousands of great men, intellectual giants, national and international personalities, and scholars for 165 years must accept your history and its teachings even to the point of laying down their life rather than deny their testimony of it.

This could equally be applied to Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, etc. See response to points 2 and 3.

24. You must include within the record this promise: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these 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."

This challenge provides Mormons with a comforting explanation if one does not get the same confirmation that they did. If you pray about the Book of Mormon but do not receive a witness in your heart that it is true, you did not pray with "a sincere heart." Latter-day Saints seem unaware of the thousands of people who claim to have sincerely prayed about other religious texts and are equally convinced that they have found the truth. Prayer alone is not enough to ensure that one is not misled. It didn't keep Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris from gaining an equal testimony to the Shakers and James Strang.

25. Missionaries must bear record to the world for the next 165 years that they know the record to be true because they put the promise to the test and found it to be true. The truth of it was manifested to them by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Christian missionaries have put their faith and lives on the line for almost 2000 years. One need only read *Fox's Book of Martyrs* for examples (www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/home.html).

26. Over 52,900 plus [This number is different in other copies] competent salesmen must be so sold on your book that they gladly give up two or more years of their lives to take it to all parts of the world for distribution. They not only pay their own way during these years, but return bearing testimony that the time spent will remain as one of the highlights of their lives. They receive nothing in return for their efforts but the joy of having shared your book with others.

The number of committed followers does not guarantee that the movement has the truth. Also, not all LDS missionaries pay their full expenses. The LDS Church has a general missionary fund to help those who are not able to pay for a mission. How is this any different from any Christian missionary society where funds are pooled to send out missionaries? This represents a great sacrifice on the part of Christian missionaries who have generally spent years in college to prepare for such a calling. Plus, they do it as a lifetime commitment, not just two years.

27. Your book must not only raise the standards of millions of people but do it in such a way that they become one of the great moral, ethical, and dynamic marvels of the day. They must become world renowned for this.

The Book of Mormon simply echoes the moral teachings of the Bible. In Alma 16:18 is a list of sins, all of which are dealt with in the Bible:

Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be—(Alma 16:18).

We read in Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Yet an ocean away Moroni writes "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mormon 9:23).

Paul cautions that to "be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life (Rom. 8:6). However,

hundreds of years before Christ's birth, the Book of Mormon recorded "Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal. (2 Nephi 9:39).

Philippians 2:12 states "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Again, Moroni uses the same language, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Mormon 9:27).

Of course the Book of Mormon sounds Christian; it simply plagiarizes verse after verse from the Bible.

Christians, Jews and Muslims have traditionally promoted honesty and family values. The LDS Church does not have a corner on the concept.

28. For the next 20 years you must watch those that follow and you, your family, and the dearest of your loved ones persecuted, driven time after time from their homes, beaten, tortured, starved, frozen and killed. Tens of thousands must undergo the most extreme hardships in your presence just because they believe your claims concerning the origin and content of what you have written on ancient Tibet.

Early Christians were arrested, thrown to the lions, and died in various terrible ways for their faith. Mormons have never suffered to the extent that Catholics, Protestants and Jews have done. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses have been persecuted far beyond anything experienced by the LDS Church. See (www.persecution.org/newsite/index.php) or (www.bibleleague.org/persecuted/index.php).

29. You must gain no wealth from your work, but many times lose all that you have. Like those that believe you, you must submit yourself to the most vile persecution. And finally after 20 years of this, give your own life in a very savage and brutal manner, for your testimony concerning your history book. This must be done willingly on your part.

Joseph Smith brought on many of his problems with his secret doctrines like polygamy and the kingdom of God. He did not die as a martyr, but in a gun battle while in jail (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/josephsmithsdeath.htm).

Zealots have been sacrificing and dying for their various causes for thousands of years.

30. Start right now and produce this record which covers 1,000 years of history, doing it, not in the peaceful atmosphere of your community, but under the most trying of circumstances which include being driven from your home several times, and receiving constant threats upon your life. Please have your book completed, talk a friend into mortgaging his farm to raise money to have it printed - all in 60 days.

The Smiths had moved a few times during Joseph's childhood due to financial reverses. But Joseph was hardly

"driven" from his home several times during the production of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph and his father traveled to the border of New York and Pennsylvania to work for Mr. Stowell in 1825 and 1826. Mr. Stowell hired Joseph Smith specifically because he claimed to have magical powers to find hidden treasure. After Joseph married Emma in 1827 they lived with his parents. However, his former partners in money-digging were hounding him about the gold plates, feeling that he owned it to them to share the treasure. Martin Harris, who financed the printing of the Book of Mormon, told a newspaper editor:

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates (*Tiffany's Monthly*, August 1859, as quoted in *The Creation of the Book of Mormon*, by LaMar Petersen, p. 136).

In the winter of 1827-1828 Joseph and Emma moved south to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to live on her parent's property while he did his translation (see *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, by Dan Vogel, p. 106). During this time Joseph's father lost the family farm due to debt and moved in with his married son, Hyrum. Joseph later moved north to the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, where he finished the translation. These moves seem to relate more to monetary necessity than religious persecution. (See *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, by Newell and Avery, pp. 24-29)

The Book of Mormon project was not restricted to "60 days." Smith seems to have been working on his story prior to getting the plates in 1827.

Joseph's mother said that he used to entertain the family with tales about the Indians. Since Smith's mother places this after the time the angel first told Joseph about the plates (1823), some have argued that he was merely repeating information he got from the angel. However, it is hard to imagine God sending an angel to tell Smith entertaining stories of the Indians' "dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode," etc. It sounds more like a young man practicing his story.

Joseph Smith first started dictating his book in 1827, so he had at least three years to record the story prior to its publication.

Also, Martin Harris, the man who mortgaged his farm to finance the printing of the Book of Mormon and one of the witnesses, had been involved with Joseph Smith for three years. He didn't make a quick decision to finance the

project. In fact, he seems to have gone into the venture with an eye to making money. Dan Vogel explains:

According to his [Martin Harris] wife and sister-in-law, Harris boasted in 1828 that the Book of Mormon would be a financial windfall. According to Tucker, "Harris was led to believe that the book would be a profitable speculation for him, and very likely in this [fact] may be traced his leading motive for taking the venture. He was vouchsafed the security of a 'special revelation' commanding that the new Bible should in no instance be sold at a less price than 'ten shillings,' and that he himself should have the exclusive right of sale, with all the avails. . . . Indeed, he figured up the profits . . . thus: 5,000 books at \$1.25 per book, \$6,250. First cost, \$3,000. Showing a clear speculation of over one hundred per cent upon the investment" (*Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, p. 481).

However, when the book failed to sell, Martin became concerned about the mortgage on his farm and the possibility of foreclosure to cover the printer's bill. In response to this Joseph received a revelation denouncing Martin for hesitating to pay the bill:

I command thee [Martin Harris] that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God—. . . Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage (*Doctrine and Covenants* 19:26, 35).

LDS historians James Allen and Glen Leonard observed that the Book of Mormon "was not a commercial success, however, and a year later Martin Harris, true to his word, sold his mortgaged farm and paid the \$3,000" (*Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 1992, p. 53).

There is only one answer: The Book of Mormon is a divine record. If not, its origin must be stated and its claims must be explained by the critic. It isn't enough to merely discard it as false and forget about it!

The first thing to do in examining any ancient text is to consider it in the light of the origin and background that is claimed for it. If it fits into that background there is no need to look farther, since historical forgery is virtually impossible.

Forgeries that fit the historical background that is claimed for them are not only possible, but are prevalent. For example, there were the infamous Hitler diaries, consisting of 60 volumes, created by Konrad Kujau in the 1980's:

. . . Kujau might have remained a small-time crook had he not come into contact with Gerd Heidemann. A *Stern* reporter whose career had reached something of an impasse, Heidemann had developed an unhealthy interest in the

personalities of the Third Reich and an expensive appetite for the artefacts associated with them, . . .

He was immediately fascinated by the "Hitler Diaries". Kujau's first production was no more than a single volume labelled *Political and Private Notes* from January 1935 until June 1935. Adolf Hitler. . . .

Believing – or wanting to believe – this extraordinary volume authentic, Heidemann went to *Stern* with his "revelation". His star began to rise at once. Amid great secrecy, the magazine's publishers agreed to give him the funds to pay Kujau for more diaries, to be secured, at some risk, via his high-ranking contact in the East German military.

Kujau set to work. For three years, he wrote Hitler's daily thoughts in Gothic script into a black A4 notebook. On to each page he would pour tea, to give it an aged appearance. He would then slap the pages together and batter them against the table to wear and age the volumes. Finally he affixed two red wax seals in the form of a German eagle on the covers.

The diaries purported to run from June 1932 to April 1945. In composing the content, Kujau worked from a library of reference books, newspapers and medical records. The result was not immediately impressive, though it was only after the hoax was revealed that the banality of the entries seemed so strikingly clear (www.mishalov.com/Kujau.html).

The forgeries were announced to the world through *Stern*, then exposed by David Irving:

Adopting high-powered marketing methods at their press conference to sell the multi-million dollar diaries, *Stern* began by presenting to the hundreds of television and newspaper journalists a one-hour video film describing how the documents had been found in East Germany by their star journalist Gerd Heidemann. . . .

The diaries had been faked, it turned out, by Konrad Kujau, a gifted Stuttgart confidence trickster. Irving located Kujau's abandoned "workshop" in May 1983. . . . Irving was in court in Hamburg on July 8, 1985, to hear sentence passed on Kujau, who had confessed to forging the documents, . . . (www.fpp.co.uk/bookchapters/Torpedo/Intro.html).

One need only look at Mark Hofmann and his numerous documents and letters to see an LDS example of historical forgery. Like Kujau, Hofmann used historical research, artificially aged ink, etc. to create his documents. He was even able to deceive the president of the LDS Church. In 1980 the *Deseret News* carried a picture of Hofmann examining the supposed Anthon Transcript with President Spencer W. Kimball (see chapter 6 of our *Tracking the White Salamander*). Not only were the LDS leaders unable to discern that Mark's documents were forgeries, they were buying them. After Hofmann killed two people the whole forgery scheme was exposed and he is now serving a life sentence at the Utah State Prison.

SUMMARY

Mormon 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, pp. 1-2).

When we look at the origin and background of the Book of Mormon we find that the only one to actually examine the record was Joseph Smith, a young farmer-turned-magician. He announced to his family and neighbors that a long dead inhabitant of the Americas had appeared to him in a vision and eventually showed him where to find the ancient record of his people.

However, no one was allowed to go with Smith to retrieve the plates from the hill and no one was allowed to see them, except in vision. When a sample of the Book of Mormon characters was shown to scholars it was denounced as a fraud. While translating the record, the plates were either hid in a box or secreted outside the home. After the translation was completed the plates were returned to the angel and have not been seen since that time, thus making it impossible for experts to examine the record.

Over the next 178 years scholar after scholar has concluded that the book is a product of the 19th century, not an ancient record (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 105).

Where is the non-LDS scholar who views the Book of Mormon as a historical document? Where are the artifacts, buildings or samples of writings of the Nephites, Lamanites or Jaredites? These groups supposedly numbered in the millions and built great cities. There are thousands of artifacts relating to the Israelites, early Christianity, Maya and Olmec civilizations. Why are there none for the Nephites and Lamanites? Where is an official LDS map?

There were no elephants, horses or cows in the Americas prior to the Europeans' arrival. Also, American Indians did

not have wheeled vehicles, metallurgy, or wheat during the Book of Mormon time period. Nothing has been found that directly relates to the Book of Mormon civilizations. Obviously it is a fictitious work of the nineteenth century and should be rejected. As John warned centuries ago:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

EXCERPTS FROM EMAILS AND LETTERS

May 2006. This might seem like an odd eMail, considering that I'm Mormon and ... well, you're not. However, I have nothing but respect for the way that UTLM has dealt with early historical documents relating to the LDS Church. My guess is that if you hear from Mormons at all, it's usually negative. However, my view is that despite our religious differences, I admire the absolute commitment to historical accuracy that you appear to have.

May 2006. I have always considered myself to be a "historian" by hobby. I have studied many religions and spent the better part of my time studying to Defend the LDS faith by using the same tactics of "anti" doctrine users.

I found almost all sites to be very negative and slanted in their bias and easily dismissed. However your messenger articles have been very informative and "eye opening". Your careful decision making and integrity while being UNBIASED and sticking totally to the facts have made me take myself out of my comfort zone and to do something I have never done... Consider the facts and do what I asked so many potential investigators of the lds faith to do and that is to have an open mind. The more I research the more damning the evidence is.

June 2006. What a sad life the Tanner's lead. I'm sorry you/them feel it's necessary to warn the world of the Mormon's "corrupt" past and teach hate (not to mention plenty of fallacies) instead of preaching love, respect and charity..... hmmm..... like what the Savior would do! Educate yourself before educating others. It makes you look silly when you don't. Don't forget, we'll all be judged according to our own judgments. If the Lord's as just as you believe he is, you'd better be right!

June 2006. . . . In August [2005] I was baptised into the Mormon church. It felt rushed and pressurised. But they were such lovely people . . . so caring . . . how could they be wrong? . . . Anyway, despite my concerns and my brain telling me this didn't gel, I went ahead with it. . . . Since that time I have been doing my own research. The more I learn, the more murky it all seems. . . . God Bless you both for what you are doing. You have helped to save one person from over 'the pond'.

June 2006. I just had to tell someone! Over the last 3-4 years I have used your material to find the “truth” about the Mormon church. I am a convert and have struggled, not from the beginning, but after my first year or two in the church. I kept remembering my personal relationship with Jesus in my childhood and the Word of God that taught me that he does nothing in secret and that confusion is of the devil.

I just decided tonight that I AM DONE. I AM REALLY DONE! Done searching for answers and the truth. I had the truth all along and God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He doesn’t change His mind. He doesn’t change doctrine. The path to the Father is straight and narrow and only through Jesus Christ! Not through a husband for cryin’ out loud!

June 2006. I am a recovering Mormon, born to Mormon parents, and most of my relatives are active. I am the only one in my family who is not active, and for the most part I have kept my belief that Mormonism is a lie to myself. Your website has played no small part in my decision to leave the church, and I wanted to express my appreciation for what you do, please never stop.

June 2006. I spent my whole life in the church . . . Thank you for your research. You seem to be the best source for accurate LDS history. I have heard that since you are geared toward converting “Mormons” to Christianity that you are not an objective source. As a scientist working in research I like to think I have high standards when people make claims. I have found the information that you provide to be well documented and accurate. The least accurate source for LDS history appears to be the LDS church. I still struggle with some of the ideas that have been ingrained in my mind when I was too young to know better.

June 2006. You have taken your stand religiously and now stubbornly deny anything else that differs from it.(very similar to what wonderful men like Nathan Bedford Forrest, Adolph Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, and Herod have tried to do) You ignore all truths from your opposition and will inadvertently abandon your own truths in attempt to destroy. . . . You try to attack a religion who accepts scientific laws and faith but you only use science and faith separately so you can choose when it suits your argument the best. How do you expect readers to believe you when they look at the whole picture? Blind faith perhaps? In a form, yes. You prey upon those whose faith, knowledge or understanding isn’t strong or upon those whose hatred and animosity will believe anything to prove their foe wrong.

June 2006. Well, I am a Mormon, and I think some of things you both have posted are rather ‘interesting’ and I know my faith, and i know many things from studying [other religions, languages, math, science] and I know what I believe is true. But i would like to note, if you both put the words ‘mormons are wrong’ or ‘joseph didn’t know egyptian’, understand that what you put, can be slightly offensive and some things i’ve read upon your site, came across as a little offensive. you both should consider seeing perspectives and writing them onto the site rather than your own.

sorry but thats the fact.

July 2006. Got my diploma [LDS termination of membership letter] dated the 27th of June, they’ve apparently mislaid my wife’s. Thinking of framing it, but can’t decide on oak or something darker. Thanks again for all you do.

It was a small paperback book left by a couple of wandering Baptists back in about ’87 that I first heard about them “Tanners”. That book was the beginning of a new line of thought for me. I hadn’t felt like the church & I belonged together particularly well for a number of years, but always bought the “failure is yours” routine they promulgate. That book gave me a feeling of relief along with the thought that maybe, just maybe, it was the church that was off, not me.

Took a while, but I’m glad we got our names off the roles & resigned ourselves officially. Still saving up for another trip to your store.

July 2006. Dear Sandra,

. . . I left the LDS Church in 1985 after a temple marriage & 2 sons. My sons have both gone on missions. In February my youngest son left his dad’s home and the LDS religion, he is now living with [us]. He has really been struggling and feels if he was lied to his whole life about Mormonism, he doesn’t want to become a Christian to find out it is all a lie too. We are doing our best to help him—with the Lords help!

July 2006. My husband and I owe you an incredible debt of gratitude. I was a Mormon for 25 years (& loved it) when after 16 years of marriage my husband joined the church. Shortly after his baptism, he began to investigate his new faith, broaden his understanding, when he came across your website. It opened his eyes but it also brought much turmoil into our family.

As he put it, “How do I share this news with my wife when she finally thinks her prayers have been answered with im joining the church?” It was 2 years of a living hell on earth in our home. But I needed to realize that the Lord is in control & to turn it over to him. Finally, the spirit, your newsletters and other info. helped me to realize what a lie I had been fed for so long. I am so scared for my friends and pray for the know-how and time of when to share with all my Mormon friends the good news of the real Jesus Christ. That you for your role in bringing full joy, freedom and Jesus Christ into our family. Love . . .

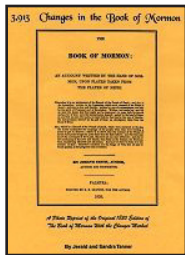
July 2006. In July of 2003, . . . [we] moved . . . to be closer to our daughter and her growing LDS family. . . . We especially want to thank you for your June 30th letter [to donors] and the accompanying article from CHARISMA. It was especially heart-warming because [we] were privileged to get acquainted in person with Jerald and Sandra and help them briefly in their ministry when our car broke down in SLC in August 1990.

Sandra, you and Jerald are especially dear to our hearts because we were able to experience in person what kind, loving, dedicated people you are. It was a time of blessing and spiritual growth for us, we will never forget it.

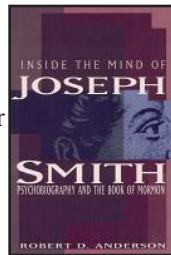
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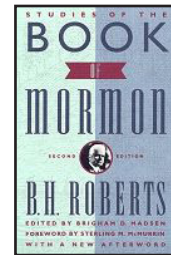
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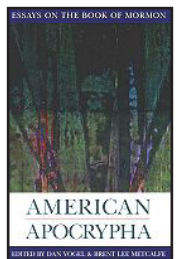
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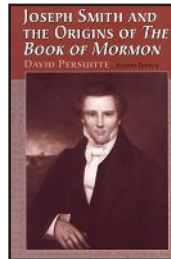
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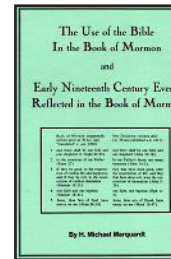
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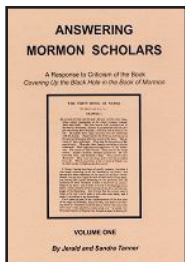
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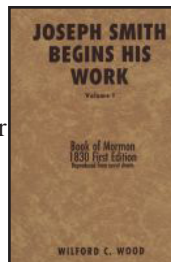
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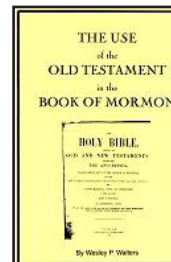
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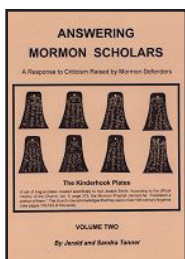
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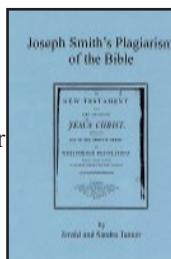
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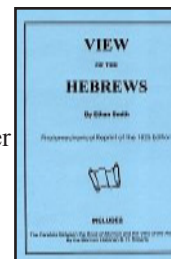
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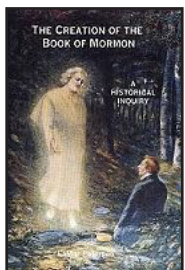
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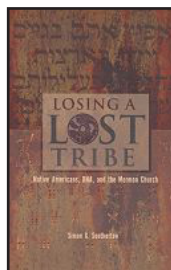
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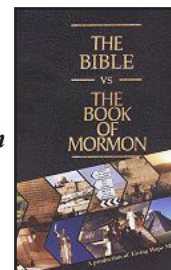
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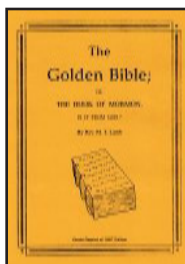
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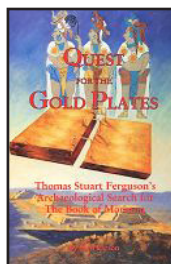
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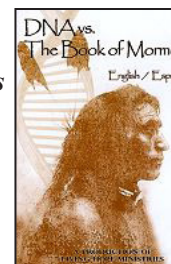
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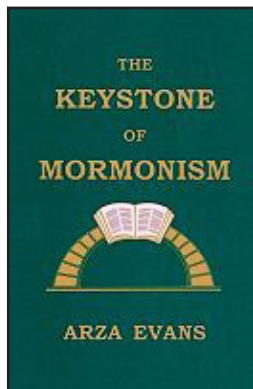
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