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Jerald Tanner's Quest for Truth - Part 3

By Ronald V. Huggins

This last of our three-part series examining the life and research of Jerald Tanner, focuses on the integrity Jerald brought to his research of Mormon historical documents. The previous two parts of this series can be found in Salt Lake City Messenger Nos. 108 and 109, which dealt with Jerald's initial doubts about the truthfulness of Mormonism, his conversion to Christianity, his marriage to Sandra and their early years of research and writing on Mormonism.

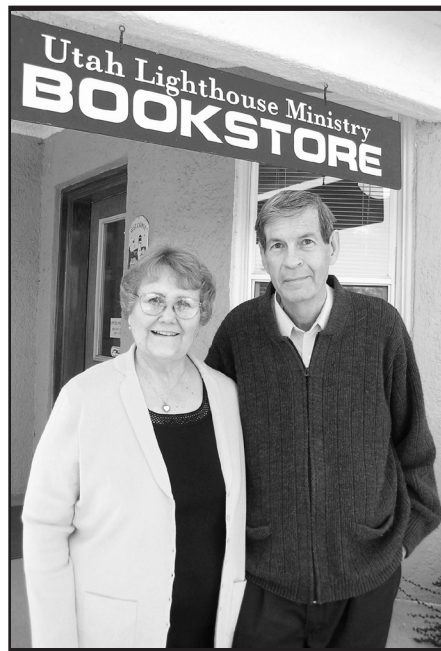
Jerald Tanner's research was always centered in determining the truth, not just uncovering problems in LDS claims. Besides examining the church's own material, at times he found it necessary to examine the veracity of works that were critical of the LDS Church. In the early sixties the Tanners published a reprint of Oliver Cowdery's *Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints* in a booklet called *Revealing Statements by the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon*.¹ Jerald was especially interested in the statements of Book of Mormon witnesses David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery as they wrote of various problems in early Mormonism and indicated that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet. Cowdery even claimed "an open vision" in which Jesus declared that the Latter Day Saints had erred in "permitting their President, Joseph Smith, Jr., to lead them forth into errors, where I led him not, nor commanded him . . ."²

At that time it did not occur to Jerald and Sandra to doubt the authenticity of the Cowdery tract as it had been treated as authentic already by Mormon historian B. H. Roberts in his

LDS Church published *Comprehensive History of the Church* where he referred to the 1906 printing by R. B. Neal.³ It was also referenced by Fawn Brodie in the original edition of *No Man Knows My History*. The latter source in addition had a tantalizing note to the effect that "apparently there are no copies of the original extant."⁴ Cowdery's tract had supposedly been published in 1839, but the earliest available reprints came from after 1900. This naturally represented a challenge to Jerald and Sandra's circle of friends to see if they could find an original copy.

In late 1960 Pauline Hancock, pastor of the little Church of Christ in Independence, Missouri, received a letter from Susan Kallenbach of the Yale University Library's Western Americana Collection announcing that they had not the original itself but a copy of the original, which they were willing to photocopy or microfilm. They stressed however that they had no information "as to the location of the original copy."⁵ This news was hopeful but not entirely satisfactory. So the next April we find Jerald requesting a copy of the Cowdery document from the LDS Church Historian's office, and being promptly refused.⁶ The copy they would eventually print would be the Yale copy.⁷ Before long Wesley P. Walters, fellow researcher and pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Marissa, Illinois, had managed to trace the original from which the Yale copy was made to a certain Mr. Fulk, who

allowed him to examine it in his home. Walters was disappointed to discover that it was not an original but only made to look like one: "in Mr. Fulk's copy the page had been cut all the way across just above the word *Defence*. A blank piece of paper of the same



Sandra and Jerald Tanner

1 Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *Revealing Statements by the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm, (1962-64). Date arrived at by address on tract. Jerald & Sandra lived at 566 Center Street from Summer 1962–June 1964. If this publication spurred Richard Lloyd Anderson's investigations (see footnote 16) then this tract must be dated to the summer or early fall of 1962.

2 Oliver Cowdery, *Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints* (Pressley's Job Office, Norton, Ohio, 1839) p. 4.

3 B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 163, ft. nt. 11.

4 Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945) p. 471.

5 Susan Kallenbach to Pauline Hancock (Nov. 15, 1960).

6 Earl E. Olson to Jerald Tanner (April 24, 1961). A photocopy of his letter appears in opening section of [Tanner's], *Revealing Statements*.

7 Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *A Critical Look: A Study of the Overstreet "Confession" and the Cowdery "Defence."* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1967) p. 7.

quality as the rest of the title page was pasted above the word *Defence*. I couldn't see the point of this until I returned home and checked [R.B.] Neal's 1906 tract and saw that this was the very spot where Neal had printed the identifying words 'Title Page of Cowdery's Tract.'⁸ Evidently Walters' discovery occurred prior to the publication of the Tanners' *Revealing Statements* where they make mention of it.⁹

By the summer of 1962 Richard Lloyd Anderson of Brigham Young University had already begun trying to determine whether the *Defence* was authentic. He sent a copy of the Cowdery *Defence* that he had somehow obtained (possibly from the Tanners' tract) to Yale and received a letter back from Archibald Hanna, curator of the Western American Collection, informing him that the copies he had sent were derived from the Yale copy, further noting that the Yale copy had been "photographed from a pasted up dummy," which suggested to Hanna that "the original may have appeared in a newspaper and that Cowdery decided to reprint it as a pamphlet and so pasted up a dummy and had a title page set for it."¹⁰ Hanna further recommended that Anderson contact Ernest Wessen of Midland Rare Book Company in Mansfield, Ohio, which he did, perhaps for the first time, the following October.¹¹

In any case, Anderson had sent a copy of the Cowdery tract to Wessen, who responded in part by saying "There was no press at Norton, Ohio, in 1839"—the tract claimed to have been printed by Pressley's Job Office, Norton, Ohio—and that "the typography is of a much later date."¹² Wessen wrote again only a few days later cautioning that the "evidence that no press existed at Norton, Ohio, in 1839, is purely presumptive," and that "I am proud of my reputation, and would not want to be quoted on the typography," i.e., on the general impression that it came from a later period.¹³

At some point in this process Anderson approached the Tanners directly about his growing doubts. In response Jerald made the question a matter of his own investigation, and on April 7, 1967, he and Sandra issued a tract entitled *A Critical Look: A Study of the Overstreet "Confession" and the Cowdery "Defence"*, which set out to prove that the *Defence*, along with another document related to Cowdery that also placed the LDS Church in a bad light, were both forgeries. Here we shall focus only on the *Defence*.

In making his case against the *Defence* Jerald repeated many of the same concerns shared by Anderson and other early investigators, i.e., the fact that the tract was never quoted anywhere prior to its appearance in the early twentieth century, that a first edition could not be discovered anywhere, and so on. But, as in most of his work, Jerald's most decisive argument was

a literary one in which he proved, I believe beyond reasonable doubt, that the *Defence* had been cobbled-together from published Cowdery writings, especially from the series of letters he wrote on the history of the Church which appeared in the LDS newspaper *Messenger and Advocate*.

There are two legitimate reasons that authors may write similar things in different places. The first is that everyone has his own distinctive style of writing, features of which show up consistently in whatever they write. It is also a common practice among writers when they write on a topic they have already covered to copy what they formerly said in a new work. Jerald, however, discovered close parallels to Cowdery's writings that fit neither of these criteria. In his 1967 pamphlet Jerald focused only on the first:

Besides the letter in the Huntington Library, Oliver Cowdery wrote articles and letters which were published in the *Evening and Morning Star*, the *Messenger and Advocate* and the *History of the Church*. We compared all of these sources with the purported "Defence," and the results of this study are rather interesting. In the letters found in the Huntington Library we found no parallels of any importance; likewise the *History of the Church* contained no significant parallels. In the *Evening and Morning Star* we found only one important parallel—i.e., both the "Defence" and an article published in the *Evening and Morning Star* contain the words "by the shedding of blood."

On the other hand, we found that the *Messenger and Advocate* contains many important parallels.¹⁴

Jerald then listed eighty-four parallels between Cowdery's *Messenger and Advocate* writings and the *Defence*. He concluded that "whoever wrote the 'Defence' used the *Messenger and Advocate*."¹⁵ Jerald granted that people sometimes copy things they have written before, and contented himself to noting that the parallels "arouse suspicion." But there is a difference between what the *Defence* does and what authors are usually doing when they copy something. Usually the motive for recopying something that you have written before is that the author has occasion to talk about the same topic again. But what we find in the *Defence* are phrases and chunks of text taken out of one context and patched in to another, without there being any obvious connection between the two settings. This is the case, for example, in the following three parallels:

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⁸ Wesley P. Walters to Jerald Tanner (April 25, 1967) p. 1.

⁹ Although the Tanners' statement does not make this explicit: "In a letter dated Nov. 15, 1960, an employee of the Yale University Library stated that they had 'a copy of the original.' Wesley P. Walters ... stated that he examined the copy and that he believed it to be the 1906 reprint. After examining we are inclined to agree with Mr. Walters." Had Walters already seen Fulk's copy of the *Defence*, or did he merely conclude from comparing the Yale photocopy with copies of the later tract what he would later confirm directly by examining Fulk's tract?

¹⁰ Archibald Hanna to Richard L. Anderson (July 23, 1962).

¹¹ The date is derived from Ernest J. Wessen to Richard L. Anderson (Oct 21, 1963), who speaks of "yours of the seventh." There may have been letters before this. The tone of Wessen's letter is at least consistent with it being his first response, but not decisively so.

¹² Ernest J. Wessen to Richard L. Anderson (Oct 21, 1963).

¹³ Ernest J. Wessen to Richard L. Anderson (Oct 26, 1963).

¹⁴ Tanners, *A Critical Look*, p. 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Cowdery’s <i>Defence</i>	Cowdery’s material in <i>Messenger and Advocate</i>
Man may deceive his fellow man, deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may seduce the unstable, untaught . . . (p. 4)	Man may deceive his fellow man; deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught. (<i>M&A</i> 1:16)
This, I confess, is a dark picture to spread before those whom I am to warn, but they will pardon my plainness when I assure them of the truth. (p. 5)	This, I confess, is a dark picture to spread before our patrons, but they will pardon my plainness when I assure them of the truth. (<i>M&A</i> 1.14)
my Spirit is holy and does not dwell in an unholy temple, nor are angels sent to reveal the great work of God to hypocrites (p. 5)	The Holy Spirit does not dwell in unholy temples, nor angels reveal the great work of God to hypocrites. (<i>M&A</i> 1:95)

This makes it all but certain that the *Defence* was plagiarized from the *Messenger and Advocate*. The only way someone could make a case for its authenticity at this stage would be to prove that Cowdery was in the regular habit of plundering phrases and paragraphs from his earlier writings and dropping them without rhyme or reason into his later ones.

In 1968, a year after Jerald’s pamphlet, Richard Lloyd Anderson wrote an article on Oliver Cowdery for the *Improvement Era* in which he prefaces his own attempt at debunking the *Defence* by saying: “The fact is that the pamphlet has been accepted at face value for over a half of century without any serious investigation of its genuineness.”¹⁶ In saying this Anderson would appear to be taking credit himself for being the first to put forward a “serious investigation.” His case is strong but not as decisive as it would have been had he appealed to Jerald’s literary argument. But he does not mention the Tanners efforts from the previous year at all.

Historians less beholden to the LDS Church than Anderson were also less quick to come to the conclusion that the *Defence* was indeed a forgery fathered on Cowdery. After reading the Tanners’ pamphlet, historian Juanita Brooks wrote to Sandra saying:

You have convinced me that the item is genuine and that it was really written by Oliver Cowdery. You did for me what I had intended to do with the *Messenger and Advocate* letter myself, and the result is clearly that Cowdery was really the author.¹⁷

Fawn M. Brodie similarly did not agree with Jerald’s arguments. “I regret very much to say that I cannot agree with you about the Cowdery ‘*Defence*.’ After the most careful reading, I still believe it to be genuine.”¹⁸

In hindsight I am a bit surprised that careful scholars like Brodie and Brooks failed to see the force of Jerald’s literary argument. It just goes to show that not everyone has a head for discerning textual relationships. With time, however, Jerald’s position has won out, leaving Brodie to be one of the very few historians to hold out for the authenticity of the *Defence*.

Factual History?

As a historian I have long been cognizant of the fact that being careful about getting at the truth of history is not a necessary prerequisite for success in publishing, in fact a certain cavaliness in fiddling the truth is often just the right recipe for achieving big sales and pride of placement on the shelves of major book stores. It is simply *not* the case anymore that a layperson can pick up a book by a scholar from a prominent university and trust that the information it contains is going to be true and accurate even at the level of being correct about the basic facts. A good example of this is the book *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Early Christianity* (New York: Viking, 2007) by Elaine Pagels, Huntington Spear Paine Professor of Religion at Princeton University, and Karen L. King, Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard Divinity School. After writing a critical review of their book I was scarcely surprised to find Pagels and King’s *Reading Judas* come out in paperback this year with all its original errors intact. Even if the authors never saw my piece, the errors I pointed out were scarcely obscure. One would have expected other scholars to point out the same things.¹⁹

In this environment, Mormon scholars have begun to flourish to the point that even in a book published by the distinguished old firm Oxford University Press, Richard Bushman can get away with asserting that Mormon apologists have “produced vast amounts of evidence for the Book of Mormon’s historical authenticity.”²⁰ Actually Mormon apologists have *not* produced *any* substantive evidence for the Book of Mormon’s historical authenticity. Bushman would have been more honest and accurate had he said the opposite, i.e., that there is “vast amounts of evidence *against* the Book of Mormon’s historical authenticity.”

Much of what has been written by Mormon apologists down through the years has been very disrespectful toward truth and the weight of evidence. Seemingly anything will do so long as it appears to sustain Mormonism. So now we see a current atmosphere of critical laxity paving the way for Mormons to get substandard scholarship published with respected publishing

16 Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration,” *The Improvement Era* (Sept. 1968).

17 Juanita Brooks to Sandra Tanner (July 13, 1968).

18 Fawn M. Brodie to Jerald and Sandra Tanner (May 10, 1967).

19 See my comments at <http://blog.bible.org/bock/comment/reply/149> and my review of Pagels and King’s *Reading Judas* at www.irr.org/pdfs/Huggins-PagelsKing.pdf.

20 Richard Lyman Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 32.

houses. As a result we are already beginning to see new life being breathed into baseless old apologetic theories, many of which have long since been considered thoroughly debunked by scholars familiar with the Mormon scene.

Book of Abraham Translation

A good example of this is found in the discussion of the translation of the Book of Abraham (a part of LDS Scripture) in Richard Lyman Bushman's biography *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. The problem for the Mormon historian is that Joseph Smith's Kirtland Egyptian papers relating to the Book of Abraham make no sense. Thus one must develop an explanation that does not make Smith responsible for the Egyptian characters on the manuscript. Bushman states:

The Abraham texts gave Joseph another chance to let his followers try translating. . . . They seem to have copied lines of Egyptian from the papyrus and worked out stories to go with the text. Or they wrote down an Egyptian character and attempted various renditions. Joseph apparently had translated the first two chapters of [the Book of] Abraham . . . and the would-be translators [Joseph's scribes] matched up hieroglyphs with some of his English sentences [in manuscript pages included in the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar].²¹

Bushman then goes on to describe how he imagines that came about: "One can imagine these men staring at the characters, jotting down ideas that occurred to them, hoping for a burning confirmation."²² Only that wasn't the case. The scribes were not independently trying to decipher the meaning of the papyrus or to identify which character matched up with Joseph's translation. So where did Bushman get the idea that the scribes added the characters after the English text had been written out? His endnote 38 tells us, "Hugh Nibley worked out this explanation," and then directs us to a Summer 1971 *Brigham Young University Studies* article by Nibley entitled "The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers." It is remarkable to me that a historian of Bushman's prominence—Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, at Columbia University—would appeal to such a source and at this late date.

One would think that someone who had lived and moved in the LDS world and the larger scholarly world as long as Bushman has would have long since learned that Nibley's work was mostly desperation apologetics not sound, careful scholarship, which should therefore not normally be appealed to in books of serious scholarship. And no place, perhaps, did Nibley speak with less credibility than in the article relied upon by Bushman. That article in particular is the purest example of damage control deployed by Nibley in an attempt to introduce a note of confusion after a remarkable discovery had demonstrated how Joseph Smith had produced the Book of Abraham, and in doing so discredited Smith's claim to have translated it miraculously from Egyptian. Bushman as a historian should have known enough to look

into the issues himself. By failing to do so, he does his readers and his craft a huge disservice. But here it provides me with an opportunity to tell "the rest of the story."

What Nibley was really up to, as we said, was trying to call into question the then-recent discovery of how Joseph went about "translating" the Egyptian papyri he bought in 1835 from antiquities dealer Michael Chandler, and which he put forward as, to quote the 1851, first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*:

A TRANSLATION OF SOME ANCIENT RECORDS, THAT HAVE FALLEN INTO OUR HANDS FROM THE CATECOMBS OF EGYPT, PURPORTING TO BE THE WRITINGS OF ABRAHAM WHILE HE WAS IN EGYPT, CALLED THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, WRITTEN BY HIS OWN HAND, UPON PAPYRUS.

This same heading accompanied the first installment of the Book of Abraham in the March 1, 1842, issue of the early Mormon periodical *Times and Seasons* (3:704), and it is still used today in the LDS Church published *Pearl of Great Price*. And for most of their history, Mormons took for granted that the Book of Abraham was just what this heading said it was, that providence had placed some of the writings of the Biblical patriarch into Joseph Smith's hands and he had translated them by the supernatural gift of God. Many Mormons, in fact, still believe that.

Long before the period and discoveries I am describing here (1960's–1970's), it had already become clear to non-Mormons that the Book of Abraham was not really what Joseph Smith claimed it was. On the one hand, the fourth chapter of Abraham, though modified to teach a plurality of Gods, nevertheless still tracked so closely with the wording of the King James Version of the first chapter of Genesis that it would have been difficult for an outsider making the comparison not to conclude that Joseph had derived that portion of the Book of Abraham directly from the King James Bible. Indeed 647 of the 864 words in KJV Genesis 1:1-2:3 are retained in Book of Abraham 4. In addition, many other words are also retained but have simply been pluralized or had their tenses changed. In the form in which this chapter first appeared in the March 15, 1842, issue of *Times and Seasons* there is even evidence that when Joseph changed singular nouns to plural he neglected to change the tenses of their accompanying pronouns. Hence we read:

And *the Gods* [plural] organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light *he* [singular] set the stars also. (cf., Abr. 4:16)

In addition, Joseph included, along with the published text of the Book of Abraham, three illustrations (Facsimiles 1, 2 and 3) of drawings he found on the Egyptian Papyri in his possession along with explanations as to what they were supposed to mean, explanations supposedly endorsed by Abraham himself in the text of the Book (see, e.g., Abr. 1:12-14). Even though these drawings were not very good, they were clear enough for Egyptologists in

²¹ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough and Rolling Stone—A Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder* (with the assistance of Jed Woodworth; New York: Alfred E. Knopf 2005) p. 290.

²² Bushman, p. 291.

the early 1900's to state very definitely that they were not what Joseph claimed them to be.²³ This in turn led to a story in the December 29, 1912, *New York Times* under the headline:

Museum Walls Proclaim Fraud of Mormon Prophet

Sacred Books Claimed to Have Been Given Divinely to the First Prophet Are Shown to be Taken from Old Egyptian Originals, Their Translation Being a Work of the Imagination—What a Comparison with Metropolitan Museum Treasures Shows.²⁴

After that time informed non-Mormon opinion regarding the Book of Abraham has continued to be in agreement with the assessment expressed in the *New York Times*. Among the Mormons, counter-arguments were proposed by LDS apologists like John Henry Evans, B. H. Roberts, and a certain Dr. Robert C. Webb, who was actually not a doctor, that is to say he didn't have a Ph.D., and whose real name was James Edward Homans.²⁵ These and other Mormon writers literally stuffed the pages of the 1913 LDS *Improvement Era* with articles trying to rescue the Book of Abraham. Stress was put on the fact that the original papyri that Joseph Smith had actually handled and worked with remained unavailable. And hope was held out that were they to turn up, Joseph's translation would be vindicated. And so the matter pretty much remained until the mid-1960's, informed non-Mormons feeling satisfied that the Book of Abraham wasn't what it claimed to be and (most) faithful Mormons imagining they knew that it was.

Joseph's Egyptian Papyri Found

Many consider the next important moment in the ongoing saga of the Book of Abraham to be the sensational article on the front page of the 1967 LDS Church owned *Deseret News* announcing:

NEW YORK: A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.²⁶

"Museum Walls Proclaim Fraud of Mormon Prophet"

New York Times, December 29, 1912

Free copy included with every purchase.

Offer expires January 31, 2009

23 For the opinions of Egyptologists in this earlier period see the chapter "Opinions of Scholars upon the Book of Abraham" in Frank S. Spaulding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., As A Translator* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Arrow, 1912) pp. 23-31; reprinted now in *Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, n.d.).

24 For typescript and PDF scan of article see: <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nytimes1912papyrus.htm>

25 See Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (5th edition; Salt Lake City, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, reformatted 2008) p. 300. Also, Kevin Barney, "Robert C. Webb," <http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2006/10/robert-c-webb/>. See the original edition of Fawn M. Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957) p. 175 nt.

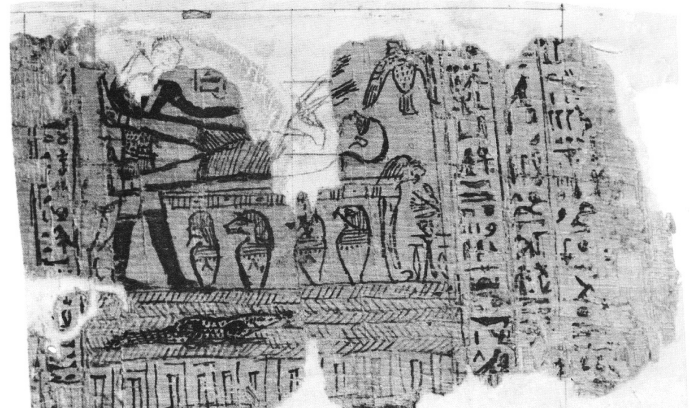
26 Jack E. Jarrard, "Rare Papyri Presented to the Church," *Deseret News* (Nov 27, 1967) p. 1.

27 For more on James Wardle, see Ronald V. Huggins, "Jerald Tanner's Quest for Truth," *Salt Lake City Messenger* 108 (May 2007) p. 1. See also, Diane Olson Rutter, "State Street Socrates: A barber by vocation, a philosopher for free—James Wardle's passionate life lives on in collection of books," *Catalyst* (July 1998) pp. 16-17.

28 Manuscript History, Book B-1:597, LDS Archives, *Joseph Smith's History of the Church* 2:238, Quoted in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844* (Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2005) p. 396.

29 *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (ed. by Scott H. Faulring; Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1989) pp. 35 and 65. Double brackets mine.

The Egyptian papyri in question were none other than at least some of those Joseph Smith had used in translating the Book of Abraham. In evidence of this, the article was accompanied by a photograph of the very papyrus that had served as the basis of Facsimile 1. According to the Book of Abraham text, Abraham himself refers to the illustration: "...that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record." (Abr. 1:12)



Original Papyrus of Facsimile No. 1

The transfer of the papyri to the LDS Church, however, fit into a larger picture that began at least two years before in the circle that frequented 424 State Street, the Barber shop of the "State Street Socrates" and Mormon book and document collector extraordinaire, James Wardle.²⁷

After obtaining the Egyptian papyri from Michael Chandler in 1835, Joseph Smith referred on a number of occasions to a document he was developing in connection with the translation of what would eventually appear as the Book of Abraham. In the Manuscript History compiled in 1843 Joseph Smith remarked concerning July 1835: "The remainder of the month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients."²⁸ Over the following months of 1835 we find additional references to the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar in Smith's journal:

October 1[st] 1835 This after noon I labored on the Egyptian alphabet in the company of Br[other]s O[liver] Cowdery and W[illiam] W. Phelps.

Tuesday, [[November]] 17th Ex[h]ibited some /the Alphabet/ of the ancient records to Mr. Holmes and some others.²⁹

Sometime, probably in early 1965, James Wardle managed to obtain a very poor quality microfilm copy of Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, which he loaned to the Tanners, who in turn took advantage of the technology then available in hopes of improving the images before publishing the document, which they finally did in April 1966.³⁰

Grant Heward's Crisis of Faith

In the meantime another person became interested in the Alphabet and Grammar in early 1965 who would play a significant role in the story: Grant Stuart Heward, James Wardle's postman. Heward was a true blue Mormon who looked upon the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar as an opportunity to prove, by showing that Joseph Smith actually succeeded in translating Egyptian, that Joseph was a true prophet of God. In pursuit of this goal, between delivering letters and packages, Heward commenced studying Egyptian, so that already by late May 1965, he was "beginning to recognize some of the characters on the Hypocephalus³¹ myself."³² Hoping to find substantive proof through his study that Joseph was indeed a prophet of God capable of translating unknown languages, Heward's study led him instead to "nothing more than a sad discouragement."³³ Like so many, Heward had spent years not being able to even consider the towering difficulties that faced his religion: "Have you ever seen anyone refuse to look at the facts while condemning wildly those who would?" Heward at one point recalls, "You should have seen me; I've been guilty of just that." Still somehow his eyes were finally opened so that he was able to see what he had been blinded to before. Were all the things he had heard about Book of Mormon problems, the changing of the prophecies in the Doctrine and Covenants, all lies? "I certainly thought so," writes Heward, "until I checked and compared for myself. It was so easy to check. I felt bewildered, but I could no longer say they were lies, because it was so easy to find out for myself."³⁴

But with Heward's Egyptian study and the efforts of the Tanners and others to come to grips with the significance of Joseph Smith's Alphabet and Grammar, enough spadework would be undertaken by the time the Tanner edition appeared and was featured in the April 1966 *Salt Lake City Messenger* (No. 7) to prove that Joseph's attempts to translate Egyptian were futile. On the one hand a microfilm copy of the document had been sent to I.E.S. Edwards, Keeper of the Egyptian Antiquities Department at the British Museum, who responded

in a letter dated December 22, 1965: "The commentary, such as it is, shows that the writer could not possibly have understood Ancient Egyptian, They simply do not deserve serious study."³⁵ The opinion foreshadowed what other Egyptologists would say about it. But more significant still was that Heward and Tanner had already come to discover that in the process of "translation" Joseph would derive dozens of words out of single Egyptian characters.³⁶

It was at this point in his journey that Heward, listening to some advice from Jerald, took a serious step that would affect his continuing relationship with the LDS Church. Like many Mormons, Heward had been brought up believing that his church was about truth and truthfulness, so he felt sure his fellow Mormons, or a least those among them who were open and honest lovers of the truth, needed to hear about what he had discovered. He came up with the idea of producing leaflets to hand out at the LDS General Conference. These consisted of at least two sheets, one entitled "Why Would Anyone Want to Fight Truth?" and the other "What About Joseph Smith's Egyptian Grammar?" We know this because Nibley quoted from both of them in the apologetic article cited by Bushman.³⁷ Somewhere in the process Heward asked Jerald if he thought his plan would get him into trouble. Jerald thought it highly unlikely since the church would not want to draw attention to the Book of Abraham problems. So Heward went ahead and distributed his leaflet at LDS General Conference in April 1967. Unfortunately for Heward—or fortunately, depending how you look at it—Jerald had underestimated the reaction of the LDS Church, which moved quickly to strike Heward off the membership rolls. He was tried on June 21, 1967, for the "alleged circulation of literature challenging the validity of the translation of a standard work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," and excommunicated.³⁸ The charge against him was made by the office of Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve.³⁹ In a circular letter informing his friends of what happened Heward declares "to oppose truth is to oppose God. To place any authority above truth is idolatry."⁴⁰

If the plan was poorly conceived, the leaflets weren't. On one sheet Heward made a case for truthfulness, asking "Is it right to fight truth to protect what we have long considered sacred?" No, says Heward, rather, "Bring on the truth! It can never cast a shadow on God! Only on a false god! What authority is greater than truth? Our Father in heaven is the Spirit of Truth—for God and Truth are one."⁴¹ On the other sheet Heward spells out the

30 Still available as *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1966)

31 Presumably a reference to Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2.

32 Grant S. Heward to Ernest C. Conrad (May 22, 1965). In the same letter Heward reports: "I have a full copy of Joseph Smith's Alphabet Character Grammar (typed) with the characters he claimed were equal to the Book of Abraham up to the 20th verse of the 2nd Chapter. His collection appears to have some real Egyptian material that remains untranslated."

33 Grant S. Heward, "Why Would Anyone Want to Fight Truth?" (1967) p. 1.

34 Heward, "Why Fight the Truth?" p. 1.

35 Quoted in "Hidden Document Revealed," *Salt Lake City Messenger* No. 7 (April 1966) p. 3.

36 "Hidden Document Revealed," *Salt Lake City Messenger* No. 7 (April 1966) p. 4.

37 Nibley quotes passages identifiable as belonging to these two works, in connection with his reference to how "In 1967 a Mr. Heward passed out Handbills at a general conference" ("The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11.4 [Summer 1971] p. 374).

38 The wording comes from the summons issued by the Midvale Stake (dated June 14, 1967) and signed by S. A. Hutchings, Lloyd Gardner, and R. Kent King.

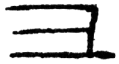
39 In a circular letter Heward prepared to explain his excommunication to his friends, he writes that "Both [i.e., the Bishop and Stake President] stated that the charge came from the office of Joseph Fielding Smith."

40 Letter undated, single page, one side.

41 Grant S. Heward, "Why Would Anyone Want to Fight Against Truth?" [1967] p. 1.

problem raised by Joseph translating many words from single Egyptian characters in the Alphabet and Grammar, which he illustrates by saying: “Suppose someone showed you a round black dot on a piece of paper and said that it was writing. That it told the story of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’; the whole story— Little Red Riding Hood, her mother, her grandmother, the wolf, the woodcutter, the forest, the basket of cookies and all— everything! The whole story was there! Could a single round dot carry that much meaning?”

Then to bring this home Heward, on the other side of the sheet, gave the actual Egyptian Alphabet and described how his readers could use it to write their own names. The drawing of an owl represents “m,” a foot stands for “b”, etc. This in order to help them understand that it takes a number of Egyptian symbols to make a word. He also included an example from Smith’s Grammar showing a single Egyptian character, resembling a backwards *E*⁴², from which Joseph allegedly derived the seventy-six words that make up Book of Abraham 1:13-14.



13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

14 That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics.

This is one of the key issues that drove Nibley to write the article Bushman cites. He could see the implications of Heward’s leaflets in terms of potentially undermining Joseph Smith’s prophetic claims and so used his trusty method of turning the facts on their heads as a way to try and wiggle out of the implications of what Heward discovered.⁴³ What *really happened* Nibley will say is not that Joseph looked at the Egyptian characters and dictated his translation of them, but that his scribes looked at Joseph’s dictated translation and then tried to guess which Egyptian characters should be associated with which part of it. That thesis, besides striking one as extremely counterintuitive, also fails to do justice to the evidence. But before we delve into that, we need first to track our story a little further along.

Locating the Papyri

When the Metropolitan Museum in New York handed the Joseph Smith Papyri over to the LDS Church on November 27, 1967, the discovery of the papyri was credited to Aziz S. Atiyah, a non-LDS Professor of Middle Eastern studies at the University of Utah, and a Coptic Christian. Atiyah had been visiting the Museum in May of 1966 while pursuing his own research when he came upon a set of papyri which he recognized at once as being related to the facsimiles in the *Pearl of Great Price*. Over the next year he played a key role in negotiating the turning over of the eleven papyrus fragments to the LDS Church.

In the meantime Jerald and Sandra’s circle caught wind of their existence. In September, 1966, University of Chicago Egyptologist Klaus Baer in a letter to Heward, referred to a “lot of eleven papyri from the Joseph Smith collection that will probably make a reappearance in the not too distant future.”⁴⁴ But no one was telling where the papyri were actually located. As it turned out the Metropolitan Museum was asking Egyptologists to keep their location confidential. In a letter Baer wrote to Jerald after the papyri had been made public Baer speculated: “It may very well be that the Metr. Mus. was dropping hints about the papyri to everyone it could think of that had some sort of Mormon connections (come to think of it, I was known to be a friend of Nibley’s) in the hope that they’d do something about it—and we all took the request to keep the matter confidential too seriously.”⁴⁵ In any case prior to the handing over of the documents, while Jerald, Grant and others were trying to discover the location of the papyri, a fortuitous thing happened.

One day while Glen W. Davidson, who had written an article published in the *Christian Century* in 1965, entitled, “Mormon Missionaries and the Race Question,”⁴⁶ was visiting Klaus Baer in his office, Baer showed him photographs of the Joseph Smith Papyri. Davidson noticed that the pictures were each marked with a number, which he took to be catalogue numbers. As he sat talking with Baer he memorized as many of the numbers as he could, and wrote them down after leaving Baer’s office. He then wrote a letter dated October 10, 1967, giving Jerald and Sandra the numbers, and saying that Hugh Nibley had already obtained a set of the photos through the mediation of a “Prof. Araya, Arabic Studies, of the U. of Utah,” which they quickly recognized as probably referring to Atiyah.⁴⁷ Grant Heward called Atiyah asking him for help in matching the numbers with the institution, but Atiyah feigned ignorance, suggesting only that “he’d heard the papyri had been burned years ago in the Chicago fire.”⁴⁸

⁴² What looks like a backwards E is actually three wavy lines and is a determinative to indicate water. See http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/glyphs_2a.html

⁴³ Nibley actually refers to Heward’s Little Red Riding Hood illustration in “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” p. 374.

⁴⁴ Klaus Baer to Grant S. Heward (Sept 20, 1966).

⁴⁵ Klaus Baer to Jerald Tanner (Aug 16, 1968).

⁴⁶ Glen W. Davidson, “Mormon Missionaries and the Race Question,” *The Christian Century* (Sept 29, 1965) pp. 1183-1186.

⁴⁷ Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *The Case Against Mormonism 2* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968) p. 136. The unidentified Egyptologist on this page is Klaus Baer, and the one referred to as the anonymous source of the numbers, Glen W. Davidson.

⁴⁸ Grant S. Heward to Klaus Baer (Jan 8, 1968).

Atiyah also sought to put Heward off the scent by suggesting he write to the University of Michigan. The numbers were then passed along to Wesley P. Walters, who, on November 23, 1967, wrote to the Metropolitan. Henry G. Fisher, Curator of Egyptian Art, responded in a letter dated November 28, saying, "It is curious that you should inquire about these fragments just now, for they were turned over to the Mormon Church yesterday."⁴⁹ Was the timing of the handing over of the Joseph Smith Papyri suddenly moved forward as a result of Atiyah's finding out that the numbers had been leaked and that Walters had pinpointed their location? The answer is no. In fact the transfer had been planned for several months.⁵⁰ In the end the papyri were given to the Church as a gift, but it was a gift "made possible" by an anonymous donation to the Museum.⁵¹

In fact the whole story of the discovery of the papyri was a bit of a sham. In August of 1968, Egyptologist Klaus Baer wrote to Jerald explaining that

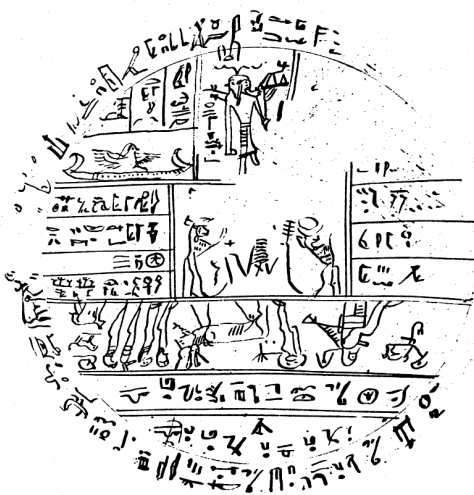
the Metr[opolitan]. Mus[eum]. photos were shown to Nibley in 1965 (at which time he did not know where the originals were). Atiya's story about "discovering" the papyri is obviously mistaken. He "discovered" them because the Metr. Mus. wanted them "discovered." It is also pretty clear to me that the Metr. Mus. didn't want anyone to find out about the papyri before the Mormon Church did, at least not publicly, and that they took their own sweet time about it. To me this is tantamount to suppression....⁵²

Nor were even Mormon scholars entirely unaware of the papyri. Noted historian Dale Morgan wrote to Stanley Ivins on June 9, 1953, asking, "Did you ever see the evidence in the files of the curator of Egyptology of the Museum of Fine Arts in N.Y. which might prove that all of the papyri were not destroyed in the Chicago fire?"⁵³

One wonders what would the LDS Church have done with the papyri had the Tanners, Heward, and Walters not learned of their existence? Would they have suffered the same fate as so many other important historical treasures that were donated only to be suppressed? That's hard to say. In any case, the LDS Church published pictures of the papyri in a last minute insert in the February 1968 issue of the LDS Church magazine *Improvement Era*. The rediscovery of the Book of Abraham Papyri would lead to a number of other problems that cast further doubt on the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith's ability to deliver when claiming to be translating from unknown languages. But what is of greatest interest in the developing story we have been telling is how the publication of the papyri enabled Heward to take the next significant step to discover which portion of the collection Joseph actually used as his "source" for the Book of Abraham.

Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar

In the Alphabet and Grammar was a portion of the translation manuscript of the Book of Abraham down to Abr. 2:18. Egyptian characters, along with a few made-up characters, were copied at the left of the margin and then translated to the right. But interspersed among the Egyptian characters were some that seemed to be made up. But why was this so? Why weren't all of the characters real Egyptian characters? Why had only a few Egyptian ones been falsified? A second mystery in the Alphabet and Grammar was that it contained a copy someone had made of a piece of manuscript material, called a Hypocephalus,⁵⁴ that became Book of Abraham Facsimile 2, but with several spaces left blank. This probably indicates that the Hypocephalus was already damaged when it came into Smith's possession.



A drawing of the Mormon Hypocephalus which appears in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*.



Book of Abraham, Facsimile No. 2 from the *Times and Seasons*

49 Henry G. Fisher to Wesley P. Walters (Nov 28, 1967), quoted in Tanners, *The Case Against Mormonism* 2, p. 137.

50 Letter from Aziz S. Atiya to Dr. Henry Fisher, Curator, Department of Egyptian Antiquities, Metropolitan Museum of Art., September 20, 1967, Aziz S. Atiya Collection, University of Utah, Marriott Library, Special Collections, No. 480, Box 40, folder 9. Letter from N. Eldon Tanner to Thomas P.F. Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 7, 1967, Aziz S. Atiya Collection, Box 40, folder 10.

51 "An Interview with Dr. Fischer," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2.4 (Winter 1967) p. 64.

52 Klaus Baer to Jerald Tanner (Aug 13, 1968) pp. 1-2.

53 Dale Morgan on *Early Mormonism: Correspondence & A New History* (ed. by John Phillip Walker; Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986) p. 199.

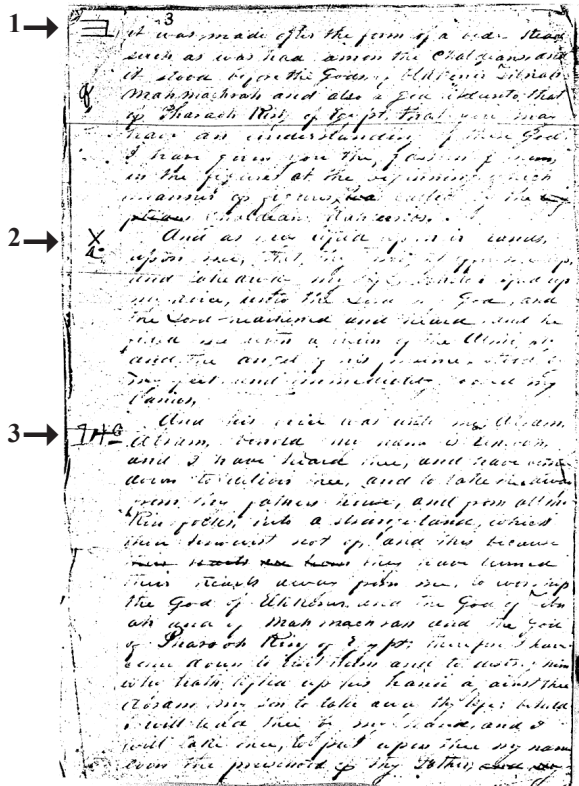
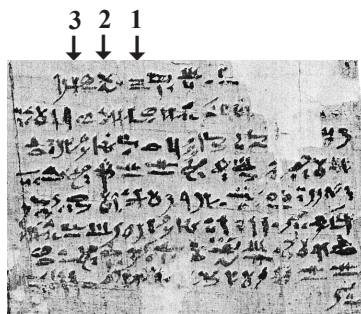
54 For an example of a Hypocephalus, see <http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/ashmolean/pages/2005-mar-11%20472.htm>

The mystery there centered on why the printed copy of Facsimile 2 was complete while this drawing was not? With the publication of the eleven pieces of the Metropolitan Joseph Smith Papyri, Heward was able to discover the key to definitively solve both mysteries by identifying beyond reasonable doubt that one of the eleven papyri had served as the source for both the Egyptian characters Joseph had “translated” to produce the Book of Abraham up through Abr. 2:18, and had provided (with one exception) the material used to fill in the gaps of the defective papyrus that served as the basis for Book of Abraham Facsimile 2. The papyrus in question was the piece known as Joseph Smith Papyrus XI, the small “Sensen” text, a part of the Book of Breathings.⁵⁵

Joseph Smith Papyrus XI

To the right is a photograph of the original fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Abraham.

Below is a photograph of the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham as it appears in *Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar*.



What made it especially clear that this was in fact the papyrus Joseph had used to produce the Book of Abraham was that the characters in the left margin of the translation manuscript in the Alphabet and Grammar were the same characters appearing in the same sequence as they appeared in that manuscript. Not only so, but by preserving in the Book of Abraham translation manuscript not only the characters in the right hand column of Joseph Smith Papyrus XI but also their original sequence, it now became clear that when Joseph encountered holes or gaps in the manuscript he sometimes “restored” the missing characters. This then explained the source of the made-up characters in the margins of the Book of Abraham translation manuscript. One point that would become particularly controversial in this connection was the fact that Joseph had “translated” the curse of Pharaoh as a descendant of Ham “pertaining to the Priesthood” passage in Abraham 1:26, from a gap he had filled in with characters he had made-up.⁵⁶

The same papyrus provided the solution for the mystery of Book of Abraham Facsimile 2 as well, where Joseph had used characters from lines 2-4 of the same papyrus, Joseph Smith Papyrus XI (again right hand column) to fill in the gaps—with the characters from line 4 written in upside down.⁵⁷

Article for Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought

One significant part of the restoration of Facsimile 2, the god in the boat in the upper-right of the picture, was copied instead from Joseph Smith Papyrus IV, again from the Metropolitan collection.⁵⁸

Once Heward had discovered all this, he and Jerald got together and wrote an explanatory article that appeared in the Summer 1968 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, under the title “The Source of the Book of Abraham Identified,”⁵⁹ which was very quickly accepted by Egyptologists who had worked with the materials. In a letter to Jerald dated August 16, 1968, Klaus Baer wrote:

Testimonials mean nothing; I can praise Tanner and Heward to the skies or damn them to hell, and it will not make the slightest difference. The only thing that counts is that there is an article in *Dialogue* 3 No. 2 (Summer 1968), 92-98 [i.e., Grant and Jerald’s article] which seems to be factual and uncontroversial in every detail.⁶⁰

Baer took for granted the correctness of Heward and Tanner’s piece publicly in an article published in the Autumn 1968 *Dialogue*, as does Robert K. Ritner, Baer’s student and successor who revisited the issue in 2000.⁶¹

55 Richard A. Parker, “The Book of Breathings (Fragment 1, the ‘Sensen’ Text, with restorations from Louvre Papyrus 3284),” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 3.2 (Summer 1968) p. 98. Parker was professor of Egyptology at Brown University.

56 Tanners, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 325.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 339.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 341.

59 Grant S. Heward and Jerald Tanner, “The Source of the Book of Abraham Identified,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3.2 (Summer 1968) pp. 92-98.

60 Klaus Baer to Jerald Tanner (Aug 16, 1968) p. 2.

61 Robert K. Ritner, “The ‘Breathing Permit of Hör’ Thirty Four Years Later,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33.4 (Winter 2000) p. 98, nt. 4.

So now it had become possible not only to say that the characters Joseph “translated” in the Alphabet and Grammar didn’t mean what Joseph said they meant, but also to actually translate them in their original context of the Joseph Smith Papyrus XI (right column) and to see what they really did mean. Following is Heward’s translation:

... to the pool of great Khensu. . . . born of Taykhebyt, justified likewise. After his arms are put over his heart and wrapped, the Book of Breathings, which was made with writing inside and out, is fastened in royal linen at the left side, in alignment with his heart. This is done at his outer wrapping. If this is made for him, then he will breathe like the souls of the gods for ever and ever.⁶²

Heward is not alone in translating the passage. Indeed it has been frequently retranslated since it was turned over to the LDS Church in 1967, and by both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars, including Richard A. Parker,⁶³ Klaus Baer,⁶⁴ Dee Jay Nelson,⁶⁵ Hugh Nibley,⁶⁶ Robert K. Ritner,⁶⁷ and Michael D. Rhodes.⁶⁸ Nor is there any essential dispute about what the passage says. The text simply has no relationship to Joseph Smith’s translation.

A particularly useful feature of the 1968 article by Klaus Baer is that he does in a comprehensive way what Heward had tried to do in his leaflet. Now that it was understood that Joseph had used Papyrus XI as the source of the Book of Abraham, Baer was able to show for each of the characters in the margins how Egyptologists translate them as opposed to what Joseph Smith made of them. This illustrates that the characters paralleled in the Joseph Smith translation manuscript amounted to scarcely more than twenty words when translated into English.⁶⁹ As Heward and Tanner had pointed out more generally, “The characters of fewer than four lines of the papyrus make up forty-nine verses of the book of Abraham, containing more than two thousand [English] words.”⁷⁰

One of the difficulties Heward and Tanner’s article caused for the Mormons was that the story of the discovery was trumpeted about all over the place in newspapers. Already an article by Wallace Turner appeared in the July 15, 1968, *New York Times* discussing Heward’s discovery.⁷¹

In 1970 Richard P. Howard, historian for the RLDS Church, also affirmed the conclusions of Heward and Tanner in the pilot issue of *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action*:

Since the publication in 1966 of the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar of Joseph Smith and the discovery the next year of the original papyri with which Joseph Smith worked, there is no need for presumption any longer. It has been determined that the Egyptian hieratic symbols appearing in the first four lines of one of the papyri fragments were the very ones copied into the left hand column of the *Book of Abraham* text pages of the Joseph Smith Alphabet and Grammar.⁷²

Wallace Turner used Richard Howard’s article as a springboard for yet another article published May 3, 1970, this time entitled “Mormons’ Book of Abraham Called a Product of Imagination.”⁷³

Into this situation, where a new consensus had arisen based on sound reasoning from the evidence, comes Nibley trying to cast doubt on it all in the apologetics article Bushman would later rely on for his arguments in *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*.

Nibley’s article is a long one (49 pages) about which much could be said, but we will focus particularly on his attempt to explain away the problem discovered by Heward relating to the Book of Abraham manuscript pages in the Alphabet and Grammar. Nibley asserted that the Egyptian characters were added after the translation was done rather than written down first to serve as the basis of translation, which Nibley claimed is obvious by examining the manuscript itself. Most of his arguments in this connection are made in a single paragraph whose parts we will deal with separately. In the first place Nibley says:

... the margins of the English text are remarkably straight and neat, and it is at once apparent that the hieratic symbols must adapt themselves to those margins, and not the other way around. Thus on the last page of B. of A. Ms. #2 [now Ms. 1a] W. W. Phelps has kept a neat margin but one more than twice as wide as necessary to accommodate the Egyptian characters; this waste of space and paper would have been avoided had he been adapting his margin to the hieratic signs.⁷⁴

62 H. Michael Marquardt, *The Book of Abraham Papyrus Found: An Answer to Dr. Hugh Nibley’s Book, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyrus: An Egyptian Endowment, As it relates to the Source of the Book of Abraham* (2nd ed. Rev. and enlarged: Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1981) p. 9.

63 Richard A. Parker, “The Book of Breathings (Fragment 1, the ‘Sensen’ Text, With Restractions from Louvre Papyrus 3284),” p. 98.

64 Klaus Baer, “The Breathing Permit of Hôr: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3.3 (Autumn 1968) pp. 119-20. Baer was professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago Oriental Institute.

65 Dee Jay Nelson, *The Joseph Smith Papyrus, Part 2: Additional Translations and a Supplemental Survey of the Ta-shert-Min, Hor and Amen-Terp Papyri* (Salt Lake City, Modern Microfilm Company, 1968) p. 21. Dee Jay Nelson was a colorful Mormon adventurer, lecturer and self-promoter, who knew enough Egyptian to win the confidence of both Hugh Nibley and the Tanners. On June 4, 1968, Nibley gave a note to Nelson, recommending that it would be “wise to permit Prof. Dee J. Nelson to obtain copies of the photographs of the 11 papyrus fragments acquired from the Metropolitan Museum.” Nelson apparently took this note to N. Eldon Tanner, because in a May 18, 1977, response to an inquiry by Wilber Lingle, N. Eldon Tanner sends a copy of the note and Nelson’s business card.” The Tanners discontinued publishing this and other works by Nelson, when it was discovered that he had bought a bogus “Philosophiae Doctor” degree in 1978 from a degree mill called the Pacific-Northwestern University. The story is told in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith?: A Response to Robert and Rosemary Brown’s Book, They Lie in Wait to Deceive Vol. 1* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1981).

66 Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyrus: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975) pp. 19-23.

67 Robert K. Ritner, “The ‘Breathing Permit of Hôr’ Thirty Four Years Later,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33.4 (Winter 2000) p. 105.

68 Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary* (Studies in the Book of Abraham 2; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2002) pp. 27-28. Rhodes is Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University.

69 Klaus Baer, “The Breathing Permit of Hôr: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3.3 (Autumn 1968) pp. 130-32. See also, H. Michael Marquardt, *Book of Abraham Papyrus Found* (Second Edition 1981) pp. 8-9.

70 Grant S. Heward & Jerald Tanner, “The Source of the Book of Abraham Identified,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3.2 (Summer 1968) p. 95.

71 Wallace Turner, “Papyrus Spur Mormon Debate Over Basis for Discrimination Against Negroes,” *The New York Times* (Mon, July 15, 1968) p. 11; an article that appeared in other newspapers around the country as well.

72 Richard P. Howard, “The Book of Abraham, in the Light of History and Egyptology,” *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action* (April 1970):pp. 40-41.

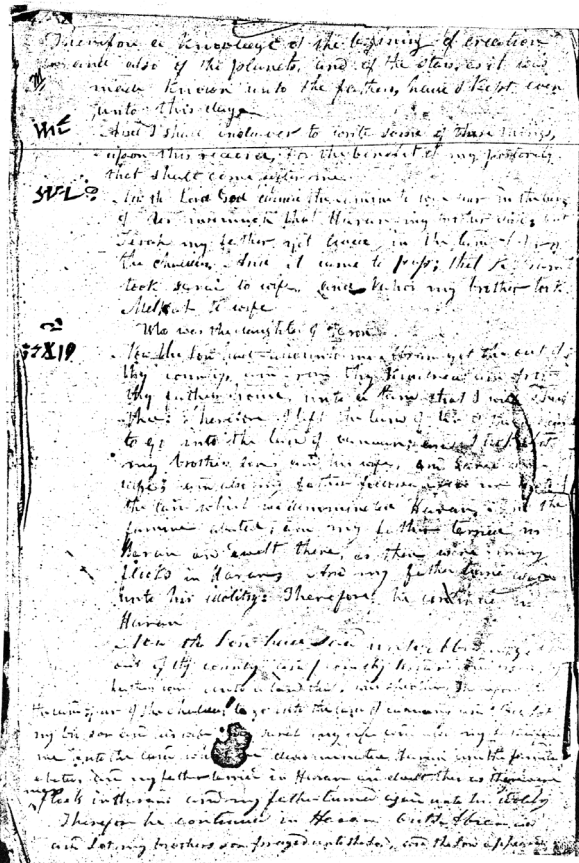
73 Wallace Turner, “Mormons’ Book of Abraham Called Product of Imagination,” *The New York Times* (Sunday, May 3, 1970).

74 Hugh Nibley, “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” p. 380.

In reality the margin on the page Nibley alludes to is anything but straight. In fact the English begins close in to the left side of the top of the paper, then bows to the right to make room for the first set of Egyptian characters. The margin then continues its curve even further for the next several paragraphs, only to cut back in close to the left side of the page again. In the process it gives one set of characters a wide birth. But far from the case that the “hieratic symbols must adapt themselves to those margins,” as Nibley asserts, the margin and English text have clearly adapted themselves to the previously present “hieratic symbols.”⁷⁵ Nibley, in fact, asserts the opposite of what the evidence suggests. Nibley goes on to assert that

on the last three pages of Ms. #1 [now Ms. 2] some Egyptian characters are squeezed right off the page by a margin that is not wide enough for them, and one jumps over the margin and intrudes a whole inch on the space of the English text. Thus the margins always accommodate the English text, but not the Egyptian symbols. Which can only mean that the English of the Book of Abraham was here copied down before the Egyptian signs were added.⁷⁶

But again that is simply not true.



Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar - Page 4 M

An important article that served as a corrective to Nibley’s writings on the Book of Abraham was Edward Ashment’s 1990 essay “Reducing Dissonance: The Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” which was out in plenty of time to have served as a warning for Bushman to avoid treating Nibley’s apologetics as credible historical reflection. Bushman lists scholarly articles and books that would have provided a more rounded understanding, but in this case at least he did not seem willing to interact enough with them to gain a more nuanced and accurate picture of what Joseph was doing. In concluding his article Nibley makes three assertions that are false and that were known to be false even then among those who grasped the nature of the questions and the materials, and even more so now after more than three decades of additional research:

- (1) the Book of Abraham was *not* derived from the “Alphabet” writings, which only got as far as Beta—the second letter; (2) it was *not* derived from or by means of the “Grammar,” which never got beyond the first page and a half; (3) it was *not* translated from the first two lines of the Joseph Smith Papyrus No. XI—the [“] Book of Breathings.”⁷⁷

Earlier in the article Nibley had gone as far as to say that “All the Grammar and Alphabet projects...aborted dismally; none of them could ever have been used even as an imaginary basis for constructing the story of Abraham.”⁷⁸ But again this is quite easily shown to be false. The book published by the Tanners in 1966 under the title *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar* contains both the Alphabet and Grammar along with two of four Book of Abraham translation manuscripts, plus some additional material. They simply printed everything that was on the microfilm Wardle had given them.

The Alphabet and Grammar is covered in the first 34 pages of the Tanner edition, which text is derived from a book in the LDS Archives with the words “Egyptian Alphabet” printed on its spine. That work is divided into five sections called “degrees.” That title is also repeated at the beginning of each of the first four degrees. The title varies a bit at the beginning of the fifth degree, reading instead, “Grammar & Alphabet of the Egyptian Language.” All the degrees are related to each other in that they all deal with developing the translation of the same characters.

One notes there are differences between the various “translations,” and that the translation expands as it moves through the degrees by a process of combining earlier translations and of additional supplementation. The Book of Abraham translation manuscripts include almost everything that had appeared before in the Grammar, and then adds additional items. It becomes clear once again that Nibley was wrong in asserting that the Grammar and Alphabet contributed nothing to the development of the story of the Book of Abraham. Clearly the former served as the foundation of the latter.

75 Formerly Book of Abraham Ms. 2, now also 1a; See the picture of that page in Nibley, “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” p. 381. Also more clearly in page marked 4 M in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar*, p. 4 M (photo of manuscript page).

76 Nibley, “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” p. 380.

77 Ibid., p. 398.

78 Ibid., p. 365.

Tanners Pursue Papyri Question

When Jerald and Sandra published their 1964 edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* they did not include any research on the Book of Abraham issue, but with the discovery of the Alphabet and Grammar and the original papyri, that was about to change. The February 1968 issue of the Tanners' newsletter carried the heading, "The Mormon Papyri Question." Thus began years of research on the Book of Abraham, the papyri and the facsimiles to determine their relationship and meaning.

After studying the microfilm of the Alphabet and Grammar and the Joseph Smith papyri Jerald felt the need to synthesize the research. In 1972 the Tanners published one of the most comprehensive studies of the Book of Abraham in their new edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Seventy-five pages were dedicated to the Book of Abraham and Smith's papyri, placing the facsimiles into the larger picture of Egyptian religious texts, as well as demonstrating the alterations made to the facsimiles and problems with Smith's interpretations and supposed translation of the papyri.

In examining the Book of Abraham issue, one must keep in mind that Egyptian hieroglyphics can be translated today almost as easily as Greek. All non-Mormon Egyptologists who have examined the issue find nothing in Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham or Alphabet and Grammar that relates in the smallest degree to the papyri he claimed to be translating. As Klaus Baer wrote on August 13, 1968, to Jerald:

You may find it oddthat [sic] an Egyptologist just doesn't get worked up about the Egyptological rubbish that Joseph Smith produced. Partly because we're all pretty well inured to assorted nuts with strange ideas about Egypt.

Enter Mark Hofmann

As a result of Jerald's meticulousness, it fell to him through the years to spend a great deal of time exposing fraud and countering erroneous statements made by or about Mormons. As we have already seen it was Jerald who made the definitive argument against the authenticity of the Cowdery *Defence*. It was also Jerald who first raised doubt about the Mark Hofmann forgeries, which quickly turned into the Mark Hofmann murders in 1985.⁷⁹

Hofmann, a young returned LDS missionary who in the early 1980's went into the rare book and document business, claimed to have found long misplaced letters and documents related to the beginnings of Mormonism. The most problematic document among the Hofmann finds was the so-called White Salamander Letter which was supposed to have been written on Oct. 23, 1830, by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris to early Mormon

leader W. W. Phelps. Instead of an angel appearing to Joseph Smith, Harris' letter had supposedly described the scene of the discovery of the Book of Mormon plates as follows:⁸⁰

... I[Joseph Smith] found it [the plates] 4 years ago with my stone but only got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck me 3 times & held the treasure & would not let me have it. . . .

While the Salamander Letter was generally being accepted as authentic by historians, Jerald had been bothered by its similarities to a letter by W. W. Phelps which was published in the 1834 expose *Mormonism Unveiled* by E. D. Howe.⁸¹ Another similarity could be seen in the Dec. 11, 1833, affidavit of Willard Chase where he recounted being told by Joseph Smith Sr. in June 1827 how Joseph Jr.,

again opened the box, and in it saw the book, and attempted to take it out, but was hindered. He saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, and struck him on the side of his head.⁸²

At one point in his *Testimony* Jerald tells how he felt after discovering literary parallels to Hofmann's Salamander Letter that suggested it might be a forgery:

Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would spot these parallels and realize their significance, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on fraudulent material.⁸³

Jerald published some of his reasons for doubting the letter in "Moroni or Salamander?" his March 1984 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, which was expanded five months later in his publication *The Money-Digging Letters: A Preliminary Report*.⁸⁴ Sandra, still hoping the letter was authentic, held back, thus causing them to issue their one and only split editorial in their June 1985 newsletter.

So here was Hofmann forging documents that were explicitly embarrassing to the LDS Church, and yet the Church slipped smoothly into damage-control mode. In no time at all it was assuring its faithful that not only was there nothing to be embarrassed over, but that indeed the documents when viewed in the right light might even be faith promoting.

For example, on August 27, 1984, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed the remarks of LDS Church spokesman, Jerry Cahill, assuring the faithful that the find "poses no threat to what is

⁷⁹ Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Tracking the White Salamander—The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder and Forged Mormon Documents* (3rd ed.; Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987).

⁸⁰ "Salamandergate' Mormon Church Caught in Magic Cover-up," *Salt Lake City Messenger* No. 57 (June 1985) pp. 5-6.

⁸¹ E[ber]. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: Or a Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion, From its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: by the author, 1834) pp. 273-274.

⁸² Affidavit of Willard Chase in E[ber]. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 242.

⁸³ *Jerald Tanner's Testimony*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987) p. 28.

⁸⁴ Jerald Tanner, *The Money-Digging Letters: A Preliminary Report* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, August 22, 1984, updated 1986).

already known about the prophet or beginning of the Church.”⁸⁵ In September the LDS Church News Section of the *Deseret News* had an article about the Salamander letter with an even more encouraging headline, “Harris Letter Could Be Further Witness.”⁸⁶ A year later Gordon B. Hinckley wrote in the *Ensign* that the Salamander Letter and one other that was supposed to be written in the hand of Joseph Smith, “have no real relevancy to the question of the authenticity of the Church or of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.”⁸⁷ In reality, of course, what Hinckley asserted was not true since the letter written by Harris reflected on the very story of how the golden plates were supposed to have been found. To this day Martin Harris is cited as a credible witness to the supernatural original of the Book of Mormon. The excuse-making reached its all time low in a talk given on August 16, 1985, by Apostle Dallin Oaks:

All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter [Martin Harris] used the word “salamander” in the modern sense of a “tailed amphibian.”

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of “salamander,” which may even have been the primary meaning in this context in the 1820s. . . . That meaning . . . is “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.” . . .

A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni: . . . the use of the words white salamander and old spirit seem understandable.⁸⁸

Another Mormon, Rhet S. James, was even quoted in the LDS Church News as claiming that “By the time of Martin Harris, the word salamander also meant angel.”⁸⁹ The LDS Church really had come to a place where they felt confident in terms of being able to dismiss any troublesome fact that might ever appear, with a simple assertion of its unimportance (as with Hinckley) or by distorting it and giving it a weird and unprecedented meaning (as with Oaks). And obviously, those who didn’t like the LDS Church would have been generally inclined to accept the embarrassing documents as authentic. One can only imagine the amusement Mark Hofmann must have derived from reading such excuses at the time.

But this all changed in October of 1985 when two people were killed in separate bomb attacks, and Mark Hofmann was seriously injured by a third bomb.⁹⁰ Soon it became apparent that these were all related to Hofmann’s business activities. After the five week preliminary hearing, Mark Hofmann was exposed as a document forger and murderer, and entered into a plea agreement. He is now serving a five-to-life sentence at the

Utah State Prison.⁹¹ Jerald’s questioning of Hofmann’s documents has now been vindicated, but one is left to wonder what if the murders had not happened and Jerald had not expressed his doubts? Would the documents still be considered genuine? Would Dallin Oaks’ excuse be accepted by Mormons today as unassailable? Or would other, even more fatuous arguments have been manufactured in the meantime?

History or Courtesy?

Another sensibility that Mormons have been able to exploit in the larger world of historical publishing relates to historical distortion in the name of courtesy. Is it acceptable today for scholars to leave relevant evidence out of consideration when writing up their research? Indeed it is. During a session at the 2002 Sunstone Symposium I asked non-Mormon historian Robert V. Remini, author of the Penguin Life Series biography of Joseph Smith, how, as a historian, he would treat a figure who had no contemporary followers, as for example the nineteenth-century free-love communist John Humphrey Noyes, differently than he treated Joseph Smith, who of course still does have followers. His answer was that he would never write anything that would offend Smith’s present day followers.⁹² So when he says in the preface of his biography—“As a historian I have tried to be as objective as possible in narrating his life and work”—the words “as possible” must apparently be taken to include favoring conclusions that would not offend modern Mormons, even when they happen to be historically indefensible, as for example when he adopts uncritically 1820 as the date of the First Vision.⁹³

Remini’s attitude is not unique. It is very much the current sensibility and temperament among historians to write sympathetically about historical religious figures, giving them the benefit of the doubt wherever possible. This subject came up at the 2001 American Association of Religion Meeting in Denver during an author meets critic session on Grant Wacker’s book *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*. Mention was made of a prominent early Pentecostal leader who had a tendency to magnify his reputation with grand stories about his spiritual exploits that often, when investigated, turned out not to be true. The question was naturally raised in light of this how the historian, when trying to produce sympathetic historical portraits of such leaders, could do so and yet avoid the appearance of perpetuating their false stories. Is there ever a time for the historian to say, “Look, what we have here is a religious charlatan, a liar, a manipulative scoundrel who uses his spiritual sway over people to get what he wants.”

85 “LDS Spokesman Says Letter is Not Threat,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Aug. 27, 1984) B-1.

86 “Harris Letter Could Be Further Witness,” *Deseret News*, Church News, Sept. 9, 1984, pp. 11, 13.

87 “Excerpts from “Keep the Faith,” First Presidency Message, by President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, September 1985, pp. 4-6, in Church Educational System Memorandum (Oct 2, 1985).

88 Quoted in Tanners, *Tracking the White Salamander*, pp. 22-23.

89 “Harris Letter Could Be Further Witness,” *Deseret News*, Church News, Sept. 9, 1984, p. 13.

90 Tanner, “LDS Documents & Murder,” *Salt Lake City Messenger* No. 59 (January 1986)

91 Tanners, *Tracking the White Salamander*, p. 186.

92 The session, with my question and Remini’s answer was recorded: “The Problem for a Non-Mormon Historian in Writing a Biography of Joseph Smith” Sunstone Symposium (Saturday, Aug. 10, 2002) 2:15-3:15 P.M. At the end of his Preface to his biography Remini similarly expresses the hope that “neither he [Joseph Smith] nor the Saints at BYU and around the globe will be disappointed or offended by what is written.” (Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith* [Penguin Life Series; A Lipper/Viking Book, 2002] xiii).

93 Remini, *Joseph Smith*, p. 39.

If Remini is willing to grant the possible existence of religious charlatans he could not, if he stuck to his own stated principles, ever describe them as such if it happened that they had present day disciples. He would simply have to dignify and validate their bad behavior by calling it something else. On this logic the only persons historians can identify as religious charlatans are those who have no followers today. In reality, of course, whether a religious charlatan has any followers or not speaks merely to his effectiveness and not to his being or not being what he claims. What Remini's principle amounts to is the bracketing out of certain negative evidence in order to present a more congenial portrait of Joseph Smith than is justified. Is it really any wonder, then, that Benson Bobrick, in reviewing Remini's biography for the *New York Times*, describes it as "a text that . . . follows its Mormon guides so closely as to resemble an official life."⁹⁴

Conclusion

The long and short of this is that current historians do feel the pressure at times to knowingly write what is false or misleading in order to flatter their readers or publishers. As a Christian historian, Jerald no doubt could feel this pressure as well, but he had another point of reference. The Bible both warns against man pleasing, and provides a category that modern historical study finds hard to get a handle on: the false prophet.

Scholars writing on religion in today's atmosphere find it most useful to adopt a sort of agnosticism about religious truth. Who is to say if any religion is true or, for that matter, false? If someone happens to find any particular religion of choice in some sense helpful in getting them through the passion play of life, well then who can criticize it? Or if you happen to find the religious symbols you grew up with more meaningful than I find the ones I grew up with, then all is well and good. How can anybody say one set of religious symbols and traditions are better than another? Mormons have done their best to exploit this sensibility, publishing what I personally would regard as substandard scholarship disguised as religious discourse.

Many Christians may feel the identification of particular individuals, especially leaders of large religious groups, as *pseudoprophetai* (false prophets), is overly harsh. But the category of religious figures is one presented to us in the Scriptures themselves, and if we wish to claim to be Biblical Christians we have no alternative but to take the Scriptural warnings about such figures seriously. So for us such questions as whether Joseph Smith should be regarded as a "religious genius," as, for example, Harold Bloom describes him,⁹⁵ or whether he was "sincere" in thinking his revelations came from God, are of very little significance for the Christian, whose starting point is the teaching of Scripture. The main thing is to begin by describing the situation accurately, and this is what Jerald did. A false prophet, be he brilliant or stupid, interesting or dull, sincere or hypocritical, is still first and foremost a false prophet, and therefore no safe guide to follow if our goal is seeking and finding the way of God.

⁹⁴ Benson Bobrick, "The Gospel According to Joseph Smith," *The New York Times* (Aug 18, 2002).

⁹⁵ Harold Bloom, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002) p. 146.



Excerpts from Letters and Emails

March 2008: Although I joined the Mormon cult in January 2008 from a faithful Bible-believing church, I have recently started to repent of that mistake and return to Christ and His true Church. I have found the articles of UTLM very helpful from removing my name from the cult's rolls to what the Bible says about God (and against Mormonism).

March 2008: I have started warning my friends about what I thought was the true Church. I'm praying that the Lord forgives me for those people that got converted to the Mormon church because I persuaded them. It is also my prayer that they see the light and walk away from the darkness.

March 2008: I was a convert to LDS church and I am a returned missionary (served in Salt Lake City area). . . . but just recently I started to study Mormon history in detail. Now my feelings about the Church and its teachings are founded on facts, thanks to you and other people that are revealing things that Church is trying to hide.

March 2008: If this [LDS] is not the true church then it is not upon the earth today. Because it is the only church that makes doctrinal sense. I have read a lot on your website and can only conclude that you need to really examine your inner-selves and ask yourself why you spend your time and throw so much effort into this message with a tone of hate.

March 2008: I would like to know how you would survive financially had you not started this crusade against the LDS Church. Also, what makes you an expert? I have read many books exposing you and many other anti-Mormons for the backhanded and deceitful ways you do things.

April 2008: I want you to know how much I appreciate the efforts and work you and Jerald have done over the years. It took me along time to be able to appreciate your work as your names were enough to disqualify anything you put out for many years. Once I was able to get over the immediate disqualification (without even looking/considering) I have found a great amount of information and resources through your efforts. I especially appreciate how factual you attempt to be.

May 2008: My wife, . . . and I were in the store Wed. We talked about our exit [from the LDS Church]. . . . Without your website and all the work you guys have done, we may never have found the truth in Jesus Christ.

May 2008: I want to thank you so much. i ordered a copy of mormonism shadow or reality and got it today. wow im blown away, everything and so much more than i expected. god bless you and your staff.

June 2008: There are so much information that was incorrect in the FAQ that It was offensive. Your group better go relearn the Mormon's church history and the Mormon's believes. It was so bad I couldn't finish reading question number 7 and I started at number one.

June 2008: I have really enjoyed your website, it has brought a ray of sunshine to me. . . . I have been a Mormon for all my life I served a mission and got married in the temple. I am on the verge of giving it all up. I really do not believe in it anymore. . . .

(Letters continued on page 22)

Min is not God!



The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients (DHC 2:238).

Over the next nine years Smith continued to work on his *translation* of the Book of Abraham. The work was included in the *Pearl of Great Price* when it was accepted as Scripture in 1880.

The Book of Abraham is unique amongst the books of LDS Scripture: it is the only book that contains illustrations in the form of three “Facsimiles,” each with an “Explanation” provided by Joseph Smith. Since the actual papyri were thought lost (some of the original papyri were found in 1967 and turned over to the LDS Church), the “Facsimiles” provided the only means of testing Joseph Smith’s translation, and his understanding of the documents that were before him.

In this small tract we cannot discuss all the evidence that now exists regarding the Book of Abraham, the papyri that have been found, and the various explanations put forward by defenders of Joseph Smith. Instead, we wish to look at just one aspect of the Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2 (found on the front of this tract), and even more specifically, one section of this drawing and what it *really* means.

← Here we reproduce one section of Facsimile 2 from the *Pearl of Great Price*, marked and explained by Joseph Smith as figure 7:

An Examination of Joseph Smith’s “Explanation” of Facsimile #2 in the Book of Abraham

In 1835 Michael H. Chandler arrived in Kirtland, Ohio. In his horse-drawn wagon he carried four Egyptian mummies. Along with the mummies were included displays of the papyri rolls found on the mummies themselves. Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, was fascinated by Chandler’s exhibit, so much so that his fledgling Church purchased the entire display from Chandler for a large sum of money: \$2,400.00. Joseph Smith said:

Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus . . . and with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, commenced the *translation* of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc. . . . (*Documentary History of the Church*, 2:236, emphasis added).

It should be remembered that at this time the study of Egyptian was, on a scholarly level, in its infancy. Smith was claiming to be able to *translate* what was, for all practical purposes, an unknown language. Of course, he had claimed this same ability in translating the Book of Mormon, which was said to have been written in “Reformed Egyptian.” That Smith was indeed claiming to translate in the normal sense of the term can be seen from his own words:

Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.

Is this indeed a representation of the one true God sitting upon His throne revealing the grand Key-words of the priesthood? Was Joseph Smith a man ahead of his time, able to decipher Egyptian writings in a time when scholarship was just starting to get a clue on the topic?

The object that Joseph Smith included in the Book of Abraham is, in reality, a “hypocephalus,” a common item of Egyptian funeral literature (all of the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham are drawn from common Egyptian funerary documents). It was placed under the person’s head, and was to aid them in making the journey through the netherworld by bathing their bodies in light. Many examples of this kind of hypocephalus are to be found. One of the many pagan gods pictured in this hypocephalus is shown above as it appears in the current edition of the LDS Scriptures. Egyptologists tell us that this is the god “Min.” Min is an “ithyphallic god,” that is, a sexually aroused male deity, as the picture clearly indicates. Min is the god of the procreative forces of nature. Joseph Smith told us that the Egyptian god Min was in point of fact the one true God.

And what is Min doing? Joseph tells us that he is revealing the grand Key-words of the priesthood, with the sign of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove before him. In

reality, he is holding up the “divine flail” in one hand and is being approached by the figure Joseph Smith identified as the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. In point of fact, Joseph’s hypocephalus was damaged at the border so that only the head of the “dove” was visible. So, Joseph had to restore the picture. Did he do so correctly? No, he did not. The figure to the right provides us with the proper scene from another hypocephalus (Leyden AMS 62). The being that is approaching Min is not the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove; it is yet another ithyphallic figure, specifically, a serpent, probably the Egyptian God Nehebka, presenting to Min the *wedjat*- eye, the symbol of good gifts. The single LDS scholar who has written the most on the Book of Abraham, Dr. Hugh Nibley, has written of Min:



As the supreme sex symbol of gods and men, Min behaves with shocking promiscuity, which is hardly relieved by its ritual nature...His sacred plants were aphrodisiacal... and he is everywhere represented as indulging in incestuous relationships with those of his immediate family; he had the most numerous and varied religious entourage of all the gods, consisting mostly of his huge harem...The hymns, or rather chanting of his worshippers were accompanied with lewd dancing and carousing...to the exciting stimulus of a band of sistrum-shaking damsels (*Abraham in Egypt*, p. 210).

It must be remembered that Joseph Smith said that this figure represented God sitting on His throne! Incredible as it may seem, intelligent, well-read LDS are fully aware of the true nature of the hypocephalus, including the presence of Min and Nehebka (the vast majority of LDS, however, are not). How do they explain this? Mormon Egyptologist Michael Dennis Rhoades said,

Joseph Smith mentions here the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove and God ‘revealing through the heavens the grand key-words of the priesthood.’ The procreative forces, receiving unusual accentuation throughout the representation, may stand for many divine generative powers, not least of which might be conjoined with blessing of the Priesthood in one’s posterity eternally (*BYU Studies*, Spring 1977, p. 273).

In other words, since the God of Mormonism is sexually active, begetting children in the spirit-world (indeed, God’s power is often described by Mormons as being made of the power of the priesthood and the power of procreation), and Min is obviously sexually active as well, this then is the “connection.”

We believe that Joseph Smith was utterly ignorant of what was represented in the Egyptian papyri that lay before him. Incapable of translating the figures, he made things up as he went along, claiming God’s direction and inspiration as his guide. In the process he demonstrated

his own inability as a “prophet, seer and revelator,” for he grossly misidentified each of the items not only in this Facsimile, but in the other two as well.

Joseph Smith’s defenders today seek to find any connection whatsoever between LDS belief and Egyptian religion, even to the point of seeing in the sexually aroused Min a picture of God upon His throne. But to grasp at this straw is to ignore the Biblical testimony to the one true God. Isaiah saw God upon His throne in Isaiah 6:1-10, but instead of an incestuous god, surrounded by lewd dancing girls, the angels surrounded His throne and cried, “Holy, holy, holy.” God describes the gods of Egypt as “idols” that tremble before him (Isaiah 9:1); these false gods will literally be captured by God in His wrath (Jeremiah 43:12). God reveals the worship of these gods to be an abomination that brings His wrath (Jeremiah 44:8), and mentions one Egyptian god by name in speaking of the punishment he will bring against Egypt (Jeremiah 46:25). Those who worship such gods are “defiled” in God’s sight (Ezekiel 20:7-8). The Bible has nothing but contempt for the gods of Egypt, which would include the abominable figure of Min, identified by Joseph Smith as his God.

We will gladly admit that there is a similarity between the pagan god Min and the Mormon doctrine of God developed in the later years of Joseph Smith’s life. What is equally clear is that the God of the Bible is not similar to either Min, nor the LDS God. As God Himself said:

“To whom will you compare me?”

Isaiah 40:25

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Review: *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*

Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley and Glen M. Leonard
(Oxford University Press, 2008)

By Ron Huggins

This year saw the long-awaited publication of the new LDS Church sponsored *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*, by three Mormon historians, Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley and Glen Leonard. The book appeared after many hopes and great expectations, and many years of delay, so that as I began reading through its slim 231 pages of actual narrative, bristling with detail of only peripheral importance to the story, the old adage sprung uninvited to my mind: “The mountain hath labored and then brought forth a mouse.” Desiderius Erasmus, the great sixteenth-century humanist scholar, describes that adage as:

A proverbial iambic line, customarily used of boastful characters who are all display, and rouse wonderful expectations by their munificent promises and the magisterial air of their expression and costume, but when it comes to the point they contribute mere rubbish.¹

High hopes were raised in 2002 for the new book after the appearance of Will Bagley’s much awaited *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* from the University of Oklahoma Press. In the October 12, 2002, *New York Times*,² the Church-sponsored book was presented as if it would provide a definitive answer to Bagley as well as the then-forthcoming *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* by Sally Denton. Both books had pointed to Brigham Young as the guilty party behind that massacre, but as the article went on to say, “That conclusion is vigorously disputed by three LDS Church historians, who vow their own history of the massacre, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2004, will exonerate Young.”

Earlier on May 18, 2002, an article appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* entitled “Church to Produce Book on Massacre: Authors Vow to Deliver Unbiased View of Killings.” In it one of the authors, Richard E. Turley, was quoted as saying:

If women can write women’s history and Jews can write Jewish history, then we should be able to write fair accurate Mormon history . . . we are not concerned about protecting the image of the church’s image. The events are far enough away, its time to let the chips fall where they may.³

But Turley’s analogy to women and Jews rings hollow, because he writes as a functionary of an authoritarian organization with a long history of suppression and censoring those who do

not make sure their history turns out “right.” When I recently quoted the phrase about the three historians letting the chips fall where they will, a dubious listener said yes, but in quotations: “Letting the chips fall where ‘they’ will,” namely, where the church authorities will them to fall. There are simply too many excommunicated Mormon historians around to buy into Turley’s attempt to liken himself to women and Jews. Fawn Brodie, LaMar Petersen, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Stan Larson, D. Michael Quinn, all Mormon historians, were excommunicated. Indeed one can say that the best Mormon history, the most accurate Mormon history, is written by those who are on the outs with the LDS Church or on its margins. Now to be sure some issues are less controversial than others, leaving plenty of room for Mormons to write good credible history so long as it is in subjects where there is no potential of the LDS Church’s image being tarnished. The Mountain Meadows massacre is not one of those subjects.

Arrington Papers

But for me the real test of the credibility of Turley’s claims was his key role in the LDS Church’s move in 2001 to seize the papers of one time LDS Church historian Leonard Arrington from the archives of the public institution to which Arrington had deeded them.

Arrington died in 1999 and 658 boxes of the papers he had given to Utah State University became open to the public on October 11, 2001. Four days later a band of eight employees arrived from the LDS Church to rifle through the collection. After Kermit Hall, President of Utah State University refused to turn over a large portion of the Arrington papers to the LDS Church, Richard Turley arrived with a lawyer to threaten him with legal action. Hall described the behavior of Turley and the other LDS Church historians involved as “very aggressive” and full of “bluff, bluster, threats, and near total disdain for the academic mission of the university.”⁴ Not only did the LDS historians reflect total disdain toward the mission of the university, but also toward the will of Arrington himself, who wanted his diary to remain sealed until several years in the future. In a session at the 2002 Sunstone Symposium, however, Stan Larson, archivist at the University of Utah’s Marriot Library, revealed that the historians involved in this debacle had ignored Arrington’s wishes and plundered the diary for information as to what was in his papers.⁵

¹ *Adages of Erasmus* (selected by William Barker; Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2001) p. 124 (Adage 1 ix 14).

² Emily Eakin, “Reopening a Mormon Murder Mystery; New Accusations That Brigham Young Himself Ordered an 1857 Massacre of Pioneers,” *New York Times* (October 12, 2002), <http://tinyurl.com/6hecxs>

³ Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Church to Produce Book on Massacre: Authors Vow to Deliver Unbiased View of Killings,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (May 18, 2002) p. A6.

⁴ Peggy Fletcher Stack and Kirsten Stewart, “USU Gives LDS Church Some of Historian’s Papers,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Nov. 25, 2001) p. A15. I rely on this article as the basis of my description.

⁵ Stan Larson spoke on a panel session entitled, “Reflections on Who Owns The People’s History: The Controversy over the Leonard Arrington Collection,” (Sat., Aug. 10, 2002). More recently another prominent Mormon historian has confirmed that this was the case.

In any case having started out claiming ownership of up to 60% of the Arrington collection, Turley and the LDS Church finally walked away with only three items: (1) *Book of Anointings*, (2) Heber C. Kimball's diary, and (3) copies of the minutes of the LDS Church's Council of Twelve allegedly covering meetings between 1877 and 1950.⁶ One may perhaps assume that it was only the third item that interested the LDS Church, and that the other two items were thrown in to give verisimilitude to their claim of only being concerned to keep sacred matters secret. In fact, however, the Kimball diary had already been published,⁷ and the *Book of Anointings* was already available in the University of Utah Marriot Library.⁸

So then what was it that made the LDS Church so desperate to have the copies of the Council of Twelve Meetings? That was not revealed, at least not intentionally. Yet it was revealed that "Arrington's copies of some minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were for use in 'an internal private study of a particular issue for the first Presidency.'"⁹

If that is correct, then we know what the subject of the internal study was probably about—the Mountain Meadows massacre. The reason we know this is something Arrington himself said in his 1998 autobiography *Adventures of a Church Historian*. "In August," Arrington wrote, "I spent a weekend doing a background study on John D. Lee and the Mountain Meadows massacre for the First Presidency, alternately frustrated because they wanted the report in four days and flattered, pleased, honored, and delighted that they had asked me to prepare it. It was the first—and only—time I received a direct request to be a resource to the First Presidency."¹⁰ Now to be sure, we can scarcely be expected to believe anything that Turley had to say about writing "fair accurate Mormon history," after his participation in the Arrington Papers scandal. How likely is it that a person who rushes to suppress documents one minute will be entirely open and honest about them in the next?

Faith-Promoting Historians

From the beginning it was clear that a book on the Mountain Meadows massacre written by historians as beholden to the LDS Church as the three authors, could not be trusted no matter who published it. Why would Oxford want to publish the work of historians who, while claiming to cherish the ideal of historical impartiality, can be found in the next instance running around with lawyers threatening people seeking to defend that very same ideal?

But to return to the quotation from Erasmus cited earlier, is the *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* "mere rubbish?" I haven't decided. Certainly some of it is, as to how much: *Tempus omnia relevant!* What is clearly rubbish, and that of the most conspicuous kind, are the blurbs of Robert V. Remini and Richard

L. Bushman on the dust jacket. Remini speaks of the account as "insightful and balanced." But would Remini be familiar enough with the story of the event to make that kind of evaluation, since apart from very small portions, it is clearly neither? Bushman calls the book "the best researched, most complete, and most even-handed account of Mountain Meadows incident we are likely to have for a long time." Now to be sure it is generally taken for granted that all blurb writers are liars and flatterers, but even among such a company, Bushman is telling a whopper. The entire book is told with a strong Us vs. Them mentality. Mormon violence and abusing language are not highlighted while the same on the part of non-Mormon is highlighted. Despite the occasional comment with regard to the massacred wagon train not deserving what they got, one is still often left with the feeling that they got what other non-Mormons deserved.

The frame of the story is set up in such a way as to give a false impression of the entire event and to evade the most pressing question of all, why were the Mormons so violent in 1857. It is not that the authors don't have an answer to the question, only that the answer is entirely artificial, and appears to be one they were determined to have no matter what the evidence was. Thus when they finally propose the supposed spark that set the event in motion—that the Cedar City residents were so frightened by the idle threats made by some in the wagon train—they decided after the train left town to go rouse the Indians and attack it. The suggestion is so patently implausible that even the authors seem to feel that they have to try and prop it up with an appeal to violence theory: "The final spark that ignites violence may be small but seem large in the eyes of the perpetrators."¹¹ The falsification of the story by framing becomes clear at the outset. The reader is given the impression that the whole spiral of violence began after the arrival of Abraham O. Smoot at the July 24, 1857, Pioneer Day celebration, with news that the U.S. Army was coming to attack Utah. Throughout the book this becomes the reference point in explaining why violence was regularly done against non-Mormons in the months that followed, violence which is regularly justified by appeals to the wickedness of the victims. The attentive reader, however, will note that the dates of Mormon violence and indications of broader violent tendencies often predated July 24, 1857.

The same kind of false impression is clearly given in relation to the 1838 founding of the retributive Mormon Danites: "a riot broke out at a Davies County polling place. Several

LDS CLAIMS

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6 Stack & Stewart, "USU Gives Historian Papers," p. A1.

7 *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* (ed., Stanley B. Kimball; Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 1987).

8 "LDS Church Suppresses Documents." Handout accompanying Aug. 10, 2002, Sunstone panel "Who Owns The People's History."

9 Stack & Stewart, "USU Gives Historian Papers," p. A15.

10 Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998) p. 155. I first learned of this in a conversation with Will Bagley.

11 Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 137.

Mormons, including recent convert John D. Lee, used sticks, boards, or whatever else they could get their hands on, to fight off Missourians who attacked them when they tried to exercise their right to vote.¹² And then, in the next paragraph, we read:

Exaggerated reports of the riot and other skirmishes led to virtual civil war. Some of the Saints, including Lee, responded to Missouri vigilantes by forming bands called “Danites,” that made preemptive strikes against vigilante targets, answering violence with violence.

This telling, however, is seriously distorted in two ways. The first is by giving the impression the Danites were formed in response to the election-day riot. Otherwise the reader might have felt less sympathy for the innocent Mormons who simply wanted to “exercise their right to vote.” In fact, however, the Danites had been formed already as is evidenced by the reference in Mormon accounts of their using the “Danite sign of distress” on that occasion.¹³

The second and far more troubling distortion is the reference to preemptive strikes against “vigilante targets,” a chilling, demonizing euphemism being used to hide the fact that Mormons attacked and burned the homes and stole the property of innocent Missourian men, women, and children. That our Mormon authors would resort even once to using such sinister euphemisms to downplay past Mormon violence, makes Oxford’s involvement with the book an absolute disgrace.

The evasive falsification of the story by the inaccurate framing which incorrectly identified the starting points of Mormon violence was further facilitated by a sentiment that is expressed various times in the book, namely that in acting violently in 1857 the Mormons, “did not match their behavior to their ideals.”¹⁴ However, there is good evidence to believe that the Mormons of the period had reacted to early persecution by adopting a violent ideology that not only provided a religious excuse for Mormons to engage in acts of violence but also resulted in a good many actual occurrences of it. Hence the statement in the preface to *Massacre*, “Except for their experiences during a single, nightmarish week in September 1857, most of them were ordinary humans with little to distinguish them from other nineteenth-century frontiersmen.”¹⁵ That they were ordinary humans there’s no doubt, but the issue had to do more with a violent religious ideology that Mormons at the time had embraced. In other words, the Mountain Meadows massacre was not the mysterious anomaly that the authors want us to believe. To illustrate this, I will simply present the following questions.

Something to Consider

After reading our authors’ account of the Mountain Meadows massacre as a fluke, an aberration in which Mormons out of a sense of fear and personal endangerment lashed out in a way that went totally against what they had been taught and believed, would you be surprised to know:

- That Brigham Young approved of the Mountain Meadows massacre after the fact and he opposed having the culprits brought to justice. We see this for example in John D. Lee’s Diary for May 31 [30], 1861, which reports how Brigham said that the victims “Merritd their fate, & that the only thing that ever troubled him was the lives of the Women & children, but that under the circumstances [this] could not be avoided. Although there had been [some?] that wantd to betreyed the Brethrn into the hands of their Enimies, for that thing [they] will be Damned & go down to Hell.”¹⁶
- That later in the same month as the Mountain Meadows massacre, we find another incident of a wagon train, the Dukes Train, being robbed of everything they had except their wagons and the animals pulling them.¹⁷ And as is reflective of the contradictions of Utah history, Will Bagley sees the Mormons as complicit *with* the Indians while Edward Leo Lyman casts the Mormons as saviors *from* the Indians. For Lyman’s thesis to stand however, he would need to counter more of the evidence brought forth by Bagley than he does.¹⁸ In Lyman’s defense, however, he is writing a comprehensive trail history, and can therefore only give a certain amount of space to each thing he describes.¹⁹
- That in June of 1862 a force of 500 men were sent from Salt Lake City to attack the entirely peaceful community of prophet Joseph Morris who had gathered in the abandoned Kingston Fort. After the community raised the white flag, piled their weapons in the courtyard, and surrendered, Robert T. Burton, the leader of the Mormon forces, rode in and murdered Morris, along with two women, in cold blood. He also shot Morris’s second counselor John Banks, who died either then, or else was finished off that night by Salt Lake councilman, Jeter Clinton. The bodies of Morris and Banks were then dressed in their full religious regalia and put on display at City Hall in Salt Lake City.²⁰
- That on December 31, 1861, John D. Dawson, the third Governor of Utah was beaten so badly while trying to escape Utah that he never recovered from his wounds, which some say included castration.²¹

12 Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre*, p. 11.

13 John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled: or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee*; (Written by Himself) (St. Louis, Mo.: Bryan, Brand & Co./ New York: W. H. Stelle, 1877) 59. (Reprinted by Utah Lighthouse Ministry); See also the comment of John L. Butler, quoted in Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1987) p. 62.

14 Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre*, p. 115.

15 Ibid.

16 *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee: 1848-1876: Vol. I* (ed. and annot. By Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks: Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1983) p. 314.

17 Will Bagley, *The Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002) p. 168.

18 Edward Leo Lyman, *The Overland Journey from Utah to California: Wagon Trails from Salt Lake City to the City of Angels* (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada, 2004) pp. 140-41.

19 Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre* deals with part of the story (esp. pp. 175-176).

20 David Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West 1847-1896* (Logan Utah: Utah State University Press, 1998) pp. 208-215. See also C. LeRoy Anderson, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites* (Logan Utah: Utah State University Press, 1988).

21 Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, pp. 201-204; Hope A. Hilton, “Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1988) pp. 99-100, Will Bagley, “Third Governor Was Run Out of Utah After 3 Weeks,” History Matter’s Column, *Salt Lake Tribune* (Dec. 30, 2001) p. B1.

- That when the Cowderys, Whitmers and Lyman Johnson left the Church in 1838, they did not simply decide to leave, they had to flee for their lives after Sidney Rigdon preached his infamous Salt Sermon against them on June 17, 1838. In it he argued that when salt (i.e., the people in question) had lost its savour (i.e., dissenters to Rigdon's and Joseph Smith's will) it was the duty of the Mormons to trample it (them) under their feet. The form Rigdon suggested that this should take was hanging, which would be "an act at which the angels would smile in approbation."²² Joseph Smith then publicly approved of Rigdon's message by noting that "Judas was a traitor and instead of hanging himself was hung by Peter."²³

- That even prior to the time when "a riot broke out at a Davies County polling place," where the Mormons had "to fight off Missourians who attacked them when they tried to exercise their right to vote,"²⁴ gangs of Mormon men were running Missourian settlers off their land. On July 31, 1838, "Twenty of the Mormons drove off some of the Missourians from their improvements [their lands] with cow-hides."²⁵ The election took place in early August. A day or two after the election a gang of about one hundred Mormons threatened the life of Missourian Adam Black if he would not sell out to them.²⁶

- That the oft-mentioned reason that the Mormons hated Governor Boggs was his infamous "extermination order" issued October 27, 1838, in which he wrote: "The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace their outrages are beyond all description."²⁷ He probably used the term "extermination" as an intentional allusion to the July 4, 1838, speech of Mormon leader Sidney Rigdon, which Joseph Smith had afterward printed up as a pamphlet, in which Rigdon said:

"And that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seal of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed—Remember it then all MEN."²⁸

Brigham Young later said that: "Elder Rigdon was the prime cause of trouble in Missouri, by his fourth of July oration."²⁹

- That in 1842 Joseph Smith very probably did send Orrin Porter Rockwell to assassinate Governor Lilburn W. Boggs of Missouri. John Whitmer, one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses, reported that "it is a well known fact that he was hired by Smith to kill Boggs."³⁰ William Law, one-time member of the First Presidency, says that Joseph told him "I sent Rockwell to kill Boggs,"³¹ and General Patrick E. Connor relates Rockwell telling him: "I shot through the window and thought I had killed him, but I had only wounded him; I was damned sorry I had not killed the Son of a bitch!"³² Bushman simply asserts that Rockwell's "innocence was proven."³³

I would be very interested to hear Bushman make a case for that.

- That other perverse interpretations of the Bible were also used at this time to justify violence. When the leadership demanded everybody to turn over property to the Church, Samson Avard was heard to say that "all persons who attempt to deceive and retain property that should be given up would meet with the fate of Ananias and Saphira who were Killed by Peter." Another was an oath on the part of the Danites, a violent Mormon paramilitary organization founded in June of 1838, to rescue a fellow Danite who had been arrested by non-Mormon authorities for legitimate crimes, even if it meant murdering a non-Mormon officer. Moses' murder of the Egyptian was appealed to as justification: "you shall extricate him even if in the wrong if you have to do with his adversary as Moses did with the Egyptian put him under the sand...."³⁴

- That as to the Danites: "When any thing is to be performed no member shall have the privilege of judging whether it be right or wrong but shall engage in its accomplishment and trust God for the result."³⁵ Little wonder Reed Peck could report hearing A. McRae say: "If Joseph should tell me to kill Vanburen in his presidential chair I would immediately start and do my best to assassinate him."³⁶

In view of all this is it really that surprising that the Utah Mormons did what they did? From the perspective of an outsider,

22 *Reed Peck Manuscript*, pp. 24-25 (Utah Lighthouse Ministry Typescript, pp. 6-7). Reed Peck was a Mormon leader who was present at many of the events he describes.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 26 (Utah Lighthouse typescript p. 7).

24 Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre*, p. 11.

25 William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Resident in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838* (Pekin, Ohio: By the Author, 1840) p. 27.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, 42-43.

27 LeSeuer, *1838 Mormon War*, p. 152.

28 *Oration Delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon on the 4th of July, 1838, at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri*, by Sidney Rigdon (Far West: Printed at the Journal Office, 1838) (*New Mormon Studies* CD Rom).

29 *Times & Seasons* 5:667 (Oct. 1, 1844)

30 *John Whitmer's History*, p. XXI.

31 Interview with William Law (March 30, 1887) *The Daily Tribune*, Salt Lake City (July 31, 1887) p. 6.

32 Quoted in Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell, Man of God/Son of Thunder* (Salt Lake City Utah, University of Utah Press, 1966) 73, from Wilhelm W. Wyl [Wymetal], *Mormon Portraits, Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and His Friends* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1986) 255.

33 Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, p. 468.

34 *Reed Peck Manuscript*, p. 40 (Utah Lighthouse typescript, p. 10). Swartzell also writes about this oath but does not mention the story of Moses and the Egyptian (July 21, 1838, p. 22).

35 *Ibid.*, p. 39 (Utah Lighthouse typescript, p. 10).

36 *Ibid.*, p. 42 (Utah Lighthouse typescript, p. 10).

the violence toward outsiders in 1857 seems quite easily explained by the fact that from 1838 on, the Mormons (or some Mormons) had embraced violence as part of their religion.

Three Voices

For the most part *Massacre* represents *history without the Why?* The reason I say “for the most part,” is that there are three voices that emerge at different points throughout the book, whether they represent the different voices of the three authors, or the kind of material being dealt with, or both, is impossible to say without actually inquiring into who wrote what part of the book.

Voice 1 gives us Sunday School History, which rattles inanely on throughout most of the first part of the book and then more sporadically through the rest of it. This voice has no curiosity about what really happened or why, nor any real empathy for “those bad people who aren’t us.” It is this voice, I suspect, that gives us the silly descriptions likening Brigham Young to “a retired New England farmer or London Alderman,” Daniel H. Wells to “fellow Illinoisian Abraham Lincoln,” and quotes a description of George A. Smith as “a huge, burly man, with a Friar Tuck joviality of paunch and visage, and a roll in his bright eye which, in some odd, undefined sort of way, suggested cakes and ale.”³⁷ When reading this voice, we are always clear on who we are to consider the White Hats (Salt Lake Mormon leaders), Black Hats (non-Mormons generally), and the Grey Hats (Southern Utah Mormon leaders). The overall sense given by this voice is that we are being patronized.

Voice 2 gives us Dumping Ground History, which is honest enough to dump all the evidence out on the table, but without evidencing any historical curiosity on its own part, or extending any effort to help the reader make sense of the pieces, or distinguish between those that are credible and relevant and those which are not. Instead Voice 2 contents itself occasionally to remind the reader what its predetermined thesis was, lest they be distracted from it by the evidence. Voice 2 dominates, and adds a very helpful sense of confusion (from the Mormon apologetic point of view) to the latter part of the book.

Voice 3 gives us Real History. Occasionally throughout the course of the book—very occasionally—one suddenly finds oneself startled to discover that one is reading good history, that attempts to wrestle and interact with the evidence with credibility, honesty, and intelligence. But usually one no sooner notices it than it slips away again to give place to Voice 1 or 2. Voice 3 is very much in the minority in the book. If you added up every example of its occurrence it would probably amount to less than 20 out of the 231 pages, perhaps less than 10. If Voices 1, 2 and 3 represent the voices of the actual three authors, then Oxford would have been well served to have dumped Voices 1 and 2 and given the project over to Voice 3 to write. One may doubt, however, that the LD Church would have found such an arrangement desirable. Looking at the final product it would seem

clear that it was respectability and public-image enhancement that the LDS Church hoped for in getting the work published with Oxford.

Conclusion

Following the massacre, the cover-up by Brigham Young and other LDS Church leaders is an equally complex and controversial story. The authors of *Massacre* plan a second volume to deal with these issues. Brian Cannon, in his favorable review of the book in *BYU Studies*, observes:

The aftermath of the massacre is as choked with controversy as the actual killing. It includes a tangled web of subterfuge, sparring between Church and federal officials, and attempts to bring those responsible for the massacre to justice. As the authors obliquely observe, Brigham Young largely “held his tongue on the subject [of the massacre], for policy and personal peace” (229). Brooks and Bagley devoted half of their narratives to these matters. Regrettably, aside from a five-page epilogue recounting the execution of John D. Lee, the authors leave the “second half [of the story] to another day” (xii).³⁸

One can only hope that the second volume will be more candid than the first.

It is, I think, significant that *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* appears 150 years after the murders because it shows that even now the possibility of good Mormon historical treatments of controversial issues by LDS historians appears to be something for the future. Hopefully the LDS Church will someday come to a place psychologically where they are willing to take a look at their own past honestly and without having to boost themselves up by trying to recast motives and personae to fit a modern Mormon ideal. Until then the greatest enemy to good Mormon history will continue to be the LDS institution itself. Mormon individuals who are having difficulty understanding or sympathizing with what I am saying, would be greatly helped by reading Ron Enroth’s book, *Churches that Abuse*,³⁹ which, although I doubt it ever mentions the LDS Church, still deals with churches with similar mindsets.

In the meantime historians such as Juanita Brooks, David Bigler and Will Bagley were right in simply going for the truth and ignoring the promises down the years that the LDS Church was finally going to begin doing history in a more honest and less self-serving manner.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

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³⁷ Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre*, p. xiii.

³⁸ Brian Q. Cannon, *BYU Studies*, Review of Books, <http://byustudies.byu.edu/Reviews/Pages/reviewdetail.aspx?reviewID=680>

³⁹ Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches that Abuse* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

Letters and Emails — Continued from page 14

June 2008: You are a liar. I wonder why you really left the Church or were you excommunicated?

June 2008: Ok, after studying several of your materials, i have come to the conclusion that you are really wasting a lot of time and messing with people's heads. You claim that you are only publishing your finds. Well, i think "your finds" are really messed up. You sound an awful lot like coriantamur in the book of mormon. Falsely leading people astray. You are false prophets in your own right.

June 2008: I am a 35 yr old, stay-at-home mom who was raised in the LDS Church. . . . Over the past couple of months, in response to the recent events in Texas concerning polygamy, I have been researching some of the history of the Mormon Church.

I have found many contradictions within the "gospel" that have really bothered me. . . . Less than a week ago . . . we get a call from the Bishop wanting to come and have a "visit" with us that evening. . . . We were met with love and understanding, but the Bishop did not make a valid argument in regards to my questions about the Church's history with polygamy, or why black people had not been able to hold the Priesthood til the 70's. And why a church leader years ago had said that the black people had black skin because they were descendents of Cain, black skin being the mark of sin.

I also have issues with the church believing that only people married in the temple will be able to reach the highest level of glory in heaven. I have plenty of friends who are not Mormon, and frankly, are better people and better Christians than some members of the Church that I know. . . . I am also a descendent of Brigham Young. Growing up, I was taught to be proud of this fact. But after doing researching on his history and teachings, I am ashamed.

It has been less than a week since my husband's and my doubts about the Mormon Church have become "public." This is a very small community, and I'm sure that our decision to "step away from the Church" will spread like wildfire.

July 2008: Wow, what do you have against Mormons? No they are not a perfect people but their church teaches them to be good people. Why don't use your time to go after some of the really bad organizations around this country. I guess you just don't like Mormons, or do you pay the same sort of disrespect all faiths not yours?

July 2008: you don't even realise how far from god you are. the lds church is the only true church and no matter how hard you try, with satan and minions, won't change that.

July 2008: In 1973 I came to the devastating realization that something wasn't right with the teachings and the church I'd known all my life. I was devastated, lost and alone. I had been taught not to trust my own mind and that questions/doubts were Satan's tricks—just have faith and don't question . . .

I don't remember how I found you—lucky accident? . . . I'm not sure. In any event, I found myself speaking to Sandra Tanner and . . . now I'm bawling my eyes out and can hardly write this . . . for the first time in my life I felt safe to begin to trust in my reasoning mind. . . .

July 2008: I began the long and difficult process of rebuilding my entire value system from the ground up. . . . Thank you, thank you, thank you for being there and talking to me when I was lost and alone and for your kindness in sharing truth with me.

July 2008: Good try. The courts struck you down and eventually God will too.

July 2008: I was listening to your [radio interview]. You are just an ex-member of the True Church and you are soured on the idea that you couldn't be in control . . . except under Satan's control. May God have mercy on your soul.

Aug. 2008: I just got done reading your website, and it almost brought me to tears. You are very brave. My husband and I are leaving the church.

Aug. 2008: I am currently a member of the LDS religion and would like to take my name off their records. . . . I have been watching Shawn's sermons (Heart of the Matter) and I am really enjoyed listening to the strong points he points out.

Aug. 2008: I just want to pass on my sincere thanks to Sandra Tanner for all the work that she and her late husband Jerald have done in bringing the real truth to light. I had been a member of the mormon church for twenty years. I took my name off the records March this year.

Aug. 2008: Thank you for all you've done and still do. . . . I've used Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? so much that it fell apart. It has been invaluable in the battle against lies and deceit.

Sept. 2008: Sandra, You are truly a beautiful and precious woman! Thank you for personally helping me come out of the LDS faith when I visited you in your store back in 1996 to purchase "Mormonism Shadow or Reality." I was a 4th generation Mormon . . . I just put in my "Letter of Resignation" here in Sept. 2008.

Sept. 2008: The temple ceremony is sacred. Do you really feel justified denigrating someone else's beliefs? Covenants are made before "God, angels, and these witnesses," as you well know, that they will not be revealed. Do you really feel safe now that you have broken a covenant you made with God? I sure would not want to have to answer to that situation in the after-life. . . . I have a testimony of the restoration of the gospel, of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and of Joseph Smith. I respect your disagreements with the LDS teachings; please respect our beliefs.

Sept. 2008: It has been years since I met the Tanners in Utah. At the time, I was struggling to find the truth and start a career. . . . I see that some have been busy trying to refute the Tanners, but in so doing they would have to refute about a dozen other researchers who have come to the same conclusions.

Sept. 2008: Sure enjoyed visiting your book store and talking with Bill McKeever. Tried picking up your "lead plates" exhibit and about had a hernia. Boy, Joseph must have been a superhuman to lug those plates around! Anyway, God bless you and your work.



NEW!
2008 FORMAT

MORMONISM— SHADOW or REALITY?

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Fifth Edition 1987 Reformatted 2008

The 2008 reformatted edition contains all the same material as the 1987 edition and the same pagination. Reformatted in regular typeface, with improved photographs of the various documents, this edition is a must for your Mormon-related research.

Writing in the October 1990 *Sunstone*, book dealer Curt Bench compiled "A list of the books which have had a significant influence on the development of Mormon history, theology, and literature." The Tanners' *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* was listed among the 50 important books on Mormonism in the first 150 years (1830-1980).

Below is an example of page 125, comparing the old and new formats.

MORMONISM—SHADOW or REALITY? 125

Photo of Merneptah Stele

Some remarkable parallels to the account in the Bible are found in the annals of Sennacherib. From a "hexagonal clay prism, found at Ninevah, and dating from 686 B.C.," J. B. Pritchard translated the following: "...Hezekiah did send me later to Nineveh... **THIRTY TALENTS OF GOLD, EIGHT HUNDRED TALENTS OF SILVER...**" (*The Bible and Archaeology*, page 144). It is very interesting to compare this with 2 Kings 18:14: "...the king of Assyria appointed into Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred **talents of silver and thirty talents of gold...**" For other parallels see our book, *A Look at Christianity*, pp. 86-87. The New Testament mentions a number of rulers that are known to have lived around the time of Christ. For instance, the Bible tells us that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. That Pilate was an actual historical person was proved beyond all doubt in 1961 when an inscription with the name of Pontius Pilate was found in the theater excavations at Caesarea. (*The Biblical Archaeologist*, September 1964, page 71) We find the following photograph on page 70 of the same article.

and the god Amun... Merneptah states:
ISRAEL is laid waste, his seed is not;
Hurru (i.e. Syria) is become a widow for Egypt.
"The stele provides the first mention of Israel on ancient monuments, and provides proof that Israel was in western Palestine by 1220 B.C." (*The Biblical World*, Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, Michigan, 1966, pages 380-381)

John A. Wilson, a noted Egyptologist from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, made this comment concerning this stele: "This is the customary magniloquent claim that the god-king was victorious over all opponents, whether he had met them in battle or not. The appearance of Israel in an Asiatic context is interesting, but has no meaning in terms of armed conflict against Egypt. It merely shows that an Egyptian scribe was conscious of a people known as Israel somewhere in Palestine or Transjordan." (*The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, University of Chicago Press, 1945, page 253)

Many ancient inscriptions mentioning the Israelites have been found, and some inscriptions even give the names of kings mentioned in the Bible. For instance, in 2 Kings 10:36 we read that **JEHU** reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-eight years. Although king **JEHU** lived more than 800 years before the time of Christ, his name has been located on an Assyrian obelisk known as the "Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser." In *The Biblical World*, page 150, we find this information: "In his campaign at Calah (Nimrud) in 1846, A. H. Layard discovered a four-sided black limestone pillar 6 1/2 feet high, with five rows of roughly executed bas reliefs extending around the pillar... The inscription reads, "Tribute of **JEHU**, son of Omri, I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king..."

This obelisk not only contains the name of the king but a picture of him as well. J. A. Thompson gives the following information in his book, *The Bible and Archaeology*, p. 128: "Jehu is best known to us as the one king in either Israel or Judah whose picture we have today. The great Shalmaneser III was still reigning at the time of Jehu's accession. He evidently had some dealings with Jehu in the year 842 B.C., for the large black obelisk found by the early excavator Sir Henry Layard at Nimrud in 1840 has a picture of Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser..."

In 2 Kings 18:13-16 we read an account of how Sennacherib "king of Assyria" came up against "Hezekiah king of Judah."

Chapter 6. Archaeology and the Book of Mormon 125

Photo of Merneptah Stele

Some remarkable parallels to the account in the Bible are found in the annals of Sennacherib. From a "hexagonal clay prism, found at Ninevah, and dating from 686 B.C.," J. B. Pritchard translated the following: "...Hezekiah did send me later to Nineveh... **thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver...**" (*The Bible and Archaeology*, page 144). It is very interesting to compare this with 2 Kings 18:14: "...the king of Assyria appointed into Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." For other parallels see our book, *A Look at Christianity*, pp. 86-87.

The New Testament mentions a number of rulers that are known to have lived around the time of Christ. For instance, the Bible tells us that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. That Pilate was an actual historical person was proved beyond all doubt in 1961 when "an inscription with the name of Pontius Pilate was found in the theater excavations" at Caesarea. (*The Biblical Archaeologist*, September 1964, page 71) Below is a photo of the stone inscription.

and the god Amun... Merneptah states:
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
Hurru (i.e. Syria) is become a widow for Egypt.
The stele provides the first mention of Israel on ancient monuments, and provides proof that Israel was in western Palestine by 1220 B.C. (*The Biblical World*, Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, Michigan, 1966, pages 380-381)

John A. Wilson, a noted Egyptologist from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, made this comment concerning this stele: "This is the customary magniloquent claim that the god-king was victorious over all opponents, whether he had met them in battle or not. The appearance of Israel in an Asiatic context is interesting, but has no meaning in terms of armed conflict against Egypt. It merely shows that an Egyptian scribe was conscious of a people known as Israel somewhere in Palestine or Transjordan. (*The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, University of Chicago Press, 1945, page 253)

Many ancient inscriptions mentioning the Israelites have been found, and some inscriptions even give the names of kings mentioned in the Bible. For instance, in 2 Kings 10:36 we read that **JEHU** reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-eight years. Although king **JEHU** lived more than 800 years before the time of Christ, his name has been located on an Assyrian obelisk known as the "Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser." In *The Biblical World*, page 150, we find this information: "In his campaign at Calah (Nimrud) in 1846, A. H. Layard discovered a four-sided black limestone pillar 6 1/2 feet high, with five rows of roughly executed bas reliefs extending around the pillar... The inscription reads, "Tribute of **Jehu**, son of Omri, I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king..."

This obelisk not only contains the name of the king but a picture of him as well. J. A. Thompson gives the following information in his book, *The Bible and Archaeology*, page 128: "Jehu is best known to us as the one king in either Israel or Judah whose picture we have today. The great Shalmaneser III was still reigning at the time of Jehu's accession. He evidently had some dealings with Jehu in the year 842 B.C., for the large black obelisk found by the early excavator Sir Henry Layard at Nimrud in 1840 has a picture of Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser..."

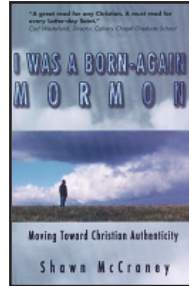
In 2 Kings 18:13-16 we read an account of how Sennacherib "king of Assyria" came up against "Hezekiah king of Judah."

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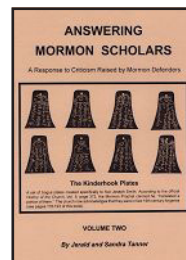
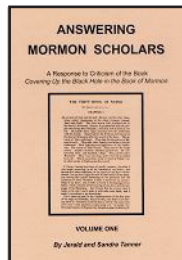
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