

# ANSWERING MORMON SCHOLARS

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



Volume One

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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**Volume One**

**By Jerald and Sandra Tanner**

**1994**

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## 1. Is There Something Missing?

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

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

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

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

A spokesman from the church's Deseret Bookstore wrote:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### The Battle Within

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In an Associated Press story, Vern Anderson reported:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **A Disgusting Joke?**

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

proceeded to defend the organization, stating that “the above claims about FARMS are ridiculous . . .”

In the same computer message Hamblin stated that he was going to post some gossip about some of those who were criticizing Mormonism. Surprisingly, however, he acknowledged: “I know nothing about the truth or falsity of the following gossip. These are simply persistent rumors I have heard. Neither I nor anyone at FARMS are responsible for starting these rumors. . . . I wish to emphasize that I make no claims about the veracity of these rumors. I merely pass them on for your amusement and edification.”

It seems strange that a professor at BYU, who said that he made “no claims about the veracity of these rumors,” would circulate serious charges on a computer bulletin board so that many people could read and make copies of them. Moreover, it seems odd that Hamblin would send out this information just “for your amusement and edification.” Mormon scholars frequently accuse anti-Mormons of using this type of tactic to embarrass the church. For example, Mormon defender Dr. Hugh Nibley wrote a book entitled, *How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book*. In this work Nibley maintained that in order to write a successful anti-Mormon book one should include a good deal of gossip:

RULE 29: *Study the techniques of gossip.* To the discerning reader of the Sisterhood of Mormon Bondage the word that comes most often to mind is bound to be “gossip.” For that very reason the student should follow Mr. Wallace’s example and scrupulously avoid ever using the word, which would be sure to let the cat out of the bag. Let us admit that our anti-Mormon classics are clearing-houses of gossip. What else are those swarming quotations without sources, or the constantly recurring “it is said,” “it was reported,” . . . Note also in these examples how careful the gossip has been to protect herself: she *won’t vouch for anything*, but she *will* tell it. (*How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book*, 1963, pages 105-106)

Hugh Nibley’s words about the use of gossip certainly seem to describe Hamblin’s method of attacking Mormon critics. We do not see how any respectable scholar could justify such behavior. The reader will remember that it was Professor William Hamblin who wrote: “In conclusion, Metcalfe’s

writing betrays an academic immaturity which could benefit from a healthy dose of disciplined tutelage in a good undergraduate program.”

Now, while we can understand that Hamblin was very upset with Mormon scholars and others who deny the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he obviously went beyond the bounds of propriety in his attack on those he deemed enemies of the church.

Unfortunately for William Hamblin, his anger was still burning when he prepared his response to Brent Metcalfe. Consequently, he included what he termed “a joke” which eventually caused embarrassment to F.A.R.M.S., Brigham Young University and the Mormon Church. Associated Press writer Vern Anderson wrote an article concerning the matter which was published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on March 19, 1994. Although the Mormon Church’s own newspaper, *Deseret News*, ignored the story at the time, three days later it was included in that paper. We quote the following from the article which was published by the church’s newspaper:

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

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

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

In the first two pages of William Hamblin's article there are three paragraphs (see pages 434-35). The first paragraph starts with the word "Methodological." The second paragraph begins with "Essentially," and the third begins with "This." The first letters of each of these words (MET) make the first three letters of Metcalfe's name.

One would think that those who altered the printed document to avoid embarrassment would have nipped the matter in the bud by changing at least the first two letters. It is possible, however, that they did not have a great deal of time to complete the task and could not immediately think of other words that might be easily substituted. Another explanation might be that they did not want to reprint any more pages than they had to. In any case, the discovery of these three letters (MET) spurred us on to see what else we could find.

It soon became apparent that the first letters of the next three paragraphs had been altered. Following this, however, we discovered the last two letters of Metcalfe's name (FE) and the first letter of the word "IS" (see pages 437-439). The last letter of "IS" was changed, but the first three letters of the word "BUTTHEAD" were retained (see pages 439-440.) Although the last "T" in "BUTTHEAD" was changed, the next three letters (HEA) were not modified. The final letter of the word (D) was altered.

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

**METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD**

**MET\*\*\*FE I\* BUT\*HEA\***

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

I am writing to apologize for my private practical joke. Whenever I write a paper Dan Petersen [Daniel C. Peterson] will be editing, I always include a joke or two for his enjoyment — fake footnotes, comments about space aliens and the golden plates, etc. The acrostic was simply a light-hearted joke for Dan's amusement. I personally only told two people about it. It was not mean spirited, and I did not mean it as an insult to you. I think you know that if I have something serious to say about you I am perfectly willing to say it in print. At any rate, I'm sorry if it offended you. (Computer message by William Hamblin, dated March 14, 1994)

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

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

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

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

And thereby hangs the tale.

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

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

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

But FARMS editor Brent Hall would not confirm that Tuesday.

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

Was the article Hamblin's?

"That was the article," Hall said.

Hamblin said there was an encryption in an early draft of his article, not the published version. And he agreed, when asked, that it was just a joke.

"Well, of course," he said. "Everybody tells jokes about people they know."

But Hamblin would not say exactly what the message would have been.

The reader will notice that the article above says that Hamblin claimed the acrostic was "in an early draft of his article, not the published version." The evidence, however, indicates that Hamblin actually allowed his article to go to press without removing the crude encryption. The reader will remember that *The Daily Herald* quoted FARMS editor Brent Hall as saying that "one article . . . needed some revision," and when he was asked if it was William Hamblin's article, he responded: "That was the article."

It should also be noted that Brent Hall was quoted as saying that there were "footnote problems, binding problems" in the book. Interestingly, in his apology to Brent Metcalfe, Professor Hamblin indicated that he sometimes included "fake footnotes" in papers "Dan Peterson will be editing." This, of course, raises the question of whether he might also have included encrypted messages in footnotes in his response to Metcalfe. Brent Hall's comment regarding "binding problems" may relate to a claim that some of the books had to be taken apart to remove the tainted pages and that altered pages were inserted in their place. We understand that a number of books had actually been distributed before the offending acrostic was detected, and that F.A.R.M.S. made haste to recover all of these copies.

Brent Metcalfe took issue with the claim that the acrostic only appeared "in an early draft" of the article and "not the published version." He sent William Hamblin a message which contained the following:

I appreciate the gesture [i. e., the apology].

But for the record my understanding of what happened is different. Brent Hall confirmed that Dan Peterson approved your acrostic for publication, and that there was no attempt by either you or Dan to remove it before publication. . . . should I assume that your characterizations of me in *RBBM* as—among (many) other things

—a "pseudo-scholar" whose research is "shoddy" were also benign jokes? Given the vitriolic tone of your review, surely you can see how some might consider it disingenuous to say that the message "METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD" was <<simply a light-hearted joke.>> (Computer message by Brent Metcalfe, dated March 14, 1994)

In another statement concerning the matter Brent Metcalfe gave this revealing information:

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

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

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

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

Both Hamblin and Peterson seem to be very skillful in making *ad hominem* attacks on those with whom they differ. Peterson, who serves as editor of

*Review of Books of the Book of Mormon*, sets a very bad example. Anyone who examines the articles written by Daniel C. Peterson, William Hamblin and Louis Midgley will see that they have sometimes been mean spirited in their attempt to save the church. All of these men have ridiculed Brent Metcalfe for his lack of education. Metcalfe made an interesting response to this matter in the article which appeared in the church's *Deseret News*:

In an interview, Metcalfe commended some of the Review's contributors, such as BYU law professor John Welch, for "their spirit of reconciliation" and civility. . . .

BYU's Hamblin points out that Metcalfe . . . never attended college and, he contends, is an anti-Mormon prone to pedantry. . . . Hamblin said, "Metcalfe's writing betrays an academic immaturity which could benefit from a healthy dose of disciplined tutelage in a good undergraduate program."

Said Metcalfe: "I consider it a compliment if the review is any indication of what it means to have a degree." (*Deseret News*, March 22-23, 1994)

Although Metcalfe is a powerful debater, he has not used the vitriolic type of approach which appears so frequently in *Review of Books of the Book of Mormon*. Those who accuse him of "academic immaturity" ought to take a careful look at their own writings. If we had written the tasteless acrostic mentioned above and had directed it at William Hamblin or Daniel C. Peterson, we would never hear the end of it. These scholars certainly use a double standard when they deal with those they perceive to be enemies of the church.

A good example of unfair tactics is found in Professor Peterson's comments toward the end of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, page 524, footnote 2:

Fully twenty-five percent of the non-Tanner books advertised in their November 1993 *Salt Lake City Messenger* are Signature titles. The Tanners have never offered F.A.R.M.S. publications for sale.

Peterson not only seems to be upset because we sell publications printed by Signature Books, but also because we do not sell F.A.R.M.S. titles. It is obvious, too, that his statement is a sly attempt to discredit Signature Books. The reasoning seems to be that if we

sell books that come from that company, it shows that the books are basically evil and of no real worth. What Peterson does not tell the reader is that we advertised 105 titles in the issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* he refers to. Of that number 74 were either written or published by our own organization. The other 31 titles came from other publishers or individuals. Only 8 of the 31 (about 26%) came from Signature Books. This means that 92.39% of the books we had on our list did not come from Signature Books. Only 7.61% of the books listed came from that company!

The thing that is ironic about Daniel Peterson's argument is that the Mormon Church's own bookstore, Deseret Book, sells many of the books published by Signature Books. On April 18, 1994, we looked at books sold at Deseret Book in the ZCMI Mall in Salt Lake City. Although we did not have time to make a thorough search, we found 20 different Signature titles displayed for sale. It should also be noted that 5 of the 8 titles we had on our list were being sold at Deseret Book on April 18, 1994. Since the Mormon Church's own bookstore had at least 20 Signature titles for sale, are we to conclude that it is more subversive than Utah Lighthouse Ministry?

Daniel Peterson used this same type of argument in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, pages xiv-xlvii:

George D. Smith's "anti-Mormon" proclivities can also be inferred from the background of some of the authors to whom he grants his patronage. . . .

That there is a recognizable *Tendenz* to many of the publications of Signature Books is perhaps witnessed to by the fact that the small bookstore run by the "career apostates" Jerald and Sandra Tanner carries a selection of them. . . . The August issue of their *Salt Lake City Messenger* praised Signature Books as having published "some very important works on Mormon history," and included the company's address for those interested in obtaining a catalog. In fact, on the last page of their newsletter Rodger I. Anderson's *Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reexamined* is actually offered for sale by mail order, along with Dan Vogel's earlier volume on *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism*. (Incidentally, although the same issue mentioned the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at several places, the Tanners did not publish its address. . . . Needless to say, no F.A.R.M.S. publications are sold at the Tanners' bookstore.)

Notice that Daniel Peterson complained because “the Tanners did not publish its [F.A.R.M.S.] address” and “no F.A.R.M.S. publications are sold at the Tanners’ bookstore.” In response we would point out that we do not remember that F.A.R.M.S. ever printed the address for Utah Lighthouse Ministry. In any case, the address given in the foundation’s catalogue is: F.A.R.M.S., P.O. Box 7113, University Station, Provo, UT 84602.

While it is true that “no F.A.R.M.S. publications are sold at the Tanners’ bookstore,” Peterson should not make an issue over this because none of our publications are sold by F.A.R.M.S. We only carry a limited number of publications dealing with subjects we deem to be important. Consequently, we have to turn down many publishers who want us to carry their books. However, since Daniel Peterson has raised the issue and apparently wants his readers to believe we are close minded, we will offer him a challenge: if F.A.R.M.S. will place three of our titles (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, and *Answering Mormon Scholars*) in their catalogue, we will be happy to put three of their titles in our list of books. We doubt very much that F.A.R.M.S. will respond to this suggestion.

### The Black Hole

As we indicated earlier, in 1990, we published our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. We spent a great deal of time working on this book and felt that it was a very significant study relating to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Prior to the publication of the book, we printed some of our findings concerning the “black hole” theory in our newsletter, the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. When Mormon scholars failed to respond to the important issues we raised, we chided them for remaining silent: “Our theory with regard to this ‘black hole’ now seems to be well established by the evidence. Not only have Mormon apologists remained silent in the face of the facts that have come forth, but new evidence has come to light which tends to confirm the research . . .”

Craig Ray, of The Latter-Day Research Center, became rather upset by the information published in our newsletter and prepared a response in which he stated:

Just as Black Holes exist only in “theory,” so the Tanner’s have a “theory” that there was a “BLACK HOLE” in the Book of Mormon . . . their “Theory” is destroyed by the facts . . . The Tanner’s theory is purely speculation written to cause dissension. . . . the “BLACK HOLE” only exists in the minds of the TANNER’S[.] (*Tanner’s ‘Black Hole Theory’ Examined in Biblical Light*, page 8)

At the end of his rebuttal, Craig Ray was careful to point out in capital letters that he was not speaking for the Mormon Church:

THIS WORK IS NOT AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS. . . . THE AUTHOR ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WORK.

We will have more to say about the contents of this rebuttal in the pages that follow.

### Tanners’ Dishonesty?

While the Mormon scholars who wrote the articles against us for F.A.R.M.S. were not as harsh in their attack as the authors who took on the liberal Mormon scholars, they were still rather condescending in their approach. One of the authors, John A. Tvedtnes, directly accused us of dishonesty:

Jerald and Sandra Tanner are two of the best known critics of the Latter-day Saint Church, its doctrines, history, and scriptures. As such, it is strange to see them come out with a book in which they profess themselves to be the “good guys” (my wording) in the anti-Mormon debate. They claim, for example, to have believed in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon as late as 1960, and that they began a sincere search to prove that the book was true, but found more and more evidence that it was not. This, they write, was painful to them (pp. 1, 7). (*Reviews of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, page 188)

In a footnote at the bottom of the same page, John Tvedtnes argues that our account of how we came to disbelieve the Book of Mormon is simply not true: “These statements are at variance with what Sandra Tanner once told me about how she came to lose her faith as a teenager, and make me wonder how they can criticize Joseph Smith for making similar ‘changes’ in his story.”



A New Witness For  
Christ in America  
*The Book of Mormon*

ATTEMPTS TO PROVE THE  
BOOK OF MORMON  
MAN-MADE  
ANALYZED AND ANSWERED

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION

By

FRANCIS W. KIRKHAM, LL.B., PH.D.

To newly found friends  
and believers in the Book of  
Mormon.  
Mr & Mrs Gerald Tanner.  
Francis W. Kirkham  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
July 22, 1960.

ABOVE: Title page of a book given to us by Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham.  
BELOW: An inscription written in the book by Dr. Kirkham which verifies that we  
were promoting the Book of Mormon in July, 1960. This inscription proves that we  
did not lie about our belief in the Book of Mormon as John Tvedtnes charges.

This is certainly a very serious charge to make against our integrity, and we assure the reader that it is without foundation in fact. What we wrote in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, concerning our early belief in the Book of Mormon is absolutely correct. We not only believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon in 1960, but we continued to believe in it *until 1962*. While Mr. Tvedtnes cannot find a scintilla of evidence to support his charge, we have abundant proof that we were supporting the Book of Mormon until near the end of 1962.

We have, for example, a book which was given to us by the noted Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham. In this book Dr. Kirkham made the following inscription: “To newly found friends and believers in the Book of Mormon. Mr & Mrs Jerald Tanner. Frances W. Kirkham[,] Salt Lake City, Utah[,] July 22, 1960.” Furthermore, in a book “Copyright 1962,” Mormon writer Kate B. Carter wrote the following: “. . . Jerald Tanner . . . when asked what he and his followers believed, wrote: ‘We believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. . . .’

“Mr. Tanner has written a number of tracts which he distributes freely on such subjects as the Book of Mormon, Priesthood, Marriage, proof that the Book of Mormon and the Bible agree . . .” (*Denominations that Base Their Beliefs on the teachings of Joseph Smith*, 1962, page 51)

Prior to our marriage in 1959, we had read David Whitmer’s booklet, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. Whitmer, of course, was one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. We were impressed with his message that the Book of Mormon was authentic but that the church had fallen into some serious errors such as polygamy (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 568, for a statement concerning this matter). Like David Whitmer, who separated himself from the Mormon Church, we continued to believe in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon and encouraged others to believe in it until 1962. John Tvedtnes seems to feel that there is a contradiction because “Sandra Tanner once told me about how she came to lose her faith as a teenager . . .” There is no misrepresentation here. Sandra was eighteen years old at the time we were married. She was still a teenager until January 1961. She lost faith in the teachings of the Mormon leaders while “a teenager,” but did not lose faith in

the Book of Mormon until late in 1962 when she read *The Golden Bible*, by M. T. Lamb.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Chasing Salamanders

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Salamander letter was supposed to have been written by Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon in 1830, just months after the Book of Mormon was first published. The contents of this letter were very embarrassing to the Mormon Church. In Joseph Smith's official story of how he received the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was "translated" he said that the Angel Moroni (the name was given as Nephi when Joseph Smith first printed the story in the *Times and Seasons*) appeared to him and revealed the location of the plates. In Hofmann's forgery, however, Harris claimed that Smith told him that when he went to get the plates, instead of an angel appearing, a "white salamander" in the bottom of a hole "transfigured himself" into a "spirit" and "struck me 3 times."

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

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

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

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

In the months that followed, we printed a great deal of material questioning the authenticity of the Salamander letter (see the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for September 1984, January 1985, June 1985, August 1985). On August 22, 1984, we published the first part of a booklet entitled, *The Money-Digging Letters*. In this pamphlet we made it clear that we were investigating all of Mark Hofmann’s major discoveries.

The next day Mr. Hofmann came to our bookstore to defend his documents. He appeared to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. It was about fourteen months later that Hofmann committed two murders that led to his arrest.

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

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

With regard to the theory that Solomon Spalding was the author of the Book of Mormon, we have *always* rejected that claim and even printed a book against the theory in 1977 (see *Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon?*).

Although F.A.R.M.S. writer, Tom Nibley, has

not presented a fair evaluation of our involvement in the Hofmann matter, Brent Metcalfe was treated far worse by Daniel C. Peterson, the editor of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*. Professor Peterson tried very hard to undermine Metcalfe’s scholarly ability by reminding his readers that Mr. Metcalfe was at one time a strong supporter of the Salamander letter and the Oliver Cowdery history, a document supposedly confirming the Salamander letter, which Mark Hofmann claimed he saw in the First Presidency’s vault at church headquarters:

In 1990, Brent Metcalfe was summoning us to “a more sensitive, responsible scholarship as well as a more honest faith”. . . . A faith realizing that what we have long believed to be actually true is in fact mere mythology. This was that same invitation he had offered us in 1985, under the spell of a *nonexistent* “Oliver Cowdery history” dreamed up by Mark Hofmann: “It does raise serious questions regarding the complete reliability of the traditional accounts,” Mr. Metcalfe said of that supposed text, for which Hofmann had not even troubled to create a physical document. “Many, I suppose, will re-evaluate their belief structure in terms of the new information. Hopefully, it will take them to a more mature belief.” Even earlier, he had anticipated a similar transformation on the basis of Hofmann’s fraudulent “salamander letter”. . . . (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pages 528-529)

On pages 544-545, Professor Peterson continued to attack Brent Metcalfe’s ability as a historian by again bringing up the Cowdery history and the Salamander letter:

But consider the case of the editor of *New Approaches*, as he is described in the confessions of the notorious forger and murderer Mark Hofmann: “One thing about Metcalfe is he’s always interested in these little hidden rumors or truths or whatever. And I noticed I could throw out a little thing to whet his appetite and he would always be after me for more and more information. So I would just make it up as we went along.”. . . “As intriguing as the Cowdery history was,” however, “Brent Metcalfe was even more excited by Hofmann’s apparent discovery of some of the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript”—which allegedly linked the (supposedly fictional) prophet Lehi with nineteenth-century money-digging. As for the

famous “salamander letter,” Hofmann remarked that “People read into it what they want or get out of it what they want. I know that really turned on Brent Metcalfe, for example.”

In footnote 74 at the bottom of page 545, Daniel Peterson tried to discredit Brent Metcalfe by claiming that Mark Hofmann did not think he was a good historian:

Professor Shipps’s description of Mr. Metcalfe’s behavior in connection with the salamander letter is fascinating, and quite revealing. For Mark Hofmann’s low opinion of Mr. Metcalfe as a historian, see *Mark Hofmann Interviews*, 2:489-490.

Professor Peterson does not end his relentless attack here. On page 551, he returns to the Hofmann scandal and tries to exploit the fact that Metcalfe trusted Hofmann:

One is forcibly reminded, again, of the nonexistent “Oliver Cowdery history,” on the basis of which the future editor of *New Approaches* once looked forward to a “more mature” Mormonism: “Metcalfe said he obtained excerpts of the Cowdery history from an individual, whom he declined to identify, who had read the work and copied portions of it.” Any “facts” about the supposed history had, therefore, to be accepted on the basis of trust in Brent Metcalfe, and in his judgment. . . . Later, of course, police investigators learned that Mr. Metcalfe’s source was Mark Hofmann.

While Daniel Peterson’s attack on Brent Metcalfe may impress some people who do not know much about the Hofmann scandal, those who understand the facts realize that it is very unfair. All of the Mormon Church’s top scholars accepted the authenticity of the Hofmann documents. Moreover, the leaders of the Mormon Church paid many thousands of dollars for his forgeries. For example, in 1980, Hofmann revealed his first major forgery, a document known as the Anthon transcript. Both Mormon leaders and church scholars were ecstatic with what they considered to be a major historical discovery—namely, a sheet of paper containing Joseph Smith’s copy of Egyptian characters which were taken from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Church experts examined the document and concluded it was written in 1828 by Joseph Smith the prophet.

According to the testimony of former Church Librarian and Archivist Donald Schmidt, Hofmann was given “roughly \$20,000” worth of items from the Church Archives in exchange for the Anthon transcript and the old Bible in which it was found. Mormon historian Richard L. Anderson, who wrote one of the articles attacking Metcalfe’s book for F.A.R.M.S., accepted the Hofmann forgery and proclaimed: “‘Joseph Smith’s story is really vindicated by the finding of the document . . .’” (*The Daily Herald*, Provo, Utah, May 1, 1980) In the same paper Dr. Anderson also announced: “‘This new discovery is sort of a Dead Sea School [Scroll?] Equivalent of the Book of Mormon,’ . . .”

Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is venerated by F.A.R.M.S. as the great defender of the Book of Mormon, also accepted the forgery as genuine and was quoted as saying: “‘This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon,’ . . .” (*Ibid.*) In the same paper, Dr. Nibley triumphantly announced: “Of course it’s translatable.” According to *The Herald*, “Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value. ‘This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get. *Nobody could have faked those characters*. It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake’ ” (*Ibid.*) On May 12, 1980, the Provo *Herald* reported: “The *Herald* called Hugh Nibley to see if he was still confident about his earlier assessment. “‘I still say just what I said before. *It can be translated.*’”

As time passed it became evident that neither Dr. Nibley nor any other scholar was able to produce an acceptable translation of Hofmann’s transcript. Nevertheless, no one seemed to doubt the authenticity of the Hofmann document. As far as we know, no Mormon scholar or church official had any question about the authenticity of the Anthon transcript. In addition, no critic of the church doubted that it was genuine. Since the church had the document and gave its stamp of approval, we saw no reason to doubt that it was genuine. We assumed that church scholars had verified the authenticity of the transcript.

It is important to note that the president of the Mormon Church is supposed to be a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” and according to the Book of Mormon a “seer” can “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Mosiah 8:13). Instead of using the

“seer stone” to translate the characters, however, President Spencer W. Kimball examined them with a magnifying glass (see photograph in our book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, page 73). According to the church’s newspaper, “President Spencer W. Kimball expressed gratitude to Brother Hofmann for his discovery and ‘for bringing it to our attention and for leaving it in the custody of the Historical Department.’” (*Deseret News*, May 3, 1980)

Less than a year after the discovery of the Anthon Transcript, it was announced that Mark Hofmann had made another major discovery:

A handwritten document thought to be a father’s blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr. . . . to his son Joseph Smith III, has been acquired by the Church Historical Department. . . .

[Earl E.] Olson and other LDS officials said they are convinced the blessing is authentic. (*Deseret News*, March 19, 1981)

Church Archivist Donald Schmidt again testified that Hofmann received material from the Archives which was valued “in the neighborhood of \$20,000.” Although this document was very controversial because it indicated that Joseph Smith’s son, rather than Brigham Young should have been his successor, it was received by the church as a genuine document.

Between 1980 and 1985 the Mormon Church acquired numerous items from Mark Hofmann. While many are known to be forgeries, most of the items are legal or government documents. Although most of these items are probably genuine, they may have been illegally obtained from a number of repositories. In 1992, Richard E. Turley, Jr., managing director of the LDS Church Historical Department, wrote a book in which he included an Appendix listing “Suspect Items Acquired by the LDS Church.” Turley noted that church officials had counted “445” items that had in some way come through Mark Hofmann hands.

Before presenting the list, Richard Turley gave the following information:

In April 1986, officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a press release describing forty-eight specific items acquired directly from Mark Hofmann. The salamander letter, it noted, had come from Hofmann indirectly through Steve Christensen. The release also

explained that Hofmann had given the church hundreds of legal documents . . . As announced in the press release, many of these legal documents were being given to the repositories where they may originally have been filed.

The list that follows includes all documents mentioned in the 1986 release (though numbered differently), as well as additional items once in Hofmann’s hands that were acquired by church officials from persons other than Hofmann or were inadvertently missed by Historical Department staff members in their 1985-86 attempts to locate Hofmann materials in church possession. . . . The listing is meant to be exhaustive, though given the extent of Hofmann’s forging and counterfeiting, it is possible other church-owned materials, especially early Mormon scrip, may eventually be identified as having come from Hofmann.

Many of the listed items are clearly forgeries; others are not. Researchers working with any of them need to be aware of the Hofmann link in the chain of possession, with its attendant possibility of alteration or complete forgery.

Most of the listed items are legal or government documents. . . . In 1986, church representatives offered the documents to the courthouses or other government repositories where they may have originated decades earlier. . . .

In addition to the items listed below that have been in church possession, there are numerous other church-related forgeries that remain in the hands of other institutions or private individuals. . . . the list below, though the most extensive ever published, represents only a fraction of the documents that passed through Hofmann’s hands. (*Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case*, by Richard E. Turley, Jr., 1992, pages 346-348)

Turley’s list and description of the 445 documents that came to the church through the hands of Mark Hofmann extends from page 348 to 394 of his book.

That Mormon leaders continued to deal with Mark Hofmann for over five years shows that they had a great deal of confidence in him. In his book Richard Turley has a quotation from Hugh Pinnock’s private journal which shows that Hofmann was trusted by the church leaders. Pinnock, who is a General Authority in the Mormon Church, indicated that he and all the other church leaders still believed in Hofmann for two or three days after he committed

the murders. Writing on April 17, 1986, Pinnock observed: “‘It seems that Hofmann has left a trail of evidence. The only effective manner to understand this situation is to realize that M[ark] H[ofmann] was well considered before 10-17 or 18th even though he fooled us all. M[ark] H[ofmann] did not internalize the gospel’” (*Victims*, page 271).

Apostle Dallin Oaks was another top leader of the Mormon Church who was deceived by Mark Hofmann. He later made a feeble attempt to explain why church leaders, who are supposed to have special discernment from God, were unable to detect Hofmann’s deceitfulness (see *Confessions of a White Salamander*, page 64). He commented: “But why, some still ask, were his deceits not detected by the several Church Leaders with whom he met?” Oaks maintained that Church leaders “cannot be suspicious and questioning” of the many people they meet with every day and noted that if “they fail to detect a few deceivers. . . . that is the price they pay to increase their effectiveness in counseling, comforting, and blessing the hundreds of honest and sincere people they see.”

Apostle Oaks, of course, never really answered the question. Mark Hofmann was not meeting with church leaders for “counseling, comforting, and blessing.” He was meeting with them for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money and authentic documents in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Furthermore, he had many visits with high Mormon officials. These meetings went on for years, yet church leaders were unable to discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart.

Gordon B. Hinckley was serving as the acting president of the Mormon Church at the time the Hofmann scandal came to light. A coin dealer by the name of Alvin E. Rust, who had given Mark Hofmann a great deal of money to buy the so-called McLellan collection, wrote President Hinckley a letter in which he informed him that he had some serious questions about Hofmann’s behavior with regard to the documents and feared that he would lose his money. Hinckley, however, chose to believe in Mark Hofmann’s integrity. According to Richard Turley, Gordon B. Hinckley made this statement about his dealings with Hofmann: “‘. . . we dealt on a basis of trust, that I regarded him as a returned missionary, a member of the Church with whom we could deal on the basis of trust . . .’” (*Victims*, pages 284-285).

Besides the warning Alvin Rust had given to Hinckley about Hofmann’s dishonesty, we had written a great deal of material throwing doubt on the Hofmann documents. Notwithstanding these attempts to sound the alarm, the Mormon leaders persisted in their belief in Hofmann until the end. Robert Lindsey wrote the following in the *New York Times*:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors . . . believe Mr. Hofmann’s goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world’s perception of Mormonism. . . .

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry . . .

In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided in 1983 [1984] that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them, many purporting to be in the handwriting of early Mormons not previously known to have left documents, supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism.

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church’s highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (*The New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1986)

While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly did not compare with that of Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land” (Acts 5:3)?

In light of the information presented above, it seems absurd and unfair for Professor Daniel C. Peterson to single out Brent Metcalfe as an ignorant person because he did not detect Mark Hofmann’s duplicity. After all, Hofmann is considered to be

one of the greatest con men of the 20th century. Although we cannot say for certain that he was responsible for all the forgeries he palmed off on unsuspecting collectors, the documents he sold were very convincing. There is no question that he had acquired a reputation as a finder of long lost documents which were of great importance. He, in fact, had the Mormon leaders and the historical community in his hand.

Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks made these comments about Mark Hofmann:

As everyone now knows, Hofmann succeeded in deceiving many: experienced Church historians, sophisticated collectors, businessmen-investors, a lie detector test and analysis by national experts, and professional document examiners . . . (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” Brigham Young University Symposium, August 6, 1987, pages 10-11)

It should be noted that even the FBI was unable to detect that the Salamander letter was a forgery. (Hofmann, of course, later confessed that he did, in fact, forge the letter.) Why, then, would Daniel Peterson tear into Brent Metcalfe for accepting Mark Hofmann’s documents and statements? On page 545 of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, Peterson said that the “historian Jan Shippis recalls Mr. Metcalfe’s eager desire to use the salamander letter ‘to impugn the LDS foundation story’ and ‘[call] the integrity of the prophet into question.’ (He was not, it seems, merely a dispassionate investigator.)”

If the Salamander letter had been an authentic letter written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, Mr. Metcalfe would have been absolutely correct in his assumption that it dealt a serious blow to the Book of Mormon. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for March 1984, we demonstrated that salamanders “were important to those who practiced magic and dug for buried treasures in Joseph Smith’s time” (page 2).

If a salamander brought the gold plates to Joseph Smith instead of the Angel Moroni, as the letter strongly maintained, it would have linked the Book of Mormon to the occult and made the Book of Mormon a laughingstock. Mark Hofmann might just as well have written that the gold plates were brought to Joseph Smith by a pink elephant. In addition, the letter suggested that Joseph Smith was willing to bring his deceased brother’s corpse to the hill to

obtain the gold plates. This, of course, would link Smith to necromancy, a practice which the Mormon Church itself condemns.

Since Mormon scholars believed in the authenticity of the letter, they tried to rationalize the contents of the letter and maintained that it was not as damaging to the church as critics asserted. As we will show below, F.A.R.M.S. was deeply involved in trying to whitewash the Salamander letter so that members of the church would not lose their testimony to Mormonism.

The Mormon Church’s *Deseret News* contained an article which also tried to put the best possible face on the Salamander letter:

The so-called “Martin Harris Letter” [the Salamander letter] *is no repudiation of Joseph Smith, but rather probably further witness of the Prophet’s own account* of the discovery of the gold plates. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, September 9, 1984)

Steven F. Christensen, a Mormon bishop who was later murdered by Mark Hofmann, purchased the letter from Mr. Hofmann for \$40,000. Before publishing the letter, Mr. Christensen wanted to be certain that it was authentic. He had Kenneth Rendell, a noted document dealer, examine physical aspects of the letter. Rendell could find no reason to question the document’s authenticity. In addition, however, Christensen felt that he should have three Mormon scholars do research regarding the contents of the letter and show how it fit into the context of Joseph Smith’s time.

Brent Metcalfe was chosen to work on the project along with two prominent Mormon scholars, Dean C. Jessee and Ronald W. Walker. Jessee, who is considered an expert on the handwriting found in early church documents, had served for many years in the Church Historical Department. In addition, he was at one time the president of the Mormon History Association. Richard Turley noted that Walker was a historian with degrees from Brigham Young University, Stanford, and the University of Utah. Both Walker and Jessee were senior research associates with the new Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University” (*Victims*, page 83).

While Daniel Peterson seems to want his readers to believe that the Salamander letter was not really



as bad as critics proclaimed and that Brent Metcalfe exaggerated the serious implications of the document, it is clear from statements made by Professor Ronald W. Walker that he considered the contents of the letter so explosive that it would lead to a rewriting of Mormon origins:

My diary tells how things began. At 9:00 A. M. on 18 January 1984, I arrived at the home of Leonard Arrington, director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History and, more to the point, my supervisor. He had telephoned the day before and asked that I come by. As I entered his living room, Leonard showed me rather matter-of-factly a copy of a recently found document, which I found unsettling. "At face value," I wrote that evening in my journal, "it is explosive. It is a letter from Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps, [written in] 1830, describing the early origins of the Church in spiritualistic or cabalistic terms. It confirms several other documents that have been recently found, indicating the 'treasure-hunting' activity of Joseph prior to the organization of the Church. These 'finds,'" I wrote, "will require a re-examination and rewriting of our origins." (*Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, page 461)

According to an entry in Dean Jessee's journal, Ronald Walker was hesitant about being involved with the Salamander letter:

"Told him about the Martin Harris letter," Jessee recorded in his journal, "and Steve Christensen's desire for R[on] W[alker] to address the issue. Ron didn't seem too anxious. Its doubtful anything can be said that will soften the document's impact." ("Jessee, Journal," January 17, 1984, as cited in *Victims*, page 84)

After Mark Hofmann confessed to forging the Salamander letter and murdering two people, Ronald W. Walker revealed just how much the document had actually affected him:

I remember sitting in a sacrament meeting several days after Mark Hofmann had confessed. . . . I felt an overwhelming emotional and spiritual relief . . . that white salamander that had bedeviled me for so long at last was exorcised. I felt spiritual channels hindered and partly clogged renew themselves. (Statement by Professor Ronald W. Walker, Brigham Young University, August 6, 1987)

It would appear from this that Brent Metcalfe was right on target with his assessment of the contents of the Salamander letter.

The reader will remember that we cited Professor Peterson as stating: "For Mark Hofmann's low opinion of Mr. Metcalfe as a historian, see *Mark Hofmann Interviews*, 2:489-90." Those who take the time to look up the pages cited by Peterson in Hofmann's confession will see that he was not really claiming that he had a "low opinion" of Brent Metcalfe's ability, but rather was merely indicating that he could not rate him with such scholars as Dean Jessee or Ronald Walker.

The reader must remember that Metcalfe would have been a young man at the time Hofmann discussed history with him. Jessee and Walker, on the other hand, had been writing on Mormon history for many years. We notice, for example, that Ronald Walker had an article in *Brigham Young University Studies* as early as 1974, and Dean Jessee reviewed a book in the same publication in 1967. Furthermore, Jessee was already working in the Church Historian's Office at that time.

What actually happened in the interview with prosecutors was that Mark Hofmann said that he had "read a few times that I am supposed to be a great Church historian or one of the best Church historians on the face of the earth or whatever, which isn't true, obviously, all though the areas that I researched, I felt that I covered them fairly comprehensively but I wouldn't rate myself with historians such as Dean Jesse[e] or Ron Walker." Mr. Hofmann went on to say: "Notice I didn't mention Brent Metcalfe although he is specialized in his own little areas of interest" (*Hofmann's Confessions*, vol. 3, pages 489-90).

From this one statement Daniel Peterson asserts that Hofmann had a "low opinion of Mr. Metcalfe as a historian." This seems to be an exaggeration of what Hofmann actually said. Furthermore, if Peterson had carefully examined the context of the interrogation, he would have seen that Hofmann affirmed that Brent Metcalfe was well qualified to deal with the issues regarding the Salamander letter. This information appears just about a page before the statement Peterson used in his attempt to discredit Metcalfe:

**Q** There came a point when Steve Christensen, who now was the owner, attempted to verify the

authenticity of the [Salamander] letter in a couple [of] different ways. One was through forensic means and the other was through historical means.

A That's right[.]

Q You were aware, first of all, of the historical efforts weren't you?

A Yes.

Q Mainly through Dean Jesse[e] and Ron Walker and Brent Metcalf[e]?

A Yes.

Q What did you think overall of that, knowing they were looking at your document from a historical standpoint?

A I thought *they were probably the best qualified historians* to look at it and had previously researched Joseph Smith's alleged magical practices. I was confident that it would stand up under their investigation. (*Ibid.*, pages 488-489)

It certainly seems one-sided that Professor Peterson would bring up what he calls Mark Hofmann's "low opinion" of Metcalfe's ability. One would think that Peterson would be embarrassed to put much stock in Mark Hofmann's judgment when Hofmann made it very clear in the same transcripts that he had no respect for the discernment of the top leaders of the Mormon Church.

Hofmann boasted that he had tricked the U. S. Treasury when he was just a boy. He also claimed that he became disillusioned with the Mormon Church "around the age of 14" (*Hofmann's Confessions*, vol. 1, page 112). He concluded that the church was not led by revelation and eventually came to believe that he could even deceive the "living prophets" and the top Mormon scholars as easily as he did the U. S. Treasury. On page 99 of his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he could "look someone in the eye and lie" and did not believe that "someone could be inspired" in a religious sense as to what "my feelings or thoughts were." On page 112, he maintained he "wasn't fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery" when he showed church leaders the Anthon transcript.

As noted above, Hofmann was shown standing with Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church. Also present were President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. Non of these "living prophets" nor the church's most noted scholars were able to detect the diabolical scheme.

In his confession, page 112, Hofmann said that when he met with these high church officials he had

"a combination of emotions. There was, of course, a little bit of fear involved since, of course, it was a forged document. There was some excitement involved, a feeling of duping them, I guess."

Apostle Dallin Oaks met with Mark Hofmann just hours after he killed Kathleen Sheets and Steven Christensen. Oaks never suspected that Hofmann was involved in the bombings and encouraged him to go on with a secret document transaction which he believed would benefit the church.

As we have shown above, Daniel Peterson made a real issue of the fact that Brent Metcalfe believed in nonexistent documents Mark Hofmann told him about:

This was the same invitation he had offered us in 1985, under the spell of a nonexistent "Oliver Cowdery history" dreamed up by Mark Hofmann: "It does raise serious questions regarding the complete reliability of the traditional accounts," Mr. Metcalfe said of that supposed text, for which Hofmann had not even troubled to create a physical document. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 528-529)

On pages 544-545 of the same book, Peterson wrote the following:

"As intriguing as the Cowdery history was," however, "Brent Metcalfe was even more excited by Hofmann's apparent discovery of some of the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript"—which allegedly linked the (supposedly fictional) prophet Lehi with nineteenth-century money-digging.

Professor Peterson's use of a double standard is very obvious here. Many members of the church believed in the existence of the Oliver Cowdery history after stories concerning it appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Even before the articles were written, some Mormon scholars were convinced there was such a document. For example, the noted Brigham Young University professor Ronald W. Walker felt that the history existed. In his book, *Victims*, page 106, Mormon defender Richard Turley wrote:

When Steven Christensen introduced himself by letter to Gordon Hinckley in February 1984, he requested access to the Cowdery history so his researchers could use it in studying the salamander letter. Months later, the subject apparently came up again, and Ron Walker offered the statement

of Joseph Fielding Smith [the tenth President of the church] as *proof that the history existed* and was in church possession.

The idea that there was such a history did in fact come from a statement made by President Joseph Fielding Smith:

Oliver Cowdery was the first one appointed to assist Joseph in transcribing and keeping a history of the Church; John Whitmer took his place, when Oliver Cowdery was given something else to do. *We have on file in the Historian's Office the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian, or recorder of the Church. (Doctrines of Salvation, 1960, page 201)*

As we indicated earlier, the criticism of the Salamander letter and other documents which appeared in our publications really bothered Mark Hofmann. It seems likely that he made up the story that Cowdery's history mentioned that a salamander appeared to Joseph Smith for the specific purpose of shoring up his claim that the Salamander letter was authentic. This technique proved to be very effective and tended to offset a great deal of the criticism we had previously printed in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. We were confused by this bizarre development in the salamander episode.

By the time we published the August 1985 issue of our newsletter (two months before the murders), we had become very suspicious that Mark Hofmann himself was the mysterious "Deep Throat" who exposed the existence of the Cowdery history. While we did not have enough evidence to directly accuse Mr. Hofmann, we pointed out that church officials allowed him privileged access to restricted documents and even material from the First Presidency's vault where the Cowdery history was supposedly stored. By remaining anonymous Hofmann was able to have the best of both worlds—he was able to capitalize on the claim that a very significant document in the vault verified portions of his Salamander letter and at the same time be shielded from the scrutiny of Mormon officials who would certainly be suspicious if they knew he was the "Deep Throat" of the Salamandergate scandal.

When the *Los Angeles Times* printed an article concerning the Cowdery history, Mark Hofmann was referred to as "A highly reliable source . . . who insisted on anonymity in order to preserve his

standing in the church . . ." (June 13, 1985). By that time some Mormons had become concerned that the accusations we printed against the Salamander letter might be true. According to the *Times*, "The source said he decided to be interviewed about the history because *the Cowdery documents provide corroboration for the salamander references* in the Harris letter, which some Mormons are claiming is a forgery."

At the present time no one who knows the story of Mark Hofmann would refer to him as "a highly reliable source." The reader should remember, however, that at that time Hofmann was certainly considered a very reliable source by church leaders, scholars and document dealers.

One thing that made his story of the Cowdery history even more convincing was that the church had just been involved in a cover-up situation with regard to another document. Mark Hofmann had forged an 1825 Joseph Smith letter which linked the prophet to magical practices. If the letter had supported Joseph Smith's claims, the Mormon Church would have immediately published it with great fanfare as the first known letter of Joseph Smith. Instead, President Gordon B. Hinckley gave Hofmann \$15,000 for the letter and hid it in the First Presidency's vault.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann claimed that when President Hinckley asked him if others knew about the letter, "I told him that no one else within the Church knew about it" (*Hofmann's Confessions*, vol. 2, page 355). Hofmann admitted later that he kept a xeroxed copy of the letter, although he told Hinckley "that I didn't" (*Ibid.*, page 358). The church, of course, would have a difficult time suppressing the letter if its existence was known and copies had been distributed.

Unfortunately for the church, Mark Hofmann did not keep the matter secret and on April 29, 1985, *Salt Lake Tribune* reporter Dawn Tracy reported:

A letter reportedly written by Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith describing money-digging pursuits and treasure guarded by a clever spirit seems to have disappeared from view. . . .

Dr. Hill [Marvin S. Hill of Brigham Young University] said he is convinced the letter is authentic . . .

"It's a sad business that the letter is buried," said Dr. Hill. . . .

Research historian Brent Metcalfe said he knows from "very reliable, first-hand sources"

the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it.

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim.

“The church doesn’t have the letter,” said Mr. Cahill. “It’s not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault.” He said none of the confidential documents is the 1825 letter.

Someone may be playing word games, said George Smith, president of Signature Books . . .

“The church clearly has possession of the letter,” he said. . . .

No, said Mr. Cahill, *the church does not have possession of the letter*. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985)

When it became apparent to the church leaders that the letter was going to be published in a major newspaper without their consent, they decided to back down and admit the existence of the document. Consequently, Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Church, admitted in a letter to the editor that his earlier statement was incorrect:

. . . Dawn Tracy correctly quoted my statement to her that the Church . . . doesn’t have a letter purportedly written in 1825 by Joseph Smith . . . either in the church archives or in the First Presidency’s vault.

My statement, however, was in error, for which I apologize and for which I alone am responsible. Some months ago I was asked the same question by another inquirer and made a thorough check before responding. Dawn Tracy called me twice as she prepared her article and I responded without checking again. . . . The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985)

It is very obvious from all this that the Mormon leaders were caught in a very embarrassing cover-up with regard to the letter and that they only released the letter because they knew that their own scholars were preparing to release a copy to the press. The church had suppressed the letter for 28 months, before it was finally printed in the *Deseret News* on May 10, 1985. Two days later the following appeared in the church’s newspaper:

The 1825 Joseph Smith letter is almost certainly authentic, said Dean C. Jessee associate

professor of Church history and research historian at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at BYU. He is a leading expert on early historical documents relating to the Church.

“The document appears definitely to be in the hand of Joseph Smith,” he said. “As such, it is the earliest document we have that is written and signed by the prophet.” (*Deseret News*, May 12, 1985)

The church lost a great deal of credibility in the eyes of many of its members when they learned that their leaders had suppressed this letter. Consequently, it was very easy for Hofmann to pull off his fraudulent story that the Cowdery history mentioned a salamander appearing to Smith and that this history was in the First Presidency’s vault. Since the church had admitted that the 1825 Smith letter was suppressed in that vault, it was very easy for many people to believe church officials had suppressed the Cowdery history.

After having to retract his statement concerning the 1825 letter, even Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Mormon Church, seems to have lost some of his confidence regarding information about material in the First Presidency’s vault. In the article published in the *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1985, Cahill indicated that the church probably had the Cowdery history:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill acknowledged that Joseph Fielding Smith, a church apostle who was church president from 1970 to 1972, wrote 60 years ago, “We have on file in the Historians Office the records written in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian or recorder of the Church.”

Cahill said, “I presume (they are) in the possession of the First Presidency” because they are not in the history department archives. He added that he would not ask the First Presidency if it has the purported history, saying he does not want to bother that office with questions about rumored or reported documents. A First Presidency staff member had no comment.

Mormon defender Richard Turley acknowledged that Cahill had become cautious about answering such questions:

The article quoted Jerry Cahill as saying he assumed the First Presidency had the history but

did not intend to ask about it. After innocently but wrongly denying church ownership of the Stowell letter, Cahill had become cautious about denying ownership of historical materials. (*Victims*, pages 110-111)

In an Associated Press story Michael White reported that Jerry Cahill definitely believed that the Cowdery history existed:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Cowdery's history had been in the church's possession since around 1900 and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency.

But Cahill said he did not know whether it contained the information described by Metcalfe, and he would not try to find out.

"Frankly, I don't intend to raise the question. Obviously, it's in the possession of the church, but what shelf it is on I don't know," he said.

He would not speculate on whether the First Presidency would make the history available for study. (*The Oregonian*, May 21, 1985)

Now, in light of Joseph Fielding Smith's comments and statements made by Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Mormon Church, it seems that Professor Daniel Peterson was being very judgmental when he ridiculed Brent Metcalfe for believing in the existence of the Oliver Cowdery history. As we have shown, even the widely respected Mormon scholar Ronald W. Walker felt there must be such a history. Many other church scholars believed that the Cowdery history existed even though they did not know the contents of the document. That the church suppressed the purported 1825 letter of Joseph Smith and that its own public relations man, who had previously denied that the letter was in the possession of the church, affirmed the existence of the Cowdery history ("Obviously, it's in the possession of the church . . ."), did not help to quell the belief that the history actually existed. Moreover, as shown in the quotation above, the claim that, "Cahill said he did not know whether it [the Cowdery history] contained the information described by Metcalfe, and he would not try to find out," made people very suspicious that the church did indeed have a history written by one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon which detailed visits of a salamander to Joseph Smith the prophet.

According to Richard Turley, Ron Barney of the Mormon Church Historical Department, was fearful that the church would make a statement denying the existence of the Cowdery history and end up with egg on its face again:

Believing Metcalfe's source was telling the truth, Barney wrote, "If the church were to make a public statement now—which they were going to do—that we can't find the Oliver Cowdery history and that we do not have the McLellin material the availability of the above mentioned photographs would be very devastating as per our image of being honest." ("Barney, Journal," June 25, 1985, as cited in *Victims*, page 121)

Ron Barney's diary also indicates that at that time he felt that Mark Hofmann could be the mysterious "Deep Throat." According to Turley, two months later, Barney wrote in notes to himself that he had concluded that, "Hofmann could not possibly be the 'source' for Brent Metcalfe'" (*Ibid.*, page 127).

Ron Barney had originally made a very perceptive observation, but comments he wrote on August 28, 1985, tend to demonstrate Mark Hofmann's phenomenal ability to fool people. Turley says that Barney had just spoken with Hofmann before he penned his observation about whether he was the source of the story about the Cowdery history. In that conversation "Hofmann said he had never been in the vault. He said he saw some items from the vault, but Francis Gibbons retrieved them and showed them to him in Gibbons's office" (*Ibid.*). About six weeks after meeting with Barney, Mark Hofmann planted the bombs that killed two people.

Richard Turley reveals that as early as "September 11, 1984, Francis Gibbons wrote a memorandum to Gordon Hinckley about . . . the Cowdery history, concluding that it was not in the First Presidency's vault and that Earl Olson knew of no such history. . . . Yet it was not beyond possibility that the record might be lost somewhere among the church's extensive collections. . . . the collections were so vast that no human being could ever hope to read through them all in a lifetime. Furthermore, many of the collections were uncatalogued. Conceivably, a volume like the Oliver Cowdery history could be lost among all those items" (*Victims*, page 106).

Turley makes it clear that months after the murders and after Hofmann had been charged with murder and selling forged documents, Mormon officials were still trying to decide if it could be possible that they had the history:

The Oliver Cowdery history remained a mystery, one they were determined to solve. . . . research into the whereabouts of the Cowdery history consistently led to dead ends. A preliminary report dated March 6 [1986] tentatively confirmed the earlier conclusion that the church did not own the history. (*Ibid*, page 252)

The church would not make a conclusive statement until a year after the murders: “On October 16, 1986, one year to the day after Hofmann’s car exploded, the church issued a statement categorically denying ownership of the Cowdery history” (*Ibid*, page 309).

In the second edition of our book, *The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection*, pages 19-22, we examined some evidence indicating that it is likely that Joseph Fielding Smith could have mistakenly identified a document written by Joseph Smith’s scribe James Mulholland in 1839 as the Cowdery history. On page 22, we commented:

Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the church’s prophet, served as Church Historian for many years. Smith had a very suppressive policy and was unqualified to deal with the documents which he controlled with an iron hand. It is possible that Smith saw this document and without really verifying the matter with experts made the statement [asserting it was the Cowdery history] . . . . On the other hand, we cannot completely dismiss the idea that the church may possess the original Cowdery History and that it could be located some place among the many documents the church is keeping from its people.

In any case, if the Cowdery history should ever turn up, it seems inconceivable that it would contain anything about salamanders. In his confessions Mark Hofmann acknowledged that he had never seen the purported history and that his story about it was all “pure fiction” (*Hofmann’s Confessions*, vol. 3, page 451). On page 452-453 he admitted it was a “fabrication” and went on to say: “It is purely made up. It’s not based on anything I saw in the First Presidency’s office or elsewhere.”

As an example of Brent Metcalfe’s gullibility, Professor Peterson points to a quotation from the book *Salamander* which refers to Metcalfe being excited over the possibility that Hofmann had found the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. Again, there is far more to the story. Mormon officials seemed to have fallen for Mark Hofmann’s story that he found the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Richard Turley concedes that it is likely that Hofmann could have forged these pages without being detected:

Had Hofmann’s deceit gone undetected, he could have completed a project he had long ago conceived: the forgery of the stolen and unpublished 116 pages. As was his pattern before forging important documents, he had let people know he was hunting the lost manuscript. By the time of the bombings, he had honed his skills to the needed level. . . . he had successfully sold or traded what he claimed to be manuscript pieces of the published portion of the Book of Mormon.

Hofmann knew how to find the right paper and make the right ink, and before the bombings, he had laid the groundwork for authenticating the handwriting. Martin Harris had been scribe for the 116 unpublished pages, and the only accepted exemplars of Harris’s writing beyond a few genuine signatures were to be found in the salamander letter and other Hofmann forgeries. With time and patience, Hofmann could indeed have consummated his scheme. (*Victims*, pages 344-345)

Although he does not mention it in the pages cited above, in a footnote on page 488, Turley acknowledges that the church had been taken in by Hofmann’s forgery of Book of Mormon manuscript fragments: “Those who acquired what Hofmann claimed to be pieces of the manuscript of the published portion of the Book of Mormon include the church Historical Department, Deseret Book, Utah State University, and Brent Ashworth.” On page 392, we find this statement:

Don Schmidt has confirmed that two groups of fragments in church possession came from Hofmann. The first contains the text for 2 Nephi 4:6-11 on one side and 2 Nephi 4:18-26 on the other side. The second is made up of many small

torn pieces of paper and is labeled “Unidentified fragments of Chaps. 3, 4, 5, of II Nephi.”

After Mark Hofmann was imprisoned he was interviewed by Michael George, an investigator from the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office. Robert Lindsey gave this revealing information about this interview:

After more than seven hours, there was still one topic Michael George wanted to discuss.

He had long suspected that before the bombings Hofmann was planning to forge the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon . . . He suspected Hofmann was driven by a rage against the church rooted in angry feelings of disillusionment and betrayal.

By producing a document transparent with errors or filled with creatures of the occult, Hofmann could have rocked the foundations of the church . . .

Everything he knew about Hofmann suggested that this was his ultimate objective, and he asked him if it was.

“Yes,” Hofmann answered matter-of-factly. “It was all set up and ready to go.” . . .

“I could have done it any time. I *would* have done it. In fact, I should have done it sooner. I got too lazy.”

Hofmann said that long ago he had become convinced that Joseph Smith, Jr., was, like himself, a con man, and the Book of Mormon was simply a product of his imagination. In *completing* the Book of Mormon, he said, he would have been doing nothing more than what the Prophet himself had done—and would have gotten rich, too. . . .

Hofmann said he had paid a college friend thousands of dollars to catalogue every word in the Book of Mormon, enabling him to emulate its structure and syntax.

Experts had accepted his handwriting as that of Martin Harris, the scribe who transcribed and then lost the 116 pages. And he had engineered it so that each of the samples of Harris’s writing that he had written appeared to have a separate and independent origin, never himself. . . .

“Ingenious,” George said.

One of George’s investigative techniques was to inflate the egos of people he interviewed and to encourage them, sometimes with flattery, to think they were smarter than he was. But as the long conversation continued in the small room starkly furnished . . . he was genuinely impressed by

the preparations for and the scope of Hofmann’s grandest scheme.

Hofmann said the salamander letter and the Josiah Stowell letter, with their superstitious references to the occult, had been accepted as genuine and would back up his version of the lost Book of Lehi. When he forged it, he said, he intended to include references to money-digging and folk magic that were consistent with the letters.

Thus, he said, they would have added further weight to his version of the lost 116 pages, which he said would have thoroughly undermined Joseph Smith’s story of the gold plates and the angel Moroni.

“Let me ask you this,” George said. “I’ve heard that the church might be willing to pay \$25 million for the 116 pages. Do you think that’s right?”

“I don’t think that figure would have been unreasonable,” he said. “They were willing to pay me \$10,000 just for my notes from a *forgery*,” Hofmann said, referring to Brent Ashworth’s assignment from a friend in the Church Office Building to obtain a copy of the missing 116 pages Hofmann was rumored to have found in Bakersfield, California.

“What would you have done with the 116 pages if you’d forged them?”

“They would have gone to the church,” he said.

George wondered if, after extorting a fortune from the church, Hofmann would have then leaked damaging portions from the lost manuscript to anti-Mormon groups as he did after forging the salamander letter.

Sure, he would have, George decided. (*A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit*, 1988, pages 379-381)

We have shown above that Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the Mormon Church, acknowledged that he and other church leaders had confidence in Mark Hofmann. It is significant to note that Pinnock was very excited about the possibility of finding the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Robert Lindsey reported that Pinnock even mentioned the matter to Hofmann:

Before they left his office, Christensen noted in his journal, Pinnock told Hofmann he would like to talk to him sometime about retaining his services to track down two other items, including the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon.

Hofmann assured him that he was already in pursuit of the missing Book of Lehi. (*Ibid.*, page 175)

Richard Turley confirms that the missing 116 pages were discussed when Hofmann was in Pinnock's office:

When Christensen had brought Hofmann to Pinnock's office on June 28, Pinnock had mentioned having some leads on the 116 pages and an unnamed item that Pinnock later told Christensen was a seer stone. As Christensen ate with Rigby on October 4, he told him Pinnock "may even know of people who have the Urim and Thummim and the 116 pages." (*Victims*, page 138)

While Daniel Peterson ridicules Brent Metcalfe for being excited over Mark Hofmann's statements concerning the lost 116 pages, he failed to tell his readers that prominent Mormon scholars were misled by claims regarding the "nonexistent" document. Richard Turley acknowledges that the editor of the church's most important magazine, *The Ensign*, was worried that the missing pages had fallen into our hands:

Meanwhile, another rumor was afloat. On May 3, 1985, church magazine editor Jay Todd telephoned Brent Ashworth, who later recalled that "Jay said that there were rumors floating around the Church Office Building . . . that the Tanners had just bought the 116 pages, or that they had acquired a copy of it." Ashworth recalled Todd saying that "several of us up here are concerned about it," though Todd did not name who the concerned persons were. Ashworth assumed the concerned persons were general authorities of the church. (Todd, however, would later say that although he could not remember the source of the information that prompted the call, he was certain no general authority had assigned him to make it.)

Ashworth checked with Hofmann about the rumor. Hofmann said that a manuscript did exist in Bakersfield, California, but it was a fake. . . .

Later, Ashworth called Todd. "Mark told me that the Tanners do not have a copy of it," Ashworth said, explaining how he offered Hofmann ten thousand dollars for the fake. The offer dumbfounded Todd. Ashworth recalled that "there was kind of a sigh like, 'Well, . . . you don't expect us to pay that for it!'"

"Oh no. Heck no, Ashworth said. "I did that on my own." (*Victims*, page 116)

Robert Lindsey also reported regarding the church's concern about the effect the missing pages might have on Mormonism:

In early May, Brent Ashworth was recuperating from the flu at his home a few blocks away from the Provo Temple when he received a telephone call from a deputy to a General Authority in Salt Lake City. The Brethren, he said, had a report that Hofmann had found the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and that Jerald and Sandra Tanner had managed to get a copy and were preparing to publish it. Church leaders were worried, he said, because it was said to contain embarrassing material.

"There's supposed to be a lot of stuff in it about money digging and magic," the church official told Ashworth. "The Brethren want to find out what's in it so they can be ready to defend against it."

"Can you help us?"

The following day, Ashworth arrived at Hofmann's home on a secret mission on behalf of the church.

Without disclosing the reason for his visit and trying to seem as casual as he could, he said he had heard rumors that Mark's long search for the Book of Lehi had finally been successful.

Hofmann replied that . . . he had seen samples of a document someone claimed was the 116 pages, but he suspected it was a forgery.

"How much do they want for it?" Ashworth asked.

Hofmann estimated the owner might sell it for \$5,000.

Deciding the church would want to keep even an embarrassing *forgery* of the Book of Mormon out of circulation, Ashworth said:

"Okay, Mark, if you can get it, I'll give you \$10,000."

A few days later, Hofmann told Ashworth the owner of the manuscript had told him he was unwilling to part with the document, which Hofmann remained convinced was a forgery. Ashworth could now advise his contact at the Church Office Building that Hofmann had not yet found the lost 116 pages, but Hofmann was not yet out of surprises for the church. (*A Gathering of Saints*, pages 163-164)



Since we could not have raised enough money to buy even half a page from the 116-page manuscript of the book of Lehi, we find this whole matter rather amusing. It should be obvious to anyone that Mark Hofmann would never have allowed us to gain possession of a manuscript he could sell to the church for millions of dollars.

The Ashworth-Todd endeavor was not the only attempt to find out if we had the manuscript. Church Archivist Donald Schmidt called Jerald on the telephone and directly asked him if it were true that he was preparing to publish the long-lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Jerald jokingly responded that he did not like to give out information about what he was preparing for publication. It soon became evident, however, that Schmidt was extremely concerned about the matter. Jerald, therefore, stated that the rumor was untrue. Donald Schmidt, however, insisted that he had learned by good authority that Jerald had boasted about the matter when he was in the library of the Utah State Historical Society on Rio Grande Street. Although Jerald had done research at the Historical Society, at that time he had never been to the new building on Rio Grande Street. When Schmidt was given a firm denial and informed about this matter, he decided to end the conversation.

Although we do not know whether Schmidt really believed the answer, we now feel that it is likely that Mark Hofmann may have been behind the story that we had the missing pages. This story could have been used to stir up the church leaders so that they would be willing to pay a higher price to obtain the purported manuscript.

In light of the above, it seems strange indeed that Daniel Peterson would try to make a laughingstock out of Brent Metcalfe because he believed Hofmann's statements concerning the nonexistent manuscript.

It would appear that in making his unrelenting attack on Brent Metcalfe, Professor Peterson seems to have forgotten all about his own church's embarrassing fiasco with regard to the "nonexistent" McLellin collection.

In our book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, pages 31-55, we pointed out that Mark Hofmann claimed to have located a vast collection of documents which were supposed to have been owned by the Mormon Apostle William E. McLellin. McLellin, who was at one time a devoted follower of Joseph Smith, became disillusioned with Mormonism and

spent a good deal of time attacking the church. Although it was known that at one time McLellin had a collection of "anti-Mormon" documents, after his death the material was lost.

Capitalizing upon his knowledge regarding McLellin's collection, Mark Hofmann began to spread the word that he had found the collection and that it would be very embarrassing to the Mormon Church. Since there was significant evidence to prove that this collection actually existed as late as 1901, Hofmann was able to come up with a very plausible story that the leaders of the church accepted at face value.

While we had expressed some serious reservations regarding Mark Hofmann's other documents, we realized that it was possible that he had found the McLellin collection. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a problem with one of his claims: Hofmann asserted he had found the original papyrus identified as Facsimile No. 2 in Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham. About two months before the murders, we printed the following in our newsletter:

Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it [the papyrus document] from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it [in] 1842. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1985, page 11)

This, of course, presented a problem, but one could conceivably believe that McLellin received the papyrus from some other source.

However this may be, Mark Hofmann had the Mormon leaders completely in his hand. Even though he did not show church leaders the original papyrus from which Facsimile No. 2 was drawn nor any document written by William McLellin, he convinced them that the collection was real and would be so devastating to the church that they needed to keep it out of the hands of the "anti-Mormons." Mark Hofmann discussed the McLellin collection with Gordon B. Hinckley, the acting president of the church. The following appeared in Hofmann's confession:

**MR. STOTT:** Do you remember when you first talked to President Hin[c]kley about this?

**A** President Hin[c]kley, I told him that a person in Salt Lake had gone in with me on it, had put up the money for it. That I was anticipating being able to come up with the money from another source, which didn't happen. That this other person was

getting anxious to get his money out of it and that I might, and I was feeling him out as far as the possibility of getting money from the church to make the purchase. We left it, after the meeting, we just left it at the point that if things got real desperate or if I needed to get some money to let him know.

**Q** Was there an idea here conveyed here [*sic*] that the collection would then be sold to the Church or donated to the Church?

**A** The idea was to prevent it from falling in to the enemy's hands.

**Q** What did you tell him about what it contained and what the enemy was doing?

**Q** How can I put this?

**Mr. Yengich:** Put it honestly.

**A** Well, of course, I basically told him that I could tell him what my fears were concerning its getting in to the enemy's hands, or whatever. And that I would, if he wanted to know, if he asked the questions or whatever, this was a previous technique or thing that we had done. I guess its almost a way of protecting him from knowing something he doesn't want to know. And his interest wasn't so much having the Church obtain it as having it going someplace where—In fact, I would almost say he almost didn't want the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it did not fall in to the enemy's, hands which was good since I knew I didn't have it, I knew the Church couldn't obtain it.

.....  
**Q** Did you tell him there was controversial items?

**A** Yes.

.....  
**Q** Wasn't that a problem that Al Rust was saying that, you know, I understand the Church has it and, of course, the Church knew they didn't have it?

**A** Yes, no, that didn't raise a problem in my mind because I knew that Hin[c]kley knew that I was protecting the collection from Rust and anyone else as far as where it was. He knew I had previously told him that I had the material in a safe deposit box in Salt Lake City and that. "See, Hin[c]kley, his concern was that if this disgruntled investor, he wanted to make sure he didn't reach the point where he would make public or try to obtain the collection. The actual meeting that I had with him was more to—The idea I had when I went to Arizona to talk to Carden was that he would obtain phone confirmation, telephone confirmation from President Hin[c]kley that it

would be nice of him to buy out this other investor named Al Rust or whatever. . . .

.....  
**Q** What was in your mind. Because you didn't have a collection?

**A** What was in my mind is President Hin[c]kley would be happy if eventually I could tell him that I had seen to it that the document would not fall in to the wrong hands. My speaking with Hin[c]kley, like I said wasn't so much—, See you have to remember that this was after the time of the Salamander and the Church was a little bit concerned as far as its public relations in what they were obtaining, if they were trying to buy up embarrassing documents or whatever. He wasn't so concerned, especially when he found out other people knew about this material, to actually obtain it, as to just see that the right people got it. . . .

**Q** The last day or so in June, how many times did you meet with President Hin[c]kley about the McClellin Collection?

**A** Altogether?

**Q** Prior to meeting with Pin[n]ock?

**A** Prior to meeting with Pin[n]ock?

**Q** Yes in the last week of June?

**A** I would guess three times. (*Hofmann's Confession*, vol. 3, pages 528-529, 531, 534)

Richard Turley revealed that on June 12, 1985, Mark Hofmann actually told President Hinckley that he planned to donate the McLellin collection to the church:

At 4:30 P. M. that day, Hofmann visited Hinckley . . . Hofmann told Hinckley he had learned the papers were available . . . they could be purchased for \$185,000. Hofmann said Rust had put up \$175,000. "Mark went East and got the papers," Hinckley wrote in a memo to his file that day, adding parenthetically, "I suppose it was East[;] he stated that he had flown in from New York today."

Hofmann told Hinckley that Rust had not kept the papers confidential, even though he had promised Hofmann he would. Hofmann implied Rust's breach of confidence had led to publicity aimed at getting the church to disclose if it had bought the collection. Hofmann said he intended to repay Rust by borrowing money . . . against his inventory of historical materials. After repaying Rust, he intended to donate the McLellin collection to the church. . . .

Hinckley recorded . . . he learned that they contained Facsimile No. 2, as well as “journals and diaries, some affidavits, and quite a number of things.” “We concluded our conversation,” Hinckley wrote, “by again saying that when he was all in the clear with Rust, that he could then get in touch with me and we could talk about his making this contribution. I thanked him and told him to keep in touch with me.” . . .

The next day . . . in the weekly meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve, Hinckley announced he had been approached by a church member who said he had acquired important papers of William E. McLellin. “These papers,” the minutes recorded, “are now the subject of a controversy between this man and another . . . This member has indicated a desire and intention to give these documents to the Church when the controversy has been resolved, documents which he reportedly purchased for \$185,000.”

The minutes also recorded how the council felt the offer should be treated: “President Hinckley indicated that it is his disposition to accept this gift when it is tendered and, because there have been public announcements that the Church already has this collection, to make announcement of the receipt of the gift and merely to indicate that the documents will be retained by the Church pending the time when they can be analyzed and appraised. The Council approved this procedure.” (*Victims*, pages 118-119)

The reader will remember that in his confession Mark Hofmann stated: “We left it, after the meeting, we just left it at the point that if things got real desperate or if I needed to get some money to let him know.” When Hofmann became desperate and finally got around to asking for money, President Gordon Hinckley was somewhere in Europe and he was unable to contact him. However, Hugh Pinnock approached Apostle Dallin Oaks about the matter. According to Richard Turley, Oaks did not feel he had the authority to approve the transaction:

He explained how Pinnock had approached him about Hofmann’s sudden need for money to purchase the McLellin collection. “Elder Pinnock asked me,” he related, “if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann 185,000 [dollars] for this purpose. I said, emphatically not.” Oaks felt *the only person who could approve such a*

*transaction was Hinckley*, who was then in Europe and whose views on the matter were unknown.

“Moreover,” Oaks explained, “to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported by the press that the church already had something called the McLellin collection or was trying to acquire it in order to suppress it.” . . . They then talked about whether the church would accept the collection as a gift. “It was my judgment,” Oaks said, “that the church probably would *at some future time*, but in that event it had to be a genuine gift from a real donor.” . . . Pinnock asked Oaks if it would be appropriate to introduce Hofmann to banking officials. “I said I saw no harm in that,” Oaks continued, “provided it was clearly understood by all parties that the church was not a party or a guarantor and that Hugh Pinnock was not a party or a guarantor to such a loan.” (*Victims*, pages 192-193)

Although Hofmann did not obtain the money directly from the church, Robert Lindsey revealed that Mark Hofmann led Mormon Church bishop Steve Christensen and church leaders into a trap which later caused them a great deal of embarrassment:

In what he marked as a “confidential” entry in his journal on June 28, 1985, Christensen wrote that Mark Hofmann had called and requested to see him . . . When they met, Hofmann disclosed that his search for the papers of Dr. William McLellin had been successful.

He said he intended to donate the McLellin documents to the church as soon as the sale of an expensive document [*The Oath of a Freeman*] to the Library of Congress was consummated. Although he had expected the deal to close in June it had been delayed until about August 15 and he had to raise \$185,000 before June 30 *in order to prevent the McLellin Collection from being acquired by critics of the church* such as Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Wesley Walters, a Presbyterian minister in Marissa, Illinois, who often wrote about Mormon history in ways the church did not like; or George Smith, the publisher of Signature Books . . .

Hofmann explained that the McLellin Collection was *an arsenal of anti-Mormon material* . . .

If there was a single cache of documents waiting to embarrass the church, Hofmann said it was the McLellin Collection.

Christensen noted in the journal that after Hofmann received payment for his pending transaction, he planned to donate the documents to the church:

It then follows that the Church's representatives could say that they were never purchased. With any luck no one will ever ask Mark if he donated the material. Though this form of dialogue walks the fine line of "honest intent" behind a question and the pure reading of the question and reciprocal answer, it perhaps saves the Church for the time being from having to offer an explanation on why they won't release the materials and/or be under the necessity of mounting a public relations move to counter the contents of the collection.

Christensen did not inform Hofmann of C.F.S.'s financial problems, but admitted he was not in a position to provide the money Hofmann needed to buy the documents. He suggested, however, that they call Hugh Pinnock, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. . . .

At fifty-one, Hugh Pinnock was a genial and articulate man . . . Called as a bishop at twenty-nine, a mission president at thirty-nine, and a General Authority at forty-three, he was considered a comer in the church hierarchy. Christensen wrote in his journal that while Hofmann waited, he telephoned Pinnock and advised him of the threat facing the church because of the McLellin Collection. Pinnock, he noted, replied that he "could arrange for the funds within one hour and that Mark and I should come over to his office as soon as possible." . . .

Christensen recalled in his journal the next link in the day's chain of events:

Upon reaching Elder Pinnock's office we were welcomed most graciously. It was remarkable to both Mark and myself that Elder Pinnock was willing to assist to his fullest extent possible with only a brief explanation. It was as though he sensed completely the potential damage which this material would cause in the hands of the enemies of the Church. Within minutes he was able to arrange for Mark to receive \$185,000 in the form of a cashier's check. The check followed a signature promissory note executed by Mark in the favor of First Interstate Bank.

Pinnock, a director of the First Interstate Bank, had simply called a senior vice-president at its main office and arranged for the loan. It had taken only a few minutes.

The *unsecured loan* was to be issued on Hofmann's signature at an interest rate of one percent above the prime rate. . . .

Christensen said Pinnock offered to arrange for a plane or armored car to carry the McLellin Collection back to Salt Lake City, but Hofmann said it wasn't necessary.

Elder Pinnock left with Mark four phone numbers with which to reach him. The extent of his helpful precautions included his *having ready \$185,000 in cash* should the owner try to break the deal since a cashier's check may not be deemed "legal tender" on a Sunday without the ability to convert it to cash. He also offered to make available *a propjet; and/or an armored car* for the transportation of the documents; however, Mark dissuaded him. Though I also am concerned with the risk, Mark will be sending the material home via registered mail, insured for \$195,000.

Hofmann promised to leave as soon as possible for Texas, pick up the documents, and then lock them in a safe-deposit box until he received the payment from the Library of Congress. Then he would donate the documents to the church.

Elder Pinnock's personal actions not only preserved Mark Hofmann's ability to purchase the collection [Christensen wrote], but equally as important, he has *saved the Church countless time and money and effort* in countering what would have been *an avalanche of negative publicity* should the collection have fallen into the wrong hands.

(*A Gathering of Saints*, pages 173-176)

Richard Turley confirmed that Pinnock had offered a jet or armored car to transport the nonexistent McLellin collection:

Pinnock offered to arrange for secure transportation of the documents by jet or armored car, but Hofmann said he would send them back to Utah by registered mail, adequately insured. (*Victims*, page 124)

Mark Hofmann claimed that after his return from

Texas, the collection was put in safe-deposit boxes in Salt Lake City. According to Turley, Hofmann had promised to call Pinnock but had neglected to fulfill this obligation:

When he finally spoke by phone to Pinnock on Thursday, July 11, Hofmann apologized for the delay, saying the purchase had not gone as smoothly as expected. He said he had had to make three trips in two weeks to close the deal but finally paid for the collection on Monday, July 8. Pinnock took notes as Hofmann spoke. "George Smith was *hot on it*," Pinnock wrote. What about the July 6 article in which Hofmann claimed to have already bought the collection? "Article appeared before collection was obtained—to get George Smith off back," Pinnock recorded. And what about the bank loan? "Going to pay off the account on Tues or Wed with 1st Interstate Bank." When would the church get to see the collection? "Church will receive when note is paid off." . . . Noting his conversation with Hofmann in his journal, Pinnock wrote, "Things are more complicated than thought, but going well." (*Ibid.*, page 125)

Richard Turley acknowledged that Hofmann's statement about George Smith trying to buy the collection was incorrect: "Despite Hofmann's assertions, Smith had heard only rumors about the McLellin collection" (*Ibid.*, page 430, note 40).

As time passed it became clear that Hofmann would have a very difficult time repaying the bank the money he had borrowed and that he could not donate the McLellin collection to the church. Consequently, on October 4, 1985,

Pinnock met with his supervisor, Dallin Oaks. Pinnock went over the notes from his meeting with Hofmann and Christensen the night before. At the bottom of his notes, Pinnock had written a question about the McLellin collection that he then posed to Oaks: "Should [Hugh W. Pinnock] *get friend to acquire or should Church[?]*"

Later, using notes he made in his meeting with Pinnock, Oaks spoke with Gordon Hinckley to pass on what Pinnock had learned. . . . At the bottom of his notes, however, Oaks had captured Pinnock's key question about the McLellin collection: "Ask: *Should HP get friend to acquire? or do ourselves?*"

Oaks later conveyed Hinckley's response back to Pinnock: The church would not buy the collection. Oaks told Pinnock it would be fine to have one of his friends buy it, provided he

understood the transaction was separate and apart from the church and that the church would not buy the collection nor lend any money for its purchase. (*Ibid.*, pages 135-136)

The transaction was to be very confidential. David E. Sorensen, "who had recently been asked to preside over the church's Canada Halifax Mission," would buy the collection and hide it away from the enemies of the church. Later, however, when the excitement over the McLellin collection had died down, he would donate it to the church. Richard Turley reported:

Sorensen later recalled that Pinnock "asked if I would listen to *a matter of concern to the church* and determine if I would be in a position or interested in helping." . . . Sorensen recalled, "Elder Pinnock was interested in seeing if I might purchase the collection. If so, *would I consider donating it to the church at a later date?*" . . . Sorensen later remembered saying that he would be happy to help the church if he could but wanted to "investigate the matter in a businesslike way." (*Ibid.*, page 136)

Bishop Steven Christensen was supposed to authenticate the McLellin collection for Sorensen on October 15, 1985. Since Mr. Hofmann did not have the collection, he killed Christensen and Kathleen Sheets that morning in an attempt to stall for time. Even after the bombings, Mark Hofmann continued to string the church leaders along with his imaginary collection.

Just hours after killing two people, Mark Hofmann met with Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks. As noted above, Oaks never suspected that Hofmann was involved in the bombings and encouraged him to go on with the McLellin transaction. In his book Richard Turley wrote:

Oaks told Hofmann that Pinnock had kept him informed about the McLellin collection. The two expressed shock at the bombings that had killed Steve Christensen and Kathy Sheets earlier that day. . . . Hofmann said he thought bombing investigators might want to question him. He worried about what to tell them. Oaks told him to tell the truth. . . .

Oaks asked Hofmann if he thought the bombings related to his association with Christensen.

Again Hofmann answered no.

"Do you know anyone in your documents business who would enforce his contracts with bombs?" Oaks asked.

When Hofmann once again replied no, Oaks said, “Well, then, what do you have to worry about? . . .”

Oaks said that as far as he knew, Hofmann’s activities with the McLellin collection, though confidential, were just part of an ordinary commercial transaction and had nothing to do with the bombing investigation. Police probably would not ask him about the deal. . . .

Oaks asked Hofmann if he still intended to proceed with the closing on the collection. Hofmann said he planned to go to New York the next day but would be willing to stay in Salt Lake to close the deal. Oaks told him he ought to get in touch with David E. West, Sorenson’s attorney, who would doubtless wonder how Christensen’s death would affect the transaction. West and his client would have to decide if they wanted to go ahead with the deal and who would replace Christensen as authenticator. . . . Hofmann said he would get in touch with West. *Oaks thanked Hofmann for his work in discovering church documents and for his willingness to sell the McLellin collection to someone “friendly” to the church.*

As Hofmann left Oaks’s office, Hugh Pinnock’s secretary called out to the document dealer, but he walked on . . . he left the Church Administration Building . . . and exited into the adjacent underground parking lot just as Pinnock arrived . . . the two men discussed the apparent connection between the bombings and CFS. Hofmann told Pinnock he would be going to New York to get some money to pay off the bank loan. They talked briefly about closing the McLellin transaction . . .

At about 3:45 P. M., Gordon Hinckley, Dallin Oaks, and Hugh Pinnock met in Hinckley’s office to discuss the bombing tragedy. They also wondered how Christensen’s death might affect the McLellin collection transaction. (*Victims*, pages 150-154)

Apostle Dallin Oaks’ comments and Hugh Pinnock’s discussion of the McLellin transaction with Mark Hofmann after the bombings make it clear that right up to the end the church leaders were completely oblivious to the fact that Mr. Hofmann was stabbing them in the back. The following day Hofmann was fumbling with another bomb he had been transporting in his car when it exploded and seriously injured him. While Hofmann claimed he was a victim, investigators found evidence that he had made all three bombs.

The Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office eventually discovered that Mark Hofmann’s so-called McLellin collection never really existed. In addition, investigators found that the Salamander letter was a forgery. The 1825 Joseph Smith letter, which Hinckley hid in the vault, also turned out to be forged. The Anthon transcript and many other documents were also deemed to be fraudulent. Consequently, the church found itself in a very embarrassing situation.

One would think that after being fooled by the imaginary McLellin collection, Apostle Dallin Oaks would show some humility. Instead, however, he was very angry and lashed out at the news media for reporting the obvious truth about the church’s deep involvement in the Hofmann scandal. He asserted that “religious prejudice is alive and well in many newsrooms, and that Mormon-bashing is still popular and apparently profitable” (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” page 11).

Hugh Pinnock, on the other hand, handled the whole matter very well. The McLellin fraud cost Pinnock a great deal of money. President Gordon B. Hinckley publicly stated that the church would not pay back the loan to First Interstate Bank. Bank officials, however, “said the only reason they made the loan was that Pinnock had asked for it. . . . Pinnock recalled, he may have said something like ‘We have lots of assets,’ or even ‘I’ve got assets —[the] Church has assets. You’ll be paid.’ These statements, whatever they may have been, meant little to him at the time because he was convinced Hofmann was both financially sound and *morally upright*. Later . . . it became clear the assumption of financial soundness was inaccurate” (*Victims*, page 202). While Mark Hofmann had repaid a relatively small portion of the loan, Hugh Pinnock had to pay the bank “\$171,243.76” (*Ibid.*, page 203).

If Professor Daniel Peterson had told the whole story concerning how both Mormon Church leaders and scholars were deceived by the clever schemes Hofmann used to obtain money and fame, we would not be so concerned about his attempt to make Brent Metcalfe appear credulous. As it is, however, he has actually demonstrated his own prejudice against Metcalfe. After all, what is the difference between Metcalfe believing in a “nonexistent” Cowdery history and church leaders believing in a “nonexistent” McLellin collection?

In making this defense of Brent Metcalfe we do not want to give the reader the impression that

we are in agreement with his theological views. We had differences of opinion with him when he was a zealous Mormon apologist and we still have divergent views. Metcalfe undoubtedly feels that we are too conservative in our religious beliefs. Nevertheless, Metcalfe has written some excellent material on the Book of Mormon, and we find it deplorable that F.A.R.M.S. would stoop to such unfair attacks against him.

Be this as it may, in discussing the McLellin collection we should also point out that the suppressive policies of the Mormon Church actually impeded the investigation into the Hofmann case. In an attempt to shield the church from criticism, some of the church leaders were very uncooperative with investigators. We have material concerning this matter in our books, *Tracking the White Salamander* and *The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection*.

It is significant to note that if the church had not suppressed important historical documents for many decades, the McLellin fiasco may never have occurred and Steve Christensen and Kathy Sheets might be alive today.

As incredible as it may seem, the church actually had an important part of the McLellin collection hidden away in the First Presidency's vault many decades before Hofmann came on the scene. The vault not only contained some of William McLellin's anti-Mormon writings, but also his diaries from 1831 to 1836. Surprisingly, the diaries concealed in the church's vault were the very diaries that Hofmann was trying to sell to the church! If the diaries had been catalogued and available in the Church Historical Department, church officials would have known that Hofmann was a complete fraud.

Interestingly, this important information did not come to light until 1992 when Richard Turley published his research on the Hofmann scandal. It is certainly ironic that this material would come to light in a book written by the managing director of the Mormon Church Historical Department. In this book Turley tries very hard to undermine the authenticity of other books written on the Hofmann case. He seems especially upset with charges that church leaders were trying to cover up facts during the investigation and does his best to smooth over these accusations.

Unfortunately for the Mormon Church, however, Mr. Turley's laborious work of shoring up faith in the church leaders comes crashing to the ground when

the reader reaches page 248 of his book. It is at this point that Turley divulges the church's attempt to suppress the McLellin collection, one of the most embarrassing secrets that a Mormon historian has ever revealed:

March 1986 brought a startling discovery. Historical Department personnel seeking information about William McLellin had contacted Dean Jessee . . . Jessee visited the department and explained to Glenn Rowe that he had found some interesting information about McLellin in his research files. Jessee's notes referred to correspondence in the department's *uncatalogued* Joseph F. Smith collection. The correspondence mentioned McLellin's diaries and other belongings. . . . Rowe and his staff searched the collection and located letters that amazed church officials.

The first letter had been written by J. L. Traughber of Doucette, Texas . . . Dated January 13, 1908, and addressed to the librarian of the church, the letter explained that Traughber had an original copy of *A Book of Commandments*. . . . what Traughber offered next was even rarer. He wrote, "I also have the Journal, in part, of Elder W. E. McLellin for the years 1831, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6." . . . Traughber said he also had some manuscript books that McLellin had written. He wanted all these materials preserved and offered to sell them for fifty dollars.

On January 18, 1908, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors wrote to President Samuel O. Bennion of the Central States Mission. The Presidency . . . instructed Bennion on how to handle the offer: "While we have studiously avoided expressing desire on our part to purchase the things mentioned by Mr. Traughber, we desire *you* to know that we would like very much to possess McClellan's [*sic*] Journal, if for no other reason than to prevent the writings of this unfortunate and erratic man, whose attitude after his apostasy was inimical to the Prophet Joseph Smith, from falling into unfriendly hands; and for that reason alone, we feel quite willing to pay the price asked for these things . . ." The Presidency also suggested that Bennion contact McLellin's widow to obtain the rest of the journals, even if their acquisition were to cost another fifty dollars.

The letter to Bennion mentioned an interview Joseph F. Smith and another church leader had had with McLellin in 1878, when McLellin had told them that the manuscripts to which Traughber referred might be the same ones McLellin had

mentioned in 1878. “We hope they are,” the First Presidency wrote, “as it would be an act of mercy on our part to purchase them, and thus prevent them from being published by unfriendly hands to the injury of innocent people.”

Rowe and his staff also found a February 12, 1908, response from Bennion to the First Presidency. Bennion reported that he had returned from Doucette, where he had acquired the proffered materials from Traugher. . . . He said he would send all the acquired items to the First Presidency that day by registered mail.

Rowe had kept his new supervisor, Richard Turley, informed about Jessee’s clue . . . Turley told Dean Larsen about the letters, and Larsen informed Packer and Oaks, who in turn contacted the First Presidency. When Gordon Hinckley learned of the letters, he asked Francis Gibbons if the First Presidency’s vault contained the items the letters mentioned. Gibbons searched the vault. Hinckley and the other church officials then learned, to their astonishment, that the *church had owned McLellin’s journals and manuscripts all along*.

The journals . . . revealed a man deeply dedicated to his religion. . . .

The little manuscript books, on the other hand, typified the later McLellin, an avowed enemy of the church. . . . the McLellin items found in church possession were not the McLellin collection touted by Hofmann. Absent, for example, were affidavits from early church members, Facsimile No. 2 from the Book of Abraham, and the Canadian copyright revelation. . . . the church’s McLellin materials *included a key item from the collection Hofmann claimed to have bought*. That item, *McLellin’s early journals, confirmed to church officials that Hofmann was a fraud*.

The discovered documents did not fall within any of the subpoenas issued to the church, and thus *officials were not legally obligated to mention them to anyone*. Still, it was apparent they were relevant to the case, and those involved in the discovery felt the documents’ existence should be revealed. Yet disclosing them would not come without cost. Church officials had sought to dispel the notion that they were buying documents to hide them. Disclosure of the newly discovered McLellin materials, however, would reinforce notions of church suppression because those documents had in fact been bought at the direction of the First Presidency and locked away nearly eight decades earlier, eventually to be forgotten. . . . Alluding in his journal to the day’s remarkable

discovery, Oaks wrote, “Today [Boyd K. Packer] & I learned that the Church has some documents that have been unknown until now, but will be of great interest when they are revealed, as they should be prior to the Hoffman [*sic*] trial (in my opinion).”

What church officials did not know was that there would be no trial. (*Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case*, pages 248-251)

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1985, we observed:

The First Presidency’s archive or vault . . . is undoubtedly the ultimate “black hole.” Documents which are embarrassing to the Mormon Church disappear into this bottomless abyss and are seldom heard of again.

Besides the McLellin collection and many other authentic documents, the vault was used to conceal some of the Hofmann forgeries. We have previously mentioned that the 1825 Joseph Smith letter was hidden in the vault. In addition, the church had a letter which Mark Hofmann had forged in an attempt to put Brigham Young in a very bad light. It was a letter purportedly written by Thomas Bullock to Brigham Young regarding the Joseph Smith III Blessing. When investigators originally asked church officials about documents obtained from Hofmann, this letter was not mentioned. Michael P. George, of the County Attorney’s Office, felt that the church was holding back information. Richard Turley reveals that, “When Hinckley said he knew of no others, George did not believe him” (*Victims*, page 224).

Later the church acknowledged that it did have the Bullock-Young letter. Turley revealed that after President Hinckley obtained the letter from Hofmann, he “discussed the matter with his fellow counselors in the First Presidency, N. Eldon Tanner and Marion Romney. . . . The men decided to file the document in the First Presidency’s vault. . . . Ordinarily, members of the First Presidency would routinely forward historical materials they acquired to the Historical Department. In this case, however, Hofmann had deliberately avoided working through the Historical Department and had lamented to Hinckley that the department had breached an earlier confidence. . . . members of the First Presidency were undoubtedly not anxious themselves to revive the animosity expressed by church critics after the Joseph Smith III



blessing became public. . . . the simplest resolution of the issue was to postpone making the document public” (*Victims*, page 62).

Michael George was very upset when he learned of the existence of the Thomas Bullock letter. In *A Gathering of Saints*, page 274, Robert Lindsey reports what happened when the ‘rediscovery’ of the letter became known:

After being issued a subpoena, the church had released to Throckmorton and Flynn what it said were all of the documents it had acquired from Hofmann since 1980, including some that it had previously kept secret.

When the First Presidency’s Vault yielded the letter presented to Gordon Hinckley by Hofmann in which Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of having tried to destroy the Blessing of Joseph Smith III, it caught the War Room by surprise.

“What else are they hiding?” Michael George demanded. “None of the church historians I’ve talked to . . . even knew this existed. *They’ve never heard of it.* What else do they have? Who knows what’s in the First Presidency’s Vault?”

Now that we know the McLellin collection was also hidden in the First Presidency’s vault, Michael George’s question concerning what else is in the vault seems almost prophetic.

The revelation that the church had the McLellin collection all along was certainly a shocking disclosure to be coming from the pen of Richard Turley, managing director of the LDS Church Historical Department. As the reader will see from Turley’s statements cited above, he acknowledged that he became aware of the fact that the church had the McLellin collection in March 1986. As an attorney Turley had to be aware of the significance of this information, yet he obviously felt it was more important to protect the church than to tell investigators working on the Hofmann case about this important matter. Although Turley stated that “those involved in the discovery felt the documents’ existence should be revealed,” high officials in the church apparently decided otherwise. The church continued to suppress knowledge of the collection for six years after it was rediscovered!

After Mormon historian Dean Jessee reported the existence of the correspondence mentioning the McLellin collection, a number of people became aware of the fact that the church had obtained the

collection. Church archivist Glenn Rowe received the information from Jessee. Rowe, in turn, reported the matter to Richard Turley and Turley relayed the information to Dean Larsen. Larsen then informed apostles Boyd K. Packer and Dallin H. Oaks about the matter. These two apostles “contacted the First Presidency,” which is composed of President Ezra Taft Benson (the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church), President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson. Francis Gibbons was the one who finally found the McLellin collection in the vault. In addition, members of Glenn Rowe’s staff also knew about the matter.

Although at least a dozen people knew about the McLellin collection, no one seemed to have been willing to step forward and report the matter to investigators. Instead of revealing the documents, the highest leaders of the church chose to remain silent and put the church in a cover-up situation. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks had enough legal knowledge that he should have demanded that a full report be immediately turned over to investigators. On page 163 of the book cited above, Richard Turley states that “Oaks’s experience as a lawyer and judge made him sensitive to investigators’ need for any information that might help solve a crime . . .”

While at first Apostle Oaks claimed that he told the FBI “everything I knew” about the Hofmann case and freely gave advice to others about how they should be completely honest and provide all relevant information to investigators, when he realized that the church would be embarrassed by the truth, he put a bridle on his tongue and joined in a conspiracy of silence just like the other church leaders.

By March 4, 1986, the day Oaks made the entry in his journal, church leaders were well aware of the fact that prosecutors were preparing for Mark Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. If the prosecution could not produce sufficient evidence at that hearing, Hofmann would be set free and there would be no trial. For this reason investigators were working feverishly to obtain the evidence necessary to be sure that Hofmann would be bound over for trial. The fact that the Mormon Church had rediscovered the McLellin collection would have been extremely important to their case. Since the preliminary hearing did not start until April 14, 1986, church leaders had almost six weeks to turn over the McLellin collection to the proper authorities. Instead of coming clean,

however, they chose to keep the documents hidden and never did reveal the existence of the documents to investigators!

Since Salt Lake County prosecutors did not have that important piece of evidence that the church could have provided, their case on the murders was not as strong as it could have been. They were obviously very concerned about the strength of their case. A person does not have to be a lawyer to know that the church should have immediately made these documents available.

Just a few days after the bombings, church leaders had publicly agreed that they would help investigators in every way they could: “ ‘From the outset of this investigation,’ the release noted, ‘the Church has cooperated fully with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, responding to every inquiry and request. The Church will continue to bring to light any facts that may contribute to this investigation’ ” (*Victims*, page 177).

When they suppressed the McLellin collection, church leaders obviously broke their pledge to “bring to light any facts” that would help investigators. Richard Turley tried to justify the church’s suppression of the records by saying: “The discovered documents did not fall within any of the subpoenas issued to the church, and thus officials were not legally obligated to mention them to anyone.” (*Ibid.*, page 250) This is certainly a very poor excuse.

It seems analogous to a person finding a pistol used to commit a murder and then maintaining there was no obligation to turn the gun over to police because it had not been subpoenaed. Investigators certainly would have subpoenaed the McLellin collection if they had had any idea that the church had it. Since Mormon leaders had always emphatically stressed that they had never seen the McLellin collection and that the church had not obtained it, law enforcement officials had no reason to think otherwise. When the collection was finally located in the church’s vault, Mormon officials took advantage of the fact that investigators were in the dark concerning the matter.

It is important to note that even after the Mormon leaders became aware that the church had the McLellin collection, its existence was denied by both Hugh Pinnock and Gordon B. Hinckley. In Pinnock’s case, it is possible that the discovery of the McLellin collection was deliberately kept from him because church leaders were aware that he would be

questioned regarding that collection at Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. At the hearing he was, in fact, asked: “To your knowledge, did any authority in the LDS Church ever obtain or possess the McLellin collection?” Hugh Pinnock responded: “No.”

In Gordon Hinckley’s case, it was clear to both the prosecution and the defense that he did not want to testify at the preliminary hearing. In lieu of having Hinckley give testimony in court, it was decided that both sides would question him in private and enter into a stipulation. This stipulation has now become a source of embarrassment to the church because it indicates President Gordon Hinckley denied the existence of the McLellin collection after it was rediscovered. According to Richard Turley, the “stipulation, which Biggs noted was ‘prepared and signed by Mr. Yengich and Mr. Stott,’ identified Gordon Hinckley and stated that he met with Hofmann sometime between January 11 and 14th, 1983 . . . Finally, it stated that Hinckley ‘has never seen nor possessed nor has any knowledge of the whereabouts of a document or a group of documents known as the McLellin Collection.’ ” (*Victims*, page 303)

It is clear, then, that notwithstanding the fact that President Hinckley was fully aware of the rediscovery of the McLellin collection, both the prosecution and the defense understood him to testify he knew nothing about any “group of documents known as the McLellin Collection.”

Writing in *Utah Holiday*, Lynn Packer revealed that on May 6, 1986, “defense attorney Ron Yengich interviewed Hinckley and asked about the McLellin diaries and papers. Hinckley denied knowing anything about them except that Hofmann had offered them for sale.” (*Utah Holiday*, Nov. 1992, page 35) According to Packer, Ron Yengich made the following statement about the church’s suppression of the rediscovery of the McLellin collection:

“My belief is that when there is an ongoing criminal investigation that anybody . . . has an obligation to clear up a misconception of fact,” Yengich said. “It was *extremely significant*, an extremely significant matter, *their having the collection when the State of Utah was running around looking for that very collection.*” (*Ibid.*)

In holding back the McLellin collection from investigators, the Mormon Church was taking a real

risk. Richard Turley acknowledged that over two months before the preliminary hearing, prosecutors informed church counsel Oscar McConkie and Hugh Pinnock that they “thought the McLellin collection would play a key role in the case, and they anticipated that Hofmann would raise two defenses. The first was that the church had acquired materials it was holding back” (*Victims*, page 238).

As we stressed earlier, Richard Turley admitted that the collection which was rediscovered included “a key item” which convinced church leaders “Hofmann was a fraud.” Moreover, Turley acknowledged that this “key item” was “relevant to the case.” This, of course, raises a very important question: what if the suppression of the McLellin collection by church leaders made it impossible for prosecutors to get Hofmann bound over for trial? If prosecutors had failed to make a strong enough case, we could have had a cold-blooded murderer walking the streets of Salt Lake City today.

If church leaders were convinced that Hofmann was a fraud after learning about the McLellin collection, why was Judge Grant not allowed to see this highly significant part of the evidence? Richard Turley tries to explain the matter by saying that the church hoped that prosecutors had sufficient evidence without the church revealing the discovery of the McLellin collection (see page 251). Turley acknowledges that a month before Apostle Oaks learned of the rediscovery of the documents, he “began to wonder about the adequacy of the murder case against Hofmann and about whether, even at this late date, the prosecution had filed its charges prematurely” (*Ibid.*, page 243).

It is certainly deplorable that church leaders would take such a gamble with regard to a person charged with two murders just so they could protect the church’s image. Lynn Packer spoke with some of those involved in the legal proceedings. According to Packer, Mormon prosecutor Robert Stott was not happy with the fact that evidence was withheld:

Lead prosecutor Stott, when informed about Turley’s revelation, said he should have been told. “Certainly if the church had some McLellin diaries or documents that could have been included in what Hofmann had categorized as the ones he had, we certainly would have been interested in them.” (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 35)

On page 34 of the same article, Mr. Packer wrote:

Not knowing that church officials had found the McLellin collection hurt the state’s case, according to Salt Lake County investigator Michael George. “It goes to show elements of fraud and deception; from that standpoint, it’s important,” George said. “If Hofmann claims to have the McLellin collection, and if we could have proved the McLellin collection existed, and existed somewhere else than where Hofmann claimed, [we’d] show Hofmann in a deception.”

Judge Paul Grant, who conducted the preliminary hearing, is reported to be a devout Mormon. While Judge Grant was impressed that the church leaders “finally fessed up” that they had the McLellin collection, he was obviously disturbed that they kept him and the prosecutors from having this information at the time of the hearing. Lynn Packer revealed that “Grant . . . says it was a public relations mistake for the church not to have disclosed the McLellin papers when they were first discovered. . . .” According to Packer, the church’s suppression of this important evidence may have seriously affected the outcome of the case:

Grant said the case may have taken a different course had the church promptly disclosed. He said a significant shift in public opinion against Hofmann might have prompted Hofmann’s attorneys to enter plea negotiations *before* the preliminary hearing began, rather than *after*, as they did. (*Ibid.*, page 36)

Judge Grant was apparently suggesting that if the Mormon Church had come forth with the truth about the McLellin collection, the case might have been settled without a preliminary hearing. This would have prevented the court and all the officials involved from being tied up for such a long time. In addition, it would have saved the State of Utah an incredible amount of money.

Gerry D’Elia, one of the prosecutors in the Hofmann case was also disturbed by the church’s suppression of the McLellin collection. Peggy Fletcher Stack interviewed D’Elia concerning this matter:

“I can’t believe that nobody came forward with it,” says Gerry D’Elia, the Salt Lake County

attorney . . . “It was a waste of our time and taxpayers’ money.”

Mr. D’Elia believes the information would have helped prosecutors. Knowing the church already had the McLellin collection could have established Hofmann’s motives.

“Our biggest problem was the motive—that goes to the heart of the case,” says Mr. D’Elia. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 31, 1992)

Although Mormon critics knew nothing about the fact that church leaders had obtained the McLellin collection in 1908, some felt that Mark Hofmann had sold the collection to the church. Wesley P. Walters came to Salt Lake City and questioned Francis Gibbons, the man who had charge of the First Presidency’s vault. This visit took place on June 25, 1985, about nine months before the church realized it had the McLellin collection. While Wesley Walters was talking with Gibbons, he specifically asked him about that collection:

He confirmed there was an inventory of his [Joseph Fielding Smith’s] vault made, but none of the 1st Presidency vault. However Mr[.] Gibbons indicated *he knew what was in the vault* . . . Furthermore, only he and Pres. Hinckley know the combination and Hinckley gets him to open the safe for him. . . . Further he indicated that the vault was for material “sensitive” and “personal” in nature. No one will be given access unless the First Presidency decides to open the materia[l] to others.

I asked about *the McClellan collection and he affirmed that it was not in the vault & he had never seen it.* (Wesley P. Walters notes of a conversation with Francis Gibbons, June 25, 1985)

Richard Turley’s book also mentions that Francis Gibbons denied the existence of the McLellin collection:

. . . Gibbons knew that no one, including Gordon Hinckley, could get access to the First Presidency’s vault unless he, Gibbons, let the person in. . . . While he had Gibbons’s ear, Walters also inquired about another item that Gibbons assured him he had not seen. It was something called “the McLellin collection.” (*Victims*, page 111)

The reader will notice that Wesley Walters said that “Mr Gibbons indicated he knew what was in the vault,” and that the McLellin collection “was not in the vault.” Since the McLellin collection was found in

the vault about nine months after Gibbons made these statements, it raises serious questions about whether the right hand knows what the left is doing. If, for instance, a search was made for the Oliver Cowdery history in the First Presidency’s vault, why was the McLellin collection not found during that search? Qualified researchers should have examined every item in the vault. How could they possibly be so inept as to fail to find the McLellin collection? In view of this critical oversight, how can we be absolutely certain that the Cowdery history is not in the First Presidency’s vault or in some other church repository?

There is one very strange thing about this whole matter which may merely be a coincidence. As early as June 24, 1985, Brent Metcalfe “said his source [Hofmann] ‘has not only seen the Oliver Cowdery history but also seen the original documents of the McLellin papers in the First Presidency vault’ ” (*Victims*, page 121). Whatever one makes of the statement concerning the Cowdery history, it is certainly surprising that Hofmann would have been right in claiming that the McLellin collection was in the First Presidency’s vault!

It seems obvious from Hofmann’s confession that he was very careful what he said about the Mormon leaders. His lawyers probably told him that if he caused any additional embarrassment to the leaders of the Mormon Church, the people of Utah would put pressure upon the Board of Pardons to keep him behind bars for an extremely long time. In any case, when Michael George later interviewed him, Hofmann claimed there was another document the church had that they had suppressed from the prosecutors. In the paperback edition of *A Gathering of Saints*, page 393, Robert Lindsey reported the following exchange between Hofmann and George:

“*Are there any other documents in the First Presidency’s Vault that the church hasn’t told us about?*”

Hofmann’s face became blank and the slightest hint of a blush appeared on his glistening white scalp [Hofmann had shaved his head].

As George waited for him to answer, his question seemed to hang in the air, the words echoing between the narrow walls of the small room.

Several long moments passed before Hofmann shook his head affirmatively. *Yes, he said, there was one.*

George asked him what the document was.

“I don’t really want to talk about it,” he said.

George fought to convince him: It didn’t matter now, he said; he might as well get everything out in the open and be done with it. But this time George’s powers of persuasion failed him.

Suddenly subdued, Hofmann became silent again, then said: “I just don’t want to talk about it.”

Lynn Packer suggests the possibility that in some way Mark Hofmann may have learned that the church had the real McLellin collection after he began his scam. Packer obtained the following statement from Michael George:

“He could have meant the McLellin collection,” George told *Utah Holiday*, “or he could have just been hanging it out there.” (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 39)

However this may be, it is certainly ironic that the man who claimed to have the McLellin collection did not even have one document from that collection! On the other hand, the Mormon Church, whose leaders maintained that they did not have the collection and tried to work out a secret plan so that the church could eventually obtain the collection, actually had it all along!

### F.A.R.M.S. and Salamanders

While we must acknowledge that F.A.R.M.S. has produced a great deal of material about the Mormon scriptures, we have great reservations regarding the value of much of this work. It seems that many of the authors have such a desire to prove Mormonism true that they have a very difficult time looking objectively at the evidence. These scholars, of course, feel the same way about our work. While we would not claim to be completely free from bias, we feel that we have taken a very close look at both sides of the question. We started out as believers in the Book of Mormon, but the great preponderance of the evidence forced us to the conclusion that it is a nineteenth century production.

In any case, as we will show below, the way that the scholars at F.A.R.M.S. reacted to the forged Salamander letter shows how far they will go to save the Book of Mormon and the church.

The staff at F.A.R.M.S. accepted the Salamander letter as an authentic document. This, of course, is understandable since Mark Hofmann was a very

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

Martin Harris’ letter . . . has dismayed some people. Harris talks of a “white salamander” which was ‘transfigured’ into “the spirit” otherwise known to us as the Angel Moroni. . . . since Phelps joined the Church after reading Harris’ letter, he must not have found the allusion to a salamander very disconcerting. In fact, as new research is showing, the salamander has been thought for millennia to have supernatural and extraordinary powers . . . Moreover, *salamanders* were associated with *the voice of God* and with *the Holy Ghost!* From Midrash *Ex. Rabbah* XV.28 on Exodus 12, we find that the rabbis of the 9th Century A.D. and before believed that “God had to show Moses four things with his finger because he was puzzled by them.” One of these things God showed Moses on Mt. Sinai was the salamander . . . Not all salamanders were good, however. The poisonous ones are “spectacularly colored” with bright spots on a dark background. . . . They were linked with evil spirits. But the non-poisonous good ones were white or grey-brown.

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

Still, it was predictable that people would not understand this. The Lord apparently knew this would happen. In 1829, God commanded Harris not to try to describe things which he had not personally witnessed. . . . Harris seems to have overstepped his commission here when he wrote to Phelps in 1830. (*Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander*; June 1985)

As we mentioned above, to those who knew anything about salamanders it was obvious that they played an important role in the occult. In 1985 the staff at F.A.R.M.S. published a 28-page preliminary report entitled, *Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel with a Salamander?* In this report we find the following:

Martin Harris' . . . talk of a "spirit" that "transfigured himself" from a "white salamander" has dismayed some people. They feel that any involvement of a salamander in divine matters is at least unseemly, *smacks of occultism rather than divine revelation*, and is surely without precedent . . . in Rosicrucian [an occultic organization] and alchemical thought, the salamander, a "fiery man," lived in ethereal fire surrounding a glorious throne, could father gods or demigods, and was able to appear as a flaming giant (in robes and armor, no less).

Renaissance metallurgist and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini's father showed him in an unforgettable manner "a salamander" in an intense furnace in their home.

As a symbol of fire the salamander was considered one of the four fundamental constituent elements of nature (*materia prima*), used by alchemists in attempts to make gold. . . . the complex of meanings and connotations surrounding the salamander make it a *remarkably appropriate cognitive and spiritual summary of Moroni the Angel*. The reader can draw many parallels between the foregoing materials and the descriptions of the Angel Moroni. . . . As a messenger from God, Moroni could be said also to dwell in fire around His throne. This point alone might have readily spawned a connection between Moroni and the salamander. Moroni's association with gold (the plates) is obvious and may also be relevant here. (pages 1, 5, 7-8)

Scholars at F.A.R.M.S. even suggested that the Salamander letter provided additional support for the Book of Mormon. In the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, June 2, 1985, the following was printed:

The recently discovered Martin Harris letter . . . *adds evidence to support Harris' account of his interview with Prof. Charles Anthon*, according to researchers at the Foundation for

Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS).

...  
 Researchers at the foundation say that a little-noticed paragraph toward the end of the letter includes an unusual term—*short hand Egyptian*—to describe the characters copied from the Book of Mormon. . . . John W. Welch, president of the foundation, said the phrase "short hand Egyptian" is a scholarly term that Harris probably would not have learned on his own.

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

In the F.A.R.M.S. publication, *Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel With a Salamander?* page 1, footnote 1, the staff reported that they had found "further evidence in favor of the authenticity of the [Salamander] letter" in the portion of the letter which mentioned short hand Egyptian. Actually, the appearance of these words in the Salamander letter did not help establish its authenticity. On the contrary, it only demonstrated that the forger of the letter plagiarized these words from a letter by W. W. Phelps which was published in *Mormonism Unveiled*, page 273.

Even the Mormon leader Dallin Oaks, who is a strong supporter of F.A.R.M.S., was carried away with the foolishness which the organization was putting out regarding the Salamander letter. In a speech he gave in 1985, Apostle Oaks spoke favorably of the research done at the Foundation and tried to equate the white salamander with the Angel Moroni:

Another source of differences in the accounts of different witnesses is the different meanings that different persons attach to words. We have a vivid illustration of this in the recent media excitement about the word "salamander". . . All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter 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 . . . That meaning is . . .

“a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.” Modern and ancient literature contain many examples of this usage. For example see the research notes by F.A.R.M.S., circulated at this symposium.

A being that is able to live in fire is a *good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni*. . . . why all the excitement in the media, and why the apparent hand-wringing among those who profess friendship or membership in the Church? . . . (“1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium,” Brigham Young University, August 16, 1985, pages 22-26)

The reader will notice that Apostle Oaks did not want people to perceive the salamander mentioned in the letter as just a “tailed amphibian.” He wanted them to believe that it was an angel of light coming down from heaven. The truth of the matter, however, is that the letter itself says absolutely nothing about a being clothed in light coming down from heaven. Instead, it plainly states that Joseph Smith saw the salamander come out of the ground: “. . . the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole . . .” The letter mentioned neither fire nor light.

Although Apostle Oaks preferred the definition, “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire” over that of a “tailed amphibian,” one would think the words, “mythical being,” might be offensive to many Mormons when applied to the Angel Moroni.

Just two months after Apostle Oaks gave his speech, Mark Hofmann killed Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets and the truth about the Salamander letter eventually came to light. After the fall of the Salamander letter, faithful Mormon scholars and officials of the church no longer spoke of the wonderful relationship of the word “salamander” with the appearance of the Angel Moroni.

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

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

In his eagerness to destroy Metcalfe’s reputation, Peterson seems to have forgotten Jesus’ advice, “. . . He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7).

While Professor Peterson, who now edits *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, has shown a very arrogant and condescending attitude toward Metcalfe, in 1987, the F.A.R.M.S. organization did print an excellent statement concerning the Hofmann scandal:

F.A.R.M.S. members outside of Utah may be unaware of new developments regarding Mark Hofmann, who has recently pleaded guilty to reduced murder and fraud charges. . . . Hofmann has admitted that the “Salamander Letter” was a hoax, and indications are that all major documents he “found” during the past nine years may prove to have been extremely clever and insidious frauds. The sadness of this situation is inexpressible. . . .

Several F.A.R.M.S. reprints and reports worked from the premise that the Hofmann documents were authentic: e.g., BAC-80, JES-82, KIM-70 (revised), STF-85a, STF-85b, STF-85d (see Catalog for details). Some were reprints from *BYU Studies*; others were prepared by a number of people associated with F.A.R.M.S. . . . In hindsight it is clear that *we, as much as other scholars misled by Hofmann, should have been even more skeptical sooner, and that we ought to have warned readers more of the suspicions of some people that forgery was afoot.*

In the aftermath, much reassessment will be needed. The research insightfully produced about salamanders and short-hand Egyptian contains valid and generally interesting historical information, but the main thing we now see is how very clever and skillful these forgeries were. Like jurors who are told to disregard evidence when it is ruled irrelevant or inadmissible, it will take conscious effort for scholars and students to weed out the phantoms left by these forgeries. (*Insights: An Ancient Window*, Winter 1987, page 4)

### Apologists or Scholars?

Tom Nibley seems to have a very poor understanding of what we wrote in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole*. He belittles and misrepresents a number of the issues we present in the book. For example, he castigates us for putting down Mormon scholars:

Robert also tells me the Tanners are not *ad hominem* in their approach. Well, just for fun, let's look at some of the evidence. We could, for example, take note of their habit of calling Mormon scholars "apologists" (Does this word perhaps conjure up images of sniveling cravens desperately scrambling to cover up one heinous indiscretion after another, all the while whining "I'm sorry, I'm sorry"? No, of course not. At least not to scholars familiar with the term. And who cares what the vast unwashed think, right?), while any one who says something that supports their theories is a "scholar" or "expert." (Does not the mind's eye perceive calm and lordly savants, graciously deigning to stoop from their ivory towers to impart magisterial wisdom to the eager, muddled masses?) But that's just kind of sidestream silliness." (*Ibid.*, page 276)

It is clear that Tom Nibley has a distorted view of our book which was apparently derived from his own unsparing prejudice against us. With regard to our use of the word "apologist," it is true that we have used that term on a number of occasions. However, we have not tried to give the impression that Mormon scholars are "sniveling cravens desperately scrambling to cover up one heinous indiscretion after another."

There is certainly nothing wrong with the word *apologist*. The English word comes from the Greek word *απολογία* and means "defense." Apostle Paul used this word when he defended both himself and the gospel of Christ (see, for example, Acts 25:16; I Corinthians 9:3). *Apologetics* is defined in *The American College Dictionary* as "the branch of theology concerned with the defense of Christianity."

When we were writing material trying to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, we were "apologists" for that book. Furthermore, after we left the church and published the book, *A Look at Christianity*, we were serving as "apologists" for Christianity. In defending the work we have done on the "black hole" in the Book of Mormon, we are "apologists" for that theory. There certainly is nothing shameful about the word itself.

It is interesting to note that in the same volume in which Tom Nibley's article appears, David Rolph Seely wrote the following:

Most of the articles in this volume are part of the apologetic tradition—written by the faithful believer, addressing questions posed by believer and nonbeliever . . . the major theme of this collection is the defense or enhancement of the Book of Mormon. . . .

Apologetics—the defense of the kingdom—is a genre whose integrity relies on accuracy and even-handedness. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 306, 309)

It is obvious, then, that those scholars who defend Mormonism are "apologists" in every sense of the word. Tom Nibley seems to be making a big fuss over nothing.

We thought, however, that it would be interesting to see just how often we did use the words "*Mormon apologist*" or "*Mormon apologists*." We found that these words only appeared thirteen times in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole*. On the other hand, we discovered the words "Mormon scholar" or "Mormon scholars" were used twenty-five times. In addition, we used the words "*BYU scholars*" two times. It would appear, then, that we used the words "*scholar*" or "*scholars*" two-thirds of the time!

Tom Nibley charged that while we used the word *apologist* when referring to Mormon scholars, "any one who says something that supports their theories is a 'scholar' or 'expert.'" The reader will notice that Nibley has quotation marks around the word *expert*. Actually, we only used the word "expert" one time in the entire book:

Dean C. Jessee, an *expert* on Joseph Smith's documents and the handwriting of prominent members of the early Mormon Church, said that the identification of John Whitmer's hand in the pages from the small plates of Nephi "is not positive," but he seemed to lean toward that opinion . . . (page 34)

Those who are acquainted with Dean Jessee know that he is a very prominent Mormon Scholar.

While we did refer to a Protestant writer as "Biblical scholar Gleason L. Archer, Jr.," (page 79) and also used the words "Biblical scholars" in our book, we certainly did not try to glorify non-Mormon scholars. In fact, in our work we tried very hard to be respectful of Mormon scholars. Although we have always had severe disagreements with Tom Nibley's father, Hugh Nibley, we called him "Dr. Nibley,"



and on page 84, we referred to him as “the noted Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley.” We also called Dr. Francis Kirkham “the noted Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham.”

It would appear, then, that Tom Nibley’s article completely misrepresents the way we have treated Mormon scholars. This clever technique, of course, would tend to discourage Mormons from reading our book. It seems to us that Mr. Nibley is the one who uses belittling language in an attempt to prejudice his readers. If we used some of the insulting language that Nibley has included in his review (e. g., “the febrile brains of our dedicated cognoscenti”), very few Mormons would take the time to read our books.

While it may be true that Tom Nibley really believes what he wrote about us insulting Mormon scholars, it is obvious that either his own fertile imagination led him to that conclusion or he has not carefully read the book. Consequently, although F.A.R.M.S. recommended his work, it is plain to see that it cannot be relied upon. The rebuttal, in fact, seems to be nothing but a smoke screen designed to prevent people from examining the evidence.

### The First Becomes Last

In his haste to discredit our work Tom Nibley makes other unfounded charges. For example, on page 275 of his rebuttal, he indicates that he has caught us in an error which affects our credibility. In our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, page 37, we pointed out that the prophet Nephi had proclaimed that “the Messiah” would be born “six hundred years” after his father left Jerusalem. We noted, however, that the prophet Alma, who lived hundreds of years later, seemed to know nothing about the remarkable prophecy which pointed out the exact year when Jesus would be born. Tom Nibley, however, felt that we were very confused about the issue:

Moving on. There is a saying that “Checking your sources and their context can ruin your argument. But it can save your credibility.” Unfortunately for *our sagacious swamis*, they seem to have remembered only the first part when they bring up Alma and the six-hundred-years-from-Lehi-till-the-birth-of-Christ prophecy. They say that Alma seems ignorant of that prophecy

because he says, “The time cometh, we know not how soon” (Alma 13:25). But if they had taken the time to read verse twenty-four they would have seen that this refers to “the time of his *coming in his glory*” (Alma 13:24) — *a very different time from that of his birth*. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, page 275)

Those who carefully examine this matter will find that Tom Nibley is the one who has not done a good job of “checking” his “sources.” The Book of Mormon text in question is obviously referring to the time of Christ’s birth. The words “the time of his coming in his glory” undoubtedly confused Mr. Nibley and led him to believe that the text was not written concerning Christ’s birth. Significantly, just a few chapters earlier Alma used almost the same words to refer to the birth of Christ:

And not many days hence the Son of God shall *come in his glory*; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the father . . . he cometh to redeem those who will be baptized unto repentance, through faith on his name. (Alma 9:26-27)

The cross reference for verse 26, which appears at the bottom of the page, refers the reader to “Alma 7:7.” When we examine this reference and verses 10-11 of the same chapter, it becomes very clear it is the birth of Christ that is being referred to:

. . . the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people. . . . he shall *be born* of Mary, at Jerusalem . . . she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions . . . (Alma 7:7, 10, 11)

As noted above, Tom Nibley uses verses 24-25 of Alma 13 to support his position. The church’s footnotes for these two verses, however, do not sustain Nibley’s assertion. Footnote 25a, in fact, lists two cross references, and both of them point to the birth of Christ. The first (“1 Nephi 10:4”) reads as follows: “Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.”

The second cross reference (“3 Nephi 1:1”) refers to the time of the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding Christ’s birth: “Now it came to pass that the ninety and first year had passed away and it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem . . .” Verse 19 of the same chapter makes it very clear that it is the prophecy about Christ’s birth that is being spoken of:

. . . they knew that it was the day that *the Lord should be born*, because of the sign which had been given. (3 Nephi 1:19)

Tom Nibley not only has the Mormon Church’s own Book of Mormon cross references opposing his point of view, but the Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints copyrighted a book in 1981 which contradicts his assertion. In the book it is stated that Alma 13:25 refers to the birth of Christ:

Thus it is appropriate that following his discussion of Melchizedek, Alma turned his attention to the nearness of the coming of the Son of God. Notice that Alma says that “the time cometh, we know not how soon” (vs. 25). . . . At the time Alma was speaking, Christ’s first coming was still about eighty years in the future. (See dates given in the Book of Mormon.) From the limited perspective of mortality, some would say that something eighty years in the future should not be described as being “near” . . . (*Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122, page 238*)

Since even the Mormon Church’s own footnotes agree that Alma 13:24-25 refers to Christ’s birth, we fail to see any mistake in our work. This, of course, brings us back to our basic argument—why didn’t Alma understand that Jesus would not come during his lifetime?

Tom Nibley fails to see the serious problem in these two verses. It was about five hundred years before Alma came on the scene that Nephi recorded the prophecy that “six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem” the Messiah would be born (1 Nephi 10:4). While Alma is supposed to be familiar with the writings of Nephi, he shows absolutely no knowledge of this prophecy. He, in fact, states in Alma 13:25 that “we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouths of angels, of his coming; for the time cometh, we know

not how soon. Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice.”

This is a serious contradiction in the Book of Mormon which cannot be lightly dismissed. How could Alma say, “we know not how soon,” if the prophet Nephi had given a prophecy clearly stating the exact year Christ would be born? Furthermore, Alma says: “Would to God that it might be in my day.” If Alma were aware of Nephi’s prophecy, he should have known that it would not take place in his day.

Although the Book of Mormon does not say exactly how old Alma was, we do know that before he was converted to the Lord he was already a grown man (see Mosiah 27:8). The footnote on page 201 indicates that he was converted to the Lord “Probably between 100 and 92 B. C.” His father died when he was “eighty and two years old” (Mosiah 29:45). The footnote at the bottom of the page says that this was in “91 B. C.” The same year that his father died, Alma was appointed to some very important positions; he became “the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church” (Mosiah 29:42).

It seems likely, then, that Alma was at least thirty years old when his father passed away in 91 B. C. This, of course, would mean that Alma would have to live to be around 120 years old just to be on earth when Christ was born. Moreover, if Alma could have lived until Christ actually visited the Nephites after his resurrection, he would have been about 150 years old. It seems very difficult, then, to explain why Alma would feel that either event might occur in his day if he was aware of the prophecy.

Mormon scholar Matthew Roper, who has written three critical reviews of our work, seems to take a liberal view of the prophecy that Christ would come “six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.” He apparently feels that any date within about fifty years might be close enough:

Perhaps Metcalfe (and others) take the 600-year prophecy with more precision than it may have been intended to convey. The statements of Lehi . . . and Nephi . . . might well mean precisely 600 years. However, a century is a good round number. I can intelligibly say that Heber J. Grant died “a century” after Joseph Smith, even though the relevant dates are more precisely 1844 and 1945.

And I probably have somewhat more leeway than that, especially when we are talking about six centuries. Did the prophecy mean exactly 600 years? How about 599? 605? Or even 590? 550? Alma 2 was probably fairly young between 100 and 92 B. C. If he could have lived until, say, 32 B. C., he would be well within the range of reasonable interpretation for six centuries. But he would also be quite old. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 364, note 2)

Matthew Roper's liberal view regarding this important prophecy stands in stark contrast to the writings of Apostle James E. Talmage. Talmage was one of the most influential writers on doctrinal views the church has ever known. The LDS pamphlet, *Missionary Gospel Study Program*, written in 1988, indicated that besides the Mormon scriptures there were only five other books in "The approved missionary library" (page 3). One of the books listed was Apostle Talmage's book, *Jesus the Christ*. In this book, Apostle Talmage strongly affirmed that the 600-year prophecy has to be taken literally:

The time of Messiah's birth is a subject upon which specialists in theology and history, and those who are designated in literature 'the 'learned,' fail to agree. . . . we believe Christ to have been born in *the year known to us as B.C. 1*, and, as shall be shown, in an early month of that year. In support of this belief we cite *the inspired record* known as the 'Revelation on Church Government, given through Joseph the Prophet, in April, 1830,' which opens with these words: "The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being *one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh.*"

Another evidence of the correctness of our commonly accepted chronology is furnished by the Book of Mormon record. . . . Lehi prophesied, as had been shown him of the Lord . . . the birth of the Messiah, which latter event he definitely declared would take place *six hundred years* from the time he and his people had left Jerusalem. This specification of time was repeated by later prophecy; and the signs of the actual fulfillment are recorded as having been realized "six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem." . . . We believe April 6th to be the birthday of Jesus Christ as indicated in a revelation of the present dispensation already cited . . . We believe that

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, April 6, B. C. 1. (*Jesus the Christ*, Thirty Third Edition, 1973, pages 102-104)

The revelation given by Joseph Smith which pinpoints the very year Christ was born is recorded in the first verse of Section 20 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

When speaking of Matthew Roper's response, we should also point out that he has fallen into the same error as Tom Nibley with regard to Alma 13:24-25. In Roper's article he has added some words in brackets to support the idea that Alma was not talking about the birth of Christ:

For behold, angels are declaring it . . . for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of *his coming in glory* [that is, among the Nephites]. And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of *his coming* [that is, among the Nephites in their own land]; for the time cometh, we know not how soon. Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice. (Alma 13:24-25) (*Ibid.*, page 365)

Besides the fact that Roper's interpretation of Alma 13:24-25 does not agree with the church's own footnotes, there is another inconsistency—i. e., that Alma states that the "joyful news" of his coming would be brought by "the mouth of angels." According to the Book of Mormon, this occurred before Christ's birth (see Helaman 13:7; 14:1-9; 16:14).

The first part of the book of Third Nephi, which is the book that gives the story of Jesus Christ's visit to the New World, has a surprising lack of references to angels when compared with the last part of the book of Helaman. A prophet named Nephi was ministered to by angels (3 Nephi 7:15, 18), but one has to turn to 3 Nephi 17:24—after Christ has come—to find any other mention of angels visiting or ministering to the Nephites. Furthermore, before the coming of Christ to the Nephites, no one seems to be declaring any new prophecies concerning his appearance.

When Christ finally came to the Nephites after his resurrection, there was no mention of "angels" bringing the "joyful news." The Book of Mormon, in fact, states that the first thing that happened was that there was a time of devastating destruction with "many great and notable cities" being "sunk, and

many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate. And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great, and there were many in them who were slain. And there some who were carried away in the whirlwind . . . And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunders, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth” (3 Nephi 8:14-17).

Moreover, even after the destruction ceased the people were left in total darkness:

And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness; And there could be no light . . . neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled . . . there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen; and there was great mourning and howling and weeping among all the people continually; yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon them. (3 Nephi 20-23)

While “thick darkness” was still on the land, Christ himself spoke from heaven telling the Nephites that he had to destroy the evildoers “to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them” (9:8). Finally, “the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble, and the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away” (10:9). An unspecified period of time then follows with no mention of angelic visitations. Finally, however, God the Father declares from heaven:

Behold my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased . . . hear ye him. And it came to pass . . . they saw a Man descending out of heaven . . . and wist not what it meant, for they *thought it was an angel* that had appeared unto them. And it came

to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying: Behold, *I am Jesus Christ* . . . (3 Nephi 11:8-10)

Angels later appear to the Nephites, but it is only after some time has elapsed. It is clear, therefore, that Roper’s attempt to make Alma 13:24-25 fit with the appearance of Christ to the Nephites is not supported from the text.

The following verse, Alma 13:26, also provides additional evidence showing that the prophet Alma was not referring to a later appearance among the Nephites: “And it [Christ’s coming] shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming, that the words of our fathers may be fulfilled . . .”

Since Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there would be no way that the Nephites could have known about his advent unless “angels” had declared the matter to “just and holy men.” When the savior later appeared to the Nephites, however, there was no need for an angelic announcement.

Tom Nibley apparently failed to grasp the serious implications of the problem we brought up. The most important question is *why* Alma did not know about the 600-year prophecy. The answer was clearly presented in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. In it we presented strong evidence that after the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon were lost, Joseph Smith did not immediately try to rewrite this part of the story. Instead, he finished the book and then went back to the beginning to fill in the missing portion. In other words, the first part of the Book of Mormon was actually written last! This, however, seems to have caused a serious problem in the book. Smith apparently forgot that Alma did not know when Christ would be born when he wrote Nephi’s prophecy that it would occur “six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem . . .” (1 Nephi 10:4). Consequently, this caused some glaring errors in the text of the Book of Mormon.

Unlike Tom Nibley and Matthew Roper, Mormon scholar John Tvedtnes did not dispute the fact that the 600-year prophecy related to the time of Christ’s birth. Instead, Tvedtnes tried to dismiss the discrepancy by claiming that the “later Nephites” either did not know about or had little interest in the fact that there was a set of small plates prepared by Nephi:

The Tanners cite (p. 37) what Brent Metcalfe believes to be an inconsistency in the Book of Mormon, i. e., that while Nephi knew when the Messiah would come (1 Nephi 10:4; 19:8), Alma did not have this information (Alma 13:25). They further note that Samuel the Lamanite did not refer to the prophecy of Nephi when he spoke of the imminent *advent of Christ* (Helaman 14:2). *Because these later Nephites knew nothing of Nephi's prophecy of Christ's coming*, the Tanners conclude that the story of Nephi's prophecy was not yet in Joseph Smith's mind, since he had not yet invented the "small plates." . . .

There is, in fact, *no evidence that any of the later Nephites ever referred to the small plates*, on which the prophecy in question was written. . . . Moreover, it is very doubtful that we can take the "600 years" of Nephi's prophecy as literal, since Lehi left Jerusalem no earlier than the first year of Zedekiah (1 Nephi 1:4), which would have been 598 B. C. —already too late for the prophecy to have been fulfilled precisely 600 years later. Thus, Alma could have been aware of Nephi's statement and taken it as an approximation only, rather than as a precise date. It is *Mormon's rewriting of the history which has the birth of Christ occurring in the six hundredth year* (3 Nephi 1:1). And it was this same Mormon who acknowledged that there could have been errors in the chronology (3 Nephi 8:1-2). (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 198-199)

John Tvedtnes seems to be trying to ride two horses at the same time: (1) that Alma and other "later Nephites" probably did not even know about the prophecy on the small plates of Nephi, and (2) even if they did, they would not be able to completely rely upon it because it contained only "an approximation" of when Christ would be born.

It is significant to note that the Mormon scholars John Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper seem to be somewhat at odds regarding whether Alma even knew about the prophecy Nephi recorded on the small plates. As we have shown above, Tvedtnes stated: "There is, in fact, no evidence that any of the later Nephites ever referred to the small plates, on which the prophecy in question was written."

Roper, on the other hand, felt that the Nephites were familiar with the small plates of Nephi:

The prophecies on the small plates of Nephi would have told of the date of Christ's birth, but would not have told the date of his death or exactly how long after the resurrection Christ would appear to the Nephites. . . . when Mormon states a few years earlier, "And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught [why not by Alma who would have already have known from the scriptures in his possession?] that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with joy and gladness" (Alma 16:20). Thus, it seems likely that this was not a new revelation, as Metcalfe asserts, but that the new converts learned this information from *Alma, who was the keeper of the records on the small plates*.

But Metcalfe does raise a significant point: Why would Benjamin and Alma *not speak more specifically on the date of Christ's birth and Lehi's 600-year prophecy* in their public discourses in the land of Zarahemla? The most likely explanation may be that *this information was considered a mystery, reserved for the faithful. Nephite prophets often concealed certain scriptural information from the public at various times in their history, for diverse reasons . . .* (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 365-366)

John Tvedtnes, on the other hand, apparently would like his readers to believe that while Alma had the large plates of Nephi, he was probably not acquainted with the small plates of Nephi. Mosiah 28:10-11 and 20, however, make it very clear that Alma was supposed to have received all of the plates from king Mosiah:

Now king Mosiah . . . took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi . . .

And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, *all the records*, and also the interpreters, and conferred them upon him . . .

In the first chapter of Mosiah we read concerning the great importance of the plates of Nephi:

. . . these sayings are true . . . And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true . . .

And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to search them diligently . . . (Mosiah 1:6-7)

Would John Tvedtnes have us believe that Alma, the great religious leader who was like the Apostle Paul of the New Testament, would be ignorant of the contents of the small plates of Nephi? According to Nephi, his larger plates contained “a more history part” of the proceedings of the Nephites (2 Nephi 4:14), whereas his smaller plates were for “the more part of the ministry” (1 Nephi 9:4). It seems almost inconceivable that Alma would overlook the small plates of Nephi, one of the most spiritual portions of the Nephite scriptures, which is filled with prophecies concerning the coming of Christ and the future of the New World.

As noted above, John Tvedtnes maintains that there is “no evidence that any of the later Nephites ever referred to the small plates” of Nephi. Alma 3:14-17 does claim to be quoting from the writings of Nephi when it speaks of the Lamanites being cursed with a dark skin, but Tvedtnes could not find the quotation that was cited in the small plates of Nephi. He concluded, therefore, that the quotation must have come from the large plates of Nephi, which, of course, are not available to scholars.

The supposed quotation from Nephi bears some resemblance to 2 Nephi 5:21, which says that the Lord “caused the cursing to come upon” the Lamanites: “. . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” Although the subject is the same in both Alma 3:14-17 and 2 Nephi 5:21, the wording is so dissimilar that the material in Alma could not be considered to be a direct quotation from 2 Nephi.

There is one quotation, however, that raises a question with regard to Tvedtnes’ argument. In Alma 36:22 we find this statement by Alma:

Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there.

The reader will notice that there is a remarkable similarity between this statement and 1 Nephi 1:8:

And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he [Lehi] was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising God.

It could be argued from this that Alma did have access to the small plates of Nephi and quoted twenty words from those plates. This, of course, could be used to throw doubt on John Tvedtnes’ suggestion that Alma was probably not acquainted with these plates and would not have known about Nephi’s prophecy concerning the coming of Christ. Tvedtnes, on the other hand, could contend that these same words may have appeared on Nephi’s larger plates or even on the plates of Lehi.

Our position on this matter is that these words did not come from any ancient plates. They undoubtedly came from Joseph Smith’s study of nineteenth-century Christianity. There is, in fact, a close similarity between some of the words of Alma and those of George Whitefield that were published in 1808. In Alma 36:22, the prophet Alma uttered the following words:

. . . methought I saw . . . God sitting upon his throne . . .

More than twenty years before the Book of Mormon was printed George Whitefield, likewise, declared:

Methinks I see . . . the Judge sitting on his throne . . .

The words cited above were taken from a sermon given by Whitefield which is found in a collection of *Eighteen Sermons Preached by the Late Rev. George Whitefield*, as cited by Mormon historian B. H. Roberts in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 1985, page 311.

The reader will notice that Whitefield used the word *methinks*, whereas Alma used the past tense, *methought*, in Alma 36:22. These words, of course, are now considered to be archaic. Although they are used in poetic works, they are not found in the Bible. The word *methought* is actually found in two different places in the Book of Mormon. In both cases this unusual word is combined with the words *I saw*

to form the phrase “methought I saw.” Interestingly, in both instances it is used in a verse speaking of a dream or vision which Lehi had. In Alma 36:22 we read that Alma exclaimed: “Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne . . .” In 1 Nephi 8:4, Lehi himself supposedly stated: “But behold . . . methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness.”

Based upon the evidence we have examined, we believe that Joseph Smith first wrote the words concerning Lehi’s vision that are found in Alma 36:22. Then, after he finished the end of the Book of Mormon, he began the task of rewriting the first part of the book—i. e., the part of the story that was contained in the 116 pages that had been lost.

When Smith began to rewrite the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon he seems to have referred back to Alma 36:22 and copied twenty words from that section into 1 Nephi 1:8. He did not, however, include the phrase “methought I saw” in that chapter. It would have been difficult to have used the word “methought” at this point because the narrative concerning Lehi was in the third-person. Nevertheless, the word was apparently lodged in Joseph Smith’s mind and just seven chapters later he had Nephi record another vision Lehi experienced. In this report Lehi’s own words were given in the first-person, and therefore the word *methought* could be used: “. . . methought I saw in my dream . . .”

While John Tvedtnes apparently thought he was refuting our argument about Alma’s lack of knowledge regarding when Christ would be born, he has actually raised another very serious question regarding the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Before we read Tvedtnes’ rebuttal we had never even thought of the importance of searching for quotations from the small plates of Nephi in the last nine books of the Book of Mormon—i. e., The Words of Mormon through Moroni. These books contain more than two-thirds of the text found in the Book of Mormon.

Frankly, we were astonished when we read John Tvedtnes’ statement that “There is, in fact, no evidence that any of the later Nephites ever referred to the small plates.” At first we thought that Tvedtnes was merely saying that the later Nephites did not mention the fact that there was a small set of plates prepared by Nephi. On further reflection, however, we concluded that he was actually saying that “the

later Nephites” never directly quoted or used the writings of the prophet Nephi found on the small plates. That John Tvedtnes was referring to citations from the small plates rather than the existence of the plates is obvious from the following: he states that Mormon, who fought in the last war against the Lamanites and was certainly one of “the later Nephites,” wrote concerning the existence of the small plates:

Mormon noted that he had been unaware of the existence of the small plates until his work of abridgment was well under way (Words of Mormon 1:3). . . .

The part of the small plates of Nephi known as the “Words of Mormon” is seen by the Tanners (p. 11) as a contrived transition between the account invented to replace the lost 116 pages and the abridgment by Mormon beginning in Mosiah. . . .

We note that Mormon wrote that it was after he had “made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin” that he “searched among the records . . . and . . . found this small account of the prophets . . . down to the reign of this king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:3). This prompts the question of why Mormon searched the records at such a propitious time. On the surface, it appears to be contrived, as the Tanners assert (p. 30). But I suggest that his reason for searching through the records was to locate the small plates he had found mentioned in the large plates in connection with king Benjamin (cf. Words of Mormon 1:10). Having found them, he was pleased with their contents and appended them to his abridgment (Words of Mormon 1:6-7). (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 198-199, 201)

It seems clear, then, that John Tvedtnes was referring to quotations from Nephi’s smaller plates rather than the existence of the plates themselves. That “the later Nephites” would ignore Nephi’s writings seems almost equivalent to New Testament writers failing to quote scriptural passages from the Old Testament. Nephi was an extremely important prophet in the early part of the Book of Mormon. He could be compared to Moses of the Old Testament because he brought the ancient Nephites to the New World.

Nephi, in fact, went far beyond Moses in that he gave detailed prophecies regarding Christ and his ministry both in the Old World and in the New World.

Nephi taught his people to worship Jesus Christ more than 500 years before he was born, and in 2 Nephi 26 he stated: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ . . .” One would think that since Nephi was such a powerful figure in the early history of the Nephites, his writings would have been frequently cited by Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Nephi the son of Helaman, Mormon, Moroni and many other prophets and righteous people mentioned in the Book of Mormon. John Tvedtnes’ comments, however, would lead us to believe that all of those followers of the Lord had an aversion to quoting Nephi’s engravings on the “small plates.”

Because of the serious implications of John Tvedtnes’ statement that there is “no evidence that any of the later Nephites ever referred to the small plates,” we felt that we should take a careful look at the matter. We used our computer to search through the last nine books of the Book of Mormon, which follow the writings found on the small plates (1 Nephi through Omni), and obtained a similar result. We looked for different word combinations which would help us locate some quotation attributed to Nephi. The only citation we found was in Alma 3:14-17, but, as we have shown above, the wording is so dissimilar that this could not possibly be a direct quotation.

We finally went so far as to examine all of the places where the word *Nephi* appears in the last nine books of the Book of Mormon. (The study was complicated somewhat by the fact that there were four different men named Nephi mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Three of the four are found in the latter portion of the Book of Mormon.) This search, likewise, yielded no evidence that the later Nephites cited anything from the original prophet Nephi.

While we would not be so presumptuous as to say that nothing will ever turn up, our preliminary research tends to support John Tvedtnes’ conclusion. In making this statement, however, we should state that there are undoubtedly portions of the text found in the first part of the Book of Mormon which resemble material contained in the last nine books. In our study of the origin of the Book of Mormon we have found that Joseph Smith was extremely repetitious in his writings. For example, the battle which was fought at the Hill Cumorah bears remarkable similarities to the destruction of the Jaredites which supposedly took place a thousand years earlier at the same place. Consequently, if Joseph Smith were the author of the book, as we maintain, one would expect to find

similar phrases or sentences in both the first and last parts of the Book of Mormon.

The obvious lack of citations to Nephi’s words in the last nine books of the Book of Mormon is certainly not consistent with what one would expect to find if the Book of Mormon were a true record. While we find “the later Nephites” disregarding Nephi’s writings, the present leaders of the Mormon Church frequently cite his quotations from “the small plates.” For example, in the book *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 1988, we find the current prophet of the church, Ezra Taft Benson, continually citing from the first two books of Nephi. In fact, the Scripture Index for the book, pages 728-29, lists over a hundred citations from Nephi’s writings! Why, we would ask, should there be such a great disparity between the ancient Nephites’ use of the writings of Nephi and the present leaders of the Mormon Church use of the same material?

The seriousness of this problem becomes more evident when we compare it to the use of Joseph Smith’s writings in the Mormon Church. Since Smith was the founder of the church, Mormon leaders and writers are constantly making reference to his works. If, however, they never cited from the materials that he wrote but quoted only Brigham Young and the prophets who followed, this would make thinking people very suspicious about what they were trying to hide. This, of course, is exactly the problem that we encounter when we try to find citations from the prophet Nephi by “the later Nephites.”

Once a person accepts the fact that the first part of the Book of Mormon was written last, the whole thing comes into focus. Since the first 116 pages of Joseph Smith’s manuscript were either stolen or lost and Smith did not know exactly what material he would use to replace the missing section, he could not cite anything from Nephi as he wrote the last nine books of the Book of Mormon because there was nothing to quote.

It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith could have made up some material while he was working on the last nine books and attributed it to Nephi in those books, but if he did this, he would have to remember to add that material to the first two books of Nephi when he began working on the first part of the Book of Mormon. It would, of course, be very easy to forget to include this material when it came time to rewrite the two books of Nephi.

This might even explain the fact that Alma 3:14-17 claims to be a direct quotation from Nephi’s



writings, but no such wording appears in the books of Nephi. Joseph Smith apparently either forgot to add the material to the section that was supposed to have come from the “small plates” or he felt that no one would notice if he wrote something that was somewhat similar. In the days before computers it would be very unlikely that anyone would notice this problem. In any case, it appears that Joseph Smith did not want to go to the trouble of reconciling the first two books of Nephi with the last nine books of the Book of Mormon. He apparently found it easier to skirt around the problem by just failing to quote the words of Nephi.

When Joseph Smith began rewriting the material to replace the lost 116 pages, he seems to have been faced with another serious problem: he could not remember exactly what he had written in the last nine books of the Book of Mormon. This confusion led him to make some serious errors. For instance, when Smith wrote the fourteenth chapter of the book of Helaman, which appears toward the end of the Book of Mormon (pages 401-402 of the 1992 printing), he had Samuel the Lamanite deliver what appeared to be a startling new prophecy: “. . . Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe” (Helaman 14:2).

By the time Joseph Smith began working on the first two books of Nephi, he seemed totally oblivious to the fact that he had already recorded a prophecy by Samuel the Lamanite regarding the birth of Christ in the book of Helaman. While the Lamanite prophet received his revelation only “five years” before the birth of Jesus, Smith proceeded to add into the two books of Nephi that both Lehi and Nephi had given the exact year of the Advent almost 600 years earlier: “Yea, even six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.”

Since the Nephites should have already known exactly when Christ would come into the world at the time Samuel the Lamanite prophesied that, “five years more cometh, and behold then cometh the Son of God,” this prediction would have been of no value to the people.

Moreover, when Smith wrote the first two books of Nephi, he also forgot that Alma said the Nephites did not know when Christ would be born. This is certainly a glaring error which Smith probably never would have made if he had written the first part of the

Book of Mormon and then proceeded in an orderly fashion to the end of the book.

Brent Metcalfe was the researcher who originally pointed out to us the problem regarding the time when Christ would be born. Mr. Metcalfe makes some interesting comments about this matter in the new book published by Signature Books:

Enveloping is particularly evident in discussion of the advent of Jesus. For example, early in the narrative Nephi relates that Lehi (1 Ne. 10:4), an angel (19:8), and ‘the prophets’ (2 Ne. 25: 19) had all predicted that Jesus would be born 600 years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. However, subsequent Book of Mormon prophets seem unaware of these extraordinary oracles.

At a Nephite revival king Benjamin comments that “the time cometh, and is not far distant . . . [that the Lord] shall come down from heaven . . . and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 3:5). This comment is surprising since the scriptures he possessed presumably told him this would not occur for over 120 years. Alma speaks of Jesus’ advent in similarly general terms: “the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand” (Alma 5:28, 50); “the time is not far distant” (7:7); “not many days hence” (9:26); and “the day of salvation draweth nigh” (13:21). Alma sincerely hopes “that it might be in [his] day” (v. 25). His reticence or inability to disclose Jesus’ birth date is explicable in his admission, “we know not how soon” . . . Thus Alma, Benjamin, and their audiences did not know what Lehi, Nephi, an angel, anonymous Old World prophets, and their sacred literature had known with certainty; that Jesus would be born 600 years after the Lehtes departed for the Americas.

When Samuel the Lamanite subsequently enters the scene, in contrast to Benjamin’s and Alma’s imprecision, he boldly specifies “for five years more cometh . . . then cometh the Son of God” (Hel. 14:2). Absent is any indication that Samuel merely echoes the inspired utterances of his forebears, Lehi and Nephi, or other prophets, including an angel. This particular point is paramount, for the potency of Samuel’s oracle lies in its absolute uniqueness. If Samuel’s prophecy is simply a repetition of earlier prophecies, it could scarcely be used to authenticate his prophetic calling (16:4-5). When Samuel’s followers are sentenced to death prior to Jesus’ advent, it is because *his* prophecy did not appear to be true, excluding any mention of Lehi or Nephi (3 Ne. 1:5).

The enveloping is obvious: Lehi and Nephi explicitly preach the date of Jesus' birth; Benjamin and Alma speak only in generalities; Samuel, like Nephi is explicit. But when we analyze the passages in the order they were dictated, the enveloping pattern is replaced with a linear pattern. Prophets in the earliest part of the dictation lack specific knowledge of Jesus' birth date. However, with Samuel a date of five years is given. At the expiration of the allotted time, the signs appear as prophesied. In this context the narrative explains: (1) that "father Lehi . . . Nephi . . . almost all of our fathers . . . have testified of the coming of Christ" (Hel. 8:22); and (2) that the year Jesus was born "was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem" (3 Ne. 1:1).

Passages such as these paved the way for the next stage of the thematic development. What started as an editorial remark that 600 years had elapsed is transformed into a literal prophecy from the lips of Lehi, Nephi, an angel, and unidentified prophets. These prophecies were not dictated until the 600-year date had been firmly established in 3 Nephi. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, 1993, edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe, pages 416-417)

In his book Mr. Metcalfe discusses other material which strongly points to the conclusion that the first part of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi through Words of Mormon) was written last and that this created serious problems in the text. In *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* we presented a good deal of evidence supporting that theory. We noted, for example, that Brent Metcalfe pointed out a significant discovery that tends to put the theory that the first part of the Book of Mormon was written last on a very solid foundation. We carefully checked out Mr. Metcalfe's insight and found it to be irrefutable.

Metcalfe's research related to Joseph Smith's use of two similar words. He demonstrated that although Joseph Smith originally used the word *therefore* frequently in his writings, for some reason, in June, 1829, he switched to the word *wherefore*.

Using the church's computer program we found that this can be demonstrated without too much trouble. All of Joseph Smith's revelations published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, dated before June, 1829, use the word *therefore*. Section 1 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is out of chronological order (it is dated November 1, 1831), but an examination of

sections 2 through 13 reveals that Joseph Smith used the word *therefore* 38 times. The word *wherefore* does not appear once in any of these sections! In Section 14, dated June, 1829, we find *wherefore* used for the first time, but *therefore* still appears three times. Sections 15 and 16 are very small and do not use either word. In Section 17 we find *wherefore* once, but *therefore* does not appear. The change becomes very obvious in the next revelation (Section 18) which is also dated in June of 1829. In this revelation the word *wherefore* is used twelve times, but *therefore* does not appear at all!

Since the revelations printed in the *Doctrine and Covenants* are dated, we know that Joseph Smith made the transition from *therefore* to *wherefore* in June 1829. Because Joseph was working on the Book of Mormon at the time of this transitional period, we are able to determine which part of the Book of Mormon was written last. If the first part of the Book of Mormon was written first, as the traditional view would hold, we would expect to find a preponderance of the word *therefore*. What we discover, however, is just the opposite; the word *wherefore* predominates by a large margin. We find *therefore* only used 42 times in the material translated from the small plates of Nephi (we included the book "The Words of Mormon" with this section because it was obviously written after the book of Mosiah). On the other hand, *wherefore* appears 307 times! This means that it was used 7.3 times as often as *therefore*. The break down according to books is as follows:

1 Nephi: *wherefore*-98, *therefore*-13  
 2 Nephi: *wherefore*-138, *therefore*-28  
 Jacob: *wherefore*-52, *therefore*-1  
 Enos: *wherefore*-6, *therefore*-0  
 Jarom: *wherefore*-3, *therefore*-0  
 Omni: *wherefore*-6, *therefore*-0  
 Words of Mormon: *wherefore*-4, *therefore*-0

One factor which greatly affects the first part of the Book of Mormon is that there has been a great deal of plagiarism from the biblical book of Isaiah. We have found that of the 42 places that *therefore* occurs, 22 are directly copied from the King James Version. This, of course, means that Joseph Smith only chose that word 20 times. There are three cases that we know of in which *wherefore* was copied from the Bible, but this still leaves 304 times that

Joseph Smith chose that word. When we adjust for the plagiarism from the Bible, we find that *wherefore* was used 15.2 times as often as *therefore*.

In the remaining portion of the Book of Mormon, the situation is suddenly reversed. As we pass from the small plates of Nephi—i. e., the part which replaced the material in the lost 116 pages—to the large plates of Nephi, we find that the word *therefore* predominates. *Therefore* is found 621 times in these pages, whereas *wherefore* appears just 108 times. The break down according to books is as follows:

Mosiah: *therefore*-123, *wherefore*-1  
 Alma: *therefore*-286, *wherefore*-3  
 Helaman: *therefore*-63, *wherefore*-0  
 3 Nephi: *therefore*-98, *wherefore*-3  
 4 Nephi: *therefore*-5, *wherefore*-0  
 Mormon: *therefore*-22, *wherefore*-0  
 Ether: *therefore*-24, *wherefore*-63  
 Moroni: *therefore*-0, *wherefore*-38

The astounding thing here is that the word *wherefore* only occurs 7 times in the six books which comprise all of the abridgment which Mormon supposedly made from the large plates of Nephi! (The books of Ether and Moroni, of course, were not taken from the large plates of Nephi.) These six books contain 342 pages of the text of the Book of Mormon—about 64% of the entire book! Moreover, three of these seven occurrences of this word appear to be derived through plagiarism. For instance, *wherefore* appears in the book of Mosiah just once (see chapter 13, verse 19). Its real source, however, is from the Ten Commandments printed in the Bible, Exodus 20:11. Two of the other verses mentioning *wherefore*, 3 Nephi 13:30; 14:20, are derived from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:30; 7:20. Without these three references, we have only four cases in which Joseph Smith chose the word *wherefore* in all of the six books abridged from the large plates!

It would appear from the evidence derived from this study that after the 116 pages were stolen, Joseph Smith did not immediately try to restore this missing portion of his book. Instead, in 1828, he began translating the book of Mosiah. The word *therefore* predominated over *wherefore* by 123 to 1 in that book. The same was true with regard to the book of Alma—286 to 3. In the next four books (Helaman, 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi and Mormon) we have a ratio of

188 to 3. When we arrive at Ether, however, there is a definite shift from *therefore* to *wherefore*. It is easy to trace this shift within the book itself.

From this research we conclude that Joseph Smith was laboring on the book of Ether in June, 1829. This, of course, is the time when the *Doctrine and Covenants* shows that Smith made the change from *therefore* to *wherefore*. After completing the major portion of the Book of Mormon (it is possible that the very last book, Moroni, was a later addition as we explain in *Covering Up the Black Hole*, p. 36), Joseph Smith moved to the front and began to replace the lost material with the writings of Nephi. First Nephi would fit neatly after Ether because of its transitional nature. *Wherefore* predominates 98 to 13. The occurrences of *therefore* begin to decrease as we proceed through the book. If we remove all of the cases where the word *therefore* has been lifted from the Bible in 2 Nephi, it fits well into the transitional pattern (138 to 6). The book of Jacob follows the same trend; the ratio between *wherefore* and *therefore* continues to grow (52 to 1). In the final four books, which fill up the hole left by the loss of the 116 pages, *wherefore* is found 19 times but *therefore* does not appear at all.

Although the evidence seemed to be very clear, Mormon scholar John Tvedtnes originally had reservations about accepting the “statistical data”:

The Tanners, following Brent Metcalfe’s lead, note that while Joseph Smith used the word “therefore” frequently in revelations dated prior to June 1829, those dated after this time tend to use the word “wherefore.” They claim that this same phenomenon appears in the Book of Mormon, where the word “therefore” predominates in the books of Mosiah through Mormon, with the word “wherefore” predominating in Ether and Moroni, as well as in the books said to derive from the small plates. This they believe (p. 35-36), is evidence that the small plates were translated last, after Joseph Smith had begun using “wherefore” instead of “therefore.” While this may be true, there is another possible explanation, i. e., that “therefore” is peculiar to Mormon, since it predominates only in those books which he abridged. The change to “wherefore” in Moroni’s work could be evidence of different authorship for Ether and Moroni, and, of course, for the small plates. I am not proposing that this interpretation

is right and that of the Tanners wrong. My point is that this statistical data is inconclusive. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, page 213)

It should be noted that even though John Tvedtnes had questions about the “statistical data” proving that the small plates were translated last, he seemed to agree that they were in fact translated last:

Joseph Smith indicated that “the title page of the Book of Mormon was taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates.” Presumably, Mormon added the small plates just before this title page, though this is less certain. It would, in any event, explain why Joseph Smith translated the small plates last. (*Ibid*, vol. 3, 1991, page 202)

Unfortunately for John Tvedtnes’ idea that the word *therefore* might have stemmed from Mormon’s own style, the book “Words of Mormon” makes it clear that this is not the case. While the word *therefore* predominates in most of the work attributed to Mormon, a careful examination of the “Words of Mormon” shows that the word *wherefore* predominates in that book. It appears four times in that book, whereas the word *therefore* is not used at all!

It seems apparent, then, that this phenomenon has nothing to do with Mormon’s style of writing. As we noted above, the word *wherefore* only occurs 7 times in the six books which comprise all of the abridgment which Mormon supposedly made from the large plates of Nephi which contain over 240 pages! Since the book, Words of Mormon, is only two pages long, it is obvious that if Mormon used the same ratio in his other books as he did in Words of Mormon, he would have used *wherefore* about 480 times instead of the seven times that we actually find!

It is obvious, therefore, that there is something more involved here than Mormon’s style of writing. The problem, in fact, relates to Joseph Smith’s style. As we have demonstrated from the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Smith was the one who changed his style. He originally preferred the word *therefore* but for some reason decided in June, 1829, that the word *wherefore* was more fitting. The fact that there was a change from *therefore* to *wherefore* in both the Book of Mormon and the *Doctrine and Covenants* clearly

demonstrates that Joseph Smith, not Mormon, Nephi nor some other ancient Nephite was responsible for the change in the words used in the Book of Mormon.

At the time Joseph Smith was working on the large plates of Nephi, the word *therefore* was an important part of his vocabulary. By the time he decided to replace the stolen material, however, he had substituted the word *wherefore* in most cases where he previously used *therefore*. The small book, The Words of Mormon, is unnaturally inserted between the book of Omni and the book of Mosiah. It was obviously written after Joseph Smith came up with the idea of the small plates of Nephi because it mentions “this small account of the prophets” (Words of Mormon, verse 3). It would appear, then, that Joseph Smith inserted The Words of Mormon into the Book of Mormon after he had completed the book of Ether. Since Smith was then using the word *wherefore* instead of *therefore*, that word appears four times in the book.

John Tvedtnes seems to have been clutching at straws when he said that the “statistical data is inconclusive.” None of the writers who have criticized our work have been able to come up with any convincing explanation regarding Joseph Smith’s use of the words *therefore* and *wherefore*. As far as we can determine, this evidence against the Book of Mormon is irrefutable.

Fortunately, to John Tvedtnes’ credit, about three years after he set forth the idea that the word “‘therefore’ is peculiar to Mormon,” he changed his mind. In *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, 1994, no. 1, he made it clear that he now believes that the pattern regarding the words “therefore” and “wherefore” probably indicates that Joseph Smith himself shifted from one word to the other. In a review of a chapter Brent Metcalfe wrote in the book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, Tvedtnes made these surprising comments:

Metcalfe begins his article by providing valuable insights into the order in which the books comprising the Book of Mormon were dictated. Recapping evidences already elicited by a number of other writers, he adds material from his own research and corrects document errors that have crept into the literature. These corrections are supported by photographs of portions of the manuscripts.

Of particular interest is the pattern that emerges in the use of certain words when Mosiah is considered to be the first book dictated after the loss of the 116 pages. This pattern shows Joseph Smith's tendency to move from one form of a word to an alternate version of the same (e.g., "whosoever" to "whoso" and "therefore" to "wherefore"). However, when 1 Nephi is posited as the first book, the pattern disappears. In the past, researchers have sometimes seen the varying use of such words *as evidence for different authorship* of the various books in the Book of Mormon. In view of the *mounting evidence for the priority of Mosiah*, these views now *seem untenable*. The variants are more likely *due to a shift in Joseph Smith's usage of the words*. Metcalfe correlates this shift with a shift involving the same words in the revelations dictated by Joseph Smith during the time the Book of Mormon was being produced. . . .

Metcalfe may be surprised to see me agreeing with him, since, in his article, he quotes me as suggesting that "therefore" was used by Mormon, while "wherefore" was used by Moroni and on the small plates and is perhaps evidence of different authorship in the various books. . . . I also wrote, "I am not [emphasis added] proposing that this interpretation is right and that of the Tanners wrong. . . ." (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, 1994, no. 1, pages 40-41)

The noted Mormon historian Dean C. Jessee, who is an expert on Joseph Smith's documents and the handwriting of prominent members of the early Mormon Church, felt that his examination of the handwriting in the Book of Mormon manuscript suggested that the first part of the book may have been written last:

The appearance of Oliver Cowdery's handwriting on what appears to be the third page of the Book of Mormon manuscript (the first page of the surviving fragments) raises a question of the beginning point of his work as scribe. If, as evidence indicates, some translation of the Book of Mormon had been done prior to Cowdery's arrival in Pennsylvania in April 1829, such writing would naturally precede Cowdery's. If Oliver commenced writing at the beginning of 1 Nephi, any writing that preceded his could not have exceeded two pages. It may be, however, that his work on the manuscript commenced

at a later point in the text. Joseph Smith, after being directed not to retranslate the lost 116 pages of the manuscript, was advised to insert in their place the "engravings which are on the plates of Nephi." This would correspond to the first 133 pages of the printed book, comprising 1 Nephi to the Words of Mormon. The location of the Cowdery writing at the beginning of the text of 1 Nephi followed by the apparent hand of John Whitmer [in another place Jessee points out that the identification of Whitmer's hand is not positive], may indicate that Oliver began writing at a point in the manuscript beyond the loss of the 116 pages, and that the "plates of Nephi" were written after the completion of the rest of the Book. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, pages 277-278)

In 1989, the Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints copyrighted a book prepared by the Church Educational System. This book suggests that the small plates of Nephi were translated last:

After the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript, Joseph apparently *started with the book of Mosiah*, also found on the large plates. He had just begun the book of Mosiah when Oliver Cowdery was sent to him in early April of 1829. Five weeks later, 15 May 1829, they were on 3 Nephi and the Savior's sermon on baptism to the Nephites. Not until arriving at the Whitmer residence in Fayette did Joseph translate the small plates of Nephi, which contain 1 Nephi through the Words of Mormon. (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, Religion 341-343, page 59)

In the September 1977 issue of the church's official publication, *The Ensign*, we find an article by Stan Larson, an authority on the Book of Mormon manuscripts, which supports the idea that the small plates of Nephi were translated last:

Generally, it has been assumed that when Oliver began as scribe for Joseph the two men started at the beginning (or very near the beginning) of the Book of Mormon and continued through to the end. However, as will be shown, several historical events tend to indicate that the first part was written last and the last, first. . . . Does the manuscript provide any evidence on when certain parts were written—that is, on the first part being written last? The presence of certain handwritings in the

original manuscript provides important internal evidence that confirms the historical evidence already mentioned. . . . both internal and external evidence join in support of the idea that the Small Plates of the Book of Mormon were translated last. (*The Ensign*, September 1977, pages 87, 90)

One of our most zealous critics, Matthew Roper, recently acknowledged that most scholars now believe that the book of Mosiah was translated before the small plates of Nephi:

. . . Metcalfe's chief interest is not so much to establish the priority of the book of Mosiah in the translation sequence of the Book of Mormon, a theory which few writers doubt today, but to show that the Book of Mormon narrative displays certain anomalies which can best be explained by viewing Joseph Smith not as translator of an ancient scriptural text, but as a modern author of a fictional nineteenth-century narrative. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, page 362)

For additional evidence concerning this matter see *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 32-37.

### Tvedtnes Speaks of Mix-Up

Interestingly, John Tvedtnes, who challenges our work with regard to the "black hole," not only believes that "Joseph Smith translated the small plates last," but he also seems to have a problem with the book, "The Words of Mormon." This, of course, is the book that is awkwardly inserted between the book of Omni and the book of Mosiah. It was apparently put there by Joseph Smith in an attempt to explain how the small plates of Nephi would replace the 116 missing pages. Tvedtnes feels that there was a mix-up when Joseph Smith had "The Words of Mormon" printed in the Book of Mormon:

I further believe that Words of Mormon 1:12-18 is part of the translation from Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi, and that *these verses were not found on the small plates and should therefore not be part of the Words of Mormon*. To understand this proposition, we must turn to an examination of the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon . . . The manuscript, as originally copied, *does not show a title for the*

*book of Mosiah*, presumably because that title appeared on one of the 116 lost pages. Even more important is the fact that there is, on the manuscript, no original indication of a separation between Words of Mormon and Mosiah. Rather, Mosiah begins with the notation "Chapter II," as if it were a continuation from Words of Mormon. A later correction to the beginning of Words of Mormon added the words "Chapter I," changed "Chapter II" to read "Chapter I," and added the title "The Book of Mosiah" before the latter. I believe that this title was misplaced and should have been after Words of Mormon 1:11. . . . Mormon wrote that he was going to 'finish my record' on the small plates (Words of Mormon 1:5, 9). Since the bulk of his abridgment was written *after* he wrote of king Benjamin's time, he could not have 'finished' his record by writing about that king in Words of Mormon 1:12-18. . . . Mormon's concluding remarks in Words of Mormon 1:11 reflect the thoughts he expressed in the last chapter he wrote in Mormon 7. . . . This makes me wonder if the last part of Mormon (chapters 6-9) may have been written on the small plates. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 201-203)

The confusion John Tvedtnes finds in this part of the Book of Mormon obviously stems from the fact that Joseph Smith was fumbling around trying to explain the awkward situation he encountered because of the loss of the 116 pages of the manuscript. M. T. Lamb made these interesting observations about the matter:

Strangely enough we find inserted in the middle of the Book of Mormon . . . [1992 printing, pages 143-45] a little book entitled the "Book of Mormon," or "Words of Mormon." It is by the supposed author or compiler of the entire work, the prophet Mormon. He has a book of his own, in its proper place, near the close of the work, recording his own life, and his connection with Nephite history. And this little affair of only two pages, having nothing whatever to do with the thread of the history that is being recorded, is to an ordinary reader of the Book of Mormon, wholly inexplicable. It becomes intelligible, however, when read in connection with a certain untoward event that occurred in connection with the translation of the book [i. e., the theft of the 116 pages]. . . in due course of time, there appeared a lengthy revelation purporting to come from God, the substance of

which . . . is that Satan has put it into the hearts of the enemies of the truth to *alter the words* of that stolen manuscript so that should Mr. Smith reproduce them, they would lie about it, and say the two did not agree together. . . .

It may be necessary to explain that Nephi is supposed to have recorded his history upon *two sets* of plates . . . The first set contained the religious history mainly, the second, the secular.

The old prophet Mormon had taken this second set of plates . . . and had condensed it to a very small compass . . . And it was this abridged record of the secular history of the Nephites that Joseph Smith had laboriously translated with Martin Harris as his scribe. The record was so brief that the 116 pages of the manuscript written by hand brought the Nephite history quite down to King Benjamin's time . . . But now that these 116 pages containing Mormon's abridgment of Nephi's secular history have been stolen and put out of reach, Joseph is informed in this precious revelation that there is another record he may use, abridged not by Mormon but by Nephi, and that is after all a *great deal better and more desirable* than the stolen record. . . .

Now several queries naturally suggest themselves:

1. How could Satan so easily circumvent the Lord? The golden plates from which these 116 pages were translated had been carefully preserved for 1400 years by the special providence of God—had been carefully translated by the gift and power of God. But now, after all this trouble and pains, the Lord is beaten by a wrathful woman, and all this trouble, labor and watchcare proves "love's labor lost"!

2. How does it happen that neither God himself nor his angel found out Mr. Smith was translating the *wrong plates* until Martin Harris stole those 116 pages? . . .

4. Does the Lord Himself come out of this affair entirely unscathed? Either He made a mistake in the first instance, and had to back out and do His work over again—or he perpetrated a fraud in the second case, a trick, a silly trick that has not even the merit of being a sharp one, so "thin," in fact, that no special acuteness is required to see through it.

But now . . . after learning all these facts, would you suppose Mr. Smith so far lacking in common sense and good judgment as to give himself completely away in the Book of Mormon itself, by making the *old prophet Mormon* a party

to the fraud? This is precisely what he does by inserting after page 141 [142 of 1992 printing] two pages, entitled the "Words of Mormon," at the precise point in the translation where he had arrived when Martin Harris carried away those one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript! Hear what Mormon says:

"And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for *after* I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi . . . *I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates*, which contains this small account of the prophets . . . And the *things which are upon these plates pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ . . . wherefore I choose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi . . .*"

"But behold, *I shall take these plates, which contain these prophesyings and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my record. . . .* And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus *it whispereth me, according to the workings of the spirit of the Lord which is in me. . . .* And now, I, Mormon proceed to finish out my record, which I take from the plates of Nephi . . ."

From all this we learn that Mormon himself, a prophet of the Lord, and led all the time and inspired by the spirit of God, helped too, by an angel from heaven, makes the same mistake that Joseph Smith made. He wearily plods on with his engraving tool through the larger set of Nephi's plates, abridging them until he reaches the period of King Benjamin's reign, when he discovers, what he had not before known, the existence of other and briefer plates of Nephi, more religious in their character, and notably fuller in their statement of Christian doctrine and prophecies relating to Christ. . . . But very strangely, from this point forward down to his own time *there are no double sets of plates to select from. . . .* Singular, isn't it, reader, that this old prophet, fifteen hundred years ago should happen to discover these other plates of Nephi, and thus change the entire *first part* of his book, *at the precise spot in King Benjamin's history where Martin Harris stole the 116 pages of manuscript?* And quite as singular is another fact, that from the beginning of the Book of Mormon, in a large number of places, these two sets of plates are carefully distinguished from each other, and very much said about them up to the very same period, the point in the history of King Benjamin where Mr. Harris stole those 116 pages,

and from that point onward *nothing more is said of a double set of plates*, so that Nephi himself, his brother Jacob, and all the writers down to King Benjamin were, as it were, preparing the way for this same great change made necessary by Mr. [Mrs.?] Harris' theft! But although these double sets of plates are so often mentioned in part first of the Book of Mormon, and the specific character of each clearly stated, yet strangely enough the prophet Mormon did not know of the existence of the one set containing "the more part of the ministry" until he happened to reach that same dangerous point in the history of his nation where Martin Harris' 116 pages ended! . . . had it not been for the fortunate theft . . . the whole religious world of to-day would have had palmed upon them, as *part first* of the Book of Mormon, a very inferior article, losing much of the flavor and sweetness of the gospel, and the most precious prophecies of Christ that the book now, fortunately, contains. Truly Mormon's ways are mysterious, and so are Joseph Smith's! (*The Golden Bible*, 1887, pages 118-126)

Although M. T. Lamb's book on Mormonism is somewhat sarcastic, he certainly made some good observations with regard to the serious problems Joseph Smith faced after the book of Lehi was stolen and the strange maneuvers Smith used in an attempt to solve these problems.

Although five Mormon apologists (Craig Ray, John Tvedtnes, L. Ara Norwood, Matthew Roper and Tom Nibley) have devoted over ninety pages to the material found in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, they have not been successful in overthrowing our work. Moreover, as we will show, some major errors appear in the reviews.

In their rebuttals these Mormon scholars have many unfavorable things to say about our work. We will deal with some of their accusations below. As noted above, in another book we are working on we will answer a number of charges made by Mormon critics.

### **"All is Lost! All is Lost!"**

In *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, we have carefully laid out our theory concerning the "black hole":

In 1828, Joseph Smith's enemies fired a shot from ambush at his translation of *The Book of Mormon*. As Smith looked at the gaping hole left after losing 400 years of Book of Mormon history in the document he had struggled so hard to protect, he seemed to sense that the wound could be fatal. His mother, Lucy Smith, revealed the anguish which flooded Joseph Smith's mind when he grasped the devastating implications of what had happened:

Martin Harris, having written some one hundred and sixteen pages for Joseph, asked permission of my son to carry the manuscript home with him, in order to let his wife read it . . .

Joseph . . . inquired of the Lord to know if he might do as Martin Harris had requested, but was refused. . . . Joseph inquired again, but received a second refusal. Still, Martin Harris persisted as before, and Joseph applied again, but the last answer was not like the two former ones. In this the Lord permitted Martin Harris to take the manuscript home with him . . . Mr. Harris had been absent nearly three weeks, and Joseph had received no intelligence whatever from him . . . we saw him [Harris] walking with a slow and measured tread towards the house . . . Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out, in a tone of deep anguish, "Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!"

Joseph . . . sprang from the table, exclaiming, "Martin, have you lost that manuscript?" . . .

"Yes, it is gone," replied Martin, "and I know not where."

"Oh, my God!" said Joseph, clinching his hands. "All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned . . ." He wept and groaned, and walked the floor continually . . . what could I say to comfort him, when he saw all the family in the same situation of mind as himself; for sobs and groans, and the most bitter lamentations filled the house. However, Joseph was more distressed than the rest . . . he continued, pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset . . .

The manuscript has never been found; and there is no doubt that Mrs. Harris took it from the drawer . . . (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 1853, pp. 117, 118, 120-123)

Joseph Smith's words, "All is lost! all is lost!" show the gravity of the predicament he found himself in. He realized that since he had not retained a copy of the 116 pages, he could not reproduce



exactly the same material as the first part of the Book of Mormon. It would, therefore, be a book without a beginning! A Mormon critic, M. T. Lamb, succinctly pointed out the dilemma facing Joseph Smith:

The general belief was that she [Mrs. Harris] burned it [i. e., the manuscript]. But the prophet Joseph evidently was afraid she had not, but had secretly hid it, for the purpose of entrapping him, should he ever attempt to reproduce the pages. If the work was really of God, the manuscript could be reproduced word for word without a mistake. If, however, Joseph inspired it himself, his memory would hardly be adequate to such a task, without numberless changes or verbal differences—and thus “give himself away,” since he loudly professed to be all the time aided “by the gift and power of God. (*The Golden Bible*, page 119)

In a preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith referred to the 116 missing pages as being from “the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon . . .” Lehi was supposed to be an ancient Jewish prophet who brought his family to the New World about 600 B. C. In any case, the theft of the 116 pages brought the translation of the Book of Mormon to a grinding halt. Joseph Smith claimed that “both the plates [i. e., the gold plates on which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been written] and the Urim and Thummim [a sacred device used to translate the plates] were taken” from him. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, p. 23) Later, however, the plates were restored and he received a revelation purporting to be from Jesus Christ. The Lord told him not to retranslate the missing pages because his enemies had altered them:

Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings . . . into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. . . . you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened. . . .

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to *alter the words* which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated . . .

Behold, I say unto you, that you *shall not translate again* those words which have gone forth out of your hands;

For, behold, they shall not accomplish their evil designs in lying against those words. For,

behold, *if you should bring forth the same words* they will say that you have lied and that you have pretended to translate, but that you have contradicted yourself.

And, behold, they will publish this, and Satan will harden the hearts of the people to stir them up to anger against you, that they will not believe my words. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 10: 1, 2, 10, 30-32)

Joseph Smith was informed that almost 600 years before the birth of Christ, the Lord had anticipated this very problem. He had even inspired the ancient prophet Nephi, who was Lehi’s son, to make another set of plates which covered exactly the same period as the missing “Book of Lehi.” The Book of Mormon, in fact, claims that Nephi made two sets of plates. In “A Brief Explanation,” printed in the front of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, we read: “1. *The Plates of Nephi*, which were of two kinds: the Small Plates and the Large Plates. The former were more particularly devoted to the spiritual matters and the ministry and teachings of the prophets, while the latter were occupied mostly by a secular history of the peoples concerned. . . .”

Mormon writers now maintain that the “Book of Lehi” came from the “Large Plates” of Nephi. We feel, however, that originally Joseph Smith claimed that he was translating from still another set of plates called “the plates of Lehi.” Moreover, we believe that the idea of a smaller set of plates may have evolved just before the Book of Mormon went to press. We will discuss these matters later in this book.

In any case, the Lord told Joseph Smith that he could translate the small plates of Nephi and the material which came from them would take the place of what had been derived from the larger plates—i. e., the missing 116 pages. The Book of Mormon would no longer be a book without a beginning. In addition, it was made clear to Smith that the small plates of Nephi dealt more with spiritual matters than the missing pages. Consequently, the loss of the 116 pages is actually set forth by the Mormon Church leaders as a victory for the Lord because the Book of Mormon would be more spiritual than it would have been if the pages had not been stolen!

Mormon critics, on the other hand, do not accept this explanation. They point out that if Satan

actually did cause Joseph Smith's enemies to alter the words, these wicked people would have had to produce the original pages to prove that Joseph Smith could not produce an accurate duplicate of the original. It would be almost impossible to alter the manuscript without detection. The Mormons could have taken the case to court and easily won a significant victory. Critics feel that the simple truth is that Joseph Smith could not reproduce an exact copy of what he had previously written. Therefore, he was forced to come up with the elaborate story about the Lord providing a second set of plates covering exactly the same period to fill in the missing portion of the Book of Mormon. . . .

We have always believed that there was something strange about this portion of the Book of Mormon, but we were not preparing to scrutinize it in more detail than the rest of the book. Recently, however, we heard of the church's new computer program [*The Computerized Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*]. . . .

We felt that this program would help us in studying the questions of plagiarism and authorship with regard to the Book of Mormon. We had the program installed on our computer and began to obtain some remarkable results. It was during this period of intense research in the Book of Mormon that we began to question why the accounts of the wars in the latter portion of the book were given in such great detail, whereas the material replacing the lost 116 pages was so surprisingly sparse in details.

This question aroused our curiosity and we began to look at names, dates, cities, lands, directions, kings, etc. In all of these areas we found an abundance of material in the later books, but scarcely anything in material coming from the "small plates of Nephi." This discovery eventually led to the formulation of our theory that there is a black hole in the Book of Mormon:

**1**— The first portion of the Book of Mormon as it was originally written—i. e., the missing 116 pages—contained a great deal of information concerning history, wars, kings, names, dates and other matters which no longer appears in that part of the Book of Mormon—i. e., the books that cover the same period. This can be inferred from Nephi's own description of the contents of the larger plates:

Upon the other plates [the plates from which Mormons claim the missing 116 pages were translated] should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people . . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 9:4)

. . . wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those plates . . . I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. (1 Nephi, 19:1 and 4)

For I, Nephi . . . had spoken many things . . . and also my father . . . many of which sayings are written upon mine other plates; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates. (2 Nephi 4:14)

And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates. (2 Nephi 5:33)

**2**— From the references cited above it seems very likely that the 116 missing pages contained many names of people, cities and lands. It probably had the names of many kings and the years in which they reigned. Since it was concerned with wars, it would undoubtedly mention the names of the prominent leaders who took part in important battles and when they occurred. The location of these battles would likely appear in the record. This would be entirely consistent with the latter portion of the Book of Mormon.

**3**— Since the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon were lost and Joseph Smith did not have another copy, it would be almost impossible for him to reconstruct all the details he had previously written concerning the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. He would undoubtedly make many mistakes with regard to names, cities, lands, kings, military leaders and battles. While the idea of having a second set of plates from which to translate released him from having to come up with the exact wording he had previously used, it did not free him from the possibility of making mistakes with regard to names, dates, locations and other matters.

**4**— Because the first part of the Book of Mormon as it was originally written was supposed to contain "a full account of the history" of Nephi's

people (1 Nephi 9:2), what Joseph Smith dictated to replace the missing pages *had to be as vague as possible*. To avoid contradicting the 116 pages if they should come to light, the *new pages must be very indefinite with regard to details*. While these pages would have to cover the same period as the original pages and give some appearance of being history, they would actually have to be very obscure when it came to particulars which Joseph Smith could not clearly remember. Many important things, therefore, which had evaporated from Joseph Smith's memory would also have to vanish into a rayless and indefinable "black hole" in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith apparently thought that some people might become suspicious that he was trying to sidestep the problem which confronted him. In an attempt to offset any criticism that he was evading the real history of the Nephites and Lamanites, Joseph Smith had Jacob, the second author who wrote upon the "small plates" of Nephi, explain that Nephi had told him that he should "write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi. . . . he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates . . . if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates, and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ's sake . . ." (Jacob 1:2-4) In 1 Nephi 9:3, Nephi explains that he received "a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people."

The more material that Nephi and the other writers put in the plates concerning "preaching," "revelation" and "prophesying," the less history of the Nephites and Lamanites would be needed.

5 — Our theory presupposes that it would be rather easy for Joseph Smith to have remembered the major details of the first part of the 116 missing pages. This portion relates to Lehi and his family leaving Jerusalem and coming to the New World. The names of the main characters would probably be indelibly written upon his memory. As he progressed with the story, however, the names

and details would become increasingly difficult to remember. There seems to be some evidence of the black hole beginning in the early chapters of the small plates of Nephi, but when Lehi and his children reach the New World (1 Nephi 18:23), the record becomes far more nebulous. The evidence for the black hole seems extremely strong from this chapter onward and continues until the book of Omni, verse 12—the last book contained in the small plates of Nephi. The black hole, therefore, extends to page 141 of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon and obscures over four hundred years of the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites! (*Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 9, 10, 12-14)

While this theory of a "black hole" is hard for some people to grasp, the critics who have written against our work seem to have a good understanding of what we are trying to say. Matthew Roper gives an excellent summary of our theory:

In their recent book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, Jerald and Sandra Tanner have presented perhaps the most extensive list of alleged plagiarisms ever assembled by hostile critics of the Book of Mormon.

"In the light of computer research and the advances that are being made in this field," the authors solemnly assure us, "the future of the Book of Mormon looks very dim indeed." . . .

The Tanners suggest that Martin Harris's loss of the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon left a serious void in Joseph Smith's work, which they call the "black hole." Having lost so much, Joseph feared that if he attempted to rewrite this portion of the manuscript he would be unable to remember all the details of the lost narrative. Therefore, to avoid being detected as a forger and a deceiver, Joseph was deliberately vague concerning matters of history in the small plates (pages 12-14). This is why, according to the authors, the section 1 Nephi through Omni contains so few details concerning wars, names of kings, cities, women, etc. (pages 14-23). To replace what had been lost, Joseph plagiarized from the Bible with the hope that he would not be detected. Today, using the computerized scriptures of the Latter-day Saint Church itself, it is possible, the authors say, to detect where Joseph Smith plagiarized the Bible. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, pages 170-171)

While those who have reviewed our work on the “black hole” understand the theory, it is obvious that they do not accept our conclusions. They have, in fact, taken a very strong stand against the theory. As we have shown, Craig Ray stated that the “black hole” only “exists in the minds of the TANNER’S[.]” The other apologists who have written concerning the matter seem to agree with Mr. Ray’s assessment.

### Light vs. Darkness?

Instead of just dealing with the issues, Mormon critics have spent part of their energy trying to impugn our motives and belittle our research. L. Ara Norwood, for example, compared us to Ananias and Sapphira, a couple who “fell down” and died after lying “to the Holy Ghost”:

There is to be an opposition in all things. In mortality, there will always be *darkness* to condemn light, *falsehood* to challenge truth, and *the proud to point the finger of scorn* at the Saints . . .

Thus, it should not come as any surprise when individuals seek every means of sophistry to discredit the truth. One of the more recent attempts to cast a dull shadow of doubt on the Book of Mormon is the publication under review here. The husband-and-wife team of Jerald and Sandra Tanner has added yet another title to their anti-Mormon arsenal. Yet, *like Ananias and Sapphira of old* (see Acts 5), they have *withheld much*—in this case, much evidence—which ultimately weakens their hypothesis. Yet we have come to expect this from the Tanners . . . Although they have tried in recent years to gain acceptance as serious students of Mormon history and doctrine, they remain to Mormon literature what the tabloids are to journalism. . . .

The Tanners follow a rather predictable and flawed pattern in their analysis. . . .

This is not a work of serious scholarship. On the surface, the Black Hole theory is interesting, yet the deeper one digs into the underlying assumptions and premises of the argument, as well as the specific evidence presented, the harder it becomes to take their conclusion seriously. . . . I am reminded of a rather poignant couplet:

Two men looked through prison bars  
One saw mud, the other saw stars. . . .

That this couplet applies here should be apparent. . . . One sees nothing but filth and

dirt and darkness, but the other peers through the darkness and sees the beauty of light—stars shimmering in the distance. . . . *While the Tanners often see mud . . . the spiritually discerning and intellectually thoughtful soul sees a second witness of the majesty of the Messiah. . . .* I boldly claim that the Book of Mormon is the greatest and most important book currently on the face of the earth. . . . its witness of the supremacy of Christ is unsurpassed. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 158, 160, 168-69)

In his review of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, Matthew Roper referred to the “superficial nature of the Tanners’ work” (page 183). On pages 186-187, Mr. Roper commented:

One has to wonder if the authors are deliberately suppressing such information. The authors would give their readers the impression that they have at last come up with “absolutely devastating” evidence against the Book of Mormon’s authenticity, yet most of the criticisms which they raise are merely rehashes or expansions on familiar criticisms of previous anti-Mormon polemicists. . . . Although their latest work presents an interesting theory, that theory ignores or fails to account for most of the complexities found in the Book of Mormon. The last decade alone has seen a virtual avalanche of information which tends to support the view that the Book of Mormon is not only ancient, but remarkably complex in ways we had not thought of before. Until the authors are willing to deal seriously with such information, honestly and objectively, their “black hole” arguments will amount to little more than an *insignificant perturbation* on the continuum of warped anti-Mormon space and time.

Mormon scholar John A. Tvedtnes commented as follows:

The Tanners are thorough in their research, but frequently wrong in their interpretations of what they have discovered. Thus, the Latter-day Saint scholar, while finding the book interesting, is hard-pressed to take it seriously. On the other hand, those with only a cursory acquaintance with the Book of Mormon may easily believe that the Tanners have, as they claim, amassed a fantastic array of evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 188-189)

The “black hole” theory offered by the Tanners, while intriguing, is unconvincing in the light of serious scrutiny. One cannot accuse them of not trying, however. They have put a lot of effort into this work. I am particularly impressed by the fact that they have turned to the use of the computerized scripture search program. I recommend it to all serious students of the scriptures . . . (*Ibid.*, page 230)

Although these scholars have charged that our work is riddled with errors, that we have covered up important material and have resorted to dishonesty to make our case, we do not wish to repay in kind. While we do not want to question their motives or charge them with deliberate deceit, we feel that we should point out some very serious errors in their work.

John Tvedtnes wrote about 60% of the material criticizing our work on the “black hole” that appears in the first F.A.R.M.S. publication which was printed in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991. (Matthew Roper was responsible for about 24% and L. Ara Norwood wrote approximately 17%.) Unfortunately, Mr. Tvedtnes has failed to understand a number of important points which we presented in our book. Consequently, he has come to some erroneous conclusions and even reproved us on the basis of his own mistakes! For example, he maintains that we have “obviously misunderstood the construction of the Book of Mormon.” The idea that we have misunderstood how the Book of Mormon was created actually comes from Mr. Tvedtnes’ own failure to understand the arguments we have presented.

In *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, page 38, we wrote:

**Problem No. 1.** The first problem we see in Joseph Smith’s story relates to the plates from which he ‘translated’ the 116 pages that were later stolen. In the Preface which appears in the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith made it very plain that what was stolen was from the “plates of Lehi.” (As we have pointed out, the Preface was completely removed from later editions.) Because Section 10 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* (verse 44) seems to suggest that what was stolen was from “an abridgment of the account of Nephi,” Mormon writers have argued that Lehi did not actually write anything on the plates; all the writing was done by his sons, Nephi,

Jacob, and those who followed after them: “Aside from employing his name honorifically, this work apparently was not written in any part by Lehi . . .” (S. Kent Brown, *Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1984, p. 21, n. 10). While S. Kent Brown evidently feels that his explanation solves the whole matter, we find it very difficult to brush aside Joseph Smith’s own words in the Preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. He not only speaks of the ‘Book of Lehi’ but also of the “plates of Lehi”: “. . . I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon; which said account, some person or persons have stolen . . .”

From all the evidence, it would appear that Joseph Smith first conceived of the Book of Mormon as an abridgment by Mormon of a set of plates prepared by Lehi. Lehi himself had recorded his history on these plates and his descendants apparently did the same until the plates had passed down into the hands of Mormon. Although the Preface which contained Joseph Smith’s statement concerning the plates of Lehi was removed from the Book of Mormon, the text of that work still bears witness to the fact that Lehi had written a record. In 1 Nephi 6:1, we read of “the record which has been kept by my father . . .”

Since Joseph Smith could not accurately reproduce the material which he claimed Mormon had abridged from Lehi’s plates, he found it necessary to have Lehi’s son, Nephi, create an entirely different set of plates known as the “plates of Nephi.” These plates also passed down to Mormon who abridged them in the same way he did the ‘plates of Lehi.

For some reason John Tvedtnes misconstrued our argument and concluded that we believed that the plates which Mormon abridged (comprising over 300 pages of the 1989 edition of the Book of Mormon) were written by Lehi! This, of course, is an erroneous conclusion. On page 47 of our book, we clearly stated that the idea of Mormon abridging the plates of Lehi “was aborted when the 116 pages of the manuscript were stolen.” We noted at the bottom of the same page that “Smith’s final solution to the problem” was “PLAN E.” In explaining this plan we show that “MORMON’S ABRIDGMENT” was made from the “LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI.” Unfortunately, John

Tvedtnes is convinced that we believe that Joseph Smith did not invent the idea of the “Large Plates of Nephi” until he had finished translating “Ether (or Moroni)”—books which appear at the very end of the Book of Mormon. This mistaken belief led Mr. Tvedtnes to write the following paragraph:

5. That Joseph Smith did not, as the Tanners believe, invent the “plates of Nephi” after completing his work through Ether (or Moroni) is evidenced by the fact that the plates of Nephi are mentioned as early as Mosiah 1:6, 16; 28:11. In Alma 37:2; 44:24, we read that Alma kept a record on the plates of Nephi passed down to him. At a point long before Joseph Smith dictated the small plates, by best evidence, Mormon noted that he had taken his record from the plates of Nephi (3 Nephi 5:10). Some of the wording implies that he was abridging from those plates . . . Indeed, Mormon made both a complete account of the events of his days on the plates of Nephi and then abridged his own account for “these plates” (Mormon 2:18), meaning his abridgment. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, 1991, page 206)

John Tvedtnes has made a great defense against the argument that the plates of Lehi are not mentioned in what was published as the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately, however, he has knocked down a straw man because we never set forth such a concept! In fact, if he had examined our book closely, he would have discovered that we reported that the plates of Nephi were mentioned at the very beginning of the book of Mosiah. We even presented some of the same references Tvedtnes gave in his attempt to refute us:

The “plates of Nephi” are often mentioned . . . King Benjamin gave his son Mosiah “the records which were engraven on the plates of brass . . . and also the plates of Nephi . . .” (Mosiah 1:6) . . . Mosiah 28:11 speaks . . . of king Mosiah having . . . the “plates of Nephi”. . . Alma in turn gave the plates to his son, Helaman. . . (see Alma, Chapter 37). (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 42-43)

It is possible that John Tvedtnes has mistaken statements we made concerning the “small plates” of Nephi with the “large plates” of Nephi. We did state that we could find absolutely nothing about

these plates in the translation of “the so-called large plates plus the books of Mormon, Ether and Moroni . . . we searched with the computer for the words *record, records, plate* and *plates*. This research also produced no results” (*Ibid.*, page 42). Mr. Tvedtnes’ own work actually verifies that our research was correct in this respect:

The fact is that *the small plates were not mentioned* after Benjamin’s time because no more was written on them. Mormon *didn’t know of their existence* because the larger plates *perhaps didn’t mention the smaller ones* or, as I suggested above, mentioned them only in connection with their receipt by King Benjamin. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 208)

We feel that these small plates were not mentioned because they did not exist in Joseph Smith’s thinking until after he had dictated Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi (see *Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 41-43). Those who have carefully read our book know that we believe that the small plates of Nephi (which replaced the 116 missing pages) were not “translated” until after Joseph Smith finished the abridgment written by Mormon. As stated above, the first part of the Book of Mormon was actually written last. The fact that Mr. Tvedtnes could not find the small plates mentioned anywhere in Mormon’s abridgment strengthens our position that Joseph Smith did not think up the idea of a small set of plates until after he had completed the abridgment of the large plates of Nephi.

John Tvedtnes made another serious error on page 207 of his article. For some reason he became confused and reached the fallacious conclusion that we felt Joseph Smith was “translating” Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi when he began to replace the material that was stolen from Martin Harris. While it is true that we suggested that one of the ideas Joseph Smith came up with to replace the missing material was that he would translate from Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 38-41), we felt that Smith had aborted this plan before he actually began translating the first portion of the Book of Mormon. Since Mr. Tvedtnes did not really understand our position, he made the following charges against our work:

1. The Tanners contend (p. 42) that the small plates started out as a supposed abridgment of Nephi's plates by Mormon and that it was only in 1 Nephi 9 that Joseph Smith switched to his "small plates" story. However, since *Nephi wrote in first person from the beginning of his work* (Nephi 1:1), with *no hint that it was an abridgment by Mormon*, the most logical conclusion is that it was intended from the beginning to represent *firsthand accounts*. . . .

3. The theory further fails when, as we have seen above, we realize that it is the major portion of the Book of Mormon (Mosiah through Mormon) which claims to be an abridgment from the plates of Nephi! The Tanners have obviously misunderstood the construction of the Book of Mormon. . . .

The Tanners' suggestion . . . that the beginning of 1 Nephi should have mentioned the second set of plates on which the record was being written is ludicrous. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 207-209)

While Mr. Tvedtnes asserts that "The Tanners have obviously misunderstood the construction of the Book of Mormon," it is clear that he himself is the one who has "misunderstood" the situation. His argument against us is based on his own failure to understand the information we have set forth. While we must admit that the material concerning the plates which we have presented is rather complicated and that Mr. Tvedtnes has undoubtedly made some honest mistakes, we still feel that we should not allow his charges to be circulated without an answer.

The reader will notice from the quotation above that John Tvedtnes referred the reader to "p. 42" of our book to verify his claim that we believe that "the small plates started out as a supposed abridgment of Nephi's plates by Mormon." If we turn to page 42, however, we find nothing about an abridgment of Nephi's plates by Mormon. We do, however, find information concerning Mormon's abridgment of the "plates of Lehi" mentioned twice on this page. While there is no mention of Mormon's abridgment of the plates of Nephi, there is material on that page which plainly shows that we were referring to the large plates of Nephi, not an abridgment of those plates:

It appears that he [Joseph Smith] originally envisioned an account which would contain secular as well as religious history. This is, in fact, what we have until we reach the ninth chapter [of 1st Nephi], and then the book deteriorates

rapidly as far as history is concerned. It seems likely that Joseph Smith had in mind only one set of plates written by Nephi until he reached the ninth chapter. This set of plates was undoubtedly what we would now call the large plates of Nephi . . . if our theory is correct, the first eight chapters would be from what we now call the "large plates of Nephi." Joseph Smith, of course, would not have used that term because at that time he only imagined one set of plates created by Nephi. By the time he reached the 2nd verse of chapter 9, however, he seems to have envisioned the smaller set of plates which would solve all his problems. (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 42)

On pages 43-44 of our book, we went on to point out that after Joseph Smith aborted the idea of working from Mormon's abridgment of Nephi to recreate the first part of the Book of Mormon, he apparently decided that "he would go directly to the large plates of Nephi . . . Smith would directly translate from the 'first part of the engravings of Nephi' found on these plates." This plan, of course, was also scrapped when Joseph Smith came up with the idea of having another set of plates called the small plates of Nephi.

It is obvious, then, that John Tvedtnes' claim that we have "misunderstood the construction of the Book of Mormon" cannot be substantiated. In his zeal to belittle our work, he has failed to grasp what we are really saying.

In our book we presented the following information concerning a problem relating to Nephi's small plates:

The little book, *Words of Mormon*, contains still another problem which relates to the small plates. While Mormon acknowledged that there was a "small account" written on plates, his statement concerning these plates would lead a person to believe that they were not written by the prophet Nephi. The reader will remember that Mormon was the one who discovered the small plates, read them and was very pleased with what they contained. Nevertheless, a comparison of his statement with our present Book of Mormon seems to indicate that he either gave an inaccurate description of these plates or else read from a different set of plates: ". . . I found these plates, which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the

reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi.”

The reader will notice that Mormon completely overlooked Nephi in the first part of his description claiming that the record was an account of “the prophets, from Jacob down to this king Benjamin,” and then he tacked on the end of the verse that these plates also contain “many of the words of Nephi.” This, of course, gives the impression that while some of the words of Nephi are included, the plates were actually authored by Jacob and his successors. An examination of the material from the small plates, however, reveals that Nephi wrote 55 chapters, whereas Jacob only wrote 7! In order to accurately describe the small plates, Mormon should have written that they contained “an account of the prophets, from Nephi down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Jacob.” The fact that Mormon’s description is exactly the opposite raises another interesting question: Is it possible that Joseph Smith at one time planned to have Jacob and his descendants author the major portion of the small plates and only quote some of the words of his brother Nephi?

In any case, it is interesting to note that in one place in his own book, Jacob himself referred to the small plates of Nephi which he was writing on as the plates of Jacob: “These plates are called the plates of Jacob, and they were made by the hand of Nephi.” These plates, however, are never referred to by that name by any other writer in the Book of Mormon. While this may only be a slip of the tongue, it fits well with Mormon’s statement about the plates he read. It is even possible that this statement may have come from a section of material which was prepared by Joseph Smith before he decided to make Nephi the main character in the book.

One place that we should expect to find the small plates identified by the name “plates of Nephi” is the book, Words of Mormon. An examination, however, reveals that although the words “the plates of Nephi” are used three times in that book (verses 3, 5, 9), in every case they refer to the large plates! While the heading to the Words of Mormon does refer to the small “plates of Nephi,” it is not found in the original printer’s manuscript, the first edition of the Book of Mormon nor even the 1874 edition.

The fact that Mormon does not at any place identify the small plates as being the “plates of Nephi” is certainly interesting. When this

is combined with Mormon’s statement that the “small account” he read was concerning “the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin,” it certainly makes one wonder if the left hand knew what the right hand was doing. (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 44)

In trying to explain away this problem, John Tvedtnes wrote the following:

It is one of several examples of how the Tanners try to support multiple and conflicting theories. It is much more logical to assume that Mormon *singled out Jacob because most of the writings on the small plates were by his descendants* and because the plates were passed down in that line. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 210)

If Mr. Tvedtnes had carefully read the material quoted above from our book, he would have seen that there is no way that “most of the writings on the small plates” could have been written by the “descendants” of Jacob. We stated that “Nephi wrote 55 chapters . . . Jacob only wrote 7!” This leaves only three chapters that could have been written by Jacob’s descendants! In other words, of the 65 chapters which came from the small plates, only 3 were written by Jacob’s descendants (see the 1989 printing of the Book of Mormon, pages 136-143).

On pages 37-38 of our book, we discuss a problem with regard to a revelation given by Joseph Smith which is printed in the church’s *Doctrine and Covenants*:

The first is the revelation in which God informed Joseph Smith that his enemies had altered the lost 116 pages of the manuscript he had dictated to Martin Harris. As we have noted, this revelation is published as Section 10 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. While this document seems to bear internal evidence of having been written at an early date, if the handwritten manuscript of it is still in existence, it apparently has not been made available to scholars. As far as we know, it was first printed in the *Book of Commandments* in 1833. To those who are familiar with the way that Joseph Smith changed his revelations (see photographic proof in our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 14-31D), the fact that it was not published until three years after the Book of Mormon appeared raises the question of whether we have the original text in the first printed version.



The Mormon Church itself has published different dates as to when this revelation was given. The introduction to the revelation given in the *Book of Commandments*, states that it was given “May, 1829” (see page 22). In the 1989 printing of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, however, the reader is informed that it was “given to Joseph Smith the Prophet . . . in the summer of 1828” (Introduction to Section 10). Mormon scholar Max Parkin tried very hard to resolve the problem concerning the date when this revelation was given. He found possible evidence for both the 1828 and 1829 dates and finally suggested another possibility: “Besides these two approaches to the dating of Section 10, another configuration of evidence may resolve some of the difficulties inherent in the previous discussion by assigning two dates to the revelation. . . . Certain claims pertaining to Section 10 made in favor of each date seem valid, for possibly Joseph received part of the revelation in 1828 and part in 1829, and then wrote all or part of the section for the first time in 1829” (*Seventh Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, pages 80 and 83).

The idea of two different dates does not give one a great deal of confidence in Joseph Smith’s methods. Moreover, Max Parkin noted on page 80 of the same article that when Smith had the revelation reprinted in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, “He changed over 140 words in the revelation to read differently from its printing in the *Book of Commandments*.”

The fact that Joseph Smith freely altered the revelation after it was printed, raises a question as to whether changes were made before he first published it in the *Book of Commandments*. Because of Smith’s lack of concern regarding accuracy, it is hard to have full confidence in the first printing. (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 37-38)

In a footnote on page 210 of his article, John Tvedtnes wrote the following:

After pointing out that the Book of Commandments dates the revelation to May 1829, while the 1989 edition of the *Doctrine & Covenants* dates it to the summer of 1828, the Tanners remark that “the idea of two different dates does not give a great deal of confidence in Joseph Smith’s methods.” What they fail to tell the reader is that the first edition (1835) of the *Doctrine & Covenants*, prepared under Joseph’s

direction, also gives the date of May 1829. The change was made by later editors, not by Joseph Smith. But the Tanners are so convinced that Joseph Smith was a charlatan that they overlook such facts when they blurt out accusations against the Mormon founder.

Unfortunately, Mr. Tvedtnes has again misunderstood our position. In the statement he cited from our book, we were not referring to the fact the church has printed two different dates regarding when the revelation was given. Instead, we were speaking of Max Parkin’s theory that portions of the revelation were given on two different occasions —i. e., that Joseph Smith combined elements of two revelations given in different years into one revelation. The reader will notice that our statement follows directly after Max Parkin’s comment:

. . . another configuration of evidence may resolve some of the difficulties inherent in the previous discussion by assigning two dates to the revelation. . . . Certain claims pertaining to Section 10 made in favor of each date seem valid, for possibly Joseph received part of the revelation in 1828 and part in 1829, and then wrote all or part of the section for the first time in 1829. (*Seventh Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, pages 80 and 83)

The idea of two different dates does not give one a great deal of confidence in Joseph Smith’s methods.

While we are a little concerned over the fact that church publications give a different year for the revelation, it is much more disturbing to think that Joseph Smith may have “received part of the revelation in 1828 and part in 1829” and then combined the two portions to make one revelation. This same sort of method seems to have been used in Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy. In the *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1-2, we are given the impression that on July 12, 1843, Joseph Smith was inquiring of the Lord for the first time concerning the practice of plural marriage:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their

having many wives and concubines—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

While this statement leads one to believe that Joseph Smith had never asked God concerning this matter before, verse 52 of the revelation makes it plain that Smith was already engaged in the practice of polygamy at the time: “And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith [Joseph’s first wife], receive *all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph*, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God.”

The evidence clearly shows that Joseph Smith was practicing polygamy for years before he dictated his revelation concerning the matter (see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality*, pages 202-212). Some people have tried to excuse this by saying that the date on the revelation was only the date the revelation was written down and not the date the revelation was actually given, but anyone who honestly examines this argument must admit that it does not make any difference when the revelation was given. Whether it was given in 1843 or years before is not the point. Regardless of the date it was received, verse 52 plainly states that Joseph had *already* entered into the practice of polygamy! A person who really believes that Joseph Smith had revelations from God is forced to the conclusion that Smith must have combined two revelations to create Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Otherwise, one must believe that Joseph Smith took plural wives *before* consulting with the Lord.

We feel that the mixing of material from two separate revelations without any statement informing the reader that this has been done is a misleading way to handle what Mormons believe is the “word of God.” It is this practice and the changes, additions and deletions that Joseph Smith made in his revelations that really bothers us. We have already noted that Mormon scholar Max Parkin has acknowledged that Joseph Smith “changed over 140 words in the revelation [dealing with the plates of Nephi] to read differently from its printing in the Book of Commandments.” This, of course, only refers to changes made after 1833 and raises the question of what changes might have been made before that date.

We are inclined to agree with Max Parkin’s idea that Section 10 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* may

be a combination of two revelations—one given in 1828 and the other in 1829. We also suspect that other important changes were made before the revelation was first published. John Tvedtnes, however, would have his readers believe that we are firmly committed to a date of 1829: “The Tanners believe (p. 35) that the real date was May 1829 . . .” (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, p. 210). We have closely examined page 35 of our book—the page Mr. Tvedtnes uses to prove that we hold to a date of “May 1829”—and are unable to find anything to support his claim. Instead of dealing with our view regarding the dating of Section 10, this page relates to the use of the words *therefore* and *wherefore* in the Book of Mormon and in the *Doctrine and Covenants*!

In any case, as we have indicated above, our real objection to Section 10 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* relates to the fact that it appears to be a composite of two revelations. Unfortunately, Mr. Tvedtnes has accused us of “overlooking” certain “facts” and of “blurt[ing] out accusations against the Mormon founder.” The evidence, however, shows that he has not really understood our argument and has made an accusation against us which is not supported by the facts.

On page 205 of his review, John Tvedtnes tries to discredit our argument that the small plates of Nephi should have been mentioned on the title page of the Book of Mormon. He states: “The Tanners try to support their thesis by noting that none of the authors of the small plates is named in the title page. But the absence of names proves nothing . . . why should it name the authors of the books on the small plates?” Again, Mr. Tvedtnes has put up a straw man. We did not argue that the absence of the names of the authors proved anything. Instead, we noted that our concern arose because the small plates themselves were not mentioned on the title page. We quote the following from our book:

The title page of the Book of Mormon leads us to believe that Joseph Smith also changed his mind concerning which plates he should use to fill in the gap left in the first part of the book which was caused by the theft of the “Book of Lehi.” . . . We take the following from the title page as it was first printed in the 1830 edition (the text in the 1981 edition is almost identical in the portion we are quoting):

THE BOOK OF MORMON: AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MORMON, UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM THE PLATES OF NEPHI. Wherefore it is an abridgment of the Record of the People of Nephi; and also of the Lamanites. . . . to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile [*sic*]; the interpretation thereof by the gift of God; an abridgment taken from the Book of Ether. Also, which is a Record of the People of Jared . . .

While this is a fairly good description of a little over two-thirds of the Book of Mormon, it does not accurately describe the first part of the book. The first part is not “AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MORMON.” If we accept the story given in the book itself, Mormon had nothing to do with the first part of the Book of Mormon. It was written by the hands of Nephi, Jacob and those who followed after them. These writers all lived hundreds of years before Mormon. In addition, it was not written “UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM THE PLATES OF NEPHI.” It was instead the very plates of Nephi, not just a copy made from these plates. Furthermore, it was not “an abridgment of the Record of the People of Nephi.” It was, in fact, supposed to be an unabridged translation directly from the small plates (see 1 Nephi 9:2-5).

A correct description of the contents of the book would be: “THE BOOK OF MORMON: A TRANSLATION OF THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI AND AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MORMON, UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM THE LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI. . . . an abridgment taken from the Book of Ether. Also, which is a Record of the People of Jared . . .”

The fact that the title page of the Book of Mormon gives such a careful description of the “Book of Ether,” a book of less than thirty-two pages, but either incorrectly describes or else entirely omits the small plates of Nephi, comprising over 142 pages, makes one wonder how such a serious mistake could be made in a book purporting to be divinely inspired. Joseph Smith’s failure to mention the “small plates of Nephi” in the title page leads us to believe that the very idea of Nephi himself making two sets of plates is an afterthought. . . .

This suggestion that the title page may represent exactly what Joseph Smith conceived the Book of Mormon to be after the loss of the

116 pages and that the “small plates of Nephi” are a later invention depends to a great extent on the theory that the first part of the book was actually written last. Also, it presupposes that the title page was written before Joseph Smith changed his mind and decided to go with the idea of Nephi creating two sets of plates—a smaller and a larger set. (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 38, 40)

The reader will notice from the material quoted above that when we gave a description of how the title page should read, we did not try to supply any new names. We said that it should read, “THE BOOK OF MORMON: A TRANSLATION OF THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI . . .” We made no issue over the “absence of names,” as John Tvedtnes would lead the reader to believe. The name “Nephi” was already in the title page. What we were concerned about was the fact that the “small plates” of Nephi were never mentioned at all. It seemed inconceivable that these plates, which made up over 140 pages of the Book of Mormon, would not even be referred to on the title page!

### No Real Answers

While the Mormon writers who have reviewed our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, struggled to convince their readers that there is no “black hole,” they have not adequately answered the objections we have raised. Take, for example, the question we raised regarding the shortage of names and other material in the portion of the Book of Mormon which was supposed to have been translated from the “small plates of Nephi.” In our book we wrote the following:

That Joseph Smith seemed to remember a number of the names at the first part of the story becomes obvious as we examine the first book of Nephi. We find the name Nephi in the first verse of chapter one. The name of Nephi’s father, Lehi, appears in verse 5, and his mother’s name, Sariah, is found in 2:5. The names of Nephi’s elder brothers, Laman, Lemuel and Sam, are also found in that verse. In 18:7 we read that Nephi had two younger brothers, Jacob and Joseph. The name of Laban appears in 3:3, and his servant, Zoram, is found in 4:35. A man by the name of Ishmael later joins with Lehi’s family in the wilderness somewhere

outside Jerusalem. It appears, however, that only eleven names are given to Nephites or Lamanites within the first book of Nephi. To our knowledge no new names are given to any of these people in the second book of Nephi! This is especially strange in light of the fact that a number of Old Testament characters are referred to by name. For example, Nephi mentions Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Adam, Eve, Zedekiah, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Joseph. Moreover, he even prophetically speaks of Jesus some 600 years before his birth and claims that he knew “the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John . . .” (1 Nephi 14:27)

Although Nephi could see far into the future and give the names of people who would live in New Testament times, he seemed to have been oblivious to the names of most of the people he lived with. For example, he did not mention the names of his brothers’ children: “. . . my father . . . called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, my sons, and my daughters of my first-born . . . after my father had made an end of speaking . . . he caused the sons and daughters of Lemuel to be brought before him . . . he spake unto them, saying: Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my second son . . .” (2 Nephi 4:3, 8, 9). The children of Ishmael also seemed to have no names: “. . . Laman and Lemuel, and the two sons of Ishmael and their families, did rebel against us; yea, against me, Nephi, and Sam, and their father, Ishmael, and his wife, and his three other daughters” (1 Nephi 7:6). It seems that Nephi was almost struggling to keep from giving names: “. . . one of the daughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael, did plead with my brethren, insomuch that they did soften their hearts . . .” (1 Nephi 7:19).

### *Women Missing?*

Nephi married one of Ishmael’s daughters, but he did not give her name: “. . . I Nephi, took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also, my brethren took of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also Zoram took the eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife” (1 Nephi 16:7). While Nephi never mentions his wife’s name, he uses his own name many times in the first two books of the Book of Mormon. In fact, we find the phrase “I, Nephi” eighty-six times!

In all fairness, however, it should be noted that there may be more than one factor working here. It appears, in fact, that the entire Book of Mormon almost looks like a black hole when we search for specific references with regard to women. While men seem to play the major roles in the Bible, it does refer to many women. Two of its books, Esther and Ruth, are named after women. We also read of “Deborah, a prophetess” who “judged Israel” at one time (Judges 4:4) and “Huldah the prophetess” (Chronicles 34:22).

Those who wrote the books of the Bible certainly felt free to mention women by name and to write concerning their achievements. For instance, we read of “Eve,” the wife of Adam. God himself refers to Abraham’s wife as “Sariah thy wife.” Isaac married “Rebekah,” and Esau “took to wife Judith.” Joseph married “Asenath,” and Moses’ wife was named “Zipporah.” Saul’s “wife was Ahinoam,” and we also read of “Michal David’s wife.” In the New Testament we have “Mary,” “Elizabeth,” and Aquila’s “wife Priscilla.” Many of the stories concerning Jesus deal with women, and on a number of occasions Jesus openly commends them. The Apostle Paul used the names of women in his epistles. For instance, in Romans 16:1 he said: “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.” In the same chapter, he also mentioned Mary, Priscilla, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis and Julia.

In our preliminary research we were only able to find the names of three Nephite, Lamanite or Jaredite women in the Book of Mormon—“Sariah” (1 Nephi 2:5), “Abish” (Alma 19:16) and “the harlot Isabel” (Alma 39:3). The computer revealed that although the word “her” appeared 1,994 times in the Bible, it only appears 79 times in the Book of Mormon. Twenty-six of these references are taken directly from Isaiah, Malachi and Matthew in the Bible. Of the fifty-three which remain, fifteen refer to unnamed queens; seven were used regarding an unnamed daughter of Jared; two relate to Abish; two to an unnamed maid servant; one to Mary, the mother of Jesus; one to Sariah; one to Nephi’s wife; one to the “mother” of “one of the daughters of Ishmael”; one to a widow; one to Zion; one to a goat; one to mercy; one to a sow; one to charity and one to a vessel. *Her* is also used four times to refer to the earth and twice with regard to “the face of the earth.” It is used three times with regard to cities and seven times in relationship to a “hen.” . . .

While Nephi's reluctance to name his wife could be explained by saying the author of the Book of Mormon was not really interested in the things of women, the fact that Nephi does not name any of his own children (see 1 Nephi 18:19), the children of his brothers, nor the children of Ishmael fits well with our idea that the author was trying to suppress names so that he would not contradict the missing 116 pages if they should come forth. Nephi does inform us that Ishmael and his own brothers had male children, but he does not give their names. Those who examine later portions of the Book of Mormon will see that Nephi's silence is inconsistent with the rest of the book. For example, just as we come out of the black hole, we find this reference in Mosiah 1:1: ". . . king Benjamin . . . had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman."

The books included in the small plates of Nephi are named after their respective authors. It is obvious, then, that if Nephi had passed the plates on to one of his sons, the name of that son would have been revealed. Instead of doing this, however, he gave them to his brother Jacob. The third book in the Book of Mormon, therefore, is called the book of Jacob. The first new name to come into the Book of Mormon after Nephi mentioned the original eleven names appears in Jacob's record: ". . . after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem" (Jacob 7:1). Sherem was a wicked man who taught there "should be no Christ." Finally, in the last verse of his book, Jacob informs the reader that he has a son named Enos to whom he gives the plates. The fourth book, therefore, is known as the book of Enos. Enos mentions his own name in his book and tells us that "an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem" (Enos 1:25). He does not, however, add a single new name to the record. Mormon writer J. N. Washburn noted that the book of Enos is "fragmentary in the extreme, a departure in its scarcity of detail from the wealth of information in the preceding books" (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, 1954, page 22). In any case, after 179 years we still have only thirteen names! The next book is called the book of Jarom. In this book, Jarom informs us that he is the son of Enos and his son is Omni. He also states that 238 years had passed away. At this point we still have

only fifteen Nephite and Lamanite names recorded on the plates. Since eleven of these names were revealed within the first decade of Nephite history, this means that only four new names were added in a period of almost 230 years!

At any rate, the only name that Omni adds to the record is that of his son, Amaron. He also noted that 282 years had passed away. Although Amaron does not really have anything to say, he continues the record in his father's book. He adds only one new name—that of his brother Chemish—and notes that 320 years had passed away. Chemish does not add any new names to the record. The next writer, Abinadom, identifies himself and says that he is the "son of Chemish." Abinadom writes two verses but adds no new names to the record.

The final writer to engrave characters on the small plates of Nephi introduces himself as Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. He writes the last nineteen verses in the book of Omni. It seems very obvious from the details that Amaleki gives in this book that Joseph Smith had arrived at or passed by the portion of the manuscript that could be contradicted by anything in the missing 116 pages. In other words, we are on the other side of the black hole. At this point Amaleki boldly introduces many new details. He, in fact, goes so far as to introduce four new names into the story. Anyone who takes the time to examine Amaleki's verses will be able to see how different they are from the rest of the writing which was supposed to have come from the small plates of Nephi. . . .

With regard to names in the small plates, it is interesting to note that Nephi claimed that in the first plates he had made—i. e., the plates which served as a basis for the 116 pages—he had made a "record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers" (1 Nephi 19:2). Since in another place Nephi says that his father "was a descendant of Joseph," it would appear that this record would trace Lehi's genealogy back to Joseph of the Bible. Joseph Smith apparently could not remember the names he had previously given; consequently, none of this material appears in the present Book of Mormon. Nephi excused the fact that the genealogy was missing by stating: "And now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do not write it in this book . . . it sufficeth me to say that we are descendants of Joseph" (1 Nephi 6:1-2). . . .

### *The Missing Kings*

Nephi was supposed to be the first king of the Nephites (see 2 Nephi 5:18). It is very possible that Joseph Smith forgot the name he had given to the second king in the lost 116 pages. When Jacob refers to Nephi's successor, he does not give him any name:

Now Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings. (Jacob 1:9)

This is certainly a strange way to speak of the new king who presumably would be a son or grandson of someone in the original group. It is entirely different from the way the ancient Israelites referred to their kings. They not only had a great deal to say about them, but they proudly gave their names and the names of their fathers. For instance, in 1 Chronicles 29:26 we read: "Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel."

In any case, Jacob went on to say that the people "were desirous to retain in remembrance his [Nephi's] name" (Jacob 1:11). Therefore, "whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, *second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth*, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of *whatever name* they would" (*Ibid.*). In the fifteenth verse of the same chapter, Jacob informed his readers that "the people of Nephi, under the reign of *the second king*, began to grow hard in their hearts . . ." This terse reference to the "second king" is the last reference to any king for hundreds of years. It is only after we come out of the black hole (Omni, verse 12) that we encounter the name of another king: ". . . Mosiah, who was made king . . ." This is the same Mosiah who was also a prophet. After speaking of king Mosiah, Amaleki goes on to mention a "king Benjamin." This seems to be the same king mentioned in the book of Mosiah.

The reader will remember that kings were supposed to be called "second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth . . . let them be of *whatever name* they would," yet when we come out of the black hole, they are called "Mosiah" and "Benjamin." This even puzzled the Mormon writer J. N. Washburn: "Was Mosiah one of these kings? If so, why was he not called Nephi X or Nephi XI or whatever

he would happen to be? . . . Where, we must ask again, does Mosiah fit into all this? It appears almost certain that he had been a king in the land of Nephi. Why, then, was he not called Nephi" (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, pages 24, 27)? (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 14-17)

The Mormon defender Craig Ray attempted to deal with this subject in his rebuttal:

I immediately saw what I considered to be flaws in the Tanner's "Theory." . . . I am only responding to many of the categories in their two issues of the *SLC MESSENGER* (# 72 & 74). . . . The *record that contains all the information* that the Tanner's are wondering about, are [*sic*] *not available*. The plates that Joseph Smith was allowed to translate, contained only the "more part of the ministry" (SEE 1 NEPHI 9:4.) . . . The first 116 pages of manuscript translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith, contained Mormon's abridgment of the record of Lehi. We do not have those pages available. The Tanner's are trying to create a problem with those pages, without knowing what information they contain. . . .

The question raised is why only a few women[']s names are mentioned, and why so few names altogether are contained in approximately 350 years of Nephite history? . . .

Comparing this to the Bible, we find that in GENESIS chapters 1-5, we have only 27 names mentioned. This period of time is from 4004 B. C. to 2448 B. C., or about 1556 years. Of those 27 names, only 4 are women. . . . Nephi did not mention many women[']s names, and neither did Moses when he did an abridgment of the records that were available to him. . . . Nephi's records are consistent with other writers of scripture. There is no "Black Hole" of missing names in the BOOK OF MORMON. . . .

The question raised [in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, February 1990] is why some names of kings are missing? Again, the Tanner's are questioning a lack of information that they might feel is necessary. Evidently, it wasn't necessary for us to know more kings names than those contained in the Book of Mormon, or their names would have been included in the records. 1 NEPHI 9:4 tells us that the Kings names that the Tanner's seem to be so interested in, are on the other plates.

... Using the Tanner's logic, it would appear that the BIBLE has a giant "Black Hole." (*Tanner's "Black Hole Theory" Examined in Biblical Light*, pages 1-4)

In trying to explain away the fact that important material that should be found in the small plates of Nephi is missing, Craig Ray compares this section of the Book of Mormon with the early part of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. Mr. Ray refers to this part of Genesis as an "abridgment of the records that were available to" Moses. Although it is obvious that the first part of Genesis is a condensed account of the early history of the world, we do not feel that it provides a valid comparison with the small plates of Nephi. The material that comes from these plates has not been abridged. It, in fact, purports to be a firsthand account written by people who were present as Nephite history unfolded. In the 2nd verse of the very first chapter, Nephi himself claims that he is making "a record of my proceedings in my days." Furthermore, in the tenth chapter Nephi says, "And now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry . . ." (1 Nephi 10:1).

Although Nephi starts off by giving historical material, the amount and the quality of this type of information declines rapidly as he continues the record. All during the time that the small plates are being written by the Nephites they are supposed to be in the hands of living eyewitnesses who could have written something about their history. We have Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom and Amaleki. While Nephi provides some material in the early chapters of his first book and Amaleki gives some historical information in the nineteen verses he wrote at the end of the record, the rest of the small plates are virtually devoid of important historical events. It is very hard to believe that so many writers could provide such a small amount of historical information. This, of course, provides strong evidence for our black hole theory.

Craig Ray is making a great mistake when he tries to compare Genesis, chapters 1-5 with the small plates of Nephi. A condensed account can hardly be compared with one written by nine contemporary eyewitnesses. Furthermore, the first 3 chapters of Genesis deal only with the story of creation and the Garden of Eden. Since there were only two people in the Garden, we cannot expect to find more than 2

names in those chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 are very compressed and have a great deal of genealogical material found in them. More names are found in these two chapters than in the 65 chapters translated by Joseph Smith from the small plates of Nephi! (We are, of course, speaking of the names of characters found in Joseph Smith's story, not biblical characters mentioned in the Book of Mormon.)

The ratio of women's names found in the chapters of Genesis mentioned by Craig Ray provide devastating evidence against the Book of Mormon. Mr. Ray correctly states that there are four women mentioned in the first five chapters of Genesis. These women are named Eve, Adah, Zillah and Naamah. Our calculations show that 17% of the names in these chapters are women's names. If the Book of Mormon had the same ratio as this portion of Genesis, there would have to be dozens of women named in that book. Instead, however, we only found three Nephite, Lamanite or Jaredite women mentioned in the entire Book of Mormon! None of the writers who have reviewed our book have tried to contest our statement that there are only three women (other than biblical characters) mentioned by name in the Book of Mormon. John Tvedtnes commented: "In reply, we note that the Bible, as a whole has a longer history, and includes books by a wide variety of authors, some of whom did not mention women" (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 217). On page 191 of the same article, Mr. Tvedtnes writes: "The Tanners note (page 14) that 1 Nephi names only eleven people (aside from biblical personalities) and names only one woman, Lehi's wife Sariah. Nephi does not mention his wife's name, nor those of his children or the children of his brothers, nor any of the children of Ishmael. There is, however, nothing suspicious in this. Only one biblical prophet—Hosea—gives his wife's name (Hosea 1:3) and also names his daughter and two sons (Hosea 1:3-9). . . . Though Job's wife is mentioned in the book of that name . . . she is not named, nor are any of Job's children."

We do not think that Mr. Tvedtnes' statement that Bible prophets generally do not refer to their wives is a valid argument. Since they were giving the word of the Lord to the people, there seems to be no reason for them to mention their wives. (Preachers today often give lengthy sermons without mentioning their wives.) Hosea's mention of his wife, Gomer, is certainly an exception. The reason, of course, is that

his wife represented the “children of Israel” in his prophecies. If “Huldah the prophetess” (2 Chronicles 34:22) had written a book of prophecy, we would not have expected her to mention her husband, Shallum, in the book. Although those authors who have written the critical reviews concerning our book do not mention their wives, there is no reason to feel that they are slighting them. We would not expect them to do so in such a work.

On the other hand, if John Tvedtnes was giving a firsthand account of his marriage—as Nephi did in 1 Nephi 16:7—we would think that he might mention his wife’s name. On page 2 of his paper, Craig Ray stated: “The Tanner’s seem concerned that Nephi does not mention his wife’s name. Be it remembered, this is a record of ‘the more part of the ministry’ (See 1 NEPHI 9:4), and therefore many things such as names of wives were left out. . . .” Notwithstanding the attempts by Ray and Tvedtnes to explain away the problem, we still feel that it is very strange that Nephi would use the phrase “I, Nephi” eighty-six times, but fail to mention his own wife’s name even once. We do not believe that either Craig Ray or John Tvedtnes have given an adequate answer to the question of the shortage of women’s names in the Book of Mormon.

It is also interesting to note that in the quotation we have cited above, John Tvedtnes argued that in the book of Job, Job’s wife “is not named, nor are any of Job’s children” (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 191). The reader will find, however, that the names of three daughters of Job *are* mentioned toward the end of the book of Job:

So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning . . . He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, *Jemima*; and the name of the second, *Kezia*; and the name of the third, *Kerenhappuch*. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. (Job 42: 12-15)

It is certainly ironic that just one passage (Job 42:14) contains as many women’s names as Joseph Smith was able to come up with in his entire Book of Mormon! It is interesting to note that F.A.R.M.S. itself has published an article by Francine R. Bennion entitled *Women and the Book of Mormon*, which seems to be a photo reprint of a chapter from her

book, *Women and the Book of Mormon: Tradition and Revelation*. Like us, Francine Bennion could only find three Book of Mormon women named—“Sariah,” “Abish” and “The harlot Isabel” (pages 169-170). On page 177, she tries to excuse the problem by stating: “The wonder is not that there is so little about women in the Book of Mormon but that there is so much, given the times and traditions.” Although Francine Bennion is writing as a defender of the Book of Mormon, she makes some interesting comments and does ask some important questions:

The power of men over women in the Book of Mormon societies produced abuses, as does any hierarchy not based on virtue alone. . . .

Women were primarily accessories to men, dependent upon them not only for survival but also for identity, which is presented as a matter of relationship to a man, usefulness to a man, or use by man. Whatever strengths or virtues, women were subsidiary to men, shown making decisions only when their men were absent or helpless. . . .

Why did good men with such doctrine keep women in subsidiary roles? Why did they seldom name the women, or portray them as individuals, or apparently expect them to read or lead? Why was gender so prime a determinant to Book of Mormon men and women if it apparently is not to God? . . .

But, says a critical twentieth-century reader, whatever the assumptions of the people, couldn’t God tell the men to record women’s names and make opportunities equitable, even if the men didn’t know enough to ask about it? The Book of Mormon tells much about revelation that I find profoundly relevant to such a question. (*Ibid.*, pages 171-173, 175)

In *Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 15, we wrote the following concerning the implications of the scarcity of women’s names in the Book of Mormon:

The fact that the Book of Mormon story says so little about women seems to throw a serious cloud of doubt over Joseph Smith’s contention that it was written by a number of ancient Jewish authors after 600 B. C. The claim is that these men had the ancient books of the Bible—books which contain the names of many women and stories concerning them. If just one of these Nephite authors broke with tradition and tried



to suppress almost all information concerning women, we would not be too surprised. As it is, however, the black hole with regard to women seems to extend all the way through the book. This evidence, therefore, seems to show that the Book of Mormon was written by only one author.

Tom Nibley felt that our work regarding the paucity of women was total nonsense:

But back to our form. This form is first used in discussing the relative absence of women in the Book of Mormon. Since they are the proud possessors of a computer and some classy new software (cheerfully introduced to them by the church that they allege is full of spies and suspicion), they are able to tell us such fascinating tidbits as, “The word *she*, which is found 982 times [ooooh!] in the Bible, appears only fifty-six times [ahhh!] [in the Book of Mormon]” (p. 15). Now if you enjoy plowing through mountains of minutiae you may go read this sterling monument to electronically assisted bean counting, but *I’m going to quote from it as little as possible*. What I find intriguing are the conclusions our learned oracles manage to leap to from these innocuous statistics.

By merely counting the number of words that relate to womanhood, the Tanners deduce that there is an effort here to cover up something that is deliberately missing (How many times do the Baseball Writers of America not mention women? What is it that they are trying to cover up?) and that the paucity of women indicates a sameness of style and therefore seems to show a single author (see p. 15, column 2). What this really shows is that the Tanners apparently can’t spot a difference of style. By their reasoning you could go into the Library of Congress and prove that every book that didn’t mention tap-dancing was exhibiting a sameness of style that showed them all to be the work of a single author. Are there really people on this earth so gullible or so desperate to prove the Mormons wrong that they buy into this foolishness?

Let me spell out the intentions of the Book of Mormon once more. . . . *It has been carefully edited by one man, who eliminated everything he considered extraneous to accomplish that mission, and it is upon these criteria that it should be judged.* (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 282-283)

In trying to ridicule us and minimize the importance of our work, Mr. Nibley completely skips over the fact that “we were only able to find the names of three Nephite, Lamanite or Jaredite women in the Book of Mormon . . .” (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 15).

In addition, Tom Nibley has made an erroneous statement with regard to the Book of Mormon: “It has been carefully edited by one man, who eliminated everything he considered extraneous . . .” Those who are really familiar with the Book of Mormon know that Mormon had nothing to do with the small plates of Nephi. These plates were written by a number of authors and the “translation” is printed in the first 143 pages of the present edition of the Book of Mormon.

With regard to our claim concerning the paucity of the names of kings in the small plates of the Book of Mormon, John Tvedtnes has responded:

On the surface, the lack of names for Nephi’s successors as king (Jacob 1:9-11) appears to be valid evidence that Joseph was avoiding giving details for fear of contradicting the 116 pages he had already written (page 17). But surely he would have at least the name of Nephi’s successor. After all, the Lehi colony was not yet large enough to make the genealogy sufficiently complicated to cause Joseph to forget the name of the second king. Why, then, did he not supply that name in Jacob, before adding that it was traditional for each king to take the throne-name “Nephi”? The most reasonable explanation is that Jacob was, as he claimed, actually following Nephi’s instructions to stick to sacred matters, and not get caught up in history. The Tanners object that “it is especially strange that Jacob would not reveal the name of the new king since in chapter 7, he gives a known Antichrist the dignity of a name” (page 24). But this is not strange at all, for Jacob had *personal* dealings with the anti-Christ Sherem. The same phenomenon is found in the Bible. For example, neither the Judaeen prophet slain by the lion nor the Israelite prophet who hosted him is ever named (1 Kings 13:11-32; 2 Kings 23:16:18), while some false prophets are mentioned by name because they had personal encounters with true prophets . . . (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 192)

With regard to Mr. Tvedtnes' claim that Joseph Smith "surely would have remembered at least the name of Nephi's successor," it may be that Nephi was the most important king in the 116 pages that were stolen and that he was followed by a number of kings who played less significant roles in Nephite history. If this were the case, it is very possible that Joseph Smith might not recollect which name he used for the second king. That he did not remember the name seems obvious from the statement attributed to Jacob:

Now Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed *a man* to be a king and a ruler over his people. . . . (Jacob 1:9)

If the Nephites were a real people, it would have been almost impossible for Jacob to have forgotten the name of the man who was anointed king. At that early period there would have been only a limited number of Nephite men who could be chosen to fill the role of king, and apparently they would all be descended from three men—Lehi, Ishmael and Zoram. As the reader will remember, John Tvedtnes admitted that the "Lehi colony" was small and that the genealogy would not have been very "complicated." Even if Jacob had forgotten the name of his king, he could have asked someone to refresh his memory. On the other hand, if Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon, he would have no one to consult with concerning this matter. There would be no way that he could know for certain unless he had kept a copy of the manuscript.

John Tvedtnes seems to recognize that there is a problem here. He tries to explain it away by stating: "Why, then, did he not supply that name in Jacob . . . ? The most reasonable explanation is that Jacob was, as he claimed, actually following Nephi's instructions to *stick to sacred matters*, and not get caught up in history." This, of course is side-stepping the issue. If, for instance, the second king were named "Zephi," it would have been just as easy for Jacob to have written that Nephi "anointed *Zephi* to be king" as to write that he "anointed *a man* to be a king." Is it more spiritual to state that he anointed "a man" rather than to say he anointed "Zephi"? Nephi certainly did not think it was wrong to say that he was made king and to frequently use his own name. As we have shown, he used the phrase "I, Nephi" eighty-six times in his record, and Jacob himself used the expression "I, Jacob" sixteen times in his book! Why would it be deemed unspiritual to mention the name of his king?

Furthermore, as we noted earlier, Nephi said that he was going to write "an account upon these plates of my proceedings and *my reign* . . ." (1 Nephi 10:1). Jacob, however, does not even mention his king's name after Nephi's death nor anything concerning his reign other than the following: "And now it came to pass that the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts . . ." (Jacob 1:15). Although Jacob said that the kings which followed Nephi would be known as "second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth . . . let them be of whatever name they would" (Jacob 1:11), there is absolutely no mention of "third Nephi." Moreover, none of the writers on the small plates after Jacob mention any specific king until we come to the end of the "black hole" hundreds of years later in the book of Omni, verse 12, where king Mosiah is mentioned.

The reader will remember that John Tvedtnes wrote the following in his review of our work:

The Tanners object that "it is especially strange that Jacob would not reveal the name of the new king since in chapter 7, he gives a known Antichrist the dignity of a name" (p. 24). But this is not strange at all, for Jacob had personal dealings with the anti-Christ Sherem.

We certainly acknowledge that the Book of Mormon states that Jacob had "personal dealings" with the "anti-Christ Sherem" on two different days. We would ask Mr. Tvedtnes, however, if Jacob did not have far more "personal dealings" with his own king, "second Nephi"? Having been "consecrated" by Nephi himself to be a spiritual leader of his people (see Jacob 1:18), Jacob could hardly escape many "personal dealings" with his king.

In his article, John Tvedtnes went on to write the following: "The Tanners ask why Mosiah, who appears to have been the Nephite king, was not called—following the pattern mentioned by Jacob—something like 'Nephi XI' (page 17). The likely answer is that the system had changed during the four centuries which had passed since Jacob's time" (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 192). The reader will notice that Mr. Tvedtnes says that we were the ones who asked why the Nephite king Mosiah "was not called . . . something like 'Nephi XI' (page 17)." While we think this is an important question, it was actually a quote from the Mormon writer J. N. Washburn, a faithful member of the church. Washburn asked:

“Was Mosiah one of these kings? If so, why was he not called Nephi X or Nephi XI or whatever he would happen to be” (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, page 24)? While this may be a minor matter, it is interesting to note that it was Mr. Washburn who raised the issue over three decades ago. We never realized the significance of his discovery until we came up with the theory of a “black hole” in the Book of Mormon.

On pages 192-93, John Tvedtnes continued his criticism of our statement concerning Nephite kings:

If Jacob’s statement about the kings being called “first Nephi, second Nephi,” etc., is correct for the early period of Nephite history, then we would expect that this would also be mentioned in the 116 pages, which was taken from the history kept by the kings. If the 116 pages do not contain this information, then Joseph Smith ran the risk of being caught in a contradiction should those who had stolen the pages ever present them for public examination. Had he been the author of the Book of Mormon, he would have been on safer ground had Jacob simply left out the statement about the title bestowed on the kings. Here, as in other examples, the Tanners’ logic can be turned against their theory as well.

We cannot agree with John Tvedtnes’ argument. If the 116 pages truly contained “an account of the reign of the kings” as Nephi maintained (1 Nephi 9:4), it would surely give their proper names. It is more reasonable to believe that Joseph Smith followed the biblical pattern and gave the actual names of the kings in the same way he did in Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates and in the abridgment of Ether—e. g., “king Benjamin” (Mosiah 6:6); “king Mosiah” (Mosiah 6:7); “king Shule” (Ether 7:16). Since Joseph Smith was unable to restore the names of the kings, he was forced to resort to a name-title, “second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth . . . let them be of whatever name they would” (Jacob 1:11).

Now, if the missing 116 pages had been located, Joseph Smith probably would have claimed that “second Nephi” in his Book of Mormon was exactly the same person known as “Zephi” (our own hypothetical name) found in the 116-page manuscript he had written. While this might seem a little suspicious to some unbelievers, who could disprove the claim? The situation would be similar

to that with regard to the word *Caesar*. This word is mentioned thirty times in the New Testament, but without doing research it is often difficult to determine which Roman emperor is being referred to. There are actually four different emperors spoken of in the Bible who have this title—Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero. Any of these men could have been referred to as Caesar. The 1974 printing of *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged*, page 253, says that Caesar is not only “Julius Caesar’s family name” but also “the title of the emperor of Rome from Augustus to Hadrian, or of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.” In light of this information, it appears that by using a name-title for the kings in the small plates of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith found a good way to circumvent the problem which could arise regarding his inability to recall the actual names of the kings.

Even after making this precautionary move, however, Smith was faced with another problem. He probably could not remember the dates when the various kings mentioned in the missing 116 pages had died. This seems clear from the fact that no date is given as to when Nephi died. All we have is this terse comment by Jacob: “And it came to pass that Nephi died” (Jacob 1:12). Because of this problem, Joseph Smith probably felt that it would be unwise to continue referring to the kings. After all, it might seem rather strange to the reader if he continually suppressed any dates regarding when the kings began to reign and when they died. Consequently, “second Nephi” was the last king actually referred to until we come out of the “black hole.”

One other interesting thing should be noted: when we examine the small plates of Nephi we find that the word *queen* is never used. We do find the word *queens* in three verses, but in all three cases it is used in reference to the biblical prophecy, “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers . . .” (Isaiah, 49:23). It never refers to any Nephite queen. The first mention of “queen” appears in the book of Alma, which is on the other side of the “black hole.”

### Still a Lost People!

In *Covering Up the Black Hole*, we demonstrate that there is a very serious lack of geographical

material in the small plates of Nephi and that this is not compatible with the rest of the Book of Mormon:

The earliest portion of the Book of Mormon, the part dealing with the Old World, gives one the impression that the book is going to have a good setting as far as history and geography are concerned. For instance, it mentions the fact that Lehi lived in Jerusalem; that Jerusalem was a walled city; that Zedekiah was the king; that Jeremiah was a prophet at that time; that Lehi's group traveled by the Red Sea; that they came to "the sea" (the Indian Ocean?) and departed by ship to the New World.

As soon as Lehi's group land in the New World, however, serious problems in the account become evident. While the account of their sojourn in the Old World does have some details about their location, things are completely different in the New World. To begin with, the account of their landing is very vague. Instead of giving the details which we would expect, Nephi seemed to be evasive: "And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land" (1 Nephi 18:23). In the first place, it should be noted that no date is given as to when these people arrived. Moreover, there is no description of where they landed—it could be any place from Alaska to the tip of South America. In verse 25, Nephi gives very specific information concerning the animals which they found, but there is absolutely no information concerning the geography of the region. The same verse informs us that the people "journeyed in the wilderness," but there is nothing to indicate which direction they traveled in. . . .

In the Old World portion of the Book of Mormon we were told that the group "traveled . . . nearly a south-southeast direction" (1 Nephi 16:13), and the next chapter, 17:1, says that they "did travel nearly eastward from that time forth." As strange as it may seem, after Lehi's people land in the New World, there is not one statement concerning their traveling in any direction until after we come out of the black hole. There is, in fact, no use of the words *north*, *south*, *east* or *west* to locate any people or geographical place. The first statement to use directions was written by Amaleki and appears in Omni, verse 22. It is, however, referring to another people, the Jaredites, who were destroyed before Lehi's group landed in the New World: ". . . their bones lay scattered in

the land northward." From that point on, directions are again used freely in the Book of Mormon. For example, in Mosiah 7:16 we read of "the hill which was north of Shilom . . ." In 9:14 of the same book, we read of "the land of Nephi, away on the south of the land of Shilom . . ." To emphasize how dark the black hole really is we only have to examine the book of Alma. In that book alone there are over 100 places where directions are used!

Nephi not only neglected to tell us where his people landed and which way they traveled into the wilderness, but he continued to be evasive throughout his record. In 2 Nephi 5:6-8, he wrote concerning his separation from his brothers, the Lamanites: ". . . I, Nephi, did take my family . . . and all those who would go with me. . . and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days we did pitch our tents. And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi." The reader will notice that we are not told where Nephi and his people started from, what direction they went or even how long they traveled. We only know that they traveled for the "space of many days" and arrived in some other place and "did call it Nephi." Nephi went on to say he taught his "people to build buildings . . . And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things . . ." (verses 15-16).

It is very interesting to note that Nephi never referred to the place where he and his people lived as a "city," and he did not name even one Nephite or Lamanite city! Before he came to the New World, Nephi spoke of the "city" Jerusalem six times and referred to 'the city of Nazareth' two times, but after he came to the New World, he was completely silent with regard to the names of New World cities. As a matter of fact, none of the other writers who followed Nephi through the black hole period mentioned the name of any city. Mosiah 7:1 is the first place that we find the name of a city: ". . . king Mosiah . . . was desirous to know concerning the people who went up to dwell in the land of Lehi-Nephi, or in the city of Lehi-Nephi . . ."

The LDS Church's computer program gives us some interesting information concerning the use of the word 'city' in the Book of Mormon. It shows that in his two books, Nephi uses the word "city" 12 times. None of these references, however, relate to the New World. They are

all Old World cities referred to by Nephi or in quotations from the prophet Isaiah of the Bible. The Book of Jacob does not contain the word “city” at all. Neither do the books of Enos, Jarom or Omni. Even the Words of Mormon, which is inserted between Omni and Mosiah, does not have the word “city” in it. When we reach the book of Mosiah we have a different story. The word “city” appears 20 times and in the book of Alma it is used 195 times! This, of course, provides a great deal of support for our black hole theory. Joseph Smith did not want to name cities in the portion of the record which replaced the missing 116 pages, but after he by-passed that portion, he felt free to use the names of many cities. . . .

In the Old World portion of the Book of Mormon, Nephi used the word “house” (referring to a building where people reside) ten different times. After he came to the New World, however, he made no mention of the Nephites or Lamanites having a “house” or “houses.” The writers who followed him through the black hole were also silent concerning Nephite or Lamanite houses. It is not until we come to Mosiah 6:3, that houses are mentioned. This verse says that the people returned “to their own houses.” The book of Alma, which follows, uses the words ‘house’ and “houses” dozens of times. It is certainly strange that the Nephite writers would have nothing to say about houses for hundreds of years!

Nephi had a great deal to say about the land he originally came from. He, in fact, spoke of the “land of Jerusalem” sixteen times in the books which he wrote. He also made three references to the “land of Egypt.” When it came to the New World, however, Nephi became strangely silent. He did refer to the New World as “the land of promise” (1 Nephi 18:25) and said that it would be a “land of liberty,” but he was evasive with regard to naming specific lands. For instance, in 2 Nephi 5:26, he said that he consecrated his brothers to be “priests and teachers over the land of my people.” The writers who followed Nephi . . . Jacob, Jarom, Omni, Chemish and Abinadom were also silent about the names of Nephite or Lamanite lands. It is Amaleki again who leads us out of the black hole. In the very first verse which he writes, he gives the names of two lands: “Behold, I am Amaleki . . . Behold I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla; for behold,

he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi . . .” (Omni, verse 12).

As we move into Mosiah, we read of “the land of Lehi-Nephi” (7:1), the “land of Shilom” (7:5), the “land of Shemlon” (10:7), “the land of Helam” (23:25), and the “land of Amulon” (23:31). The book of Alma introduces many more lands into the story. We will not name them, but it is interesting to note that there are over 200 times in that book where the words “land of” are followed by a specific name. For instance, in chapter 20 alone we find the “land of Middoni” mentioned ten times, the “land of Nephi” appears twice, and the “land of Ishmael” is found twice.

We decided to use the church’s computer program to see if we could find anything in the small plates of Nephi which would help us establish some type of geographical or historical base for the story after Lehi’s people reached the New World. We asked the computer to find the following words: *shore, shores, sea, seashore, hill, hills, valley, valleys, river, rivers, mount, mountain, mountains, lake, border, borders, bordered, bordering, place and places*. The search proved futile. The “place Nephi,” turned up, but as we have already shown, it has no relationship to any known location. The word “valley” turned up in the section in question, but the context made it obvious that it had nothing to do with geography: “. . . why should . . . my soul linger in the valley of sorrow . . .” (2 Nephi 4:26). The word “lake” is found four times in the section we call the black hole, but the lake spoken of is the “lake of fire and brimstone”—i. e., hell.

That there would be no rivers mentioned during this early period is very interesting. Alma 2:15 gives us the first and only New World river mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The words “river Sidon” are found 27 times in Alma. They do not appear in any other book, but the river is probably referred to once in the Book of Mormon 1:10 (this is the small book which appears toward the end of the volume entitled, *The Book of Mormon*).

The absence of the word “hill” in the black hole is also important because a number of hills are mentioned later. The first hill to appear is found in Mosiah 7:5: “. . . they came to a hill which is north of the land of Shilom . . .” The most important hill in the Book of Mormon is the “hill Cumorah,” known to the Jaredites as the “hill Ramah.” We also have hills with the following names: Manti, Amnihu, Onida, Riplah, Shim, Ephraim and Comnor.

The first “valley” after the black hole is found in Mosiah 24:20: “. . . they called the valley Alma . . .” There are many other references to valleys in the books which follow.

We find it very strange that Nephi can behold “the city of Nazareth” and the Virgin Mary within that city in vision, but he will not give the name of a single city or land in the New World. Moreover, he tells us that his father, Lehi, knew that John the Baptist would “baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan . . .” (1 Nephi 10:9), yet his small plates give us absolutely no information concerning rivers, lakes, hills and valleys in the New World. All of the evidence indicates that there was a deliberate attempt to suppress any details that might contradict the 116 missing pages. (*Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 19-21)

John Tvedtnes tries to explain the lack of geographical information in the small plates of Nephi by stating:

The Tanners (p. 19) contrast the geographical details found in Nephi’s account of events in the Old World with the lack of such detail after the group arrived in the New World. . . . When the group arrives in the New World “the account of their landing is very vague” . . . They could have arrived at “any place from Alaska to the tip of South America.”

Some degree of vagueness is, however, natural enough. Having never seen the place before (and having forgotten to bring their Hammond’s atlas with them), Lehi’s people call it “the promised land” (1 Nephi 18:23). They couldn’t have given a date for the landing. Surely we cannot expect that Nephi would have dated the landing “in the X year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah” (which was the Israelite pattern in his day) when, for all he knew, Zedekiah was no longer king. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, page 194)

While we really did not expect the Nephites to bring their “Hammond’s atlas” with them, we certainly felt that a first-hand account should be more precise with regard to geography and dating. Furthermore, we cannot agree with Mr. Tvedtnes’ assertion that Nephi “couldn’t have given a date for the landing.” There is no reason why he would have to date the event “in the X year of the reign of Zedekiah.” In Jacob 1:1 we read that “fifty and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem . . .” The reader will notice that the

Nephites were dating events from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. Nephi himself wrote that “the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem . . .” (2 Nephi 25:19). It is clear, therefore, that the landing in the “promised land” could have been dated in the same way. Moreover, it should be noted that at the very time the Nephites left Jerusalem the Jews had both months and days to use in dating. Since the prophet Jeremiah was living at the time Lehi left Jerusalem (1 Nephi 7:14), it is important to note that precise dates are found in his book: “And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up” (Jeremiah 39:2).

After John Tvedtnes made the claim that Nephi “couldn’t have given a date for the landing” we did some additional research which tends to substantiate our claim that there is indeed a “black hole” in the Book of Mormon. We found that in the portion of the book which Mormon abridged both months and days are used. For example, in Alma 10:6 we read: “. . . I went on rebelling against God, in the wickedness of my heart, even until the fourth day of this seventh month, which is in the tenth year of the reign of the judges.” When we turned to the small plates of Nephi, however, we discovered that although the word *day* appears 120 times, it is never used to date events as in the example quoted from the book of Alma. The words “that day” are found 43 times in the section purportedly derived from the small plates. It is true that Nephi says that his party “traveled for the space of four days” (1 Nephi 16:13), but since we do not know when they started the journey it does not help us to date the event. When we turned to the word *month*, we encountered an even greater surprise: it is never used in the Book of Mormon before Alma 10:6. In other words, it is nowhere found in the section we have identified as the “black hole.”

On page 193 of his review of our book, John Tvedtnes wrote the following:

The Tanners contrast the precise dates found in that part of the Book of Mormon which begins at Mosiah with the paucity of such precision in the small plates. They point out that Amaleki failed to give dates in his record (Omni 1:12-30), while in Mosiah 29: 46 it is recorded that the second Mosiah died “in the thirty and third year of his reign, being sixty and three years old; making in the whole, five hundred and nine years from

the time Lehi left Jerusalem.” They attribute this sudden precision to the fact that the black hole has now been passed (p. 17).

But there is another possible explanation for this precision. We are, after all, dealing with Mormon’s abridgment in the book of Mosiah. The dates are therefore probably Mormon’s doing, and hence attributable to the character of the author, rather than to a cover-up by Joseph Smith. . . .

The thirty years mentioned in 2 Nephi 5:28, contrary to the opinion of the Tanners (p. 18), represents an historical occurrence, for it was when Nephi made the small plates (2 Nephi 5:29-31). They also note (p. 18) the forty-year time period in 2 Nephi 5:34, which marks the journal entry in which he tells us when he wrote the preceding material. Similarly, the reference to fifty-five years in Jacob 1:1 (p. 18) denotes when he received the plates from Nephi. The imprecision in Jacob 7:1-2 (p. 18) is due to the fact that the whole chapter is a journal entry added to Jacob’s record “after some years had passed,” when he was an old man.

Mr. Tvedtnes seems to have entirely missed our point when he speaks of the very limited number of dates which appear in the small plates. He tries to make it appear that there is important historical information communicated in these references that speak of the small plates of Nephi:

The thirty years . . . contrary to the opinion of the Tanners . . . represents an historical occurrence, for it was when Nephi made the small plates . . . the reference to fifty-five years in Jacob . . . denotes when he received the plates from Nephi.

Our point, of course, is that these small plates did *not* exist in Joseph Smith’s mind when he wrote the 116 pages which were stolen. Consequently, when he wrote what is now published in the Book of Mormon, he could make all kinds of statements concerning the small plates of Nephi. He could certainly use dates with regard to these plates because he knew that he could not contradict anything he had written in the missing pages. The real question, however, is why he did not mention important historical dates such as when Nephi and Lehi and other important people died, when the various kings began to reign, when wars occurred, etc. The fact that he fails to do this and yet links historical dates to the small plates

furnishes additional proof to support our theory of a black hole. We stand behind the statement which we made on page 18 of our book:

As far as we can determine, there is *no historical date of any importance* in the Book of Mormon from the time that Lehi’s group left the Old World until the reference in Mosiah 6:4 . . . There were ample opportunities in the small plates of Nephi for dates to have been given, but it seems obvious that the author did not want to tie events to dates.

At any rate, Mr. Tvedtnes writes the following on page 195 of his article:

The Tanners assert (p. 20) that Nephi never mentions the names of any Nephite or Lamanite cities and that he does not refer to any New World lands by name. But since the two groups were, in Nephi’s day, merely extended families, each living at a single site, there were probably no other “cities” (and no “lands”) to name until a few generations had passed. If there were no large political entities and no other towns involved in the early Nephite history, there would certainly be no reason to mention them. Indeed, the city of Zarahemla may have been their first outside contact.

This statement certainly does not solve the problem. As early as 2 Nephi 5:13, Nephi tells us that his people “began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land.” They must have multiplied very rapidly because at the time Jarom wrote on the plates, he informed his readers that when “two hundred years had passed away . . . the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land. . . . And they were scattered upon much of the face of the land, and the Lamanites also. . . . And they were exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites . . . they came many times against us, the Nephites to battle. But . . . we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands, and began to fortify our cities, or whatsoever place of our inheritance. And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land . . .” (Jarom, verses 5-8).

While we must admit that it seems impossible that the Nephites and Lamanites could have multiplied so rapidly, that is what Joseph Smith solemnly informs us in the Book of Mormon. In any case, the reader will notice that Jarom mentions both “our lands” and “our cities.” Although Mr. Tvedtnes may have a point

when he argues that there could not have been very many people in Nephi's time, we would ask him this question: since Jarmon informs us that the people "multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land" and there were both "lands" and "cities" inhabited by the Nephites just "two hundred years" after they came into the land, where do we find any mention of these lands and cities? After all, neither Jarom nor the *four* writers which follow before we reach the end of the "black hole" ever mention the names of any of these cities!

On page 195 of his rebuttal, John Tvedtnes turns to the Bible to try to refute our argument:

The Tanners contrast the paucity of place-names and directional indications in the small plates with the large quantity of such data in the rest of the Book of Mormon (over 200 in Alma alone), and cite this as evidence of the "black hole" (p. 20). A simpler explanation is population growth and increased interaction between different settlements—including warfare, which was of interest to Mormon, abridger of the book of Alma and himself a military leader. . . .

The Tanners state (p. 21) that the small plates mention no rivers or mountains in the New World. To this, I respond that, in all of Paul's very extensive travels recorded in Acts 13-28, there is only one mention of a river (Acts 16:13) and only one of a hill (Acts 17:22), with absolutely no mention of valleys or plains.

Two things should be noted about these comments. One, our search for such things as rivers, mountains, valleys, plains, etc., was initiated only after we failed to find such important things as cities, lands and directions in the "black hole." It was not the main thrust of our argument, but we wanted to be certain that all the bases had been covered. This was made clear on page 20 of our book: "We decided to use the church's computer program to see if we could find *anything* in the small plates of Nephi which would help us establish some type of geographical or historical base for the story after Lehi's people reached the New World." As we have shown above, our search proved to be futile.

Two, John Tvedtnes' use of Acts actually damages his argument, because it has an abundance of the very type of important material which is missing in the Book of Mormon. It contains the type of geographical and historical material which is

important in establishing a book's authenticity. Paul's travels can, in fact, be traced on a map. The account in Acts mentions lands, cities and places. In addition we find directions and the names of many people. The following is a chapter-by-chapter examination of Acts 13 through 28. Although a number of things may have been overlooked, the study shows the wealth of material contained in these chapters.

**CHAPTER 13** — at Antioch — Barnabas, and Simeon — Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen — Herod the tetrarch, and Saul — departed unto Seleucia — sailed to Cyprus — were at Salamis — also John — unto Paphos — name was Barjesus — Elymas the sorcerer — loosed from Paphos — came to Perga in Pamphylia — returned to Jerusalem — departed from Perga — came to Antioch in Pisidia — unto Iconium —

**CHAPTER 14** — in Iconium — fled unto Lystra and Derbe cities of Lycaonia — at Lystra — Jews from Antioch and Iconium — to Derbe — returned again to Lystra and to Iconium and Antioch — throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia — in Perga — into Attalia — sailed to Antioch —

**CHAPTER 15** — from Judaea — to Jerusalem — passed through Phenice and Samaria — come to Jerusalem — Peter — James — Simeon — to Antioch — Judas surnamed Barsabas — Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia — to Antioch — in Antioch — sailed unto Cyprus — went through Syria and Cilicia —

**CHAPTER 16** — to Derbe and Lystra — named Timotheus -- were at Lystra and Iconium — gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia -- in Asia — to Mysia — into Bithynia — by Mysia — down to Troas — of Macedonia — into Macedonia — from Troas — to Samothracia — to Neapolis — to Philippi which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia — out of the city by a river — named Lydia — of Thyatira — being Romans —

**CHAPTER 17** — through Amphipolis and Apollonia — to Thessalonica — Jason — Caesar — unto Berea — in Thessalonica — of Thessalonica — at Berea — to the sea — unto Athens — at Athens — of the Epicureans and of the Stoicks — unto Areopagus — the Athenians — Mar's hill — men of Athens — Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris —



**CHAPTER 18** — from Athens, and came to Corinth — Jew named Aquila — from Italy — wife Priscilla — Claudius — from Rome — from Macedonia — named Justus — And Crispus — the Corinthians — Gallio — of Achaia — took Sosthenes — came to Ephesus — in Jerusalem — from Ephesus — landed at Caesarea — down to Antioch — country of Galatia and Phrygia — Apollos, born at Alexandria — came to Ephesus — into Achaia —

**CHAPTER 19** — through the upper coasts came to Ephesus — school of one Tyrannus — in Asia — one Sceva — at Ephesus — passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem — Rome — into Macedonia — Erastus — in Asia — named Demetrius — for Diana — at Ephesus — Diana of the Ephesians — Gaius and Aristarchus — of Asia — Alexander — the Ephesians — of Ephesus —

**CHAPTER 20** — into Macedonia — came into Greece — sail into Syria — through Macedonia — accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea and of the Thessalonians Aristarchus — of Asia Tychicus and Trophimus — at Troas — to Troas — named Eutyclus — sailed unto Assos — at Assos — to Mitylene — over against Chios — at Samos — at Trogyllium — came to Miletus — by Ephesus — in Asia — at Jerusalem — from Miletus he sent to Ephesus — came into Asia —

**CHAPTER 21** — unto Coos — unto Rhodes — unto Patara — unto Phenicia — Cyprus — into Syria, and landed at Tyre — the shore — from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais — came unto Caesarea — Philip the Evangelist — from Judaea — named Agabus — went up to Jerusalem — disciples of Caesarea — Mnason of Cyprus — of Asia — in the city Trophimus an Ephesian — Canst thou speak Greek? — of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia —

**CHAPTER 22** — in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia — Gamaliel — to Damascus — unto Jerusalem — nigh unto Damascus — go into Damascus — came into Damascus — one Ananias — to Jerusalem — out of Jerusalem — a Roman —

**CHAPTER 23** — Ananias — at Rome — to Caesarea — unto Felix — Claudius Lysias — to Antipatris — to Caesarea — of Cilicia —

**CHAPTER 24** — named Tertullus — chief

captain Lysias — to Jerusalem — from Asia — wife Drusilla — Porcius Festus —

**CHAPTER 25** — from Caesarea to Jerusalem — at Caesarea — unto Caesarea — to Jerusalem — came into Caesarea — at Jerusalem — to Jerusalem — at Jerusalem — O king Agrippa —

**CHAPTER 26** — at Jerusalem — went to Damascus — unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem — coasts of Judaea —

**CHAPTER 27** — sail into Italy — Julius — coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica — at Sidon — sailed under Cyprus — sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia — a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy — against Cnidus — sailed under Crete, over against Salmone — city of Lasea — attain to Phenice — an haven of Crete — lieth toward the south west and north west — the south wind blew — sailed close by Crete — a certain island which is called Clauda — from Crete — driven up and down in Adria —

**CHAPTER 28** — the island was called Melita — whose name was Publius -- a ship of Alexandria — landing at Syracuse — came to Rhegium — to Puteoli — as far as Appii forum and The three taverns — we came to Rome —

While John Tvedtnes set forth these chapters with the intention of showing that Acts resembles the first part of the Book of Mormon as far as the lack of rivers, hills, valleys or plains is concerned, a study of them reveals just how rich they really are in terms of geographical and historical material. The poverty of the early portion of the Book of Mormon story with regard to these matters stands in stark contrast to the abundance of material we find in Acts. The sixteen chapters of Acts referred to by Mr. Tvedtnes appear as a large mountain of evidence when set to the side of the first sixty-five chapters in the Book of Mormon. The chapters in Acts, which amount to only one-fourth the number found in the first part of the Book of Mormon, are filled with nuggets of relevant material. While the small plates of Nephi are rich in words, they are lacking in the important details that should be found in a true historical document.

It is also interesting to note that the sixteen chapters of Acts contain more women's names than the entire Book of Mormon. As we have shown, apart from biblical names, the Book of Mormon furnishes the names of only three women. Chapters 13-28 of Acts, however, have the names of five women — i. e., Lydia, Damaris, Priscilla, Drusilla and Bernice. Moreover, the first 12 chapters of Acts provide six additional names: Mary (the mother of Jesus), Sapphira, Candace, Tabitha (also known as Dorcas), Mary (the mother of John, whose surname was Mark), and Rhoda. In all, therefore, we have the names of eleven women in the book of Acts alone, and Acts is only one of sixty-six books found in the Bible.

### Book of Mormon Wars

In *Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 196-197, John Tvedtnes made these observations concerning our comments on warfare in the Book of Mormon:

The Tanners believe that Joseph Smith was intensely interested in warfare, and hence included many battle accounts in that part of the Book of Mormon which deals with the period following the “black hole”. . . They further believe that the lost 116 pages must have contained much more information about wars which Joseph, for fear of contradiction, left off the small plates. The difference can just as easily be explained by the fact that Mormon, as a military leader, would have been more prone to speak of warfare than others. . . . The abundance of geographical detail given in the abridgment of the large plates (and lacking in the small plates) was necessary for Mormon's explanation of military strategy—something in which he was an expert.

Indeed, the lack of such details in all writings except those of general Mormon can be used as evidence to support the idea of multiple authorship of the Book of Mormon. The objections of the Tanners make sense only when one has made the *a priori* assumption that Joseph Smith was the sole author of the Book of Mormon. Besides, in view of their small numbers, the early battles of the Nephites could have been nothing more than armed gang fights, with a few dozen participants.

John Tvedtnes' statement that “The Tanners . . . believe that the lost 116 pages must have contained

much more information about wars” makes it appear that this idea originated with us. Actually, Nephi himself is the one who indicated that the large plates used to produce the 116 pages had accounts of wars: “Upon the other plates [the large plates of Nephi] should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people . . .” (1 Nephi 9:4).

With regard to Mr. Tvedtnes' statement that “in view of their small numbers, the early battles of the Nephites could have been nothing more than armed gang fights, with a few dozen participants,” we feel that he undoubtedly has a point. How could such a small group of people be continually engaged in “wars” and yet expand so rapidly? It just does not make sense. The Mormon writer John C. Kunich has addressed this issue and has concluded that this is a very serious problem in the Book of Mormon (see his article in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 231-267).

The noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts was very disturbed by the war stories in the Book of Mormon. He noted that the evidence might suggest that they were all the product of the same mind:

In the method of carrying on war, and in the descriptions of battles, the same tendency to repetition, to recurrence to the marvelous is found. The case of war seems to be always the same, or else without cause — they seem to be wars just stuck in at supposed needed intervals . . . with monotonous regularity. The battles were bloody, heroic, and often attended with marvelous personal encounters between the leaders. The whole matter of war seems to be treated from the amateurish notion that the wicked are invariably punished, the righteous always victorious. The whole treatment of war and battles, some will say, bears evidence of having originated in one mind and that mind pious but immature. . . .

The allusions here to absurdities of expressions and incidents in the Book of Mormon are not made for the purpose of ridiculing the book, or casting undue aspersions upon it; but they are made to indicate what may be fairly regarded as just objects of criticism under the assumption that the Book of Mormon is of human origin, and that Joseph Smith is its author. For these absurdities in expression; these miraculous incidents in warfare; those almost mock — and certainly extravagant

—heroics; these lapses of the main characters about conditions obtaining, are certainly just such absurdities and lapses as would be looked for if a person of such limitations as bounded Joseph Smith undertook to put forth a book dealing with the history and civilization of ancient peoples. . . .

And now, I doubt not, at the conclusion of this review of the Nephi and Jaredite wars of extinction, some will be led to exclaim—and I will set it down for them—“Is all this sober history inspired written and true, representing things that actually happened? Or is it *a wonder-tale of an immature mind, unconscious of what a test he is laying on human credulity when asking men to accept his narrative as solemn history?*” (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 272, 277 and 283)

We do not have space in this response to deal at any length with B. H. Roberts’ assessment of the war stories in the Book of Mormon, but the reader will find his material on this subject in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 272-283. His keen insight concerning the close parallels between the last war of the Jaredites and the destruction of the Nephites is well worth reading.

In the first part of the Book of Mormon the problems are obviously of a different nature. We have so many “wars” mentioned in the small plates of Nephi that it is almost impossible to believe that Lehi’s little group could have expanded into the vast civilization described in Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. On the other hand, while the small plates often speak of wars, details concerning these wars are almost non-existent. In our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole*, we wrote the following:

As we have previously noted, Nephi has informed us that the plates from which the 116 pages were translated contained “an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people . . .” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 9:4). In another place, Nephi noted that these plates give “a greater account of the wars and contentions and destruction of my people” (1 Nephi, 19:4).

We have stated that these plates [the large plates from which the 116 missing pages were derived] would undoubtedly mention the names of the prominent military leaders who took part in important battles and give the dates and locations of the battles. In addition, they probably would give details of the battles and the number of men

lost in combat. Our theory of a black hole in the Book of Mormon suggests that Joseph Smith would not be able to accurately reconstruct all the details he had previously written concerning the wars of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. Consequently, in the pages he wrote to replace the missing part of the Book of Mormon, he would have to steer clear of military encounters. An examination of the portion translated from the small plates of Nephi reveals that this is the case. Any meaningful details concerning battles are completely avoided.

In 2 Nephi 5:34, Nephi wrote that “forty years had passed away, and we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.” The reader will notice that absolutely no details are given. In his book, Jacob tells us that Nephi had “wielded the sword of Laban” in the defense of his people (Jacob 1:10). Again, we find no mention of any of the battles he fought in. Jacob also informed the readers that the Lamanites “delighted in wars . . . they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually” (7:24). No examples, however, are given by Jacob at this time nor at any other time. The next writer, Enos, only noted that he “saw wars between the Nephites and Lamanites in the course of my days” (Enos, verse 24). Jarom commented that the Lamanites “came many times against us, the Nephites, to battle. But our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord; and they taught the people the ways of the Lord; wherefore, we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands, and began to fortify our cities, or whatsoever place of our inheritance” (Jarom, verse 7). Jarom by-passed the opportunity of giving any information about the battles.

In the next book, Omni boasted that he “fought much with the sword to preserve my people, the Nephites, from falling into the hands of their enemies, the Lamanites. . . . we had many seasons of serious war and bloodshed” (verses 2-3). Omni, likewise, provided no relevant information about these wars. Amaron, the next writer in the book of Omni (verse 5) noted that “the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed.” Amaron gave us no information with regard to how they had been destroyed, but the Mormon writer John L. Sorenson speculated that it was “apparently in wars against the Lamanites . . .” (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 1985, p. 145)

Chemish wrote nothing about wars, but his

son, Abinadom, said he saw “much war and contention between my people, the Nephites, and the Lamanites; and with my own sword, have taken the lives of many of the Lamanites in the defense of my brethren” (Omni, verse 11). Abinadom followed the example of those who had previously written on the plates and provided no information.

Amaleki, the writer who begins to lead us out of the black hole, revealed that he had seen “a serious war and much bloodshed between the Nephites and the Lamanites. But behold, the Nephites did obtain much advantage over them; yea, insomuch that king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of Zarahemla” (Omni, verse 24). This, of course, does not give us any detailed information about the war or the year or years in which it occurred. . . .

As the story in the Book of Mormon proceeds [i. e., as we move from the small plates to Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates], the accounts of the battles become very specific. For example, in the book of Alma we read that in the “eighteenth year of the reign of the judges” the Lamanites were “coming upon” the Nephites. The Nephites, therefore, gathered in the “land of Jershon” (Alma 43:3-4). The “Lamanites came with their thousands . . . into the land of Antionum, which is the land of the Zoramites; and a man by the name of Zerahemnah was their leader” (43:5). The “chief captain over the Nephites . . . was Moroni” (43:16). The story concerning this war continues for pages and gives numerous details. We notice that it reveals the date the war was fought; uses the words east, west, north and south; gives the names of five groups of people; mentions eight personal names; gives the names of three lands, a river and a hill. It seems reasonable to believe that this same type of detailed information was given in the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript which were stolen. Since Joseph Smith did not retain a copy of this portion, he was unable to duplicate it. Consequently, he was forced to leave out any specific military matters in the pages he created to replace those that had been pilfered.

All the evidence points to the fact that Joseph Smith had to be extremely evasive with regard to the war material he had originally prepared in the 116 pages because he could not accurately reproduce it again. In trying to explain why this material is now missing from the first part of the Book of Mormon, he used the Nephite characters he had created to offer an excuse. We have already

shown that he had Nephi say that his other plates contained “a greater account of the wars.” Toward the end of the small plates of Nephi, he had Jarom apologize again for the missing material on the wars: “. . . ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written (Jarom, verse 14).” (*Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 21-23)

The reader will notice from the quotation above that nine different authors (Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom and Amaleki) failed to provide any significant information regarding the wars which supposedly took place. The fact that all these writers avoided details is very suspicious and leads one to the conclusion that all of the information found in the “small plates” of Nephi was actually written by one person who had to suppress this material.

In his response to us, Craig Ray had a rather simplistic way of dealing with the problem:

The Tanner’s complain that Nephi mentions that there were wars in the land, but not many details are given. They again must have forgotten that 1 NEPHI 9:4 describes that Nephi made two sets of records. The plates that contain the details of wars and [the] reign of the kings, are on the other plates (SEE 1 NE 9: 3-4). (*Tanner’s “Black Hole Theory” Examined in Biblical Light*, page 4)

Craig Ray would have his readers believe that we had “forgotten” that 1 Nephi 9:4 says that Nephi made two sets of plates and that “The plates that contain the details of wars and [the] reign of the kings, are on the other plates . . .” A careful examination of the evidence, however, clearly reveals that we did not forget that the accounts of the wars were supposed to be on the large plates of Nephi. We, in fact, pointed this out in our book:

. . . Nephi has informed us that the plates from which the 116 pages were translated contained “an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people . . .” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 9:4). In another place, Nephi noted that these plates give “a greater account of the wars and contentions and destruction of my people” (1 Nephi, 19:4). (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 21)

The real problem, of course, is that we do not have these records, and therefore there is no way that we can check out the truthfulness of these statements. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that these plates ever existed except in the mind of Joseph Smith.

Both Craig Ray and John Tvedtnes have side-stepped the issue with regard to the missing information regarding warfare in the small plates of Nephi. Mr. Tvedtnes also seems to imply that we are overlooking the fact that Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi contains spiritual material as well as accounts of wars:

The Tanners believe that Joseph Smith was intensely interested in warfare . . .

By the Tanners' reckoning (p. 27), Joseph had to substitute more spiritual material for the original bloody war stories when he redid the first part of the Book of Mormon. However, had Joseph Smith been the author of the Book of Mormon, intending to recount war stories, how do we account for the presence of the very spiritual stories in Mormon's abridgment . . . In other words, the record is not all "blood and guts" after the small plates. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, pages 196-197)

In response to this, we would say that we have never suggested that the account abridged by Mormon was "all 'blood and guts.'" Mr. Tvedtnes seems to be setting up his own straw man to knock down. A person who closely examines our book will see that we have stressed that Joseph Smith had an interest in writing about spiritual matters. While we did state that warfare seemed to be "one of the most important things" in Mormon's abridgment (page 27), we went on to state that "Joseph Smith liked to write concerning religion . . ." On page 54 of our book, we wrote that Joseph Smith was preoccupied with both "battles and religious controversies . . ."

John Tvedtnes asks how one can "account for the presence of the very spiritual stories in Mormon's abridgment." The answer to this question, of course, is that since Smith "liked to write concerning religion," it was only natural that he would discuss these matters at length in the portion of the Book of Mormon which was supposed to have been abridged by Mormon. He obviously liked to talk about religion and intended to include a great deal about it in his book. He could have discussed subjects like philosophy, biology or medicine in the portion of the Book of Mormon which

he redid without being trapped by the historical type of material he had previously written. That he chose religion demonstrates that he had a great interest in the subject.

The fact that the portion of the Book of Mormon taken from the small plates differs from the rest of the book is adequately accounted for in our theory that Smith had to remove the war material from the first part of the book so that it would not contradict material in the lost pages if they should come to light. It seems hard to believe that John Tvedtnes would twist this around to make it appear that "the lack of such details in all writings except those of general Mormon can be used as evidence to support the idea of multiple authorship of the Book of Mormon." Unfortunately, Tvedtnes' argument does not deal with the fact that Nephi himself made it plain that his large plates had this very type of detailed material on them and that he was instructed by the Lord to make the small plates to deal more with spiritual matters:

And after I made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates [the small plates] . . . Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates [the large plates], which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. (1 Nephi 19:3-4)

We believe that Joseph Smith himself wrote these words to escape his problem with the 116 missing pages. John Tvedtnes, on the other hand, feels that the ancient prophet Nephi actually made these comments. Now, if this were the case, then it follows that Tvedtnes would have to believe that Nephi did prepare a set of plates containing "a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people." It is obvious, then, that like Mormon's abridgment, this account would have to contain details regarding wars. It is unreasonable, therefore, for Mr. Tvedtnes to try to support "the idea of multiple authorship of the Book of Mormon" by appealing to the lack of such data in the small plates.

In any case, the evidence clearly shows that Joseph Smith was a man who was fascinated with both religion and war, and his interest in both these subjects seems to be reflected in the Book of Mormon. While some members of the Mormon

Church would probably like to gloss over his interest in warfare, the history of Joseph Smith's life shows that he was deeply interested in military matters (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* 253-254). Even the Mormon defender Dr. Hugh Nibley acknowledges that the Book of Mormon contains a great deal of material on war:

Readers of the Book of Mormon often express disgust or at least weariness and impatience at having to wade through 170 pages of wars and alarms in a religious book. This writer must confess to having suffered from the same prejudice. . . . In twenty years of writing about the Book of Mormon we have studiously ignored the war stories. But that is where we were wrong. (*Since Cumorah*, 1967, p. 328)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts commented:

Between these two peoples, who were soon again in contact, there were almost continuous wars. The periods of peace were brief, and always uncertain; the battles were bloody, and the toll of death such as must have checked materially the growth of population. I feel safe in saying that *among no other people of history* do wars appear to have been so frequent, so long continued, or so sanguinary. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 168)

John W. Welch disagreed with B. H. Roberts' statement regarding wars in the Book of Mormon.

In his discussion of similarities between Joseph Smith's work and *View of the Hebrews*, Welch stated: "There are long wars in both. Roberts incorrectly sees the Book of Mormon as the most war-ridden history of all time (page 168). War, of course, is a universal phenomenon, but one which receives very little attention in VH [*View of the Hebrews*]" (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts's Questions and An Unparallel*, page 38).

In this section we have shown that in the portion of the Book of Mormon we have designated as the "black hole" there is an incredible lack of details when it comes to dates, names, directions, geographical details, etc. We have cities and lands but they are not named. Although wars are continually being fought, there are no descriptions of these wars or information given concerning how many people were killed or wounded. No dates are given as to when the wars began, how long they lasted or when they ended. We are told that there were kings, but Nephi is the only one who is actually named. The date of Nephi's death is not even mentioned. The only information we have about the second king is that he was "a man" (Jacob 1:9). We have no idea who he was, when he began to reign or when he died. No other king was mentioned until after we come out of the black hole. It is almost impossible to escape the conclusion that all these items were deliberately suppressed from the record to hide something from the reader.

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## 2. Jew or Christian?

In *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 56-71, we examine the claim that the Book of Mormon was written by Jews who came to the New World in 600 B. C. On page 56, we stated: “An extremely important question concerning the Book of Mormon is whether it was actually written by Jewish writers who understood the laws and customs of ancient Israel or by someone who was raised in the Christian faith as a Protestant during the early part of the 19th century. The authenticity of the Book of Mormon stands or falls on this question.”

In the same section we plainly show that the Book of Mormon was written by someone who was very familiar with Christian teachings and customs. It has Christianity being practiced in the New World six centuries before the coming of Christ. On the other hand, the Book of Mormon is sadly deficient with regard to Jewish religion and culture.

John Tvedtnes seems to be very confused with regard to some of the issues we have dealt with in our book. In his review he commented:

Having discussed their ‘black hole’ theory, the Tanners move to a discussion of other criticisms of the Book of Mormon. Though they don’t seem to realize it, their basic concepts are at variance one with another. Part II of the book, for example, accuses Joseph Smith of “plagiarizing” the Bible because so many biblical expressions appear in the Book of Mormon. At the same time, the latter portion of Part I (pp. 46-63) attempts to discredit the Book of Mormon by showing that it contains too few biblical words. They seem so anxious to prove the Nephite record false that they move in opposing directions to prove their point.

The lack of certain biblical words, according to the Tanners, proves that the Book of Mormon was written by a single author, who must have been Joseph Smith. Their claim “that the entire Book of Mormon is also lacking a significant number of important things that should be there if the book were really a history of ancient Jewish people in the New World” (p. 46) is presumptuous. . . . It seems unreasonable to expect the Book of Mormon . . . which is so much smaller than the Bible, to use all of the biblical terms the Tanners think an authentic ancient Israelite book should contain. More serious, however, is the fact,

mentioned above, that when the Tanners do find biblical terms in the Book of Mormon, they accuse Joseph Smith of “plagiarism.” (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 213, 214 and 217)

John Tvedtnes’ claim that our “basic concepts are at variance one with another” is without foundation in fact. Part Two of our book, pages 75-164, is devoted almost entirely to quotations from the New Testament. What we are trying to show in this section is that portions of the New Testament have been plagiarized and inserted into the “Old Testament” portion of the Book of Mormon. On page 81, we stated: “The following study of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon only deals with the small plates of Nephi from the book of 1st Nephi through Omni (the material used to replace the missing 116 pages). This material is dated between 600 B. C. and 130 B. C. All of it, therefore, was supposed to have been written before the time of Christ and also before the New Testament was produced.”

The reader can see, therefore, that we are not upset “because so many biblical expressions appear in the Book of Mormon,” but rather we are disturbed that hundreds of quotations which could not have been available to the ancient Nephites are incorporated into Joseph Smith’s major work. We certainly would not be opposed to quotations from the portions of the Old Testament which would have been in existence at the time Lehi’s people left the Old World. (We do, of course, have a problem with the fact that the texts from the Old Testament which are found in the Book of Mormon almost slavishly follow the King James Translation of the Bible.) It should also be stated that the small plates of Nephi contain some quotations from Old Testament books that had *not* been written before the Nephites left the Old World.

In any case, in our book we point out another serious problem: many of the things that were so important to the Jews who lived in 600 B. C. are almost totally missing in the Book of Mormon. On pages 70-71 of *Covering Up the Black Hole*, we made these observations concerning the Book of Mormon:

We have noted a great deal of information regarding Jesus Christ and Christianity throughout the book but hardly anything that would relate

to the early Jewish religion and customs. We have noted, for instance, that the Nephites never celebrated the Passover or any of the other festivals or feasts that were so important to the ancient Israelites. Very little appears about the Sabbath day and nothing concerning the sabbatical years or jubilee. There seems to be no evidence that circumcision was actually practiced. The Book of Mormon also seems to be sadly deficient with regard to material regarding both tithing and the temple. The author of the Book of Mormon seems to know nothing about the laws concerning unclean foods and practices, and sacrifices are almost completely absent. In fact, the only time that the author of the Book of Mormon speaks of ‘burnt offerings’ he makes a serious mistake — an error which shows that he was entirely unfamiliar with the biblical material concerning offerings.”

It is evident, therefore, that the Book of Mormon has things reversed when it comes to Jewish religion in the first 600 years of its story. While it should be mentioning many Hebrew laws, feasts, festivals and other Jewish practices, it is virtually silent. Instead, it is filled with Christian doctrines, practices and arguments. Furthermore, the theological questions it deals with are exactly the same as those that were being debated in the early 19th century!

### A Giant Error?

In his response to our work, Craig Ray seemed certain he had the perfect answer to our criticism of the lack of material concerning Jewish customs and laws:

The Tanner’s make a giant error . . . They assume that the people that left Jerusalem near 600 B. C. are Jewish. It may be true that they follow some of the Jewish traditions, but *the Nephites are not Jewish*. They are descended from Manasseh (See 1 NE 5: 14; Alma 10: 3). . . .

The Tanner’s state that the authenticity of the Book of Mormon stands or falls on the question of whether the Book was written by JEWISH writers, or a Christian Protestant of the 19th Century. This type of statement or question demonstrates the Tanner’s lack of knowledge or apparent deception of the true facts of the situation. Again they must be ignorant of the fact, that Nephi was a descendant of Joseph, through Manasseh (ALMA

10: 3) and therefore was *not a descendant of Judah* (Joseph’s Brother) and therefore were *not JEWS*. Their questioning is therefore rendered inane. . . .

The assumption that there never was a Passover held by the Nephites, is only an unsupported guess by the Tanner’s. Because the word itself is not in print in the Book of Mormon, does not at all mean that no Passover took place. . . . As the Tanner’s point out, “The importance of the Passover to the Jewish people cannot be overstated.” But of course, the Nephites were not JEWISH, and not subjected to every tradition of the JEWS. (See John 2: 13). . . .

Issue 74 [of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*], pages 9, 10, 11, and a portion [of] 12, continually brings up the point that the JEWISH traditions were not being practiced by the Nephites. By bringing up this point, they again miss the target. As has been pointed out previously, the Nephites were not JEWISH, but from the TRIBE OF JOSEPH, through MANASSEH (ALMA 10: 3), and therefore not obligated to hold to the JEWISH TRADITIONS. (*Tanner’s ‘Black Hole Theory’ Examined in Biblical Light*, pages 6-7)

While Craig Ray speaks of our “lack of knowledge or apparent deception of the true facts,” and feels that he has completely solved the problem, his answer will not satisfy those who carefully examine his solution. While it is true that the Book of Mormon claims that Lehi “was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph” (Alma 10:3), the Book of Mormon itself still refers to Lehi’s descendants as “Jews.” Nephi, in fact, made this clear:

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that *they are descendants of the Jews*. (2 Nephi 30:4)

The word *Jews* first appears in the Bible in 2 Kings 16: 6, where we read that “Rezin king of Syria . . . drave the Jews from Elath . . .” Originally, it only applied to a person who belonged to the tribe or kingdom of Judah. In the *Illustrated Davis Dictionary of the Bible*, page 414, we read that later the meaning of the word “was extended, and the word was applied to *any one of the Hebrew race* who returned from the captivity; and finally it comprehended any one of that race throughout the world . . .”

Apostle Paul referred to himself as a “Jew”: “I



am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus . . .” (Acts 22: 3). In Romans 11: 1, however, he stated that he was actually of the tribe of Benjamin: “. . . I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Bruce R. McConkie, who served as an apostle in the Mormon Church, wrote the following:

Although the term *Jew* comes from the Hebrew *yehudi*, “one belonging to Judah,” it has always been used to identify a much larger group than those who are of the tribe of Judah. *Citizens of the Kingdom of Judah*, no matter what their tribal affiliation, were called Jews or sometimes *Judeans*. Lehi and Ishmael, though descendants of Joseph, were Jews . . . and the present day Lamanites [the Indians], a remnant who descended from Lehi of old, are Jews. . . . Christ was a Jew . . . (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, page 393)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the 10th prophet of the Mormon Church, also commented concerning this matter:

Lehi a Jew by Citizenship. In 1 Nephi 5: 14, we are informed that Lehi was a descendant of Joseph, and in 2 Nephi 30: 4, it states that the Nephites were descendants of the Jews. . . . The Nephites were of the Jews, not so much by descent as by citizenship . . . *Lehi was a citizen of Jerusalem, in the kingdom of Judah. . . . all of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah, no matter which tribe they had descended through, were known as Jews.*” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, pages 262-63)

Joseph Smith even received a revelation from God which identified Lehi’s descendants as being Jews:

Which is my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 19:27)

When the Mormons were in Missouri, Joseph Smith received another revelation in which the Lord was supposed to have instructed that “it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints, and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 57:4). This, of course, would be the line which separated the Indians (Lamanites or descendants of Lehi) from the whites.

We will not resort to the harsh and judgmental words which Craig Ray used with regard to us, but will merely say that we can understand how he could have made this mistake with regard to the word “Jews.” Nephi refers to the wickedness of the Jews in Jerusalem and this may have led Mr. Ray into believing that Nephi did not consider himself a Jew.

Although we do not know whether Daniel C. Peterson read Craig Ray’s paper, he seems to have the same opinion regarding the Jews. Peterson, who serves as editor for F.A.R.M.S. *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, criticized John Ankerberg and John Weldon for saying that the Nephites were “Jewish” in their book *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*:

The problems start with Ankerberg and Weldon’s failure to master even basic facts about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Errors and misinterpretations and highly questionable presuppositions pervade this book.

Careful readers of the Book of Mormon will be surprised, for instance, to learn that the Nephites were “Jewish” (p. 35; contrast Alma 10:3). (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, page 6)

In a footnote on pages 13-14 of the same article, Daniel Peterson says that “Ankerberg and Weldon’s own logical skills appear to be rather rudimentary.” Professor Peterson is so convinced that Ankerberg and Weldon are making a mistake in using the words “Jews” and “Jewish” when speaking of the Nephites that he carefully marks these words with the Latin word *sic*:

“Mormonism,” declare Ankerberg and Weldon, “has never explained how godly Jews [*sic*] of A.D. 400 allegedly knew Egyptian . . .” “How likely is it that the allegedly Jewish [*sic*] Nephites would have used the Egyptian language to write their sacred scriptures? . . .” Ankerberg and Weldon wonder why “godly Jews [*sic*] . . . would have written their sacred records entirely in the language of their pagan, idolatrous enemies.” (*Ibid.*, pages 43, 45)

As noted above, Professor Peterson is incorrect in this criticism of Ankerberg and Weldon. The Book of Mormon, the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the teachings of Mormon leaders all bear witness to

the fact that it is correct to refer to the Nephites as “Jews.”

While both Craig Ray and Daniel Peterson were in error when they asserted that the Nephites should not be referred to as Jews, Ray makes a more serious mistake. He seems to believe that only the tribe of Judah was bound by the law of Moses and therefore the Nephites did not have to keep the law. He stated that those of the tribe of Manasseh were “not obligated to hold to the JEWISH TRADITIONS.” Actually, all of the tribes of Israel, including the tribe of Manasseh, were supposed to keep the law of Moses. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that the Nephites believed they were under the law of Moses. Between “559 and 545 B. C.” Nephi was supposed to have written the following:

And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. . . . the right way is to believe in Christ . . . And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given to Moses. (2 Nephi 25: 24, 29-30)

Hundreds of years later, about “74 B. C.,” the Book of Mormon boasted that “the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord; and they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses; for they were taught to keep the law of Moses until it should be fulfilled” (Alma 30:3).

Mormon writers L. Ara Norwood, Matthew Roper and John Tvedtnes do not use the same approach as Craig Ray in their attempt to escape the problem concerning the lack of Jewish religious practices in the Book of Mormon. Instead of arguing that the Nephites were not “obligated to hold to the JEWISH TRADITIONS,” they agree with our position that the Nephites were supposed to keep the law of Moses. They seem to attack the problem from two different angles: One, they claim that the paucity of data concerning Jewish religious customs in the Book of Mormon does not disprove that the Nephites were actually engaging in these practices. Two, they feel that enough circumstantial evidence can be found to show that the Book of Mormon people followed the law of Moses.

## No Passover or Festivals

In our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole*, we set forth strong evidence showing why we do not believe the Book of Mormon was written by someone familiar with the ancient Jewish religion:

It is a well-known fact that one of the most important items in Judaism is the festival of the Passover. . . . In Exodus 12:14, the Lord told the Jewish people that “this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

The importance of the Passover to the Jewish people cannot be overstated. Since the Nephites were supposed to have been Israelites who possessed “the five books of Moses” (1 Nephi 5:11), they should have celebrated the Passover almost six hundred times after they came to America. We would expect, therefore, to find a significant number of references to that festival in the Book of Mormon. A computer search for the words *Passover* and *Passovers* revealed that these words were used 77 times in the Bible. In the Book of Mormon, however, these words are never used at all. It is absolutely astounding that a book purported to have been written by ancient Jewish people would never refer to the Passover. . . .

At the time of the Passover, the Israelites were supposed to “observe the feast of unleavened bread” (Exodus 12:17). In verse 15, the Lord tells the people that “Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.” The Bible yielded 43 places where *unleavened bread* was mentioned, but the Book of Mormon was completely silent about the matter. We also searched for the following words: *leaven*, *leavened*, *leaveneth* and *unleavened*. While the Book of Mormon never used any of these words, the Bible had 100 places where these words were used.

Besides the Passover with the accompanying feast of unleavened bread, the Jewish men were required to attend two other feasts or festivals — i. e., the feast of weeks (also known as the feast of harvest) and the feast of tabernacles (or feast

of ingathering). When we searched in the Bible for the two words *feast of*, we found 41 places where they refer to Jewish feasts. We found the *feast of* Passover, the *feast of* unleavened bread, the *feast of* harvest, the *feast of* weeks, the *feast of* tabernacles, the *feast of* the ingathering, the *feast of* the seventh month, the *feast of* dedication, the *feast of* the Lord and the *feast of* the Jews. Some of these names, of course, are just different names for the same feasts. In the New Testament we find the word *Pentecost* used three times. This is the Old Testament *feast of weeks*. We have, therefore, 44 cases in which Jewish feasts or festivals are mentioned in the Bible, and we feel that a search for just the word *feast* would bring forth more examples. In the Book of Mormon, however, there is *not even one case where a Jewish feast or festival was celebrated in the New World!* . . .

The only reference to Jewish religious “feasts” found in the entire Book of Mormon is found in 2 Nephi 15:12. Unfortunately for Mormon apologists, even this verse has to be eliminated because it has been taken from the Bible, Isaiah 5:12.

During the feast of ingathering (also known as the feast of tabernacles), the ancient Hebrews would live for a week in shelters made of branches to remind them of the fact that they dwelt in tents when they wandered in the wilderness. These shelters are referred to in the Bible as “booths.” When we searched for the words *booth* and *booths* we found that they were used 11 times in the Bible but were never used in the Book of Mormon.

The “new moon” was also an important time for the Israelites. Special sacrifices were offered and trumpets were blown (Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15). We searched for the words *new moon* and *new moons* and found they were used 21 times in the Bible. The Book of Mormon, however, produced no examples of these words appearing together. In fact, the Book of Mormon only used the words *moon* and *moons* 5 times and 2 of these were derived through plagiarism from the Bible. The context of the 3 remaining examples shows that they do not relate in any way to the “new moon” festival observed by the ancient Jewish people. . . .

Even before the Israelites received the law of Moses, they were practicing circumcision. It was a very important part of the Jewish religion. Genesis 17:14 makes it clear that “the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken the covenant.” The Book of Mormon should have many references to this

practice if it is really a history of Jewish people. We searched for the words *circumcise*, *circumcised*, *circumcising*, *circumcision*, *uncircumcised*, *uncircumcision*, *foreskin* and *foreskins* and learned that the Bible uses these words 160 times. These same words only appeared 5 times in the Book of Mormon. Two of the places where they appear (2 Nephi 8:24 and 20:36) are taken directly from the Bible, Isaiah 52:1. Two other references (2 Nephi 9:33 and Helaman 9:21) are only referring to the “uncircumcised of heart.” The only remaining reference (Moroni 8:8) is found in one of the very last chapters in the book. It says that after the coming of Christ, he told the Nephites that “the law of circumcision is done away in me.” This is a very strange statement because there seems to be no evidence in the Book of Mormon that it was ever practiced. . . .

The author of the Book of Mormon seems to have been almost completely in the dark with regard to the importance of sacrifices and offerings in the ancient Jewish religion. We used the computer to search for the following words: *sacrifice*, *sacrificed*, *sacrificedst*, *sacrifices*, *sacrificeth*, *sacrificial* and *sacrificing*. The result was that the Bible yielded 298 cases where these words were used, but the Book of Mormon produced only 20. Of these 20, however, 9 referred to Christ sacrificing his life, 3 were related to human sacrifice, 2 were concerning men sacrificing their own lives, 1 was concerning the sacrifice of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” and 2 were specific instructions by Christ to the Nephites to cease making “sacrifices and your burnt offerings” after the law was fulfilled. There were, therefore, only 3 references that could relate to someone making a sacrifice according to the Jewish law.

We searched for the words *offering* and *offerings* and discovered that while they were used 989 times in the Bible, they only appeared 13 times in the Book of Mormon. Of the 13, only 4 could be linked in any way to the type of sacrifices the Jewish priests offered in their temple, 4 were directly copied from the Bible, 2 came from Christ’s words to end sacrifices and burnt offerings. The last 3 were concerning the story of Isaac in the Bible, the offering of Christ and the teaching that people should offer their “whole souls” to God. A search for the words “burnt offerings” yields only 5 places in the Book of Mormon where these words appear together. All of these were previously found in our search

for the words *offering* and *offerings*, and as we stated before, 2 of the 5 relate to “burnt offerings” being forbidden after the appearance of Christ to the Nephites. The Bible, on the other hand, has 86 places. The Book of Mormon never uses the words “burnt offering” (singular), but they do appear 184 times in the Bible.

The only verse in the Book of Mormon that relates to the inhabitants of the New World making burnt offerings is Mosiah 2:3: “And they also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses.” Instead of helping the case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, this verse actually shows that the author of the Book of Mormon really did not understand the law of Moses. M. T. Lamb points out the following problem:

According to the law of Moses the firstlings of their flocks were never offered as burnt offerings or sacrifices. All firstlings belonged to the Lord, *de jure*, and could not be counted as a man’s personal property—whereas, all burnt offerings, or sacrifices for sin of every kind, must be selected from the man’s own personal property, or be purchased with his own money for that purpose, while all firstlings of the flock, as the Lord’s property, came into the hands of the high priest, and by him could be offered up as a peace offering, not as a burnt offering or a sin offering, himself and family eating the flesh. (See Ex. 13:2, 12 and 22:29, 30; Numb. 3:13; 2d Sam. 24:24; Numb. 18:15-18 and other places.)

This one little blunder, then, proves beyond the chance of question that the Book of Mormon could not have been inspired by the Holy Spirit or by an angel of the Lord. . . . (*The Golden Bible*, pages 109-110)

That the author of the Book of Mormon would make the serious mistake described above with regard to “burnt offerings” shows that he was unfamiliar with the biblical material concerning offerings. Moreover, it appears that he was not even aware of the other kinds of Jewish offerings commanded in the Bible. In the King James Version of the Old Testament we find the following: *trespass offerings*, *meat offerings*, *drink offerings*, *wave offerings* and *peace offerings* (see Exodus, chapter 29; Leviticus, chapters 2-5; Numbers, chapter 29; Chronicles, chapter 29). The computer showed that these offerings were mentioned 519 times in the Bible. The Book of

Mormon, on the other hand, does not have a single place where any of these important offerings are mentioned! . . .

We also searched for the following words which were in some way related to Jewish sacrifices: *censer*, *censers*, *fat*, *firstfruit*, *firstfruits*, *first-fruits*, *firstling*, *firstlings*, *incense*, *fleshhook*, *fleshhooks*, *laver*, *lavens*, *oblation*, *oblations*, *oil*, *sprinkle*, *sprinkled*, *sprinkles*, *sprinkleth*, *sprinkling*, *vow*, *vowed*, *vowedst*, *vowest*, *voweth* and *vows*. The result was that the Bible yielded 757 examples. The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, only has these words 7 times! Moreover, 4 of the 7 have been plagiarized from the Bible. With regard to the 3 that are left, the word *firstlings* does appear in Mosiah 2:3. This is the verse in which Joseph Smith made the serious mistake of having the Nephites offer “the firstlings of their flock” for burnt offerings. The word *first-fruits* does appear in 2 places in the Book of Mormon, but in both cases it is referring to Jesus and the resurrection. It is clear, then, that none of these words in any way help the case for the Book of Mormon’s claim that the early inhabitants of the New World offered sacrifices according to the law of Moses. . . .

The Book of Mormon not only fails the test with regard to Jewish sacrifices, but it is also deficient when it comes to the ancient laws concerning ceremonial uncleanness. Under the Mosaic law there were certain things people did that would make them “unclean.” For instance, in Numbers 19:11-13, we read: “He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean . . . Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him . . .” That these laws concerning ceremonial uncleanness were still in effect when Jesus was born is clear from Luke 2: 21-23: “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS . . . And when the days of her [Mary’s] purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord . . . And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”

The Old Testament also gave the Jewish people strict laws concerning which type of food was clean or unclean. These instructions are still carefully observed by Jewish people today who only eat “kosher” food—i. e., food that is permitted by their dietary laws.

The author of the Book of Mormon seems to have been oblivious to these laws. While the Bible uses the words *clean* and *unclean* 327 times, they only appear in the Book of Mormon 25 times. Eleven of these, however, seem to relate to whether a person is going to heaven or to hell. For instance, in 1 Nephi 15:34, we read that “there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God . . .” In 6 places the material has been taken directly from the Bible, 3 relate to unclean spirits and 5 are concerning other matters that have no relationship to the ceremonial laws concerning uncleanness in the Bible.

In our search to find if the Book of Mormon mentioned anything about these ancient laws, we searched for the following words: *purification*, *purifications*, *purified*, *purifier*, *purifieth*, *purify* and *purifying*. The Bible yielded 49 places where these words occurred. While the Book of Mormon had 10 places, 8 related to Christ’s purifying work in a person’s life and the other 2 were derived through plagiarism from the Bible.

The Bible described those who ate unclean things or engaged in activities which made them unclean as being “defiled.” We, therefore, searched for the following words: *defile*, *defiled*, *defilest*, *defiles*, *defileth*, *defiling* and *undefiled*. While the Bible contained 127 places where these words were used, the Book of Mormon yielded only one place—Mormon 8:28. Even this verse, however, had nothing to do with the Jewish laws. It is a prophecy concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon which states that in the latter days churches would be “defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts . . .”

Our research with regard to the ancient laws concerning ceremonial uncleanness shows that the people portrayed in the Book of Mormon as Israelites seemed to know nothing about these laws. (*Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 59-63)

Mormon apologists who have dealt with our work try to minimize the problems involved with regard to the scarcity of Jewish customs in the Book

of Mormon. Tom Nibley used a very foolish analogy in an attempt to discredit our research:

At this point I pause for a moment of bemused pondering to try to comprehend how someone could be so caught up in their agenda that they could do such violence to the English language. And apparently do it with a straight face.

Now let’s check out some of the other methods our meritorious mentors subscribe to. I made mention of the Tanners’ making claims for Joseph Smith and then debunking those claims, mostly by pointing out that there are lots of things that are missing, without ever justifying their apparent assertion that those things are necessary. Let’s use an analogy to show how that’s done. Perhaps I read somewhere, “Bob says he drove from New York to Los Angeles over a five-day period, bringing his mother with him.” “A-hah!” cry I, “A canard! Lies upon lies and deception following deception!” and, using the Tanners’ methods, I can prove it. To drive from New York to Los Angeles would obviously require a car, would it not? Well, yes, a truck is a possibility, but nevertheless, an automotive vehicle would be necessary, . . . *but there is no mention of any such vehicle in Bob’s story!* Why this astounding oversight? Especially since Bob purports to come from a society in which automobiles were not only used, but practically venerated. (I’m thinking here of the Tanners’ discussion of the Passover in *Covering Up the Black Hole*: “Since the Nephites were supposed to have been Israelites, . . . they should have celebrated the Passover almost six hundred times after they came to America” [p. 59]. Well, the Book of Mormon says the people kept the law of Moses, which includes the Passover [2 Nephi 5:10, Alma 25:15]. Why draw pictures and diagrams when that has very little to do with the purpose for which the book was written, namely to testify of Christ?) Obviously this “Bob” has something to hide. If he did indeed drive, why is there no mention of gas stations? Does he really believe that we are so naive as to accept the incredible supposition that he drove all that way without once stopping for gas?

And why no mention of cities? Any child can tell you that America is literally polka-dotted with cities from one coast to the other, but “Bob” seems to be totally unaware of that well-known fact. Bob also doesn’t seem to care much about his family either. Oh, yes, he mentions his mother—significantly not giving her a name—but father,

brothers, sisters, cousins, in-laws, grandparents, etc., . . . not a word. I could go on and on about the astonishing lack of musical instruments, dishes, and utensils (Bob doesn't eat?!!!), clothes and footgear, medical supplies, toys, earwax, cantaloupes, etc., but by now the message should be clear; Bob is covering something up. (I understand there were a series of bank robberies in Wichita that week. Hmmmm.) And not only that, he has the temerity to bring his *mother* into the picture, making that sainted soul an accomplice to his nefarious scheming. The man apparently has no shame at all!

Notice how what Bob said is never attacked, but only what he didn't say: however, by taking the rhetorical stance of high-minded superiority, and thereby making Bob's story sound ridiculous even though it is perfectly logical and reasonable as first told, Bob can be made to appear a rascal to the uncritical observer. This is done over and over in *Covering Up the Black Hole*. The "evidence" used to back up these claims is a list of meaningless words that go on ad nauseum. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 280-281)

Tom Nibley's analogy seems to be more like a filibuster than a serious attempt to deal with the problems at hand. It, in fact, reminds us of the writings of his father, Hugh Nibley and leads us to believe that he was trying to imitate Dr. Nibley. As we noted above, in his book *Sounding Brass*, Hugh Nibley wrote a long section entitled, "How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book." In this article Dr. Nibley went to great lengths to ridicule the logic of "Anti-Mormon" writers. Below is a sample taken from his book:

RULE 18: *In place of evidence use Rhetoric!*  
When one is making grave criminal charges, either directly or by broad implication as all anti-Mormon writers do, questions of evidence can be very bothersome unless one has the wisdom and foresight to avoid all such questions. Surprisingly enough, this can be done rather easily . . . The basic principles of the Classical Rhetorical method are two: (1) *eikos*, that is the building up of a case not on facts but on probabilities, and (2) the use of *loci communes*, standard responses to standard situations . . . the appeal to familiar stock phrases to avoid thought and the use of emotive words of tested reliability to avoid evidence. We can illustrate how these two principles work together in a situation which we shall call The House That Jack Built:

1. It is common knowledge that Jack built a house. It is that house which we are now discussing.

2. There are rumors that a good deal of malt—very probably stolen—was stored in the house. What lends plausibility to the report is the building of the house itself—by Jack. Why a house, if not to store the stolen malt?

3. It is said that the malt was eaten by rats, and in view of the high nutriment content of malt (See Appendix A for references to scholarly and scientific studies proving beyond a doubt that malt is nutritious), there is no good reason for doubting this report.

4. The rats may very possibly have been killed by a cat, as some believe, and there is certainly nothing intrinsically improbable in the event. On the contrary, studies made at the Rodent Institute of the U. of So and So, etc. . . . The report that only ONE rat ate the malt is of course erroneous, since the consumption of such a large quantity of malt would require many years and probably a large number of rats.

5. That the cat was chased by a dog is only to be expected. Only a fanatic would question it.

6. The same applies to the dog's being tossed by a cow, though that is admittedly a less common event.

7. "AT ANY RATE" (a very useful expression) we can be reasonably certain that the cow was milked by a milk-maid—what other kind of maid could it have been?—and also (since there is no good reason to doubt it) that the milkmaid, whose name may have been Bertha, was wooed by a man all tattered and torn. There are unmistakable references in the newspapers of the time (or at most a generation later) to poorly-dressed men known as "tramps" roaming parts of the country. There can therefore be little doubt that Bertha was engaged in a passionate public wooing.

8. The exact date of Bertha's marriage to her tatterdemallion lover is not known, though it *may* have been some time late in January 1858. Certainly the court records of the time are silent on any earlier or later marriage.

9. Though there is no direct evidence that Bertha was mistreated by the man who wooed her so passionately, there is every evidence of cruel neglect both in the proven fact that Bertha apparently had no house to live in (at least there is no record of her having a house in the County

archives) and in the character of the man who married and abused her. . . .

Let the student check the above ten points for evidence. There is none! We have given the world a suffering Bertha and her brutal spouse without having to prove a thing; it is all *eikos*—we have created a little world of our own, and got the reader so emotionally involved that he is ready to lynch the Man-All-Tattered-and-Torn or any of his followers without bothering to ask whether he even existed or not. (*Sounding Brass*, by Hugh Nibley, 1963, pages 81-84)

Hugh Nibley devoted a great deal of space in his book to his tongue-in-cheek explanation of how a beginner can “Write an Anti-Mormon Book.” His son, Tom, likewise pokes fun at us by describing how the Book of Mormon would have to be written to “please the Tanners.” His eighth rule is, “If you want to please the Tanners, aim for the airy aeries of arcane academia where your production can be pedantically pondered by profes[s]orial pedagogues such as, well—the *Tanners!!!* If, after reading these criteria, you are confused as to how you should proceed, don’t worry, the world probably isn’t holding its breath in anticipation of your epic.” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 283-284)

### Mormon’s Mistake

While L. Ara Norwood is also very opposed to our work and even compares us with “Ananias and Sapphira,” his work is far superior to that of either Hugh Nibley or his son, Tom Nibley. Norwood wrote the following in an attempt to undermine our book:

The Tanners also feel that, if the Book of Mormon were a valid record of Jewish peoples, it would contain much information on the Passover, feasts, new moons, the Sabbath day, circumcision, tithing, the temple, and so forth. Since it does not, according to the Tanners, it is obviously the fabrication of Joseph Smith. While one can understand the Tanners’ surprise, they reach hasty and naive conclusions. . . .

Another tendency of the Tanners is to draw premature conclusions from ambiguous evidence. On page 62 they cite Mosiah 2:3 to the effect that firstlings were used by the Nephite/Mulekite peoples as burnt offerings according to the law of Moses. They then go on to quote their anti-

Mormon predecessor, M. T. Lamb, to the effect that firstlings were never used as burnt (holocaust) offerings in the Mosaic system. And *they are right*. They therefore conclude that “the author of the Book of Mormon . . . was unfamiliar with the biblical material concerning offerings.” . . .

But have the Tanners (or M. T. Lamb) considered other possibilities? For instance, have they considered that it is the prophet/historian Mormon who wrote those words in Mosiah 2:3? Have they considered that Mormon, who lived hundreds of years after the Mosaic law was fulfilled, may not have been clear himself on the particulars of Mosaic sacrifice? It is certainly possible that Mormon, after reviewing the records left by Mosiah and abridging them, may have incorrectly recorded just how their various sacrifices took place. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 160, 161, 165-166)

Mr. Norwood would apparently have us believe that when the scribe, who had custody of the large plates of Nephi, wrote the story of the Nephites offering up “burnt offerings” over a century before the coming of Christ, he recorded the matter correctly. Later, however, when Mormon abridged these records he botched up this part of the account and “incorrectly recorded” what had actually taken place. While this is an interesting way of skirting around the problem, it does raise the question of whether Mormon may have made other errors in his abridgment. (We have already shown that John Tvedtnes feels that the Book of Mormon may contain a great deal of material on warfare because “Mormon, as a military leader, would have been more prone to speak of warfare than others . . .”)

In any case, we cannot completely dismiss Norwood’s suggestion. It is possible that Mormon could have made a mistake in this portion of his abridgment of the record. Unfortunately for Mormon defenders, however, the error occurs at the only place in the Book of Mormon that gives a description of the animals used for “burnt offerings.” The most serious problem about this whole matter is that the small plates of Nephi, which were written by people who were then living under the law of Moses, do not give us any material which would lead us to believe that the authors had any real understanding of Old Testament sacrifices and other Jewish customs. Mr. Norwood cannot look to Mormon (who lived after the law of Moses had been abolished) to excuse the lack of such material in the small plates.

The reader will remember that Mormon did not abridge these plates. What appears in this portion of the Book of Mormon is supposed to be a correct translation of plates which covered almost five hundred years of Nephite history. During this entire period the Nephites were supposed to be under the law of Moses, and historians were on the scene to record the events as they transpired. The only reasonable explanation for the lack of these important Jewish religious practices is that the author, whom we believe to be Joseph Smith, was not familiar enough with these Jewish laws and customs to feel competent in writing about them. He felt much more at home with the Christian religion he was brought up in, and therefore filled the pages of the Book of Mormon with Christian material.

Matthew Roper made these observations concerning our work with regard to Jewish religious practices:

Since a computer check of the Book of Mormon does not reveal the existence of words such as “Passover,” “Jubilee,” or “booths,” the authors conclude, “In the Book of Mormon . . . there is *not even one case where a Jewish Feast or Festival was celebrated in the New World!*” (p. 59). Although I would like to give the authors the benefit of the doubt, I find it difficult to believe that they are completely ignorant of the work that has been done in recent years on King Benjamin’s address. On page 84 they quote from Hugh Nibley; why don’t they mention his studies on Near Eastern festivals and the Book of Mormon? Contrary to the authors’ assertion, it can be shown—rather convincingly, in my opinion—that Mosiah 1-6 represents a prime example of a New Year rite in the ancient Near East, such as the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. Scholars have also noted elements of the ancient coronation rite and covenant renewal ceremony in Mosiah 1-6. . . .

One has to wonder if the authors are deliberately suppressing such information. . . . most of the criticisms which they raise are merely rehashes or expansions on familiar criticisms of previous anti-Mormon polemicists, with little attempt to understand why such arguments have proved inadequate in the past. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 185-187)

John Tvedtnes uses a similar approach in trying to side-step the problem with regard to the charge that Jewish religious material is missing in the Book

of Mormon. Although Mr. Tvedtnes does not attempt to overthrow our research which shows that Jewish festivals are not mentioned by name in the Book of Mormon, he strongly asserts that these festivals were indeed observed:

Another item the Tanners consider critical but “missing” from the Book of Mormon is reference to Jewish festivals. In this they appear to be unaware of the fact that I published, in 1978, a rather detailed article showing that the Nephites practiced the Feast of Tabernacles. . . . I participated in a F.A.R.M.S. round-table discussion in Provo in which scholars who had been following up on my earlier work presented their most recent findings. All of the Old Testament festivals have now been identified in the Book of Mormon from their particular characteristics. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 216)

In a footnote on the same page, Mr. Tvedtnes states: “Some of the results appear in John W. Welch, compiler, ‘King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,’ F.A.R.M.S. preliminary report, 1985.”

Both John Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper refer to “King Benjamin’s Speech,” found in Mosiah, chapters 1-6, as evidence that the Nephites practiced the Feast of Tabernacles. We find it very hard to believe that Mormon defenders would point to Benjamin’s address to try to prove anything concerning Jewish festivals. This is, in fact, the very portion of the Book of Mormon which has the blunder concerning the Nephites bringing “the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses” (Mosiah 2:3). Moreover, although the speech was supposed to have been given over a century before Christ was even born (“About 124 B. C.”), it is filled with Christian terminology. While it seems to have no significant relationship to Old Testament practices, it closely resembles the type of Protestant revival meetings which Joseph Smith attended in his youth.

We are so certain that these six chapters contain nothing concerning the Feast of Tabernacles or any other Jewish festival that we are including the entire text in this response. The reader can examine these chapters and see that we are presenting the truth. The chapters which follow are photographically reproduced from the Mormon Church’s own 1992 printing of the Book of Mormon. We have omitted



the chapter headings to save space. The headings on these six chapters were not written by Joseph Smith and did not appear in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. In fact, they were not even included in the 1888 edition.

In addition to giving the text of the first six chapters, we have made a computer study of these chapters using the church's *Computerized Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-*

*day Saints*. Parallels between the New Testament are shown with handwriting at the side of the text. While it can be argued that some of these parallels are only a coincidence, some are so strong that it is impossible to escape the conclusion that their true source is the King James Version of the New Testament. We have done our best in this study to eliminate material which is found in both the Old and New Testaments.

## THE BOOK OF MOSIAH

### CHAPTER 1

AND now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days.

2 (And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

3 And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.

4 (For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.

5 (I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments al-

AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT HE - MARK 2:23

MIGHT BECOME ROM. 4:18

THE PROPHECIES WHICH I TIM. 1:8

THIS PRESENT TIME LUKE 18:30

MYSTERIES OF GOD I COR. 4:1

FOR IT WERE I COR. 9:15

NOT KNOWING THE MATT. 22:29

NOT POSSIBLE THAT ACTS 2:24

EXCEPT IT WERE JOHN 6:65

I SAY UNTO YOU MY LUKE 12:4

FOR THESE THINGS WHICH LUKE 21:6

**OUR FATHERS WOULD ACTS 7:39** **ways before our eyes, that even our fathers would** have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know **nothing concerning** these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct. **NOTHING CONCERNING HEB. 7:14**

6 O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes.

**DILIGENTLY THAT TITUS 3:13** 7 And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should **keep the commandments of God** that ye may prosper in the land according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers. **KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD - REV. 12:17**

**WHICH ARE NOT WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK-JOHN 20:30** 8 And many more things did king Benjamin teach his sons, **which are not written in this book**. 9 And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of teaching his sons, that he waxed old, and he saw **that he must** very soon go the way of all the earth; therefore, he thought it expedient that he should confer the kingdom upon one of his sons. **THAT HE MUST MATT. 16:21**

10 Therefore, he had Mosiah brought before him; and these are the words which he spake unto him, saying: My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together; for **on the morrow** I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth that thou art a king and a ruler over this people, whom the Lord our God hath given us.

**ON THE MORROW I ACTS 25:17** 11 And moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord.

**THAT NEVER SHALL BE MARK 9:43** 12 **And I give unto them** a name **that never shall be** blotted out, except it be through transgression. **AND I GIVE UNTO THEM JOHN 10:28**

13 Yea, and moreover **I say unto you, that if** this highly favored people of the Lord should fall into transgression, and become a wicked and an adulterous people, that the Lord will deliver them up, that

**I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT IF MATT. 18:17**

thereby they become <sup>b</sup>weak like unto their brethren; and he will no more <sup>c</sup>preserve them by his matchless and marvelous power, as he has hitherto preserved our fathers.

I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT  
MATT. 18:19

14 For (I say unto you, that if he had not) extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers they must have fallen into the hands of the Lamanites, and become victims to their hatred.

IF HE HAD NOT  
MATT. 26:24

15 And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of these sayings to his son, that he gave him <sup>a</sup>charge concerning all the affairs of the kingdom.

16 And moreover, he also gave him charge concerning the records which were engraven on the <sup>a</sup>plates of brass; and also the plates of Nephi; and also, the <sup>b</sup>sword of Laban, and the <sup>c</sup>ball or director, which led our fathers through the wilderness, which was prepared by the hand of the Lord that thereby they might be led, every one according to the heed and diligence which they gave unto him.

17 Therefore, as they were <sup>a</sup>unfaithful they did not prosper nor progress in their journey, but were <sup>b</sup>driven back, and incurred the displeasure of God upon them; and therefore they were smitten with famine and sore <sup>a</sup>afflictions, to stir them up in <sup>d</sup>remembrance of their duty.

18 And now, it came to pass that Mosiah went and did as his father had commanded him, and proclaimed unto all the people who were in the land of Zarahemla that thereby they might gather themselves together to go up to the <sup>a</sup>temple to hear the words which his father should speak unto them.

MIGHT GATHER TOGETHER  
EPH. 1:10

## CHAPTER 2

AND it came to pass that after Mosiah had done as his father had commanded him, and had made a proclamation throughout all the land, that the people <sup>a</sup>gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the <sup>b</sup>temple to <sup>c</sup>hear the <sup>d</sup>words which king Benjamin should speak unto them.

2 And there were a great number, even so many that they did not number them; for they had multiplied exceedingly and waxed great in the land.

AND THEY ALSO TOOK  
ACTS: 27:36

3 (And they also took) of the <sup>a</sup>firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer <sup>b</sup>sacrifice and <sup>c</sup>burnt <sup>d</sup>offerings <sup>e</sup>according to the law of Moses;

4 And also that they might give thanks to the Lord their God, who

had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, and who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and had appointed just men to be their teachers, and also a just man (to be their king) who had established peace in the land of Zarahemla, and who had taught them to keep the commandments of God, that they might rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all men.

TO BE THEIR KING  
ACTS 13:22

KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS  
OF GOD - REV. 12:17

5 And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another.

MIGHT REMAIN IN  
JOHN 15:11

6 And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them;

7 For the multitude being so great that king Benjamin could not teach them all within the walls of the temple, therefore he caused a tower to be erected, that thereby his people might hear the words which he should speak unto them.

BEGAN TO SPEAK  
MARK 12:1

8 And it came to pass that he began to speak to his people from the tower; and they could not all hear his words because of the greatness of the multitude; therefore he caused that the words which he spake should be written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also receive his words.

AND IT CAME TO PASS,  
THAT HE - MARK 2:23

SHOULD BE WRITTEN  
JOHN 21:25

9 And these are the words which he spake and caused to be written, saying: My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view.

THE MYSTERIES OF GOD  
I COR. 4:1

I OF MYSELF  
JOHN 8:42

10 I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man.

MORE THAN A  
MATT 11:9

IN BODY AND  
I COR. 7:34

11 But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities (in body and) mind; yet I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people; and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power,

WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH - MARK 12:30

to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me.

SUFFERED TO MARK 10:4

12 (I say unto you that) as I have been (suffered to) spend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have not sought (gold nor silver nor) any manner of riches of you;

I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT MATT. 3:9

GOLD, NOR SILVER, NOR MATT. 10:9

13 Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves one of another, nor that ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, (in all things which) he hath commanded you—

IN ALL THINGS WHICH GAL. 3:10

LABOUR, WORKING WITH OUR OWN HANDS - I COR. 4:12

14 And even I, myself, have (labored with mine own hands) that I might serve you, and that ye should not be (laden with taxes), and that there should nothing come upon you which was (grievous to be borne)—and (of all these things which) I have spoken, (ye yourselves are) witnesses this day.

OF ALL THESE THINGS WHICH LUKE 24:14

GRIEVOUS TO BE BORNE MATT. 23:4

YE YOURSELVES ARE 2 COR. 11:14

DO I TELL MARK 11:33

15 Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things that I might (boast, neither (do I tell)) these things that thereby I (might accuse) you; (but I tell you) these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear (conscience before God this day).

MIGHT ACCUSE - MATT. 12:10

BUT I TELL YOU LUKE 9:27

CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD UNTIL THIS DAY - ACTS 23:1

BECAUSE I SAID UNTO JOHN 1:50

16 Behold, I say unto you that (because I said unto) you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God.

SERVICE OF YOUR PHIL. 2:17

17 And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn (wisdom); that ye may learn that when ye are in the (service of your) fellow beings ye are only (in the service of your) God.

SERVE ONE ANOTHER GAL. 5:13

18 Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, (whom ye call your king), do labor to (serve you, then) ought not ye to labor to (serve one another)?

WHOM YE CALL THE KING MARK 15:12

WHOM YE CALL THE KING MARK 15:12

I SAY UNTO YOU, MY LUKE 12:4

19 And behold also, if I, (whom ye call your king), who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to (thank your heavenly King)!

YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT AND SOUL I THESS. 5:23

GRANTED THAT - REV. 19:8

20 (I say unto you, my) brethren, that if you should render all the (thanks and praise which (your whole soul)) has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and (preserved you), and has caused that ye should (rejoice), and (has granted that) ye should live in (peace one with another)—

PEACE ONE WITH ANOTHER MARK 9:50

I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT IF MATT 18:19

21 (I say unto you that if) ye should (serve him who has created you) from the beginning, and is (preserving you) from day to day, by lending

LIVE, AND MOVE, AND  
ACTS 17:28

you <sup>a</sup>breath, that ye may (live and move and) do according to your own <sup>a</sup>will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your <sup>a</sup>whole souls yet ye would be (unprofitable servants).

UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS  
LUKE 17:10

22 And behold, all that he <sup>a</sup>requires of you is to <sup>b</sup>keep his commandments; and he has <sup>a</sup>promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth <sup>a</sup>vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do <sup>a</sup>keep his <sup>c</sup>commandments he doth bless you and prosper you.

23 And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

THAT YE SHOULD DO AS  
JOHN 13:15

24 And secondly, he doth <sup>a</sup>require (that ye should do as) he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately <sup>b</sup>bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

25 And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were <sup>a</sup>created of the <sup>b</sup>dust of the earth; but behold, it <sup>a</sup>belongeth to him who created you.

WHOM YE CALL THE KING  
MARK 15:12

26 And I, even I, (whom ye call your king) am <sup>a</sup>no better than ye yourselves are; for I am also of the dust. And ye behold that I am old, and am about to yield up this mortal frame to its mother earth.

27 Therefore, as I said unto you that I had <sup>a</sup>served you, <sup>b</sup>walking with a clear (conscience before God), even so I at this time have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might (be found blameless) and that your <sup>a</sup>blood should not come upon me, when I shall stand to be <sup>a</sup>judged of God of the things (whereof he hath) commanded me concerning you.

CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD  
ACTS 23:1

BEING FOUND BLAMELESS  
I TIM. 3:10

WHEREOF HE HATH  
ACTS 17:31

28 I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together that I might <sup>a</sup>rid my garments of your blood, at this period of time when I am about to go down to my grave, that I might go down in peace, and my immortal (spirit may) join the <sup>a</sup>choirs above in singing the praises of a just God.

SPIRIT MAY - I COR. 15:5

29 And moreover, I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that (I might declare unto you) that I can no longer be your teacher, nor your king;

I DECLARE UNTO YOU  
I COR. 15:1

30 For even at this time, my whole frame doth tremble exceedingly while attempting (to speak unto you);

TO SPEAK UNTO YOU  
I THESS. 2:2

but the Lord God doth support me, and hath suffered me that I should speak unto you, and hath commanded me that I should declare unto you this day, that my son Mosiah is a <sup>a</sup>king and a ruler over you.

I DECLARE UNTO YOU  
I COR. 15:1

THAT YE SHOULD DO AS  
JOHN 13:15

31 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should do as ye have hitherto done. As ye have kept my commandments, and also the commandments of my father, and have prospered, and have been kept from falling into the hands of your enemies, even so if ye shall keep the commandments of my son, or the commandments of God which shall be delivered unto you by him, ye shall prosper in the land, and your enemies shall have no power over you.

DELIVERED UNTO YOU  
I COR. 11:23

32 But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you and ye <sup>ye</sup>list to <sup>ye</sup>obey the evil spirit, (which was spoken of) by my father Mosiah.

CONTENTIONS AMONG YOU  
I COR. 1:11

WHICH WAS SPOKEN OF  
MATT. 2:15

33 For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to <sup>ye</sup>obey that spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his <sup>ye</sup>sins, the same (drinketh <sup>ye</sup>damnation to) his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an <sup>ye</sup>everlasting <sup>ye</sup>punishment having transgressed the law of (God contrary to) his own knowledge.

DRINKETH DAMNATION TO  
I COR. 11:29

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT  
MATT. 25:46

GOD CONTRARY TO  
ACTS 18:13

ANY AMONG YOU - JAMES 5:13

34 I say unto you, that there are not (any among you) (except it be) your little children that have not been taught concerning these things; but what (knoweth that ye) are eternally <sup>ye</sup>indebted to your heavenly Father, to render to him <sup>ye</sup>all that you have and are; and also have been taught concerning the <sup>ye</sup>records which contain (the prophecies which) have been (spoken by the holy prophets) even down to the time our father, Lehi, left Jerusalem;

EXCEPT IT BE - MATT. 19:9

KNOWETH THAT YE  
MATT. 6:32

THE PROPHECIES WHICH  
I TIM. 1:18

SPOKEN BEFORE BY THE  
HOLY PROPHETS - 2 PET. 3:2

THAT WHICH WAS  
COMMANDED - HEB. 12:20

35 And also, all that has been spoken by our fathers until now. And behold, also, they spake (that which was commanded) them of the Lord; therefore, they are (just and true).

JUST AND TRUE - REV. 15:3

THAT, AFTER YE HAVE  
HEB. 10:36

36 And now, (I say unto you, my brethren, (that after ye have) known and have been taught) all these things, if ye should transgress and go <sup>ye</sup>contrary to that which has been spoken, (that ye do <sup>ye</sup>withdraw yourselves from) the Spirit of the Lord, that it may (have no place in you) to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—

I SAY UNTO YOU MY  
LUKE 12:4

AND HAVE BEEN TAUGHT  
EPH. 4:21

THAT YE WITHDRAW YOURSELVES  
FROM - 2 THESS. 3:6

GUIDE YOU INTO  
JOHN 16:13

HATH NO PLACE IN YOU  
JOHN 8:37

37 I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open <sup>ye</sup>rebellion against God; therefore he <sup>ye</sup>listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness therefore, the Lord

ENEMY OF ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS  
ACTS 13:10

HATH NO PLACE IN JOHN 8:37 — has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholly temples — DWELLETH NOT IN TEMPLES ACTS 7:48

UNQUENCHABLE FIRE MATT. 3:12 — 38 Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever. — ASCENDETH UP FOREVER AND EVER - REV. 14:11

AND NOW I SAY UNTO YOU ACTS 5:38 — 39 (And now I say unto you) that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment.

UNDERSTAND MY SPEECH JOHN 8:43 — 40 O, all ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might understand, I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression. — PRAY THAT YE - LUKE 22:40  
A REMEMBRANCE - HEB. 10:3

FAITHFUL TO THE - ACTS 16:15 — 41 And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it. — KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD - REV. 12:17  
AND SPIRITUAL - COL. 1:9

CHAPTER 3

SOMEWHAT MORE - 2 COR. 10:8 — AND again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come. — TO SPEAK UNTO YOU - 1 THESS. 2:2  
THAT WHICH IS TO COME EPH. 1:21

AN ANGEL FROM - GAL. 1:8 — 2 And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me.

DECLARE UNTO YOU I COR. 15:1 — 3 And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. — GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY - LUKE 2:10

BE FILLED WITH JOY 2 TIM. 1:4 — 4 For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy. — THEY MAY ALSO - 2 TIM. 2:10

THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH - REV. 19:6 — 5 For behold, (the time cometh) and is not far distant, that with power, (the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth) (who was, and is) from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the — THE TIME COMETH - JOHN 16:2  
WHICH WAS, AND IS REV. 4:8



children of men, and shall dwell in a <sup>a</sup>tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty <sup>'</sup>miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing (the lame to walk) (the <sup>'</sup>blind to receive their sight) (and the deaf to hear) and curing all manner of diseases.

THE LAME TO WALK  
MATT. 15:31

THE BLIND RECEIVE THEIR  
SIGHT - MATT. 11:5

AND THE DEAF HEAR - MATT 11:5

THE EVIL SPIRITS  
ACTS - 19:12

6 And he shall (cast out <sup>a</sup>devils) or the <sup>'</sup>evil spirits) which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.

CAST OUT DEVILS - MATT. 12:27

ANGUISH, FOR - JOHN 16:21

7 And lo, (he shall <sup>a</sup>suffer) <sup>b</sup>temptations, and pain of body, <sup>'</sup>hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can <sup>a</sup>suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, <sup>'</sup>blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his (anguish for) the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

HE SHALL SUFFER - I COR. 3:15

JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF  
GOD - MARK 1:1

8 And he shall be called (Jesus <sup>'</sup>Christ, the <sup>'</sup>Son of God) the (Father of heaven and earth) the <sup>'</sup>Creator (of all things from the beginning) and his <sup>'</sup>mother shall be called Mary.

FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND  
EARTH - MATT. 11:25

OF ALL THINGS FROM THE  
VERY FIRST - LUKE 1:3

HIS MOTHER CALLED MARY  
MATT. 13:55

HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN  
JOHN 1:11

9 And lo, (he cometh unto his own) that <sup>a</sup>salvation might come unto the children of men even (through <sup>'</sup>faith on his name) and even after all this they shall (consider him) a man, and say that he hath a <sup>'</sup>devil) and shall <sup>a</sup>scourge him, and shall (crucify him).

THROUGH FAITH IN HIS NAME  
ACTS 3:16

CONSIDER HIM - HEB. 12:3

SAY HE HATH A DEVIL  
LUKE 7:33

AND SHALL SCOURGE HIM, AND  
SHALL - MARK 10:34

CRUCIFY HIM - MATT. 20:19

10 And (he shall <sup>a</sup>rise the <sup>'</sup>third day) (from the dead; and behold, he standeth) (to <sup>'</sup>judge the world) and behold, (all these things are done) that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

HE SHALL RISE THE THIRD  
DAY - MARK 9:31

TO JUDGE THE WORLD  
JOHN 12:47

FROM THE DEAD; AND, BEHOLD,  
HE - MATT. 28:7

ALL THESE THINGS ARE DONE  
MARK 4:11

THE WILL OF GOD  
MARK 3:35

11 For behold, and also his <sup>a</sup>blood <sup>'</sup>atoneth for the sins of those who have <sup>'</sup>fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing (the <sup>'</sup>will of God) concerning them, or who have <sup>'</sup>ignorantly sinned.

KNOWETH THAT HE.  
REV. 12:12

12 But wo, wo unto him who (knoweth that he) <sup>'</sup>rebelleth against God! For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith (on the <sup>'</sup>Lord Jesus Christ).

ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST  
ACTS 11:17

HIS HOLY PROPHETS  
LUKE 1:70

13 And the Lord God hath sent (his holy <sup>'</sup>prophets) among all the children of men, to declare these things

TO EVERY NATION, AND KIN-  
DRED, AND TONGUE - REV. 14:6

(to every kindred, nation, and tongue,) that thereby whosoever should believe (that Christ should come, (the same might) receive (re-

THAT CHRIST SHOULD  
ACTS 26:23

THE SAME MIGHT  
2 COR. 9:5

mission of their sins) and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even <sup>'</sup>as though he (had already) come among them.

HAD ALREADY - PHIL. 3:12

REMISSION OF THEIR SINS  
LUKE 1:77

14 Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a <sup>'</sup>stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a <sup>'</sup>law, even the <sup>'</sup>law of Moses.

UNDERSTOOD NOT THAT  
JOHN 8:27

15 And (many signs, and wonders, and <sup>'</sup>types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they <sup>'</sup>hardened their hearts, and understood not that) the <sup>'</sup>law of

MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS  
ACTS 5:12

	Moses availed <u>nothing</u> <sup>except</sup> it were through the <sup>atonement</sup> of his blood.	<u>NOTHING, EXCEPT IT JOHN 3:27</u>
<u>IF IT WERE POSSIBLE MATT. 24:24</u>	16 And even <u>if it were possible</u> that little <sup>children</sup> <u>could sin they could not be saved;</u> <u>but I say unto you they are</u> <sup>blessed</sup> ; for behold, <u>(as in Adam)</u> or <u>(by nature)</u> they fall, <u>even so the</u> <sup>(blood of Christ)</sup> <u>atoneth</u> for their sins.	<u>BUT I SAY UNTO YOU MATT. 5:22</u> <u>AS IN ADAM - I COR. 15:22</u> <u>BLOOD OF CHRIST - EPH. 2:13</u>
<u>BY NATURE - EPH. 2:3</u>		
<u>EVEN SO THE - JOHN 5:21</u>		
	17 And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be <u>(no other name)</u> given nor any other way nor means whereby <sup>salvation</sup> can come unto the children of men, only in and through <u>(the name of Christ)</u> the <sup>Lord Omnipotent</sup> .	<u>NONE OTHER NAME - ACTS 4:12</u> <u>THE NAME OF CHRIST 2 TIM. 2:19</u>
<u>JUDGEMENT IS JUST JOHN 5:30</u>	18 For behold he judgeth, and his <u>judgment is just</u> and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men <u>(drink</u> <sup>damnation</sup> <u>to)</u> their own souls except they humble themselves <u>(and</u> <sup>become as little children</sup> <u>and believe that</u> <sup>salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through</sup> <u>(the</u> <sup>atonement</sup> <u>blood of Christ)</u> the <sup>Lord Omnipotent</sup> .	<u>DRINKETH DAMNATION TO I COR. 11:29</u> <u>AND BELIEVE, THAT - JOHN 10:38</u>
<u>AND BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN - MATT. 18:3</u>		
<u>THE BLOOD OF CHRIST I COR. 10:16</u>		
	19 For <u>(the</u> <sup>natural</sup> <u>man)</u> is an <sup>enemy</sup> to God, and has been from the <sup>fall</sup> of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he <sup>yields</sup> to the enticings of <u>(the Holy</u> <sup>Spirit</sup> <u>and putteth off</u> <u>(the</u> <sup>natural</sup> <u>man)</u> and <u>becometh a</u> <sup>saint</sup> through the atonement of <u>(Christ the Lord)</u> and <u>becometh as a</u> <sup>child</sup> , <sup>submissive</sup> , meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.	<u>THE NATURAL MAN - I COR. 2:14</u> <u>THE HOLY SPIRIT - LUKE 11:13</u> <u>THE NATURAL MAN - I COR. 2:14</u> <u>CHRIST THE LORD - LUKE 2:11</u>
<u>AND BECOMETH A - MATT. 13:32</u>		
<u>I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT THE MATT. 21:31</u>	20 And moreover, <u>(I say unto you, that the</u> <sup>time shall come</sup> <u>when the</u> <sup>knowledge of a</sup> <sup>Savior</sup> <u>shall spread throughout</u> <u>(every nation, kindred, tongue, and people).</u>	<u>TIME SHALL COME - JOHN 16:4</u> <u>EVERY NATION, AND KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE - REV. 14:6</u>
<u>THE TIME COMETH - JOHN 16:2</u>	21 And behold, when <u>(that time cometh)</u> none shall <u>(be found</u> <sup>blameless</sup> <u>)</u> before God, <u>(except it be)</u> little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent.	<u>BEING FOUND BLAMELESS I TIM. 3:10</u> <u>EXCEPT IT BE - MATT 19:9</u>
<u>THE THINGS WHICH THE I COR. 10:20</u>	22 And even at this time, when thou shalt have taught thy people <u>(the things which the)</u> Lord thy God hath commanded thee, even then <u>are they found no more</u> <u>(blameless in the)</u> sight of God, only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee.	<u>BLAMELESS IN THE - I COR. 1:8</u>
	23 And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me.	
	24 And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, <u>(at the judgment day; whereof they shall be)</u> <u>(judged, every man according to his</u> <sup>works</sup> <u>)</u> whether they be good, or whether they be evil.	<u>AT THE JUDGMENT - LUKE 10:14</u> <u>JUDGED EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS - REV. 20:13</u>

25 And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful <sup>a</sup>view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of <sup>b</sup>misery and <sup>c</sup>endless torment, (from whence they) can no more return; therefore they have <sup>d</sup>drunk damnation to their own souls.

FROM WHENCE THEY ACTS 14:26

DRINKETH DAMNATION TO - I COR. 11:29

26 Therefore, they have drunk out of the <sup>a</sup>cup of the wrath of God, which justice (could no more) deny unto them than it could deny that <sup>b</sup>Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden <sup>c</sup>fruit; therefore, <sup>d</sup>mercy could have claim on them no more forever.

DRINK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD, WHICH - REV. 14:10

COULD NO MORE - MARK 1:45

AND THEIR TORMENT - REV. 9:5

A LAKE OF FIRE BURNING WITH BRIMSTONE - REV. 19:20

ASCENDETH UP FOR EVER AND EVER - REV. 14:11

27 (And their <sup>a</sup>torment) is as (a <sup>b</sup>lake of fire and brimstone) whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up <sup>c</sup>forever and ever. Thus (hath the Lord commanded me. Amen.

HATH THE LORD COMMANDED ACTS 13:47

CHAPTER 4

AND now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been <sup>d</sup>delivered unto him by the <sup>a</sup>angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about <sup>b</sup>on the multitude, and behold they had <sup>c</sup>fallen to the earth, for the <sup>d</sup>fear of the Lord had come upon them.

DELIVERED UNTO HIM LUKE 4:17

BY THE ANGEL - ACTS 12:9

ON THE MULTITUDE - MARK 8:2

2 And they had <sup>a</sup>viewed themselves in their own <sup>b</sup>carnal state, even <sup>c</sup>less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O (have mercy, and) apply the <sup>d</sup>atonement blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be <sup>e</sup>purified; for we believe (in Jesus Christ, the Son of God) who created heaven and earth, and all things who shall come down among the children of men.

HAVE MERCY. AND - MATT. 9:13

BLOOD OF CHRIST - I COR. 10:16

MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AND - ACTS 26:18

IN JESUS CHRIST - GAL. 2:16

WHO CREATED HEAVEN... AND THE EARTH, AND THE THINGS - REV. 10:6

3 And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they <sup>d</sup>were filled with joy having received a <sup>e</sup>remission of their sins, and having peace of <sup>f</sup>conscience, because of the exceeding <sup>g</sup>faith which they had (in Jesus Christ) who should come, according to the <sup>h</sup>words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.

WERE FILLED WITH JOY - ACTS 13:52

REMISSION OF THEIR SINS LUKE 1:77

IN JESUS CHRIST - GAL. 2:16

HAD SPOKEN UNTO THEM MARK 16:19

4 And king Benjamin again opened his mouth and began to speak unto them, saying: My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people, I would again call your attention, that ye may hear and understand the remainder of my words which I shall speak unto you.

5 For behold, if the knowledge of the goodness of God at this time has awakened (you to a) sense of your

YOU TO A - I COR. 10:27

I SAY UNTO YOU, IF YE HAVE MATT. 17:20  
 THAT HE SHOULD PUT HIS MATT. 19:13  
 I MEAN - 2 COR. 8:13  
 THAT THIS IS THE - JOHN 1:34  
 SALVATION THROUGH - 2 TIM. 3:15  
 EVER SHALL BE - MATT. 24:21  
 BELIEVE IN GOD - JOHN 14:1  
 BELIEVE THAT HE IS, AND THAT HE - HEB. 11:16  
 THE THINGS WHICH THE I COR. 10:20  
 YOUR SINS AND - 2 COL. 2:13  
 ASK IN - MATT. 21:22  
 IF THOU CANST BELIEVE, ALL THINGS - MARK 9:23  
 AND AGAIN I SAY UNTO YOU MATT. 19:24  
 COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE - 2 TIM. 3:7  
 OR IF YE - 2 COR. 11:4  
 REMISSION OF SINS - MATT. 26:28  
 EXCEEDING GREAT JOY MATT. 2:10  
 AND ALWAYS - MARK 5:5  
 HIS GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE AND LONG-SUFFERING Rom. 2:4  
 CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD - ACTS 22:16  
 WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY THE MATT. 2:23  
 THE LOVE OF GOD - LUKE 11:42

"nothingness, and your worthless and fallen state—  
 6 (I say unto you, if ye have) come to a "knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the "atonement which has been/prepared from the "foundation of the world/that thereby salvation might come to him (that should put his) "trust in the Lord, and should (be diligent) in keeping his commandments, and (continue in the faith) even unto the end of his life, (I mean) the life of the (mortal body)—  
 7 I say, (that this is the) man who receiveth (salvation, through) the atonement which was prepared from (the foundation of the world) for all mankind, which ever were since the "fall of Adam, or who are, or who (ever shall be) (even unto the end of the world.)  
 8 And this is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is "none other salvation (save this) which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you.  
 9 (Believe in "God) (believe that he is, and that he) (created all things,) both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all "wisdom, and (all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not "comprehend all (the things which the) Lord can comprehend.  
 10 And again, (believe that ye) must "repent of (your sins and) forsake them, and (humble yourselves before God; and (ask in) (sincerity of) heart that he would "forgive you; and now, (if you "believe all these things) see that ye "do them.  
 11 (And again I say unto you) as I have said before, (that "as ye have) (come to the knowledge of the) glory of God, (or if ye) have known (of his goodness and) (have "tasted of) his love, and have received a (remission of your sins) (which causeth) such (exceedingly great joy) in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, (and always) retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own "nothingness, and (his "goodness and long-suffering) towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of "humility, (calling on the name of the Lord) daily, and standing "steadfastly (in the faith) of that which is to come, (which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.)  
 12 And behold, (I say unto you that) if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with (the "love of God)

PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD MATT. 25:34  
 BE DILIGENT - 2 PET. 3:14  
 CONTINUE IN THE FAITH - COL. 1:23  
 MORTAL BODY - ROM. 6:12  
 PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD MATT. 25:34  
 EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD - MATT. 28:20  
 SAVE THIS - LUKE 17:18  
 CREATED ALL THINGS - REV. 4:11  
 ALL POWER... IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH - MATT. 28:18  
 BELIEVE THAT YE - MARK 11:24  
 SINCERITY OF - 2 COR. 8:8  
 THAT AS YE HAVE - 1 THESS. 4:1  
 OF HIS GOODNESS AND - ROM. 2:4  
 HAVE TASTED OF - HEB. 6:4  
 WHICH CAUSETH - 2 COR. 9:11  
 IN THE FAITH - ACTS 14:22  
 I SAY UNTO YOU. THAT IF MATT. 18:9

AND ALWAYS - MARK 5:5 — and always retain a remission of your sins and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true. REMISSION OF SINS - MATT. 26:28  
 IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF EPH. 1:17

THAT WHICH IS JUST AND COL. 4:1 — AND YE WILL NOT - JOHN 5:40 — LIVE PEACEABLY - ROM. 12:18 — AND YE WILL NOT - JOHN 5:40 — OR NAKED - MATT. 25:44 —

13 (And ye will not) have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man according to that which is his due.

14 (And ye will not) suffer your children that they go hungry, (or naked) neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness.

ENEMY OF ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS ACTS 13:10

15 But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another.

TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER I JOHN 4:11

OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS ACTS 26:25

SERVE ONE ANOTHER GAL. 5:13

16 And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; (and ye will not) suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.

THAT THE BEGGAR - LUKE 16:22

AND YE WILL NOT - JOHN 5:40

HIM OUT TO - MARK 15:20

17 Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just.

BUT I SAY UNTO YOU MATT 5:22

ARE JUST - PHIL. 4:8

O MAN, WHOSOEVER - ROM. 2:11

THE SAME HATH - I JOHN 2:23

18 (But I say unto you) O man, who-soever doeth this (the same hath) great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD - MARK 14:25

19 For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?

20 And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.

ON HIS NAME - JOHN 1:12

REMISSION OF SINS - MATT 26:28

BE FILLED WITH JOY - 2TIM. 1:4

EXCEEDING GREAT JOY - MATT. 2:10

21 And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is

THAT YE HAVE, AND - LUKE 12:33

**IN FAITH - ROM. 4:19** right, **(in faith)** **(believing that ye shall receive)** **BELIEVING, YE SHALL RECEIVE MATT. 21:22**  
**HOW YE OUGHT TO - 2 THESS. 3:7** O then, **(how ye ought to)** **(impart of the substance)** **(that ye have one to another)** **THAT YE HAVE ONE TO ANOTHER - LUKE 24:17**  
 22 And if ye <sup>a</sup>judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your <sup>b</sup>condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God,  
**TO WHOM ALSO - HEB. 7:2** **(to whom also)** your life <sup>a</sup>belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.  
 23 I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance **(shall perish with)** him; **(and now, I say)** these things unto those who are <sup>a</sup>rich **(as pertaining to the)** **(things of this world)** **AND NOW I SAY - ACTS 5:38**  
**SHALL PERISH WITH - MATT 26:52** **AS PERTAINING TO THE - HEB. 9:9** **AND AGAIN I SAY UNTO - MATT. 19:24** 24 **(And again, I say unto)** the poor, **(who have not)** and yet **(have sufficient)** that ye remain from day to day; **(I mean)** all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; **(I would that ye)** say in your hearts that: I <sup>a</sup>give **(not because I)** <sup>b</sup>have not, but if I had I would <sup>a</sup>give. **THINGS OF THE WORLD - I COR. 7:34**  
**WHO HAVE NOT - ROM. 11:4** **I MEAN - 2 COR. 8:13** **I WOULD THAT YE - I COR. 14:5** **NOT BECAUSE I - PHIL. 4:17**  
 25 And now, if ye say this in **(your hearts)** ye remain guiltless, **(otherwise ye)** are <sup>a</sup>condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that **(which ye have not received)** **YOUR HEARTS, YE - JAMES 4:8** **OTHERWISE YE - MATT. 6:1**  
**WHICH YE HAVE NOT RECEIVED 2 COR. 11:4** 26 And now, for the sake of these things **(which I have spoken unto you)** - that is, for the sake of retaining **(a remission of your sins)** from day to day, that ye may <sup>a</sup>walk guiltless before God - I would that ye should <sup>b</sup>impart of your substance to the <sup>c</sup>poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as <sup>d</sup>feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting **(the sick and)** administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. **WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU - JOHN 15:3**  
**REMISSION OF SINS - MATT. 26:28**  
 27 And see that all these things are done in wisdom and <sup>a</sup>order; for it is not requisite that a man should run <sup>b</sup>faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should **(be diligent)** that thereby he might win **(the prize)** **(therefore, all things must be done in order)** **THE SICK, AND - JAMES 5:15** **THEREFORE ALL THINGS - MATT. 7:12**  
**BE DILIGENT - 2 PET. 3:14** **THE PRIZE - I COR. 9:24**  
 28 And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you <sup>a</sup>borroweth of his neighbor should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt **(commit sin)** and perhaps thou shalt cause thy neighbor to **(commit sin)** also. **COMMIT SIN - JAMES 2:9**  
 29 And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby **(ye may commit sin)** for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them. **YE COMMIT SIN - JAMES 2:9**

30 But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not <sup>a</sup>watch yourselves, and your <sup>b</sup>thoughts, and your <sup>c</sup>words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.

CONTINUE IN THE FAITH - COL. 1:23

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND REV. 12:17

THE COMING OF OUR LORD - I COR. 1:7

THE END OF YOUR - I PET. 1:9

CHAPTER 5

AND now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they <sup>a</sup>believed the words which he had spoken unto them.

HAD THUS SPOKEN - LUKE 19:28

HAD SPOKEN UNTO THEM MARK 16:19

2 And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty <sup>a</sup>change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do <sup>b</sup>evil, but to do good continually.

BELIEVE, ALL - MARK 9:23

IN OUR HEARTS - ROM. 5:5

WE OURSELVES ALSO - TITUS 3:3

3 And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite <sup>a</sup>goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

OF HIS SPIRIT - I JOHN 4:13

ON THE THINGS - PHIL. 2:4

4 And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy.

FAITH, WHICH WE - ROM. 10:8

EXCEEDING GREAT JOY - MATT 2:10

WHEREBY WE - I JOHN 2:18

5 And we are willing to enter into a <sup>a</sup>covenant with our God (to do his will) and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a <sup>b</sup>never-ending torment, as has been spoken (by the angel) that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.

TO DO HIS WILL - HEB. 13:21

BY THE ANGEL - ACTS 12:9

DRINK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD - REV 14:10

6 And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant.

IS A RIGHTEOUS - 2 THESS. 1:6

SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD - MATT 5:9

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ his sons, and his daughters; (for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you) for ye say that your hearts are <sup>b</sup>changed (through faith on his name); therefore, ye are (born of him) and have become his <sup>a</sup>sons and his daughters.

FOR BEHOLD THIS - 2 COR. 7:11

BEGOTTEN YOU - I COR. 4:15

THROUGH FAITH IN HIS NAME ACTS 3:16

BORN OF HIM - I JOHN 2:29

8 And under this head ye are made <sup>a</sup>free, and there is <sup>b</sup>no other head

- YE SHALL BE MADE FREE-JOHN 8:33** whereby **ye can be made free.** There is no other 'name given whereby salvation cometh' therefore, I would that ye should take upon you **THE NAME OF CHRIST - 2 TIM. 2:19** **(the name of Christ)**, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.
- AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD ROM. 8:34** **9** And it shall come to pass that **whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God** for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.
- WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT - MATT. 10:14** **10** And now it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall not** take upon him **(the name of Christ)** must be called by some **(other name)**; therefore, he findeth himself on the **left hand of God.** **OTHER NAME - ACTS 4:12**
- SHOULD REMEMBER - GAL 2:10** **11** And I would that ye **(should remember)** also, **(that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts.** **THAT THIS IS THE - JOHN 1:34** **TAKE HEED THAT YE DO NOT MATT. 6:1**
- SHOULD REMEMBER - GAL. 2:10** **12** I say unto you, I would that ye **(should remember)** to "retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.
- 13** For **(how knoweth a man)** the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from **(the thoughts and intents of his heart?)** **HOW KNOWETH THIS MAN JOHN 7:15** **THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART - HEB 4:12**
- AND CAST HIM OUT - ACTS 7:52** **14** And again, doth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay; he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his flocks, but will drive him away, **(and cast him out.)** I say unto you, **(that even so shall it be among you)** **(if ye know) not the name by which ye are called.** **EVEN SO SHALL IT BE - MATT. 12:45**
- IF YE KNOW - JOHN 13:17** **15** Therefore, I would that ye **(should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord) God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation (and eternal life), through (the wisdom, and power) and justice, and mercy of him who (created all things), in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen.** **BE YE STEDFAST, UNMOVEABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK I COR 15:58** **THE WISDOM...THE POWER I COR. 2:5** **CREATED ALL THINGS - REV. 4:11**

## CHAPTER 6

**IT WAS EXPEDIENT JOHN 18:14**

**AND** now, king Benjamin thought **(it was expedient)** after having finished speaking to the people, that he should "take the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God to keep his commandments.



2 And it came to pass that there was not one soul (except it were) little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them (the name of Christ).

EXCEPT IT WERE - JOHN 6:65

THE NAME OF CHRIST - 2 TIM. 2:19

3 And again, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of all these things, and had consecrated his son 'Mosiah to be a ruler and a king over his people, and had given him all the charges concerning the kingdom, and also had 'appointed 'priests to 'teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know (the commandments of God, and) to stir them up in remembrance of the 'oath which they had made, (he dismissed the) multitude, and they returned, every one, according to their 'families, (to their own houses).

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND - REV. 12:17

HE DISMISSED THE - ACT 19:41

TO THEIR OWN HOUSES MARK 8:3

4 And Mosiah began to reign in his father's stead. \*And he began to reign in the thirtieth year of his age, making in the whole, about four hundred and seventy-six years from the 'time that Lehi left Jerusalem.

5 And king Benjamin lived three years† and he died.

6 And it came to pass that king Mosiah did 'walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe his judgments and his statutes, and did keep his commandments (in all things whatsoever he) commanded him.

IN ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER HE ACTS 3:22

7 And king Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth. And (he also, himself) did till the earth, that thereby he might (not become burdensome to) his people, that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things. And there was no contention among all his people (for the space of three) years.

NOT BE BURDENSOME TO 2 COR. 12:14

HE ALSO HIMSELF - HEB. 2:14

FOR THE SPACE OF THREE ACTS 19:8

### Fabricated Evidence?

From the material we have presented (all the text of Mosiah, chapters 1-6), it is apparent that there is no evidence to support the idea that the Nephites were celebrating a Jewish feast or festival at the time of King Benjamin's address. Moreover, the parallels between these chapters and the King James Version of the New Testament provide devastating evidence that this material was plagiarized after A.D. 1611. It is obvious, then, that the content of king Benjamin's address appearing in the Book of Mormon is spurious.

In the *Illustrated Davis Dictionary of the Bible*, page 242, we find that in ancient Israel the "three annual festivals were deemed so important, that when they came every adult not incapacitated by disease or infirmity *was required to appear* before the Lord at the sanctuary . . ." The people knew when these festivals took place and automatically gathered to worship the Lord. In the Book of Mormon, on the other hand, the people are summoned to appear before king Benjamin just one day before he gives his speech:

Therefore, he had Mosiah brought before him; and these are the words which he spake unto him, saying: My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people . . . who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together; for on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth that thou art a king and a ruler over this people, whom the Lord our God hath given us. (Mosiah 1: 10)

The reader will also notice from the text that king Benjamin makes no mention of a Jewish festival occurring at the time his son was to become king. Furthermore, in Mosiah 2:29 we read: "And moreover, I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might declare unto you that I can no longer be your teacher, nor your king . . ." We would think that if the Nephites had assembled for a feast such as the "Feast of Tabernacles," king Benjamin would have said something like the following: "Now that you have assembled yourselves together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, I feel that it would be a good time to tell you that I can no longer be your teacher, nor your king."

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated for seven days, but there is no indication that the people were participating in any type of festival either before or after king Benjamin "finished speaking" and "took the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God to keep his commandments." The record merely states that "when king Benjamin had made an end of all these things, and had consecrated his son Mosiah to be a ruler and a king over his people, and had given him all the charges concerning the kingdom, and also had appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made, he dismissed the multitude, and they returned, every one, according to their families, to their own houses" (Mosiah 6: 3).

Notwithstanding the fact that there is absolutely no evidence to support the idea that a Jewish festival took place in this section of Mosiah, some Mormon scholars continue to assert that such a festival was celebrated at that time. They apparently realize that if the Book of Mormon is an authentic record, it must contain some evidence to show that the Nephites were familiar with the Jewish feasts and festivals. These scholars, therefore, seize upon anything they can find to try to make a case that the Nephites were practicing the Law of Moses. Both Matthew Roper and John Tvedtnes refer to John W. Welch's publication *King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals*. In this 60-page paper, John Welch acknowledged that the Book of Mormon never specifically mentions the Jewish holy festivals. Nevertheless, he assured his readers that through a great deal of research by at least eleven Mormon scholars they had been found:

The identification and analysis of ancient Israelite festivals in the Book of Mormon is one of the more significant and thought-provoking developments in the recent decades of intensifying Book of Mormon research. These particular discoveries have not been made, and probably could not have been made, by any single person. Collaboration, interaction, mutual criticism and encouragement have been invaluable. . . .

While good evidence of all pre-Exilic Israelite festivals has been found in various places in the

Book of Mormon, *no source has been more fertile than King Benjamin's Speech*. Its holy festive character is both rich and specific. (*King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals*, 1985, page 1)

While anyone can read the Bible and find the Jewish holy festivals, it appears that it took some real detective work by a team of Mormon scholars to find them in the Book of Mormon. If King Benjamin's speech is the best source in the Book of Mormon for this information, as Welch maintains, then the rest of Joseph Smith's work must be extremely unclear with regard to this subject! In any case, on pages 2-5 John Welch even suggested that Mormon, who abridged the large plates, may have made references to festivals ambiguous:

Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Halloween, and the Fourth of July are some of the main holidays we celebrate in the United States. . . .

Festivals were even more important in ancient Israel. There were three main Israelite holy festivals. . . . These holy days had enormous religious, political and family significance. They were especially vital since God had commanded the Israelites to observe these festivals. Many of the details about when and how each holiday was to be celebrated are found in Exodus, Leviticus, and passages scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible. These festivals were integral parts of the Law of Moses: "Three times *thou shalt* keep a feast unto me in the year." No person could keep the Law of Moses without observing them. . . .

There can be no question, therefore, that similar holidays were important to the people of the Book of Mormon. Lehi and his people kept the Law of Moses . . . these people observed the holidays of ancient Israel which were part of that law.

But the Book of Mormon never mentions Passover or Tabernacles or any such holidays specifically by name. Why not? There are three answers. First, the writers may have simply assumed that we would understand. . . . the words Passover or Pentecost do not need to be stated in the Book of Mormon for these Jewish holidays to be brought to mind.

Second, it may be that these names were more apparent in the original texts. These Hebrew names have meanings: *Pesach* in Hebrew literally means "exemption"; *Sukkot* means "tabernacles,

booths", *Yom Kippur* is "day of atonement." Thus the reference of the word "tents" in Mos. 2:5, or of "atonement" in Mos. 3:19, would have been associated much more readily by a Nephite than by us with the very names of those holidays. Perhaps Mormon's abridgment obscured or eliminated other references.

Third, the fact that the Book of Mormon is so particular about its calendar offers circumstantial evidence that festivals were important. One of the main reasons for keeping an accurate standardized calendar would have been to regulate and facilitate the observance of specific holidays. . . .

Whether mentioned expressly or not, as will be shown, there is impressive evidence in the Book of Mormon, particularly in King Benjamin's Speech, that the festivals most likely known to Israel in Lehi's day were indeed observed in the Lands of Nephi and Zarahemla. (*King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals*, pages 2-5)

John Welch would like us to believe that "Mormon's abridgment obscured or eliminated" some of the references to Jewish festivals in the large plates of Nephi. It now appears obvious that some Mormon scholars are seriously attempting to use Mormon as a scapegoat for difficult problems encountered in the text of the Book of Mormon. Even if this were the case, it would not help matters with regard to the question at hand. The small plates of Nephi, which were not abridged by Mormon, covered about two-thirds of the period when the Nephites were supposed to be under the Law of Moses. Why are these plates, which were *unabridged* and supposedly more devoted to religious matters, so deficient when it comes to holy festivals and other practices mentioned in the Law of Moses?

The reader will notice that in the quotation above, John Welch tries to link the word "atonement," found in Benjamin's speech, with the "day of atonement" or Yom Kippur which was instituted in the Old Testament. An examination of the verse Welch mentioned reveals that it is actually referring to the atonement of Christ, not the Old Testament "Day of Atonement": "For the natural man is an enemy to God . . . and will be forever and ever, unless he . . . putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the *atonement of Christ the Lord* . . . (Mosiah 3:19).

On page 27 of his paper, John Welch wrote: “The hypothesis that Benjamin’s Speech was held on or in connection with the Day of Atonement finds initial plausibility in Benjamin’s seven explicit references to the atonement. He speaks of ‘the atonement of his blood’ (3:15), the ‘atoning blood’ (3:18), the blood which ‘atoneth’ (3:11, 16), and the ‘atonement’ (3:19; 4:6, 7).” In examining the text we found that in every case where the words *atonement*, *atoneth* or *atoning* are used in Benjamin’s address they have reference to the atonement of Christ. It is clear, therefore, that the scene is not from an Old Testament setting of the “Day of Atonement” but rather from the teachings concerning Jesus Christ which are found in the New Testament.

John Welch also feels that there are parallels between king Benjamin’s speech and “Rabbinic writings, like the Mishnah and the Talmud, and later Jewish traditions” (*King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals*, page 6). He states, however, that these books were “compiled from long-standing oral law . . . written down between the second and fifth centuries A. D. . . . (*Ibid.*). Welch goes on to admit that “it is not always possible to know which details are archaic and which are later innovations.” Welch’s method of dealing with these sources is very revealing. He seems to feel that the portions which he believes give support to the Book of Mormon are likely to be older:

Where Book of Mormon practices are consistent with these Rabbinic and Jewish traditions, it is sometimes reasonable to assume that the Oral Law origins of these Rabbinic rules and regulations *can be dated back to the time of Lehi*, even though the early sources may be silent on the point. Where Book of Mormon customs appear similar to later Jewish developments, it is therefore sometimes plausible to conclude that they all may have had some ancient origin in common, at least where there is no specific reason to believe otherwise. (*Ibid.*, page 6)

In one case (pages 16-18) John Welch cites parallels between the Book of Mormon and Jewish liturgy that he admits cannot be dated back beyond the time of the Crusades—i. e., 11th to the 13th centuries: “Although these words cannot be dated confidently before [the] time of the Crusades, they could, of course, be substantially older. Parallels

to King Benjamin’s Speech are obvious.” We cannot accept Welch’s method of dealing with the Jewish documents and do not find his parallels very impressive. They do not even begin to compare with the parallels we have found to the New Testament.

On pages 33-35 of his publication, John Welch tried very hard to link Benjamin’s speech with the Day of Atonement:

So holy was the Day of Atonement that on this day—but on this day alone—could the unspeakable name of God, YHWH, be pronounced. Ten times in all during the Yom Kippur service would the priest say this name out loud, and each time the people would fall prostrate on the ground. . . .

The ineffable name of God, YHWH, was never to be spoken lightly. Just as the Jewish traditions allowed the priest to utter this name ten times during the Yom Kippur liturgy, it is a remarkable fact that in Benjamin’s Speech, the words “Lord God,” “Lord God Omnipotent” or “Lord Omnipotent” appear exactly ten times. Seven of these utterances are in the words of the angel to Benjamin . . . It seems more than coincidental that the number seven reflects “spiritual” perfection, and thus it is the spirit or angel that uses the name seven times. The other three utterances are in the words of Benjamin . . . Three is the number of “real” completeness; thus Benjamin, a mere mortal, pronounces the name on his own initiative three times.

We find it hard to understand why John Welch is so certain that the “unspeakable name of God, YHWH” was pronounced exactly ten times in king Benjamin’s sermon. Modern scholars transliterate this name (known as the tetragrammaton because it is derived from four Hebrew consonants) as Yahweh, but in the King James Bible it appears as *Jehovah*. Although the word “Jehovah” only appears four times in the King James Version (see Exodus 6:3; Psalms 83:18; Isaiah 12:2, 26:4), the Hebrew word from which it is derived is found over 6,000 times in the Old Testament. It is usually rendered as Lord. An examination of king Benjamin’s speech in the Book of Mormon reveals that the word “Lord” actually appears 28 times. It seems evident, then, that the “unspeakable name of God” could have been uttered 28 times. Welch, however, only counts the times the word Lord is followed with the words *God*, *God Omnipotent* or just *Omnipotent*—i. e., “Lord God,” “Lord God Omnipotent” or “Lord Omnipotent.”

In a footnote on page 34 of his paper, Welch states that “It is reasonable to believe that the tetragrammaton YHWH stood behind these ten intensified references to deity.” Welch, of course, would really have no way to know this for certain because he does not have the original gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was purportedly translated. In the King James Bible it is easy to determine where the tetragrammaton has been rendered as Lord because the word is printed in capital letters. The reader will find ten examples of this in Genesis, chapter 4, verses 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 15 (twice), 16 and 26. We have checked all of these verses with the original Hebrew and have found that the “ineffable name” appears in every case where the word “LORD” is printed in what is known as “small capital” letters.

It is interesting to note that the words “Lord God,” which Welch uses to try to establish five of the ten appearances of the sacred name in king Benjamin’s speech, are actually found 115 times in the Book of Mormon! The Mormon Church’s “Bible Dictionary,” which is bound with the King James Version of the Bible in copies printed since 1979, gives this information: “Jehovah. . . . The original pronunciation of this name has possibly been lost, as the Jews, in reading, never mentioned it, but substituted one of the other names of God, usually Adonai” (pages 710-711). A study of the text of the Book of Mormon certainly does not seem to limit the “unspeakable name” to Yom Kippur. In fact, Alma, the son of Alma, seems to have freely used it in preaching and missionary travels. In Alma 5: 32 he stated: “. . . for the Lord God hath spoken it!” In the 46th verse of the same chapter, he said: “. . . for the Lord God hath made them manifest . . .” When he spoke to the people in Gideon, he proclaimed: “. . . the Lord God hath power to do all things . . .” (Alma 7:8). In “the land of Melek” Alma said that the Lord told him that unless the people repented, “the Lord God will destroy them.” In Alma 13:1 we find these words used twice: “the Lord God gave these commandments . . . the Lord God ordained priests . . .” We find the words “Lord God” again in Alma 29:11 and 31:30. We, in fact, find these words sixteen times in the book of Alma and seventy-two times in the first two books of Nephi! It would be very difficult for one to argue that all these appearances occurred on Yom Kippur.

In a footnote on pages 34-35 of his paper, John Welch tries to make something out of the fact that “only

in Benjamin’s Speech do ‘Lord God Omnipotent’ or ‘Lord Omnipotent’ ever appear in the Book of Mormon, indicating cultic usage here.” Actually, the use of these words strongly supports our thesis that Joseph Smith relied heavily upon the book of Revelation in the New Testament in creating the Book of Mormon. While the word *omnipotent* was never used in the Old Testament of the King James Version of the Bible, in Revelation 19:6 we find the words “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” This is, in fact, the only place in the entire Bible where the word “omnipotent” is found. In the Book of Mormon, Mosiah 3:5 the following appears: “. . . the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth . . .” While the word “God” does not appear with “Omnipotent” in this particular verse, in verse 21 we find the following: “the Lord God Omnipotent.” It is clear, then, that in this chapter of the Book of Mormon the author has used all five words from Revelation 19:6 (“the Lord God omnipotent reigneth”). There seems to be strong evidence of plagiarism here.

The fact that Joseph Smith used the words “ ‘Lord God Omnipotent’ or ‘Lord Omnipotent’ ” only in the portion dealing with king Benjamin’s speech is not surprising to us. We have noted other cases where he became fascinated with some word or expression he plagiarized, used it a number of times and then suddenly dropped it. An example is found in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 68: “The expression ‘the Lamb of God’ only appears twice in the Bible, and both occurrences are found in the first chapter of the book of John (see verses 29 and 36). We have already shown that John 1:29 was actually used in the Book of Mormon. The words ‘Lamb of God’ are used 35 times in the Book of Mormon, but of the 35 places where they are found, 28 are located in the first two books of Nephi . . .”

Another example is the expression “the Holy One of Israel.” There can be little doubt that Joseph Smith picked up these words from the prophet Isaiah. Of the 30 places they are found in the Bible, 25 come from the pen of Isaiah. In the first two books of Nephi, Joseph Smith quoted extensively from the writings of Isaiah. Isaiah, chapters 50-51 and the first two verses of 52 have been copied from the King James Version into chapters 7-8 of 2 Nephi. In the next chapter (chapter 9), which is not supposed to be from the writings of Isaiah, the author of the Book of Mormon seems to have acquired the habit of using the expression “the Holy One of Israel” and used these words repeatedly:

. . . our God, the Holy One of Israel . . . by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel. . . they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel . . . the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel . . . or God the Holy One of Israel! . . . having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel . . . the Holy One of Israel has spoken it. . . the mercies of the Holy One of Israel . . . that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel. . . Remember the greatness of the Holy One of Israel . . . the gate is the Holy One of Israel . . . and come unto the Holy One of Israel . . . (2 Nephi 9: 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 23-26, 40, 41 and 51)

Although all these occurrences of the expression “the Holy One of Israel” are in 2 Nephi, the 9th chapter is actually supposed to be Nephi’s report of a speech given by his brother Jacob. We would expect, then, that when we come to the actual book of Jacob, it would be filled with this phrase. Surprisingly, this is not the case; in fact, Jacob never uses this expression in any part of his book! He did, however, latch on to another favorite expression of the prophet Isaiah, “the Lord of Hosts.” These words are found 47 times in the book of Isaiah. In just five verses in the Book of Mormon, chapter 2, Jacob uses this expression six times :

. . . whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. . . this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts . . . For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people . . . I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people. . . shall come up unto me . . . saith the Lord of Hosts. . . For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people . . . like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts. (Jacob 2: 28-30, 32-33)

It is interesting to note that Jacob never uses these words in any other part of his book. In the 5th chapter of his book, Jacob quotes “the prophet Zenos”—apparently an ancient Jewish prophet who is not mentioned in the Bible. This prophet uses the expression “the Lord of the vineyard” 33 times in this one chapter! Interestingly, these words are not found in any other part of the Book of Mormon. This phrase is also lacking in the Old Testament, and seems to have been taken from Jesus’ words found in Mark 12:9: “. . . the lord of the vineyard . . .”

From the above we can see that Joseph Smith sometimes latched on to a biblical expression, used it for a short time and then abandoned it for another phrase which caught his attention. In light of this information, John Welch’s claim that the words *Lord God Omnipotent* or *Lord Omnipotent* are only used in material relating to Benjamin’s speech really amounts to nothing.

The reader will remember that Welch sees great significance in the “remarkable fact that in Benjamin’s Speech, the words ‘Lord God,’ ‘Lord God Omnipotent’ or ‘Lord Omnipotent’ appear exactly ten times. Seven of these utterances are in the words of the angel to Benjamin . . . It seems more than coincidental that the number seven reflects ‘spiritual’ perfection, and thus it is the spirit or angel that uses the name seven times. The other three utterances are in the words of Benjamin . . . Three is the number of ‘real’ completeness; thus Benjamin, a mere mortal, pronounces the name on his own initiative three times.”

We feel that Welch’s use of numbers, particularly the separation of the angel’s use of the words from king Benjamin’s, amounts to nothing more than guess work on his part. It, in fact, reminds us of the technique used by one anti-Mormon writer who went to great lengths in an attempt to discredit Mormonism by finding the mark of the beast, “666,” in the Book of Mormon. Mormons scholars, of course, will not accept his work (see Daniel C. Peterson’s criticism in *Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 231-260), but many of them seem to accept John Welch’s conjectures without putting them to the test.

John Welch appears to latch onto almost anything in an attempt to prove his case. For example, because king Benjamin mentions “an ass” in his speech, Welch feels that he may be referring to the “*scape goat* ritual” which took place on “the Day of Atonement.” The verse in question reads as follows: “And again, doth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay; he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his flocks, but will drive him away, and cast him out. I say unto you, that even so shall it be among you if ye know not the name by which ye are called.” (Mosiah 5:14)

While most of us would have a difficult time relating this verse to the “*scape goat* ritual,” Welch feels that it may be an important link:

4) Lev. 16:7-10 prescribes the well-known *scapegoat* ritual in which the high priest on the Day of Atonement took two goats, one for Jehovah and the other for Azazel . . . The goat for Jehovah was sacrificed, but upon the other the high priest placed his hands and transferred to it all the sins of Israel. This scapegoat was then taken off into the desert. The man who carried the goat out to the wilderness became impure . . . In perhaps a similar light, any individual who breaks the covenant is, in Benjamin's mind, to be "consigned to an awful view" of his guilt . . . He will ultimately be driven away and cast out (5:10-14). Had Benjamin said that the sinner would be driven out like a goat, this connection with the Day of Atonement would have been more direct. As it was, he spoke of driving out an ass (5:14). In fact, it was not critical among Israel's neighbors in the ancient Near East what kind of animal was used; similar Hittite expiatory rituals drove out bulls, rams, mice, and vermin of the ground. (*King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals*, pages 30-31)

John Welch even suggests that Benjamin was "perhaps actually driving a young ass out of the temple precinct" (*Ibid.*, page 31) as he was speaking the last part of verse 14. Welch seems to have a very vivid imagination. While the Book of Mormon itself mentions nothing about Benjamin sacrificing any animal or having anything to do with the blood from such an animal, Welch feels "It is possible to visualize Benjamin sprinkling blood" on a symbolic segment of his people (following the ancient Israelite custom) as he pronounced this concluding benediction" (*Ibid.*, pages 38-39).

### Blowing Horns?

In *Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 56, we noted a surprising lack of musical instruments in the Book of Mormon:

We searched [with the computer] for the names of specific musical instruments the Israelites used. In the first search we looked for the following instruments: *organ, organs, psalteries, psaltery, sackbut, tabret, tabrets, timbrels, trump, trumpet, trumpeters, trumets, trumps* and *viol*. While these words appeared 174 times in the Bible, they are used only 7 times in the Book of Mormon. The word *trump* appears 3 times, but in every case it

is referring to the trump of God. While the word trumpet is found twice, one of these examples (3 Nephi 13:2) has been plagiarized from Matthew 6:2. The only example of any of these musical instruments actually being used is when a Jaredite . . . "did sound a trumpet unto the armies of Shiz to invite them forth to battle" (Ether 14:28). It is really surprising that the author of the Book of Mormon, who obviously had a real interest in warfare, never had the Nephites or the Lamanites sound a trumpet.

The Book of Mormon contains absolutely nothing concerning any horns being blown at the time king Benjamin gathered the people together. Nevertheless, John Welch is able to "imagine" horns sounding at various times during Benjamin's speech:

8) The most characteristic ritual of *Rosh Ha-Shanah* was the sounding of the horns. The horns are never mentioned in Benjamin's Speech, but one would not expect anything like a musical score to have accompanied Benjamin's written script or to have been preserved. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that some kind of cue, such as the blowing of a horn or acclamation, would have been given once to call the people to fall together to the ground (4:1), and twice to cry aloud all with one voice (4:2; 5:2). . . . one can easily imagine something like the *shofar* sounding off at those intervals. . . .

Further evidence that the horn (*shofar*) or the trumpet (*yobel*) was used among the Nephites as a liturgical instrument blown on the New Year to herald a season of repentance may be garnered from Alma's wish that he might speak with the "trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth and cry *repentance* unto every people" (Alma 29:1). (*King Benjamin's Speech* . . . , pages 21-23)

It is hard for us to understand how the mention of the "trump of God," which appears about 120 pages after king Benjamin's speech in the Book of Mormon, provides evidence that a horn or trumpet was "used among the Nephites as a liturgical instrument blown on the New Year to herald a season of repentance."

We find it very difficult to accept John Welch's speculation concerning Benjamin's speech providing evidence that the Nephites celebrated Jewish festivals. Actually, we are not the only ones who have trouble with Welch's claim to see things in texts which others cannot find. Todd Compton, a Mormon scholar who believes that John Welch has done

some “valuable” work in his book, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, also feels that Welch sometimes stretches “the point somewhat.” Writing in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, the same publication which criticizes our work, Compton observed:

Chapters 2-3 [of *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*] . . . are, to me, the most tentative part of the book. Here, Welch seems to be applying a “pan-temple” interpretation to our text, in which he sees endowment ceremony imagery in much of the text. Such “pan-anything” interpretations are useful in that they take a certain new perspective to its logical limits, often revealing new insights; however, not all readers will find his examples equally convincing. In certain of his interpretations, Welch seems to me to be stretching the point somewhat. An example of this occurs on page 66, when Welch takes 3 Nephi 13:17 as a reference to ritual washing and anointing. But in context, washing and anointing refer only to avoiding any unusual appearances while fasting . . .

Welch also strikes me as forcing the Book of Mormon context somewhat in his suggested interpretation of Christ ministering to the children in 3 Nephi 17. In context this passage presents a beautiful outpouring of love for children by Christ; Welch, however, reads it ritually, and hints that it might have constituted some kind of sealing ceremony, which to me takes away some of its dramatic effect. . . . If there had been a sealing, Christ logically would have received child and parent together. . . .

In addition, it seems to me that Welch sometimes comes dangerously close to subordinating the moral aspects of the Sermon to its ritual aspects (it is, according to Welch, a “ritual text,” p. 86) . . . (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 319-320)

David Rolph Seely, assistant professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, reviewed the book *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The F.A.R.M.S. Updates*, edited by John W. Welch. In his review Dr. Seely acknowledged that the Book of Mormon “is remarkably silent” about festivals or rituals found in the law of Moses:

In addition there is great emphasis in these articles on comparing Book of Mormon peoples

and customs to various aspects of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament. For example, much is made about parallels of sacral kingship rituals found in coronation customs . . . comparing them with temple ritual. Yet Mosiah completely does away with kingship in Nephite society (Mosiah 29) and replaces it with the concept of the “voice of the people,” a concept that is quite unlike anything known from the ancient Near East or the Bible. What then are we to make of the importance of “sacral kingship” in the political sphere?

Likewise, many passages of the Book of Mormon are discussed and understood by comparison to Jewish feasts and festivals, part of the Mosaic law, largely documented from later rabbinic sources rather than the Old Testament. . . . Many of these comparisons are compelling, yet *the Book of Mormon is remarkably silent about any specific festival or ritual known from the Mosaic law*. The only specific mention of practices from the law of Moses is the sacrifices and offerings offered by the people who are non-Levites and with the authority of the Melchizedek priesthood (Alma 13), which *is not typical of the Mosaic law* as practiced and recorded in the Old Testament. Perhaps it is worth considering the Book of Mormon practice of the Mosaic law. Did the Book of Mormon peoples practice the law of Moses precisely as outlined in the Old Testament?

Apologetics—the defense of the kingdom—is a genre whose integrity relies on accuracy and even-handedness. The articles in this book are written by specialists for readers with no particular expertise in the subjects treated. Therefore, most readers do not have the capability to check on either accuracy or overstatement in the arguments in these articles. There is need for caution in this regard. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 309-310)

### The Elephantine Papyri

In his review of our work on the “black hole” Mormon scholar L. Ara Norwood tries to use the Elephantine Papyri to shore up his argument that the Book of Mormon is authentic:

The Tanners also feel that, if the Book of Mormon were a valid record of Jewish peoples, it would contain much information on the Passover, feasts, new moons, the Sabbath day, circumcision, tithing, the temple, and so forth. Since it does not,



according to the Tanners, it is obviously the fabrication of Joseph Smith. While one can understand the Tanners' surprise, they reach hasty and naive conclusions. Following their reasoning, one must be consistent and declare as fabrication the fifth-century Jewish documents from Elephantine in Upper Egypt. The Jewish colony there (like one later in Lower Egypt) built a temple for traditional animal sacrifice and other offerings and rites. Yet their papyri never mention the Exodus, Moses, the Law, Levites the Sabbath, and the like. Does it make sense to dismiss the Book of Mormon for its alleged failure to discuss certain concepts found in the Bible when they are lacking in the Elephantine writings as well? But, in fact, the Tanners have overstated this supposed deficiency in the Book of Mormon. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, pages 160-161)

While L. Ara Norwood's argument might impress some people who are not familiar with the Elephantine Papyri, when the facts are known, the ancient records actually do far more to hurt his case than to support it. Members of the Jewish colony Norwood speaks of wrote these documents in the Aramaic language while they were living in Egypt during the fifth century B.C. The first document is dated 495 B.C.—about a century after the Nephites came to the New World.

Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley made an astounding claim concerning the Elephantine Papyri: "In our opinion these letters, written in Aramaic to Persian officials and to important Jews in Jerusalem, supply the most valuable commentary to the Book of Mormon" (*Since Cumorah*, 1967, page 53). This incredible statement cannot be supported by the papyri. Those who take the time to carefully examine these documents will see that Dr. Nibley has misled his readers.

Recently Jeffrey R. Chadwick wrote an article in which he claimed that he found an important Book of Mormon name in the Elephantine Papyri:

The Book of Mormon introduces Sariah, the faithful wife of the prophet Lehi and mother of Nephi and his brothers (1 Nephi 2:5). The conjectural Hebrew spelling of *Sariah* would be *sryh* and would be pronounced something like *Sar-yah*. The skeptic might suggest that this name was an invention of Joseph Smith, since *Sariah* does not appear in the Bible as a female personal

name. However, in a significant historical parallel to the Book of Mormon, the Hebrew name *Sariah*, spelled *sryh*, has been identified in a reconstructed form as the name of a Jewish woman living at Elephantine in Upper Egypt during the fifth century B.C.

The reference to Sariah of Elephantine is found in Aramaic Papyrus #22 . . . and appears in *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* . . . Cowley had to reconstruct part of the text, supplying the final *h* of *Sariah* and the initial *b-r* of *barat* . . . The extant final *t* of *barat* assures us that the person was a daughter, not a son, and, after the letters *b-r* are supplied, there is only room for one additional letter—the final *h* of *Sariah*. (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Fall 1993, page 196)

On page 197 of the same article, Dr. Chadwick comments: "Although *sryh* is not found as a female name in the Bible, it is well documented as a male name in ancient Israel, appearing nineteen times in the Hebrew Old Testament, representing eleven different men." He then explains that "the nineteen instances of the male name . . . are all rendered in English as *Seraiah*." The reader will note that in the King James Version of the Bible the name is somewhat different than in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Samuel 8:17; 2 Kings 25:18; Jeremiah 52:24 and other examples listed in Bible concordances). Whereas Joseph Smith gave the name as *Sariah*, the King James translators rendered it as *Seraiah*. Notice that the second letter in the King James rendition of the name is transliterated as an *e* and that there is an extra *a* in *Seraiah*. The *New American Standard Bible* (1971) and *New International Version of The Holy Bible* (1978) both use the spelling found in the King James Version.

On page 197 of his article, Jeffrey R. Chadwick acknowledges that Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, the translator of the Elephantine Papyri "follows the KJV in using the *S-e-r-a-i-a-h* spelling . . ." In his translation of Papyrus 22, Cowley gives this rendering (restorations are marked with italics): "—*Seraiah* daughter of Hoshea . . ." (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, page 71). Chadwick, however, maintains that this could be rendered as Sariah:

The English *Seraiah* spelling is an effort to represent a Hebrew pronunciation of *Sera-yah* or *Sra-yah* . . . But in light of evidence from Iron Age seals and clay bullae, Nahman Avigad suggests that *sryhw* may be read *Saryahu* . . . By extension,

the shorter name *Sryh* would be read *Sar-yah*, both in the case of the eleven biblically noted men and in the case of the female from Elephantine. And by the same extension, rather than Cowley's *Seraiah* spelling, the Book of Mormon *Sariah* spelling would more correctly represent the name of our lady of Elephantine. (pages 197-198)

Although Jeffrey R. Chadwick really believes that he has found "a significant historical parallel to the Book of Mormon," his work needs to be carefully examined by those who are qualified to deal with the Aramaic Papyri and the Hebrew language.

It is possible that the name *Sariah* was the result of a spelling error on the part of Joseph Smith or his scribe. In the first part of the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith used some important names from the time of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In 1 Nephi 6:4, he spoke of "the God Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob . . ." The names of four of the first Book of Mormon characters are related to this early period—Jacob, Joseph, Laban and Ishmael. Joseph Smith frequently referred to Abraham, although no one in the Book of Mormon was given that name. It seems possible, however, that Joseph Smith wanted to use the name of Abraham's wife in the first part of the Book of Mormon. Interestingly, Abraham's wife's name was changed in the Bible, Genesis 17:15:

And God said unto Abraham, As for *Sarai* thy wife, thou shalt not call her name *Sarai*, but *Sarah* shall be her name.

The fact that Abraham's wife had two different names in the Book of Genesis (she was called Sarai 16 times and Sarah 35 times) could have caused some confusion in Smith's mind. It is possible, therefore, that *Sariah* was just a mistake caused by the confusion of the two names. The reader will notice that if the letter *i* is removed, we have the word *Sarah*—the name of Abraham's wife after it was changed.

In any case, Dr. Chadwick's work concerning the name *Sariah* seems to pale into insignificance in the light of a study we made of names found in the Elephantine Papyri. We had originally examined the first eight papyrus documents with the purpose of finding out how many Bible names they contained.

After reading Chadwick's article, however, we decided to go back over the same eight documents to see how many Book of Mormon names could be derived from the papyri. The Bible, of course, has many more names than the Book of Mormon.

In our study of the Elephantine papyri, we found only three names in the entire eight documents—*Isaiah*, *Uriah* and *Zechariah*—that also appear in the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately for defenders of the Book of Mormon, at least two of the three names must be eliminated. Although they appear in the Book of Mormon, they are not names of characters found in that book. They are, in fact, part of the biblical book of Isaiah which Joseph Smith incorporated into his Book of Mormon. In Isaiah 8:2 we read:

And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, *Uriah* the priest, and *Zechariah* the son of Jeberechiah.

In the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 18:2, we find exactly the same words:

And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, *Uriah* the priest, and *Zechariah* the son of Jeberechiah.

It is clear, then, that these names cannot qualify as Book of Mormon names because there was no one in that book with either the name *Uriah* or *Zechariah*. We will accept the name *Isaiah* because there is one Book of Mormon character by that name. He was one "of the disciples whom Jesus had chosen" when he came to the New World (see 3 Nephi 19:4). It is obvious, however, that Joseph Smith took the name *Isaiah* from the book of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 12:1).

While a search of the Book of Mormon yields only one name when compared with the eight papyri from Elephantine, the Bible has many examples. We found the following Bible names in the documents:

Abijah, Ahio, Ananiah, Azariah, Ethan, Gedaliah, Gemariah, Hanani, Hodaviah, Hosea, Hoshaiah, Isaiah, Jonathan, Machi, Malchiah, Nathan, Pelaiiah, Pelatiah, Shabbethai, Shallum, Shemaiah, Uriah, Zadok, Zaccur, Zechariah and Zephaniah.

The reader will see that our search of the Elephantine Papyri yielded twenty-six biblical

names, whereas the Book of Mormon contained only one! This seems rather important because Lehi left Jerusalem in 600 B.C., and the eight papyri from Elephantine appear to have been written only 105 to 140 year after Lehi's departure—i.e., 495 to 460 B.C. Consequently, if the Book of Mormon were an authentic record we would expect it to contain a significant number of names similar to Bible names found in the Elephantine Papyri. That this is not the case raises doubt regarding the claim that the Book of Mormon is an ancient book.

The Bible, on the other hand, shows real consistency with regard to the names found at Elephantine. For example, the book of Nehemiah, like the Elephantine Papyri, was written in the fifth century B.C. Consequently, we might expect to find many similarities between the names found at the Egyptian colony and the names in the book of Nehemiah. Our research revealed that fifteen of the twenty-six names we found were also in the book of Nehemiah! Moreover, three other names were found in the book of Ezra, which was also written in the fifth century B.C. One name came from the book of Zechariah, written about 520 B.C., and another name came from the book of Jeremiah, who was supposed to be contemporary with Lehi.

Since nineteen of the twenty-six names we discovered can be found in biblical books written close to the time the Elephantine Papyri were penned, this seems to be good evidence that the books were written in the time frame suggested by Bible scholars.

Interestingly, the translations of the Elephantine Papyri, published in two books (one edited by Arthur Ernest Cowley, who translated most of the papyri, and the other by Emil G. Kraeling, who translated seventeen additional documents), combine to show that the way that women are ignored in the Book of Mormon is highly unusual.

As noted earlier, in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, page 15, we stated that “we were only able to find the names of three Nephite, Lamanite or Jaredite women in the Book of Mormon—‘Sariah’ (1 Nephi 2:5), ‘Abish’ (Alma 19:16) and ‘the harlot Isabel’ (Alma 39:3).” Although we had not noticed it before, our research regarding this matter was confirmed in an official LDS student manual copyrighted in 1981 by the “Corporation of the President of The Church”:

“If for no other reason, Abish, the Lamanitish woman is distinguished because her actual name

appears in the Book of Mormon. She is one of only three women in the entire Nephite-Lamanite-Mulekite-Jaredite records to have her name in the Book of Mormon. The other two are Sariah, the wife of Lehi . . . and Isabel, the harlot . . .” (*Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122*, page 248)

Sariah's name appears in the actual text of the Book of Mormon four different times and also once in the heading of the First Book of Nephi. Abish and Isabel, however, are only mentioned once. This, of course, means that there are only seven places where the actual names of Nephite, Lamanite or Jaredite women are found in the entire Book of Mormon.

In the Elephantine Papyri, however, we have found at least sixty-eight places where women's names appear! There are undoubtedly other women mentioned, but we have tried to limit our examples to cases where the text specifically identifies the individuals as women. For example, in Papyrus No. 22, which is translated by Arthur Ernest Cowley, we read of “Shabith daughter of Hori . . . Abihi daughter of Oshea . . . Mephatteah daughter of Zephaliah . . .” (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century*, page 72).

The Book of Mormon never uses the word *sister*, and the word *sisters* is only found once in the entire book. In the Aramaic Papyri, however, we find at least nine places where the word *sister* is found.

The reader should be aware of the fact that the contents of the Elephantine Papyri make a very small amount of text when compared to the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon's virtual silence concerning women certainly does not compare with either the Bible or the papyri found at Elephantine.

Although we cannot see that the Elephantine Papyri help the Book of Mormon in any way, there is some information in them that throws light on the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah. J. A. Thompson commented regarding the book of Nehemiah:

The material in the papyri from Elephantine enables us to date Nehemiah very firmly in the reign of Artaxerxes I. The high priest referred to in the papyri is Johanan, who, according to Nehemiah 12:22, was the second high priest after Eliashib, the priest referred to in the days of Nehemiah. Again in Nehemiah 12:10, 11 we have a list which places Johanan (or Jonathan) after

Eliashib. Another significant reference is to be found in Josephus, who speaks of an officer of the Persians, Bagoses and a high priest named John (Johanah). According to this reference, Bagoses, living in the days of Johanah, must have ruled after Nehemiah. Bagoses is the governor referred to in the Aramaic letter we have just considered from the year 407 B.C. Evidently the Sanballat referred to is the same man whom we meet in the days of Nehemiah, but now grown older. We are led to the conclusion that Nehemiah lived before 407 B.C. Since he went to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, we look for a king of this name who ruled prior to 407 B.C. This is, of course, Artaxerxes I, who reigned from 465 to 425 B.C., which means that Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem is to be dated in 444 B.C. In a most exciting way, the discovery of some Aramaic papyri in Egypt, hundreds of miles away from Palestine, enables us to give an exact date to an important character. (*The Bible and Archaeology*, 1962, page 227)

In his book, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Arthur Ernest Cowley, indicated that he was very surprised to learn that the Elephantine Papyri provided some support for the book of Ezra:

It was Ezra who made modern Judaism, by instituting (or re-instituting) the ceremonial law and formulating regulations for the national festivals. . . . The reason why he was able to enforce the Law and thus prevent its falling (again?) into neglect, is that he had the support of the Persian king. Why this was so, what caused the Persian kings to take so much interest in the Jews, whether it was part of a general policy of religious tolerance or was due to special circumstances, must remain matters of speculation. The fact at any rate is evident from what we are told of Cyrus (e.g. in Isaiah 45), Cambyses in pap. 30, and Darius here. What has hitherto seemed incredible is that they should have concerned themselves with details of ceremonial, as in the letter of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7, but the present papyrus (and the style of other letters in this collection) removes all reason for doubting the genuineness of the Persian letters in Ezra. (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, edited by Arthur Ernest Cowley, 1967 reprint of the 1923 edition, page 62)

In *The Biblical World*, we find the following information regarding the Jews at Elephantine:

The Jewish colony at Elephantine seems to have been composed largely of mercenary soldiers, although the papyri indicate that some members engaged in trade . . . The Elephantine colony had built a temple to Yahweh, whom they called Yahu, which was standing when Cambyses took Egypt in 525 B.C. . . . Although Jeremiah had counseled the Jews not to go to Egypt . . . many rejected his counsel . . .

Among the papyri listing contributions to the Egyptian temple we read of one portion set aside for the worship of Yahu, a second for Ishumbethel, and a third for Anathbethel. Another text mentions Herembethel. These names, compounds of Bethel, "House of God," may be interpreted as an attempt to personalize or give a separate existence to certain qualities or aspects of Yahweh. . . . Yet this very tendency was a step away from the rigid monotheism of the Old Testament, and the very existence of a Jewish temple in Egypt suggests that the Elephantine Jews were moving away from the orthodoxy which came to characterize the Jews of Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. (*The Biblical World*, 1966, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, pages 220-221)

The noted Biblical scholar William Albright commented as follows:

If the writer is correct in explaining the divine names of the Jewish pantheon at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C. as hypostatized aspects of Yahweh, we should have a paganizing prototype of Philonic hypostatic speculation, completely stripped of its philosophical trappings, at least a century before Alexander the Great. According to this view, the three divine names . . . meaning respectively "Name of the House of God" (=God), "Sacredness of the House of God," and "Sign(?) of the House of God" would reflect pure hypostatizations of deity, probably influenced by contemporary Canaanite-Aramaean theological speculation, in which *Bêth 'el* frequently appears as the name of a god (from the seventh to the fourth century B.C.). . . . direct evidence of Jewish writings from the period 600-200 B.C. proves that pagan Phoenician literature was then exerting a very considerable direct and indirect influence on Jewish thought, and the evidence of the Elephantine Papyri and of Tobit demonstrates that pagan Aramaic literature also began to exercise similar influence after the sixth century B.C. (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 1957, pp. 373-374)

Arthur Ernest Cowley, who translated most of the papyri, felt that other gods may have been worshipped in the temple at Elephantine:

Yet the national God was Ya'u. Whatever may have been their doctrine as to his relation to the other gods, there is no sort of doubt that he was pre-eminent. It was to him that the temple belonged, although it seems that other gods were also worshipped there. (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Introduction, page xx)

On page xvii of the same book, Cowley stated: "They lived on equal terms with the Egyptians, transacted business with people of various races, intermarried, and sometimes bore alien names . . ."

Emil G. Kraeling, who also translated some of the papyri, felt that although the Jews at Elephantine worshipped the same God as those in Jerusalem, they may have had some "subsidiary gods":

It is not the depraved type of Jewish religion that is illustrated in the Elephantine colony. We may be certain that the Jews residing there were worshipers of their national god. But as a matter of insurance they were willing to give a bit of attention to several subsidiary gods, whom they might readily view as his vassals or helpers. The inducement to be liberal was all the greater because of the composite nature of the community. The Jews there lived among Egyptians, Aramaeans, Phoenicians, Babylonians, and Persians. Mutual tolerance and a willingness to recognize other deities were almost a practical necessity.

The liberal attitude of some of the Elephantine Jews is reflected in the salutations used in certain letters. In the Mazzoth Papyrus, *A.P.* 21:2, Hananiah, in writing to "Yedoniah and his colleagues (and) the Jewish garrison," says, "May the gods desire the welfare of my brethren." (*The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine*, 1953, pages 83-84)

In his book, *Old Testament History*, Charles F. Pfeiffer also spoke of the pagan elements that had entered into Jewish worship at Elephantine:

Many ancient papyri written in Aramaic were discovered. They were written by Jews between the years 494 and 400 B.C. Most of them were

business documents, involving contracts for loans, conveyance of property, and similar activities. . . .

The most interesting document is a letter written in 407 B.C. . . . It tells how Egyptian priests, with the connivance of the local governor and the active assistance of the governor's son, destroyed the temple which the Jews had built at Elephantine. . . .

The Elephantine Jews, while much concerned about the temple and the worship of the God of Israel, whom they called Yahu or Yaho, did not maintain the purity of worship insisted on by the prophets of Israel. . . . The pagan elements in the religion of the Elephantine Jews would underscore the necessity for insisting on the Jerusalem Temple as the one place where sacrifice might be offered.

The Elephantine Jews doubtless considered themselves to be wholly orthodox. . . . A priesthood and sacrificial system patterned after that of the Jerusalem Temple functioned at Elephantine. The fact that appeals are made to Samaria as well as to Jerusalem indicates that the Elephantine Jews did not deem it necessary to take sides in the conflicts between Jerusalem and Samaria. . . . The elements of paganism at Elephantine have something in common with the Scriptural description of the Samaritans who "feared Yahweh" but also served other gods. . . . If a reformer like Nehemiah appears Puritanical in his attitude toward his Samaritan neighbors, Elephantine shows the danger which beset a community which left its moorings and allowed a religious syncretism in which Yahweh could be associated with a pantheon of deities. (*Old Testament History*, 1987, pages 538-539, 541)

While the Book of Mormon describes the faithful Nephites as orthodox followers of the Jewish faith who had "the five books of Moses" (1 Nephi 5:11), and tried to keep the law of Moses until the coming of Christ, the Jews at Elephantine were considered heterodox in their religious beliefs. Therefore, one would expect to find much more detailed material in the Book of Mormon relating to Jewish religious practices than in the Elephantine Papyri. This, however, is not the case.

Although the Book of Mormon was purportedly written by some of the great religious leaders of the Nephites, the Elephantine Papyri contains all kinds of secular documents which, of course, cannot be

compared with the religious writing found in the Book of Mormon. J. A. Thompson gives this information concerning the contents of the documents from Elephantine:

The documents were written in Aramaic on papyri which, thanks to the dry climate of Egypt, had been preserved all these years. They consisted of deeds, contracts, and letters, both private and official. . . .

All transactions were safeguarded by agreements and contracts were drawn up in proper manner, attested by witnesses, and then rolled up and sealed. . . .

Marriage contracts, as we might expect, are numerous and show that marriages were generally arranged between the bridegroom and someone acting for the bride. . . . One woman whose name was Mibtahiah was involved in more than one marriage.

Slavery was known in Yeb and slaves were bought and sold, or perhaps inherited. . . .

Many of the documents deal with loaning and borrowing, and it is evident that both men and women were able to engage in business. . . . Other business contracts deal with all manner of things. One case is recorded where two men signed a receipt for a load of barley they received from a boatman and promised to deliver it to a certain company of soldiers.

Real estate transactions were common. . . .

Litigation was common in Elephantine for all kinds of reasons. It is clear that Jews could go to law in civil matters, and the case would be heard before the Persian-Egyptian courts. . . . Typical civil cases were disputes about land, boundaries, possession of stock, and stealing.

Regular correspondence was sent and received by the people in the colony. . . . the simple matters of the common life are discussed. . . .

Among the most interesting of the papyri are several that consist of little more than lists of people. One contains the names of those who contributed gifts to the temple at Yeb. There are 123 names on the list, many of them being women. . . .

Glimpses into the Persian government that was in existence in Egypt at the time are also to be gained from these papyri. . . .

It is not certain that the Jews at Elephantine had copies of the Jewish Scriptures with them. . . .

We cannot, of course, argue from silence and conclude that the Jews here had no Biblical literature simply because no pieces of the Bible

have been found. It may be one of the accidents of preservation that it is chiefly documents of a business character that have been found. . . .

One disconcerting feature of the Jewish religion at Yeb is the fact that evidently some kind of syncretism was tolerated. The long list of contributors to the temple of Yahu indicates that of the total sum collected, certain moneys were earmarked for Eshem-bethel and 'Anat-bethel. The distribution was, Yahu, 246 shekels, Eshembethel, 140 shekels, and 'Anat-bethel 240 shekels. The element "bethel" in the latter two names frequently occurs as the name of a god from the seventh to the fourth century B.C. in Canaanite-Aramaeian contexts. A third name that has a divine connotation, Herem, is found on other documents from Elephantine. The conclusion of W. F. Albright. . . . is as follows:

There can, accordingly, be no reasonable doubt that we are confronted with Aramaic syncretism, arising about the seventh century B.C. in Jewish circles which were under strong pagan influence.

(*The Bible and Archaeology*, by J. A. Thompson, 1962, pages 218-223)

One thing that L. Ara Norwood does not tell his readers is that the Elephantine Papyri are mostly a collection of secular documents having to do with the common affairs of life such as business transactions. The papyri contain material on marriage, divorce, agreements, contracts, burglary, loans, lists of names, receipt of rations, slaves, petitions, letters, etc. Some of them even seem to be pagan in nature. For example, on pages 180-81 of Cowley's book, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, one document says that "the gods of Egypt shall be assembled," and on page 183 we read in another papyrus concerning "a purification before Apuaitu, the great god" and also regarding "a purification before Isis the [Egyptian] goddess." Cowley observes that this papyrus "may not have come from Elephantine" (page 182). One document contains this statement: "Then an oath was imposed on you and you swore to me concerning them by the [Egyptian] goddess Sati. . ." (page 42).

One papyrus document has over six pages containing the words "of one named Ahikar, a wise and ready scribe. . ." (pages 220-226). On page 205, Cowley says that "although it was found in a Jewish colony, the story shows no sign of Jewish origin. It is not derived from Hebrew sources and there is no

reason why we should expect it to be so.” Another document, which is two pages long, contains the Behisun Inscription—a document having nothing to do with the Jews at Elephantine (see pages 257-259). On page 190, Cowley states that, “The next three papyri are later than those from Elephantine.” It is evident, then, that what we have is mostly a hodgepodge of documents relating to secular matters.

Although Arthur Ernest Cowley’s book is over 300 pages long, a great deal of the space is used to show Aramaic characters and to provide the reader with technical information about the translation. In searching through his work, we could only find nine documents (or fragments of documents) which could possibly throw any light on religious practices at Elephantine. These documents only make about three hundred lines of type and this would be equivalent to six pages of the book. Moreover, about two pages of text are from a document Cowley describes as, “Names of Contributors to Temple Funds.” Toward the top of the document itself we are told that, “This is (a list of) the names of the Jewish garrison who gave money for Ya’u the God . . .” Unfortunately, there is nothing in this document that provides any information other than the names of the donors.

One fragmented papyrus is a duplicate of another document regarding the idea of rebuilding the temple. When these two documents—i. e., the papyrus containing the list of names and the copy of the document regarding the rebuilding of the temple—are set aside, we find that there are less than three and a half pages of text that could provide the type of information which L. Ara Norwood feels should be in the Elephantine Papyri. Nevertheless, even this small amount of text actually does reveal information regarding ancient Jewish religious practices and stands in stark contrast to the paucity of material found in the Book of Mormon.

For example, while the Book of Mormon never mentions the Feast of Unleavened Bread or the Jewish Passover, Arthur Ernest Cowley translates Papyrus No. 21, which is an “Order to keep the (Passover and) Feast of Unleavened Bread. 419 B.C.” This papyrus is damaged and Cowley had to make restorations. In the Introduction to his book, page xxxii, he stated: “In the translation, restorations are indicated as far as possible by italics.” The following is Cowley’s translation of this significant document:

*To my brethren, Yedoniah and his colleagues the Jewish garrison, your brother Hananiah. The welfare of my brethren may the gods seek. Now this year the 5th year of King Darius, word was sent from the king to Arsames, saying: In the month of Tybi (?) let there be a Passover for the Jewish garrison. Now you accordingly count fourteen days of the month Nisan and keep the Passover, and from the 15th day to the 21st day of Nisan (are) seven days of Unleavened bread. Be clean and take heed. Do no work on the 15th day and on the 21st day. Also drink no beer, and anything at all in which there is leaven do not eat, from the 15th day from sunset till the 21st day of Nisan, seven days, let it not be seen among you; do not bring (it) into your dwellings, but seal (it) up during those days. Let this be done as Darius the king commanded. (Address.) To my brethren Yedoniah and his colleagues the Jewish garrison, your brother Hananiah. (Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C., page 63)*

Emil G. Kraeling felt that the restorations in Papyrus 21 were “purely conjectural,” but he acknowledged that, “Many scholars, from Sachau on, were persuaded that this was the case” (*The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine*, 1953, page 95). Kraeling also commented: “Passover, of course, was an old Jewish rural festival, and so it is possible and even likely that the Jews of the Elephantine colony had previously observed it. . . . it is attractive to suppose that the Jews of Elephantine had a Passover” (*Ibid.*, pages 95-96).

In a footnote at the bottom of page 161 of his article, Mr. Norwood says that, “Unleavened Bread is the only Jewish feast specifically mentioned in the papyri (and Passover, if it is to be restored in a fragmentary part of one of the papyri), although the Sabbath ‘is to be found in the ostraca, letters about personal affairs.’”

Actually there is some important information which seems to verify that the Jewish colony at Elephantine did keep the Passover. According to Arthur Ernest Cowley, his translation is supported by some good solid evidence. He notes that “two ostraca,”—that is, potsherds or tablets of earthenware which contain writing—show that the Passover was kept by the Jews at Elephantine:

Apparently they did keep the Passover on this occasion, as directed, for it is mentioned *at least on two ostraca* (not included in this volume), of about the same date as no. 21 [the papyrus he translated], though of course these may refer to another celebration of it. It is worth noting also that the great list (no. 22) of subscriptions to the temple funds was drawn up in the same year (419) as the Passover edict, and it is difficult to believe that they are not connected. . . . What is certain is that the celebration of the (Passover and) feast of Unleavened Bread was ordered by the Persian king, and that these are the only festivals mentioned (and that exceptionally) in these papyri. (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Introduction, page xxv)

On page 64, Arthur Ernest Cowley shows that one of the ostraca reads: “that she may prepare the Passover.”

As mentioned above, the Bible uses the words *leaven, leavened, leaveneth, and unleavened* 100 times, whereas the Book of Mormon never mentions any of these words! Interestingly, the papyrus Cowley translated contains the word “leaven,” which, of course, helps to prove that it is related to both the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover. In *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by James B. Pritchard, 1969, the same papyrus is translated by H. L. Ginsberg. Ginsberg also restores the “*festival of unleavened bread*” and the “*passover*” in his translation.

The Passover Papyrus contains material similar to that found in Exodus 12:18-19:

In the first month [Nisan], on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

The reader will notice some very interesting parallels between the biblical text and the Passover Papyrus. It seems inconceivable that it could relate to anything other than the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As we noted above, the writing on two ostraca strongly supports that conclusion.

We have stated earlier that very little in the Book of Mormon was written concerning the Sabbath day. While it is true there is nothing about the Sabbath in the papyri, the ostraca found at Elephantine seem to indicate that the Sabbath was observed. The translator Emil G. Kraeling made some comments about this matter:

Did the Jews at Elephantine observe the Sabbath? Dupont-Sommer has found what he believes to be evidence for that observance on their part in several of the Clermont-Ganneau ostraca. In No. 204, lines 4-5, there is a statement that he renders “I am going, and not will I come until the eve (of the Sabbath).” The word used for eve (*rwbh*) seems to be the same as that used for the “day of preparation” in Jewish sources . . . In No. 152, further supported by No. 186, Dupont-Sommer holds there is express mention of the Sabbath day. In the former ostrakon the important clause occurs in lines 2-3.

“Tie up the ox tomorrow on the Sabbath lest he stray.”

The word here rendered Sabbath by Dupont-Sommer is written *sbh*, and if it really means the Sabbath it compels our seeking for a different etymology than the customary Hebrew form would seem to suggest. The other ostrakon referred to is very fragmentary but provides in its last line a phrase this scholar believes to have been “day of the Sabbath.” Since the Sabbath is ancient in Israel its observance in the Elephantine colony is quite possible. (*The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine*, 1953, pages 91-92)

The temple at Elephantine was destroyed in about 410 B. C., and in 408 B. C. the Jews wrote a “Petition to the Governor of Judaea” concerning the rebuilding of the structure. Because they were concerned about the matter, a few documents which speak of the temple were written. Below are some extracts from those documents:

. . . meal-offering and incense and sacrifice to offer there to Ya`u the God of heaven . . . (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, page 100)

Our wives are made widow-like, we do not anoint ourselves with oil and we drink no wine. Also from that (time) till (the present) day in the 17th



year of Darius the king, neither meal-offering, incense, nor sacrifice do they offer in that temple. Now your servants Yedoniah and his colleagues and the Jews, all *of them* inhabitants of Yeb, say as follows: If it seem good to your lordship, take thought for that temple to build (it). . . . let a letter be sent from you to them concerning the temple of the God Ya'u to build it in the fortress of Yeb as it was built before, and they shall offer the meal-offering and incense and sacrifice on the altar of the God Ya'hu . . . (*Ibid.*, page 114)

. . . that they may offer the meal-offering and incense upon that altar as formerly was done. (*Ibid.*, page 123)

. . . If your lordship is *favourable* and the temple of Ya'u the God which *we had (?) be rebuilt (?)* in the fortress of Yeb as it was formerly built, and sheep, oxen (and) goats are *not* offered as burnt-sacrifice there, but incense, meal offering *and drink-offering only*, and (if) your lordship gives orders *to that effect*, then we will pay to your lordship's house the *sum of*. . . and also a thousand ardabs of barley. (*Ibid.*, page 125)

The reader will note that the last reference seems to indicate that the Jews at Elephantine were willing to forgo animal sacrifice if it would help them gain approval to rebuild the temple. Arthur Ernest Cowley commented: "No doubt their animal sacrifices offended Egyptian susceptibilities . . ." (*Ibid.*, Introduction, page xvii). J. A. Thompson observed: "It is interesting to note that the new temple was to be a place where the only offerings were to be the non-blood offerings" (*The Bible and Archaeology*, page 226).

Thompson feels that one document, dated 402 B. C., suggests that the temple was rebuilt. In any case, it is obvious that these Jews were familiar with what went on in the temple. They knew, for example, that incense played a very important part in temple worship. The Bible, in fact, uses this word 129 times. In the writings from Elephantine, which are found above, it is mentioned five times (one of these examples is a restoration). The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, never uses the word *incense*.

In the Bible, Numbers 5:15, we read concerning an offering of "barley meal." The writings from Elephantine use the words "meal-offering" five times (the word *offering* is restored in one instance). The Book of Mormon, however, is completely silent about meal-offerings.

The Bible has a great deal to say about oxen and goats being sacrificed. The Elephantine Papyri seems to indicate that the Jews would be willing to give up the sacrifice of "oxen (and) goats" if they were allowed to have a temple. While the Book of Mormon mentions that the Nephites had both oxen and goats, there is no indication that these animals were ever sacrificed.

Unfortunately, not all of the Aramaic papyri were published in 1923. Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley wrote: "In 1954 some of these records, the Brooklyn Aramaic Papyri, were discovered in a trunk, where they had been overlooked for fifty years" (*Since Cumorah*, 1967, page 59).

Actually, the Egyptian Department of the Brooklyn Museum received these documents in 1947 from Theodora Wilbour, the daughter of the Egyptologist Charles Edwin Wilbour. As Nibley stated, the papyri were stored in a trunk. They were published by Emil G. Kraeling in 1953 under the title, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine*.

Although this book is over 300 pages in length, it actually contains only seventeen papyrus documents from Elephantine. A careful examination of the translation of the papyri reveals that at least the first fourteen of them are definitely secular documents. According to Emil G. Kraeling, Papyrus 15 is merely "an endorsement of a lost papyrus." It is just nine words in length: "Document which Ananiah son of Meshullam wrote to Yehoyishma."

Kraeling states that Papyrus 16 "is the most perplexing in the collection, for it does not fall into a recognizable category with the aid of which its fragments might be arranged. . . . The initial word of the text, 'the corn,' is preserved. . . . The most certain and most interesting thing about it is that the two pieces containing reference to "Khnum, the god," . . . belong together. . . . Perhaps this papyrus was not of Jewish origin but came from the house of a priest of Khnum."

According to Kraeling, Papyrus 17 is just a fragment, and "since it is only a small piece it is difficult to say much about it. There are allusions to a man's 'bringing' something and to measures . . ."

Unfortunately, none of these papyri throw any light on religious practices at Elephantine.

The reader will remember that L. Ara Norwood asserted that the Elephantine Papyri tend to demonstrate that we have reached “hasty and naive conclusions” with regard to the Book of Mormon. A careful examination of the evidence, however, shows just the opposite to be true. In just three and a half pages the papyri reveal more about ancient Jewish feasts and sacrifices than the entire book of Mormon! The papyri and the ostraca seem to make it clear that the Jews at Elephantine celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover. They also show that these Jews were aware of the Sabbath and knew that incense was used in the temple. Moreover, they demonstrate that the people knew that oxen and goats were offered as burnt offerings and that there was a meal-offering. What more could we expect from a collection of secular documents that only briefly touch on the subject of religion?

The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, is not a secular book. While it does have a great deal of material on wars, it purports to be a book of scripture that gives the religious history of ancient Jews in the New World. Since the greatest part of the book was written while the law of Moses was still in effect and since it devotes a great deal of space to religious matters, it should be filled with material relating to the law of Moses, ancient Jewish customs and the temple. While the Elephantine Papyri covered a period of only about a century, the Book of Mormon encompassed about 630 years of history in which the Nephites were supposed to be living under the law of Moses. It seems astounding, then, that the Book of Mormon would be so silent regarding ancient Jewish laws and customs. Instead, it is filled with Christianity from beginning to end. It is clear, therefore, that it was not written in ancient times.

The reader will remember that L. Ara Norwood made this comment concerning our research: “Following their reasoning, one must be consistent and declare as fabrication the fifth-century Jewish documents from Elephantine in Upper Egypt.” We certainly can not agree with this statement. The Elephantine Papyri, in fact, have all the earmarks of being produced by Jews in the fifth century B.C.

The largest portion of the Book of Mormon, which was supposedly written prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, is anachronistic because it is filled with a great deal of Christian material. The Aramaic Papyri,

on the other hand, are completely silent about Christ. This, of course, is what we would expect to find in Jewish documents produced in the fifth century B.C. While the Jews at Elephantine may have made some compromises with paganism, the papyri do contain the very type of material concerning the ancient Jewish religion which we would expect to find.

### Feast or Revival?

As we suggested earlier, we feel that king Benjamin’s speech in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon actually resembles a 19th century revival far more than a Jewish religious festival.

It is a well-known fact that when Joseph Smith was a young man he attended revival meetings. Interestingly, the Book of Mormon itself is filled with scenes similar to those which he would have witnessed at these meetings. King Benjamin, in fact, sounds just like a revivalist preacher. At the end of chapter 3, verse 27, Benjamin warned that the “torment” of the wicked is “as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen.” In the next two verses (4:1-2) we read:

And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking . . . that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had *fallen to the earth*, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all *cried aloud* with one voice, saying: *O have mercy*, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . .

In his autobiography Charles G. Finney, a famous 19th-century revival preacher reported many cases of people falling down during his meetings and crying out for mercy. For example, on page 103 of his book, Finney related: “I had not spoken to them... more than a quarter of an hour when all at once an awful solemnity seemed to settle down upon them; the congregation *began to fall* from their seats in every direction, and *cried for mercy*. . . . nearly the whole congregation were either on their knees or prostrate . . . (Charles G. Finney, *An Autobiography*)

On page 136 of the same book, Finney reported: "I had not preached long, before . . . I observed a man fall from his seat near the door . . . I was satisfied that it was a case of falling *under the power of God*, as the Methodists would express it . . ." The expression "under the power of God" is very interesting because it is also found in the book of Alma in the Book of Mormon. Alma 18:42 relates how a man "fell unto the earth," and Alma 19:6 says he was "*under the power of God* . . ." That this was the way the "Methodists would express it" is also interesting because in 1828 Joseph Smith himself took steps towards becoming a member of that church by joining a Methodist class in Pennsylvania (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 162-162A).

The story of king Benjamin certainly sounds like a 19th-century "camp-meeting." Mosiah 2:5 says that the people "pitched their tents round about." Then a "tower" was erected from which king Benjamin spoke. As we have noted, the king then delivered a sermon which would fit very well in the context of a revival meeting. Finally, the people fell down upon the earth, repented and "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins . . ." (Mosiah 4:3).

Notice how similar this is to a report of a "camp-meeting" reported by Captain Frederick Marryat:

"The camp was raised upon . . . a piece of table-land . . . At one end . . . was a raised stand, which served as a pulpit for the preachers . . .

"Outside of the area, which may be designated as the church, were hundreds of tents pitched . . . In front of the pulpit was a space railed off . . . which I was told was the anxious seat . . . girl after girl dropped down upon the straw on one side, and men on the other. . . .

"Every minute the excitement increased; some wrung their hands and called for mercy . . . boys lay down crying bitterly . . . some fell on their backs with their eyes closed, waving their heads in a slow motion, and crying out—'Glory, glory, glory!'" (*Diary in America*, as cited in *Uncommon Americans*, by Don C. Seitz, pages 74-77)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts also suspected that the religious manifestations found in the Book of Mormon were derived from Joseph Smith's environment:

It will not be necessary to further repeat the scenes, nor describe again the manner of these "religious" manifestations. It is clearly established now that these scenes of religious frenzy were common in the vicinage where Joseph Smith resided in his youth and early manhood. . . . The question is, did his knowledge of these things lead to their introduction into the Book of Mormon narrative? I think it cannot be questioned but where there is sufficient resemblance between the Book of Mormon instances of religious emotionalism and those cited in the foregoing quotations from the works of Edwards et al. to justify the thought that the latter might well have suggested and indeed become the source of the former. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 308)

Notwithstanding the claims put forth by those associated with F.A.R.M.S., a careful examination of all the evidence leads one to conclude that the Book of Mormon was written by someone raised as a Protestant who had very scanty knowledge concerning Jewish history, religion and customs.

### Tanners' Double Standard

In his rebuttal to us, John Tvedtnes accused us of being unfair in our criticism of the Book of Mormon:

The Tanners (pp. 23-24) believe that, in order to make up for lack of historical detail which would have contradicted the material contained in the 116 pages, Joseph Smith used filler from the Old Testament, citing a number of chapters of Isaiah. They find it odd that Nephi would quote this material rather than recount the history of his people. In view of the fact that the material is already found in our Bible, the Tanners term its inclusion in the Book of Mormon "ridiculous." Actually, Nephi's work in this respect is no less ridiculous than the fact that the Bible repeats the genealogy lists of Genesis 5, 10-11, 36, in the early chapters of 1 Chronicles, that Isaiah 36-39 repeats material already found in 2 Kings 18-20, or that much of the history found in the books of Samuel and Kings is repeated in the Chronicles, etc. The Tanners use the same tactic as many other anti-Mormon writers, attacking the Book of Mormon in the same manner that unbelievers

attack the Bible. This double standard compromises their work. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 197-198)

The reader will notice that John Tvedtnes argues that since the Bible also “repeats” material, we are being unfair in our criticism of the Book of Mormon. Actually, there is far more to this issue. One serious problem with regard to the Book of Mormon’s extensive citations from Isaiah is that the writers, unlike those who wrote the Bible, claimed to be engraving the material on metal plates “in the language of” Nephi’s father, “which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2). This, of course, would be a very slow and awkward process. Nephi’s brother Jacob lamented:

Now behold, it came to pass that I, Jacob, having ministered much unto my people in word, (and *I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates*) . . . but we can write a few words upon plates . . . (Jacob 4:1-2)

Moroni complained: “And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands” (Ether 12:24).

Under these circumstances, we find it extremely difficult to believe that a scribe would spend so much time engraving chapter after chapter from the book of Isaiah, which the Nephites already had in the brass plates brought from Jerusalem, instead of recording the current religious teachings of the inspired leaders. Since it was so difficult to engrave the characters on the metal plates, it does seem unreasonable to believe that the Book of Mormon would contain so much filler.

The reader will notice that in John Tvedtnes’ statement cited above, he accused us of using a “double standard.” A careful examination of our work, however, reveals that there was no double standard used with regard to the repeated material. We did refer to material that was duplicated in the Bible. John Tvedtnes’ statement “that Isaiah 36-39 repeats material already found in 2 Kings 18-20” is certainly not new to those who have carefully read *Covering Up the Black Hole*. In fact, we frankly discussed the duplication of material in the Bible:

Some Old Testament books have material that is found in other Old Testament books. For example, large portions of chapters 36-39 of Isaiah are also found in 2 Kings 18-20. A comparison of Isaiah 36:1 with 2 Kings 18:13 should demonstrate the point. . . . That there is a definite connection between the four chapters of Isaiah and the three chapters of 2 Kings cannot be disputed. . . .

While scholars may differ concerning whether the material in 2 Kings was taken from Isaiah or vice versa, it is obvious that material has been copied from one book to another. . . .

When one turns to the New testament it is obvious that there are very many similarities in the Synoptic Gospels—i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke. (*Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 79-80)

After noting examples of material which appeared to have been borrowed, we commented:

At any rate, in the examples we have from the Bible, all of the cases of copying can be explained by simply stating the obvious fact that the authors used some known and available work. The problem with regard to the Book of Mormon, however, is that it has the ancient Nephites making extensive quotations from works that were not even in existence at that time. In fact, in the 1st and 2nd books of Nephi, the writings of the New Testament are cited 600 years *before* they were written! (*Ibid.*, page 80)

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### 3. The Question of Plagiarism

In *Covering Up the Black Hole*, pages 75-164, we presented devastating evidence that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in creating the Book of Mormon. Mormon defenders have become very concerned about the case we have presented and have tried to counter it in a number of different ways. In his response, Craig Ray referred to “THE PLAGIARISM QUESTION” which we had raised in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, issues 72 and 74. Unfortunately, Mr. Ray’s rebuttal would lead the reader to believe that our main concern was quotations from the Old Testament which appear in the Book of Mormon:

The question of plagiarism is brought up. To complain that the Book of Mormon is wrong because it quotes the Old Testament, is a very lame argument. They say the Book of Mormon is not scripture, and then complain because it quotes from the scriptures. I have a copy of The Oxford Bible for Teachers, printed about 1896. It has a section in the back of the book called Helps To The Study Of The Bible. On page 87, it lists: PASSAGES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. . . . In very small print, we have documented evidence, that Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and Christ, all plagiarized the Old Testament. On pages 91 and 92 are lists of scriptures of: REFERENCES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT NOT BEING EXACT QUOTATIONS. It seems that the New Testament writers are not condemned by the Tanner’s, but the Book of Mormon writers are for doing the same thing. This sounds like a double standard to me. . . .

Suffice it to say, The New Testament plagiarizes (QUOTES) from the Old Testament as much as or more than, the Book of Mormon. This does not constitute one or the other being in error. If references are given for their quotes, it is not plagiarism. (*Tanner’s “Black Hole Theory” Examined In Biblical Light*, pages 5, 8)

Craig Ray points to page 10 of the July 1989 issue of our newsletter, *Salt Lake City Messenger*, to buttress his idea that we have a great deal of trouble with the Book of Mormon borrowing from

Old Testament books of the Bible. He is undoubtedly referring to these comments which appear on page 10:

By chapter twenty [of 1st Nephi], Nephi seems to have completely run out of words. He, in fact, inserts two chapters of Isaiah (see 1 Nephi, chapters 20 and 21). While he claims that he is copying them from the “plates of brass,” it is obvious to anyone who takes the time to critically examine the matter that the material really comes from the 48th and 49th chapters of the book of Isaiah in the King James Version of the Bible, first printed in 1611 A. D. . . . Chapters 7 and 8 of 2 Nephi are copied from Isaiah, chapters 50, 51, 52:1-2. . . . In Chapter 11, Nephi . . . also informs the reader that he is going to “write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words.” Nephi then proceeds to quote thirteen chapters of Isaiah (chapters 2 through 14) from the King James Version! . . . That Joseph Smith would have to throw in so many chapters of Isaiah as filler shows that he was having a very difficult time trying to find something suitable to replace the material in the lost 116 pages. It is certainly odd that he would leave out significant portions of the history of the Nephites and yet throw in page after page of material from Isaiah. The fact that we already have this material in our Bible makes the situation even more ridiculous.

As we have already explained, our problem is not that the Book of Mormon quotes from Old Testament books. What we are concerned with here is that Nephi was specifically instructed by “the Lord” to create the small plates “for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven *of the ministry of my people*” (1 Nephi 9:3). Nephi, however, seems to lose sight of the “special purpose” for which the plates were made and almost slavishly copies chapter after chapter from the writings of Isaiah. Since the Nephites had a copy of Isaiah and we already have these chapters in our Bible, it would appear that Nephi wasted important space on the plates which should have been devoted to information concerning “the ministry” among the Nephites.

As we explained when dealing with John Tvedtnes’ criticism, we have no objection to portions of the Old Testament which were in existence at the time the

Nephites left the Old World being incorporated into the Book of Mormon. The extensive quotations from the book of Isaiah, however, seem to serve no useful purpose, and the use of King James language in these chapters points strongly to the conclusion that they were actually plagiarized from a 19th century Bible, not from ancient plates. Joseph Smith's dependence on the words translated in A. D. 1611, therefore, clearly shows that he was not actually translating from an ancient text preserved by the Nephites.

Daniel C. Peterson, who is a strong supporter of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, acknowledges that there is a "close relationship" between the words in Isaiah and those found in the Book of Mormon, but he can "only speculate" concerning the reason for this similarity:

This [Isaiah 5:25] is identical to 2 Nephi 15:25, as anti-Mormons like to point out. What of it? Let me clearly say, first, what no thinking Latter-day Saint has ever dreamed of denying: There is some sort of close relationship between the King James translation of Isaiah and the version that appears in the English translation of the Book of Mormon. The precise nature of this relationship is not altogether clear, despite what critics of Joseph Smith are wont to allege. . . . We can only speculate as to why the Lord *inspired Joseph Smith to render these passages in the idiom of the King James Version*. Perhaps early nineteenth-century Bible believers would have been offended by seeing Isaiah in "unbiblical language." Perhaps, for the same reason, there would have been more loss than gain in making alterations, even improvements, to unimportant elements of the text. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 51-52)

While Professor Peterson has done his best to try to find an explanation for this serious problem in the Book of Mormon, his speculation seems to skirt around some very important evidence.

Tom Nibley appears to have missed the whole point of our arguments on plagiarism and tries to make our research appear absolutely ridiculous:

The use of that word *plagiarism* deserves a closer look. According to Webster plagiarism is "1. the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work." Well, that would let Joseph Smith off the hook,

since he *never claimed the Book of Mormon as his own work*. But, then, what does Webster know? Language is determined by usage, and the Tanners, not unlike Humpty Dumpty, use the language just as they please. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, page 279)

While it is true that Joseph Smith stated on the title page of the original 1830 Book of Mormon that it contained, "AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MORMON, UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM THE PLATES OF NEPHI," on the same page these words are found: "BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR, AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR." In modern editions this has been changed to read: "TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUN."

In spite of the fact that Joseph Smith had a statement printed on the title page proclaiming that he was the "AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR," we believe that Tom Nibley is correct in stating that Joseph Smith did not want people to believe that the Book of Mormon was "his own work." Smith had originally included these words when he copyrighted the book. The page following the title page in the first edition reproduces the copyright document and also includes the words, "By Joseph Smith, Jun. Author and Proprietor." While this matter has caused some confusion (the original Testimony of Eight Witnesses also spoke of Joseph Smith as "the Author and Proprietor of this work . . ."), one thing is clear: Joseph Smith had the book printed with the idea of making a profit. Furthermore, he gained a large following because of the Book of Mormon.

David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, plainly stated that those involved in the printing expected to make a profit:

In June 1829, the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished. . . . When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, more money was needed to finish the printing of it. We were waiting on Martin Harris who was doing his best to sell a part of his farm, in order to raise the necessary funds. After a time Hyrum Smith [Joseph Smith's brother] and others began to get impatient, thinking that Martin Harris was too slow and under transgression for not selling his land at once, even if at a great sacrifice. Brother Hyrum thought they should not wait any longer on Martin Harris, and the money should be raised in some other way. Brother Hyrum was vexed with

Brother Martin, and thought they should get the money by some means outside of him, and *not let him have anything to do with the publication of the Book, or receiving any of the profits thereof* if any such profits should accrue. . . . Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and *sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money*: and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph . . . received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram page [*sic*] and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. . . . Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he inquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: “*Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.*” So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right was not of God, but was of the devil or of the heart of man. . . . Without much explanation you can see the error of Hyrum Smith in thinking evil of Martin Harris without a cause, and desiring to leave him out in the publication of the Book; and also the error of Brother Joseph in listening to the persuasions of men and inquiring of the Lord to see if they might not go to Toronto to sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon, when it was made known to Brother Joseph that the will of the Lord was to have Martin Harris raise the money. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, by David Whitmer, 1887, pages 30-31)

David Whitmer’s statement that there was a desire to “sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money” and that Joseph Smith himself received a revelation approving of the plan shows that Smith was very interested in receiving a profit from the book.

In light of the information given above, we find it strange that Tom Nibley would claim that Webster’s definition of *plagiarism* gets Joseph Smith “off the hook.” If, as we maintain, Joseph Smith used large portions of the Bible to create his Book of Mormon,

he appropriated other people’s work for his own benefit. Whether he claimed to be the “author” or the “translator” of the material would make very little difference. The reader will remember that Mr. Nibley says that Webster’s definition of plagiarism is “1. the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work.”

In spite of Nibley’s smoke screen, this seems to be a very good description of what Joseph Smith actually did. While he claimed that he was “translating” from ancient metal plates, he was actually appropriating material from the King James Version of the Bible. He plagiarized the words of Isaiah and other prophets from the Old Testament and claimed they were really from a far more ancient text unknown to scholars. Moreover, he purloined the words of Jesus, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and other writers in the New Testament and steadfastly maintained they were actually engraved on the metal plates of the ancient Nephites and Jaredites.

Even if one were to attempt to try to rigidly cling to the definition of *plagiarism* that Mr. Nibley uses, there is another definition which clearly covers the present situation. In *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1986, page 898, the following definition of *plagiarize* is given: “present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.” Clearly, Joseph Smith’s use of the King James Version of the Bible to bring forth a “new” book on religion fits the situation described in the dictionary.

The reader will remember that Tom Nibley mockingly states: “But, then, what does Webster know? Language is determined by usage, and the Tanners, not unlike Humpty Dumpty, use the language just as they please.” It seem obvious, then, that although Nibley maintains we have misused the English language for our own benefit, there is nothing to justify that claim.

In his attempt to denigrate our work, Tom Nibley wrote:

There follow [in the Book of Mormon] a number of chapters that certainly do seem to be from Isaiah, and includes the quote the Tanners say is plagiarized. Then we find, “Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah” (2 Nephi 25:1). Well! I never!

Not only to plagiarize the Bible, but to have the unmitigated gall to announce blatantly that he is doing so! Now that the Tanners have been so kind as to redefine the word [*plagiarism*] for us, I hope their readers will do their *Christian Duty* and, the next time they hear their minister quote a scripture or use a phrase like “wages of sin,” or “charity never faileth,” march themselves right up to the pulpit and have that awful man denounced, debunked, defrocked, dismissed, and destroyed for the terrible *crime of plagiarism!* (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 279-280)

While Tom Nibley is correct in saying that the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi acknowledged that he was quoting from the words of Isaiah found on the brass plates, the evidence, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, points to the unmistakable conclusion that Nephi was a fictional character and that Joseph Smith himself was plagiarizing these words from the King James Version.

Mr. Nibley does his best to make our argument appear totally ridiculous by maintaining that the way we have redefined the word *plagiarism* opens the door so that even a minister could be “denounced, debunked, defrocked, dismissed, and destroyed for the terrible *crime of plagiarism.*” This, of course, is pure nonsense. We have no objection to anyone using the words found in the Bible. In fact, we have no problem with Joseph Smith or the current prophet of the Mormon Church using this material in sermons, books, etc. Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* is, in fact, filled with quotations from the Bible. What we do object to is Smith appropriating Bible verses and stories into his own works (e. g., the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham) and claiming that he is translating from ancient documents.

Our main problem with plagiarism in the Book of Mormon is the material taken from the New Testament. On page 81 of *Covering Up the Black Hole*, we commented:

To those who really consider the matter, it should be obvious that the presence of many portions of the New Testament in the Book of Mormon is more out of place than to find the following words in a speech attributed to George Washington: “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” These

words alone would be enough to prove the speech a forgery. While less than a century separated George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, in the Book of Mormon we have Lehi quoting from the New Testament book of Revelation *almost seven centuries before it was written!*

An examination of the 1st and 2nd books of Nephi reveals that a significant number of other books found in the New Testament are cited 600 years before they were written!

It is clear that the author of the Book of Mormon possessed a copy of the King James Version of the Bible which he used in constructing his book. In many places, in fact, it appears that he must have had an open Bible on the table or laying in his lap as he dictated the text to his scribes. The author, therefore, could not have lived around 600 B. C. When all the evidence is examined, it is evident that he actually lived in 1830—some 2,430 years after Lehi was supposed to have fled from Jerusalem.

Daniel C. Peterson tries to make the whole matter of plagiarism seem very trivial:

Now, one must admit that certain elements in the Book of Mormon have their parallels in the Bible. And a few even have parallels in *View of the Hebrews*. . . . neither the Bible nor *View of the Hebrews* adequately explains the Book of Mormon.

I, however, am about to solve the mystery. There is a book that neither Ankerberg and Weldon nor even the Tanners have considered. There is a printed document that—while it still does not account for plot, structure, theology, meaning, and details—can be shown to have innumerable parallels to every verse of the Book of Mormon: It is Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*. This great work was published in 1828 and would have been, therefore, available to Joseph Smith. Apart from a few score proper names, virtually every word in the Book of Mormon can be demonstrated to have existed earlier in Mr. Webster’s dictionary. As an explanatory device for the Book of Mormon, then, Webster is a far more powerful tool than either Ethan Smith or the Bible. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 47-48)

Professor Peterson’s comments cited above tend to demonstrate how far he will go to make a very strong argument appear insignificant and silly.



Matthew Roper leans heavily on John Tvedtnes' work, *The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon*, to try to prove that the quotations from the Book of Mormon really come from an ancient text:

The more important questions, which the Tanners never get to, are what to make of the Isaiah variants in the Book of Mormon and what to say of the sensitive selection and use of these quoted passages. John Tvedtnes has done a rather thorough study of these and has shown that the Book of Mormon variants accord remarkably well with other texts of Isaiah, and in some cases provide a superior reading to the King James Translation. This fact greatly weakens the Tanners' case that this material was just filler to save time and worry. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, 1991, page 184)

### The Dead Sea Scrolls

Unfortunately for Roper's argument, the Isaiah manuscripts, found in 1947 among the collection known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, do not support the authenticity of the Isaiah text found in the Book of Mormon. This is extremely important because these scrolls are a thousand years older than any Hebrew manuscripts known prior to that time. Millard Burrows, a noted authority on the Dead Sea Scrolls, commented as follows regarding these scrolls:

The first of the prophetic books, Isaiah, was evidently, as we have seen, the most popular in the Qumran community. In addition to the two scrolls from Cave 1, there are more or less extensive fragments of thirteen others from Cave 4. Like the later and incomplete scroll from Cave 1, the Cave 4 fragments agree closely with the Masoretic text [i.e., the Hebrew text used by Bible scholars]. This demonstration of the antiquity of our traditional text in the book of Isaiah is all the more important in view of the quite different indications in other books. (*More Light on The Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York, 1958, page 146)

On page 172 of the same book, Millard Burrows observed that the St. Mark scroll of Isaiah gives "the complete text of the book in a manuscript which cannot be dated much after 100 B.C. at the latest."

Bible scholars have reason to rejoice over the discovery of manuscripts of Isaiah dating back

to ancient times. Mormon scholars, on the other hand, are faced with a dilemma, for although these manuscripts support the text of the Bible, they do not support Joseph Smith's "Inspired Revision" of the Bible and his "translation" of the text of Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon. For years Mormon scholars have labored to prove that the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is actually a translation of an ancient copy of Isaiah taken from the brass plates and is therefore superior to the translation found in the Bible. They have attempted to show parallels between the text of Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon and that found in some ancient manuscripts. In our book, *Mormon Scriptures and the Bible*, pages 9-11, we show that these parallels are of little value.

If the Book of Mormon were a translation of an authentic ancient document, the Dead Sea Scrolls should provide a great deal of evidence for the book. The Isaiah scroll found at Qumran Cave 1 should have caused a great deal of joy among Mormon scholars, for here was a manuscript of Isaiah which is hundreds of years older than any manuscript previously known. Surely, if the Book of Mormon were true, this manuscript would be filled with evidence to support the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and thus prove that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

Instead of supporting the Book of Mormon, however, it has turned out to be a great disappointment to Mormon scholars. Lewis M. Rogers, who was assistant professor of religion at Brigham Young University, wrote a paper which is entitled, "The Significance of the Scrolls and a Word of Caution." In this article Rogers warned members of the church not to get too excited about the scrolls:

It has been noted that deviations from the Masoretic text in the newly found Isaiah scrolls were minor, indicating a faithful preservation of the accepted Scriptures. . . .

Latter-day Saints have cause to rejoice with other Christians and Jews for the new light and fresh perspective brought to them by the Dead Sea Scrolls, but occasionally they need to be reminded that their hopes and emotions make them vulnerable. It is quite possible that claims for the Book of Mormon and for L.D.S. theology will not be greatly advanced as a consequence of this discovery. (*Progress in Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, 1963, pages 46-47)

In his “Preliminary Report,” *The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon*, distributed by F.A.R.M.S., John Tvedtnes noted: “Few scholars have attempted to study the Book of Mormon Isaiah variants. The most notable among those who have worked on the question are Professors Sidney B. Sperry (deceased) and Hugh Nibley (retired), both of the Brigham Young University” (page 1).

Significantly, after a painstaking study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry was disappointed that the Isaiah texts did not provide the support for the Book of Mormon which many people anticipated:

After reading the Scrolls very carefully, I come to the conclusion that *there is not a line in them that suggests that their writers knew the Gospel as understood by Latter-day Saints*. In fact, there are a few passages that *seem to prove the contrary*. . . .

We should be especially interested in the light the Isaiah scroll throws on the problem of the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon. I have compared in some detail the text of the scroll with its parallels in the Book of Mormon text. This tedious task has revealed that *the scroll seldom agrees with the departures of the Book of Mormon text* from that of the conventional Masoretic text of Isaiah and consequently the Authorized Version. The conclusions I come to as a result of these comparative studies may be set down as follows:

1. Despite the supposed antiquity of the scroll, its text is inferior to the conventional Hebrew text that has come down to us in the King James Version.

2. If the date assigned to the scroll is correct, we must conclude that serious changes took place in the text prior to the coming of Christ. If my thinking is correct, however, the pronouncement of Nephi concerning the perversion of the scriptures (1 Nephi 13:26) would suggest that we give thought to the possibility that the Isaiah scroll is dated a little too early—let us say about 150 years.

3. The Isaiah scroll is of relatively little use to Latter-day Saints as showing the antiquity of the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.

4. The Book of Mormon text of Isaiah should warn us that the use of the Isaiah scroll of Qumran for purposes of textual criticism is open to grave suspicion.

What then do I see as valuable in the Scrolls? It should be understood that they have great value to the scholar in matters pertaining to Hebrew spelling, grammar and paleography. The Scrolls undoubtedly contribute much to the history of Judaism and Christianity, and specialists of the Old and New Testaments are properly much concerned with them. . . .

But aside from their technical value to scholars, I believe that the importance of the Scrolls in a religious sense has been highly overrated by certain scholars. Their practical importance to Latter-day Saints is relatively small. (*Progress in Archaeology*, pages 52-54)

While Dr. Sperry was very frank about the importance of the scrolls to the Mormons, it is interesting to see how he tried to minimize the age of the scrolls by 150 years in an attempt to save the Book of Mormon. Sperry was forced to do that because the prophet Nephi made this prophecy concerning the Bible:

. . . The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews. . . . and when it proceedeth forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord . . . these things go forth from the Jews *in purity unto the Gentiles* . . . thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, *they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.*

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

Wherefore, thou seest that *after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many things taken away from the book*, which is the book of the Lamb of God. (1 Nephi 13:23-28)

The early leaders of the Mormon Church clearly identified the “great and abominable church” mentioned above as the Roman Catholic Church. It is obvious from the quotation above that the Book of Mormon charges that serious changes were made in the Bible after the time of Christ and after the formation of the Catholic Church.

In 1832 the Mormon publication *The Evening and the Morning Star*, vol. 1, no. 1, June, 1832, page 3, asserted that the changes in the Bible were made sometime between 460 and 1400 A.D.: “. . . the most plain parts of the New Testament, have been taken from it by the Mother of Harlots while it was confined in that Church,—say, from the year A.D. 460 to 1400 . . .”

Since this assertion was made, a great deal of evidence has come forth clearly showing that the Catholics did not make the alterations in the Bible which the early Mormons alleged. We now have papyrus manuscripts of significant portions of the New Testament which date back to A.D. 200. Because the Catholic Church was not even in existence at this time, it could not have corrupted the Bible at such an early date.

Since professor Sidney B. Sperry realized the problem involved in stating that the purported changes in the Bible were made sometime between A.D. 460 and 1400, he tried to move the date of the changes back to just after Christ's death. It is clear, then, that Sperry wanted to change the dating of the Isaiah texts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls to save the Book of Mormon. Instead of accepting the date of about 100 B.C., which most scholars tend to favor, he apparently wanted to move it “say about 150 years” later to A.D. 50, just after the start of the Christian religion.

Wayne Ham, who wrote his M.A. thesis for the church's Department of Biblical Languages at Brigham Young University in 1961, made a study in which he compared the Isaiah scroll with the Book of Mormon text. His thesis is entitled, “A Textual Comparison of the Isaiah Passages in the Book of Mormon with the Same Passages in the St. Mark's Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Community.” After making this study, Wayne Ham was forced to the conclusion that the Isaiah scroll does not support the text in the Book of Mormon. In an article published in *Courage* in 1970, he set forth his thoughts on the matter:

Included in the Dead Sea finds was a complete Isaiah scroll and an incomplete one. Latter Day Saints were hopeful that these Isaiah scrolls would bring some supportive evidence for the Book of Mormon. The theory went like this: The language of the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon is that of the King James Version, with some variations. Since the King James Version had been

translated from the Massoretic Hebrew text (a text developed by Jewish scholars during the early centuries of the Christian era), it was assumed by some Latter Day Saints that the variations in the Book of Mormon represented an older, more accurate text than the Massoretic text. The Dead Sea Isaiah scroll, which dates probably from the second century B.C., predates by one thousand years what was previously considered to be the oldest surviving text of the Old Testament.

After a thorough investigation of the matter, reported in “A Textual Comparison of the Isaiah Passages in the Book of Mormon with the Same Passages in the St. Mark's Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Community,” this writer found no noteworthy instances of support for the Book of Mormon claims. (*Courage*, vol. 1, no. 1, September 1970, page 20)

Although research on the Isaiah material in the Dead Sea Scrolls does not help the case for the Book of Mormon, many Mormons believe that other scrolls found in the collection provide evidence for Mormonism. While most of the important material found at Qumran has been translated and published, for many years after the discovery of the scrolls only a limited number of scholars had access to some of the material. Fortunately, in 1991, “Huntington Library in San Marino, Calif., broke the monopoly . . . by giving qualified scholars free access to its 3,000 photographs. The library has one of only two copies of the entire collection of parchment scrolls and fragments” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 7, 1991). The same article in the *Tribune* contained the following:

The Dead Sea Scrolls, originally discovered in 1947, have generated big news lately. . . . Stephen E. Robinson, chairman of BYU's Ancient Scripture department and a Dead Sea Scroll scholar, compares the recent discoveries to the anticipated publication of the Temple Scroll in the 1970s.

“There was a lot of hype in the press and especially among Latter-day Saints. While the Temple Scroll was important in its historical and linguistic contributions, few of the things that many Latter-day Saints were expecting turned up,” said Mr. Robinson.

“I see no reason to suspect that there will be such major revelations in these new fragments, either.”

Ever since Mormonism's founding in 1830, Latter-day Saints have had an obvious interest in ancient scripture. The *Book of Mormon* speaks of "plain and precious truths" that were omitted or lost from the Bible. . . .

Many Mormons believe the Dead Sea Scrolls have come to light in "these latter days" to restore those lost biblical truths and to help establish the veracity of the *Book of Mormon* as a truly ancient scripture.

Even official LDS publications such as the . . . *Ensign* have featured faith-promoting articles about the scrolls. . . .

Although [Stephen] Ricks [professor of Hebrew and Semitic languages at BYU] is excited about the recent release of photocopies of previously unpublished scroll fragments, he, too, is cautious in his exuberance.

"The additional scrolls will undoubtedly enhance our knowledge of the Qumran community, but the extent remains to be seen."

Mr. Robinson is more blunt.

"So far the plain and precious things have not been restored to us in the Dead Sea Scrolls. If Latter-day Saints would just get a good English translation of all the [already] published scrolls, they would discover that the people of Qumran are not [Latter-day] Saints of former days. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 7, 1991)

Although Sidney B. Sperry and Wayne Ham were unable to find any significant textual support for the Book of Mormon text of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls, John Tvedtnes made his own comparison and felt that he found some evidence favorable to Joseph Smith's work. As noted above, Tvedtnes' 137-page work, *The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon*, was distributed by F.A.R.M.S. A condensed version was published by the Religious Studies Center in the book, *Isaiah and the Prophets*, 1984, edited by Monte S. Nyman. We would assume that Tvedtnes has given his best examples in this book. While he compares the text of the Book of Mormon with a number of ancient documents, he primarily uses the Masoretic text, the Septuagint translation of the Bible and the Isaiah material found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Significantly, in an examination of the important part of his study, found on pages 168-176, we found that he referred to the Masoretic text forty-two times; the Septuagint Version of the Bible twenty-one times and the Isaiah material in the Dead Sea

Scrolls only sixteen times. This seems to indicate that he found less to discuss in the extremely ancient texts found at Qumran than in the Septuagint Version and the Masoretic text. We made a similar study of portions of John Tvedtnes' longer study distributed by F.A.R.M.S. and found a similar pattern.

It is certainly strange that Tvedtnes devoted so much of his attention to the Masoretic text but had little to say about the material from Qumran. Since the Dead Sea Scrolls are about a thousand years older, one would think that they would play the predominant role in his study.

In his book, *The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, pages 92-93, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry pointed out what he believed to be a very significant parallel between the Isaiah text found in the *Septuagint* and the Book of Mormon (compare *Septuagint*, Esaias [Isaiah] 2:16 with 2 Nephi 12:16). Although we do not have room here to deal with the matter, Mormon critic Wesley P. Walters pointed to some evidence indicating that the parallel did not come from the *Septuagint*, but from a well-known Bible commentary written by Thomas Scott (see our book, *Mormon Scriptures and the Bible*, pages 9-10).

In both his larger study (pages 26-27) and in his condensed version appearing in *Isaiah and the Prophets* (page 170) John Tvedtnes used the example set forth by Sperry as evidence for the Book of Mormon's authenticity. It is interesting to note, however, that in both cases he failed to mention a very important matter: that is, that the Isaiah text found in the Dead Sea Scrolls does not support his example. Wesley Walters pointed this out over two decades ago:

"I even checked the Isaiah MS from about 100 B.C. found in the Dead Sea materials and their text follows the text translated in the King James version." (Statement by Wesley P. Walters, as cited in *Mormon Scriptures and the Bible*, page 10)

Unfortunately, John Tvedtnes does not even refer to the evidence that the Dead Sea Scrolls provides regarding this matter in either of his two studies. As we will show below, Tvedtnes has accused us of covering up "evidence on a number of occasions." It seems that there is a double standard operating here. However this may be, we do feel that he should have noted that the oldest Hebrew manuscript of the Isaiah text does not sustain his theory.

Although we have no reason to question John Tvedtnes' competence with regard to the Hebrew language, it is obvious that he is so committed to the belief that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God that it is unlikely that he will ever be dissuaded from that position. His unwavering commitment to Mormonism, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, was clearly demonstrated when the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered in the late 1960's. Because of the extreme partiality John Tvedtnes demonstrated with regard to the Book of Abraham, we find it difficult to take his work on the Book of Mormon seriously. The reader will find some important information on this subject in the Appendix of this book.

### “Leaps of Faith”

It is interesting to note that in the same issue of the F.A.R.M.S. publication in which John Tvedtnes attacks our work on the “black hole” Tvedtnes himself was criticized for making “outrageous claims.” In a review of the book, *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, David B. Honey, assistant professor of Chinese at Brigham Young University, commented as follows:

In “Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes” (pp. 289-326), author John A. Tvedtnes posits some interesting, often intriguing possibilities, which are unfortunately asserted with too much certainty in light of the paucity of evidence. . . . more depressingly, our confidence in the validity of Tvedtnes's important conclusions is constantly undermined by outrageous claims made for unimportant, peripheral matters. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 130, 132)

Kurt Weiland reviewed the same book and also felt that Tvedtnes was making “leaps of faith”:

My last concern deals with leaps of faith. In many of the articles, we're asked to *assume* a lot. John Tvedtnes does a lot of leaping . . . (*Ibid.*, page 145)

In a review of the book, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The F.A.R.M.S. Updates*, Edited by John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, assistant professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University,

indicated that there is actually “a surprising lack of textual evidence supporting the Book of Mormon readings”:

The articles in this book are written by specialists for readers with no particular expertise in the subjects treated. Therefore, most readers do not have the capability to check on either accuracy or overstatement in the arguments. There is need for caution in this regard. Arguments from two examples will suffice.

1. The discussion of “Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon” (pp. 77-79) demonstrates passages where the Book of Mormon text agrees with other ancient texts which were not “available to Joseph” (p.77). The reader is given the impression that ancient texts verify the differences between the Book of Mormon and the biblical text. Four examples are given. . . .

Considering the many textual differences between the Book of Mormon, the Masoretic Text, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Septuagint, there is *a surprising lack of textual evidence supporting Book of Mormon readings*. This, of course, is not to say the Book of Mormon does not preserve authentic ancient readings, but rather suggests textual diversity was much greater in antiquity than is witnessed by more recent texts and versions. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 309-311)

### From John's Gospel?

On page 76 of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, we printed photographic proof that Joseph Smith plagiarized from a New Testament book in writing his Book of Mormon (a photograph of that page is included in this book). The material was taken from the eleventh chapter of the book of John. This portion of John's book relates the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

The parallels between the two stories are astounding:

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

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

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

**Two** — Both Martha and the unnamed queen use the words “he stinketh”:

... others say that he is dead and the “he stinketh ...” (Alma 19:5)

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

**Three** — Both Ammon and Jesus use the word “sleepeth” with regard to the man:

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

... Lazarus sleepeth ... (John 11:11)

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

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

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

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

**Six** — In both cases the man arose:

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

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

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

Unfortunately, John Tvedtnes could not accept what should be obvious to any unbiased observer and protested as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 19.

*A wonderful conversion—Abish the Lamanite woman—Lamanite king and queen espouse the faith—Ammon establishes the church in Ishmael.*

1. And it came to pass that after two days and two nights they were about to take his body and lay it in a sepulchre, which they had made for the purpose of burying their dead.

5. Therefore, if this is the case, I would that ye should go in and see my husband, for he has been laid upon his bed for the space of two days and two nights; and some say that he is not dead, but others say that he is dead and that he stinketh, and that he ought to be placed in the sepulchre; but as for myself, to me he doth not stink.

8. And he said unto the queen: He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again; therefore bury him not.

9. And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.

12. And it came to pass that he arose, according to the words of Ammon; and as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said: Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou.

CHAPTER 11

*Jesus testifies he is the resurrection and the life—Mary and Martha testify of him—He raises Lazarus from the dead—Caiaphas speaks prophetically of the death of Christ.*

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Selected verses from chapter 19 of Alma in the Book of Mormon (to the left) compared with verses from chapter 11 of John in the Bible (to the right). The verses in the Book of Mormon were supposed to have been written over a century and a half before the book of John was penned. The close relationship between the texts provides evidence that the Book of Mormon story was plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible.

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

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

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

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

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

Alma 19:9 reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

It is obvious, then, that John Tvedtnes saw six references, containing twenty-four words, that are just not there. The reader will remember that Tvedtnes argued that the “very existence” of the four-word phrase “in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.” Now that the truth is known, it is obvious that it is Tvedtnes’ argument that has been weakened.

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

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

We searched for phrases of two or more words which are not found in the Old Testament. Although we were particularly interested in finding phrases from the book of John, we also included many other references from other New Testament books which may have been borrowed by Joseph Smith in writing these three chapters which are found in the Book of Mormon. Although about a fourth of the phrases appear in more than one New Testament book (this is especially true of phrases found in the synoptic Gospels), we have only taken the space to list the location in one of these books. The reader will notice that in the study which follows we have abbreviated the King James Version of the Bible as “KJV” and the Book of Mormon as “BM.”

**KJV:** caused that (John 11:37)

**BM:** caused that (Alma 18:1)

**KJV:** things which they had seen (Luke 9:36)

**BM:** things which they had seen (Alma 18:1)

**KJV:** things which they had seen (Luke 9:36)

**BM:** things which they had seen (Alma 18:2)

**KJV:** sought to slay him (John 5:16)

**BM:** sought to slay him (Alma 18:2)

**KJV:** he was astonished (Luke 5:9)  
**BM:** he was astonished (Alma 18:2)

**KJV:** more than a (Matthew 11:9)  
**BM:** more than a (Alma 18:2)

**KJV:** and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know (John 9:25)  
**BM:** and said: Whether he be the Great Spirit or a man, we know not; but this much we know (Alma 18:3)

**KJV:** For we know (Romans 7:14)  
**BM:** for we know (Alma 18:3)

**KJV:** And now when the (Mark 15:42)  
**BM:** And now, when the (Alma 18:4)

**KJV:** heard these words, and said unto (John 9:14)  
**BM:** heard these words, he said unto (Alma 18:4)

**KJV:** received from God the Father (2 Peter 1:17)  
**BM:** received from his father (Alma 18:5)

**KJV:** they supposed that (Matthew 20:10)  
**BM:** they supposed that (Alma 18:5)

**KJV:** conduct him forth (1 Corinthians 16:11)  
**BM:** conduct him forth (Alma 18:9)

**KJV:** at the land (John 6:21)  
**BM:** at the land (Alma 18:9)

**KJV:** by the Father (John 6:57)  
**BM:** by the father (Alma 18:9)

**KJV:** been so (John 14:9)  
**BM:** been so (Alma 18:10)

**KJV:** that this is the (John 1:34)  
**BM:** that this is the (Alma 18:11)

**KJV:** which is, being interpreted (John 1:41)  
**BM:** which is, being interpreted (Alma 18:13)

**KJV:** and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? (Mark 10:51)  
**BM:** and said unto him: What wilt thou that I should do for thee (Alma 18:14)

**KJV:** Being filled with (Philippians 1:11)  
**BM:** being filled with (Alma 18:16)

**KJV:** therefore whatsoever (Matthew 23:3)  
**BM:** therefore, whatsoever (Alma 18:17)

**KJV:** When they had heard these words, they marvelled (Matthew 22:22)  
**BM:** when the king had heard these words, he marveled (Alma 18:18)

**KJV:** Art thou that prophet? and he answered, no. (John 1:21)  
**BM:** Art thou that Great Spirit . . . Ammon answered . . . I am not (Alma 18:18, 19)

**KJV:** speak boldly (Acts 18:26)  
**BM:** speak boldly (Alma 18:20)

**KJV:** also tell (Acts 15:27)  
**BM:** also tell (Alma 18:20)

**KJV:** By what power (Acts 4:7)  
**BM:** by what power (Alma 18:20)

**KJV:** ye slew and (Acts 5:30)  
**BM:** ye slew and (Alma 18:20)

**KJV:** But I know, that (John 11:22)  
**BM:** but I know that (Alma 18:21)

**KJV:** wise as serpents, and harmless (Matthew 10:16)  
**BM:** wise, yet harmless (Alma 18:22)

**KJV:** if I tell (John 3:12)  
**BM:** if I tell (Alma 18:22)

**KJV:** By what power (Acts 4:7)  
**BM:** by what power (Alma 18:22)

**KJV:** I tell you by what authority I do these things (Mark 11:33)  
**BM:** I tell thee by what power I do these things? (Alma 18:22)

**KJV:** believe all (Luke 24:25)  
**BM:** believe all (Alma 18:23)

**KJV:** caught you with guile (2 Corinthians 12:16)

**BM:** caught with guile (Alma 18:23)

**KJV:** began to speak unto (Mark 12:1)

**BM:** began to speak unto (Alma 18:24)

**KJV:** spake . . . with boldness (Acts 4:31)

**BM:** speak . . . with boldness (Alma 18:24)

**KJV:** Believest thou (John 11:26)

**BM:** Believest thou (Alma 18:24)

**KJV:** I do not know (Matthew 26:72)

**BM:** I do not know (Alma 18:25)

**KJV:** what that meaneth (Matthew 9:13)

**BM:** what that meaneth (Alma 18:25)

**KJV:** Believest thou (John 11:26)

**BM:** Believest thou (Alma 18:26)

**KJV:** Believest thou (John 11:26)

**BM:** Believest thou (Alma 18:28)

**KJV:** created all things (Ephesians 3:9)

**BM:** created all things (Alma 18:28)

**KJV:** which are in heaven, and which are on earth (Ephesians 1:10)

**BM:** which are in heaven and in the earth? (Alma 18:28)

**KJV:** Yea, Lord: I believe that (John 11:27)

**BM:** Yea, I believe that (Alma 18:29)

**KJV:** created all things (Ephesians 3:9)

**BM:** created all things (Alma 18:29)

**KJV:** I do not know (Matthew 26:72)

**BM:** I do not know (Alma 18:29)

**KJV:** all his holy (Acts 3:21)

**BM:** all his holy (Alma 18:30)

**KJV:** the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)

**BM:** the thoughts and intents of the heart (Alma 18:32)

**KJV:** were they all (Acts 27:36)

**BM:** were they all (Alma 18:32)

**KJV:** believe all (Luke 24:25)

**BM:** believe all (Alma 18:33)

**KJV:** sent from God (John 1:6)

**BM:** sent from God (Alma 18:33)

**KJV:** In the beginning was (John 1:1)

**BM:** in the beginning was (Alma 18:34)

**KJV:** just and true (Revelation 15:3)

**BM:** just and true (Alma 18:34)

**KJV:** dwelleth in me (John 14:10)

**BM:** dwelleth in me (Alma 18:35)

**KJV:** had said these words (John 7:9)

**BM:** had said these words (Alma 18:36)

**KJV:** the creation of the world (Romans 1:20)

**BM:** the creation of the world (Alma 18:36)

**KJV:** the holy scriptures (Romans 1:2)

**BM:** the holy scriptures (Alma 18:36)

**KJV:** hunger and thirst (Matthew 5:6)

**BM:** hunger and thirst (Alma 18:37)

**KJV:** he expounded unto them in all (Luke 24:27)

**BM:** he expounded unto them all (Alma 18:38)

**KJV:** he expounded unto them (Luke 24:27)

**BM:** he expounded unto them (Alma 18:39)

**KJV:** the foundation of the world (John 17:24)

**BM:** the foundation of the world (Alma 18:39)

**KJV:** abundant mercy (1 Peter 1:3)

**BM:** abundant mercy (Alma 18:41)

**KJV:** when he had said this, he fell (Acts 7:60)

**BM:** when he had said this, he fell (Alma 18:42)

- KJV:** fell unto the earth (Revelation 6:13)  
**BM:** fell unto the earth (Alma 18:42)
- KJV:** he were dead (John 11:25)  
**BM:** he were dead (Alma 18:42)
- KJV:** he were dead (John 11:25)  
**BM:** he were dead (Alma 18:43)
- KJV:** and laid him in a sepulchre (Mark 15:46)  
**BM:** and lay it in a sepulchre (Alma 19:1)
- KJV:** saith unto him . . . that thou art a prophet (John 4:19)  
**BM:** said unto him . . . that thou art a prophet (Alma 19:4)
- KJV:** many mighty works (Matthew 13:58)  
**BM:** many mighty works (Alma 19:4)
- KJV:** that he is not (Matthew 24:50)  
**BM:** that he is not (Alma 19:5)
- KJV:** is not dead (Matthew 9:24)  
**BM:** is not dead (Alma 19:5)
- KJV:** others say that (Luke 9:19)  
**BM:** others say that (Alma 19:5)
- KJV:** dead; and that (Acts 17:3)  
**BM:** dead and that (Alma 19:5)
- KJV:** he stinketh (John 11:39)  
**BM:** he stinketh (Alma 19:5)
- KJV:** that he ought (Acts 25:24)  
**BM:** that he ought (Alma 19:5)
- KJV:** for he knew that (Matthew 27:18)  
**BM:** for he knew that (Alma 19:6)
- KJV:** under the power of (Corinthians 6:12)  
**BM:** under the power of (Alma 19:6)
- KJV:** which was a (Matthew 22:35)  
**BM:** which was a (Alma 19:6)
- KJV:** marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9)  
**BM:** marvelous light (Alma 19:6)
- KJV:** of his goodness (Romans 2:4)  
**BM:** of his goodness (Alma 19:6)
- KJV:** desired of him (John 5:15)  
**BM:** desired of him (Alma 19:7)
- KJV:** is not dead, but sleepeth (Matthew 9:24)  
**BM:** is not dead, but he sleepeth (Alma 19:8)
- KJV:** he shall rise again (John 11:24)  
**BM:** he shall rise again (Alma 19:8)
- KJV:** Believest thou this? (John 11:26)  
**BM:** Believest thou this? (Alma 19:9)
- KJV:** have had no (Hebrews 10:2)  
**BM:** have had no (Alma 19:9)
- KJV:** I believe that (John 11:27)  
**BM:** I believe that (Alma 19:9)
- KJV:** I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel (Luke 7:9)  
**BM:** I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites (Alma 19:10)
- KJV:** he stretched forth his hand (Matthew 12:49)  
**BM:** he stretched forth his hand (Alma 19:12)
- KJV:** as sure as (Matthew 27:65)  
**BM:** as sure as (Alma 19:13)
- KJV:** believe on his name (John 1:12)  
**BM:** believe on his name (Alma 19:13)
- KJV:** When he had said these words (John 7:9)  
**BM:** when he had said these words (Alma 19:13)
- KJV:** again with joy (Luke 10:17)  
**BM:** again with joy (Alma 19:13)
- KJV:** thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11)  
**BM:** thanksgiving to God (Alma 19:14)

**KJV:** the great power of (Acts 8:10)

**BM:** the great power of (Alma 19:15)

**KJV:** for many years (Luke 12:19)

**BM:** for many years (Alma 19:16)

**KJV:** from house to house (Luke 10:7)

**BM:** from house to house (Alma 19:17)

**KJV:** had suffered (Mark 5:26)

**BM:** had suffered (Alma 19:19)

**KJV:** should remain (John 15:16)

**BM:** should remain (Alma 19:19)

**KJV:** rebuked them (Matthew 19:13)

**BM:** rebuked them (Alma 19:20)

**KJV:** whose brother (John 11:2)

**BM:** whose brother (Alma 19:22)

**KJV:** being exceedingly mad (Acts 26:11)

**BM:** being exceedingly angry (Alma 19:22)

**KJV:** drew his sword, and (Matthew 26:51)

**BM:** drew his sword and (Alma 19:22)

**KJV:** now we see (Hebrews 2:8)

**BM:** Now we see (Alma 19:23)

**KJV:** to touch him (Mark 3:10)

**BM:** to touch him (Alma 19:24)

**KJV:** among themselves, What (John 16:17)

**BM:** among themselves what (Alma 19:24)

**KJV:** and others said (Mark 6:15)

**BM:** and others said (Alma 19:25)

**KJV:** rebuked them (Matthew 19:13)

**BM:** rebuked them (Alma 19:26)

**KJV:** saying that he was (Luke 7:4)

**BM:** saying that he was (Alma 19:26)

**KJV:** to torment (Matthew 8:29)

**BM:** to torment (Alma 19:26)

**KJV:** had ever (Mark 15:8)

**BM:** had ever (Alma 19:27)

**KJV:** said, That it (Mark 6:15)

**BM:** said that it (Alma 19:27)

**KJV:** so many of (Romans 6:3)

**BM:** so many of (Alma 19:27)

**KJV:** And the contention was so sharp between them (Acts 15:39)

**BM:** And thus the contention began to be exceedingly sharp among them (Alma 19:28)

**KJV:** went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose (Matthew 9:25)

**BM:** went and took the queen by the hand, that perhaps she might raise her (Alma 19:29)

**KJV:** stood upon their feet (Revelation 11:11)

**BM:** stood upon her feet (Alma 19:29)

**KJV:** And when she had so said, she (John 11:28)

**BM:** And when she had said this, she (Alma 19:30)

**KJV:** Being filled with (Philippians 1:11)

**BM:** being filled with (Alma 19:30)

**KJV:** took him by the hand . . . and he arose (Mark 9:27)

**BM:** took the king . . . by the hand, and behold he arose (Alma 19:30)

**KJV:** stood upon their feet (Revelation 11:11)

**BM:** stood upon his feet (Alma 19:30)

**KJV:** and began to rebuke (Mark 8:32)

**BM:** and began to rebuke (Alma 19:31)

**KJV:** And they did all (Mark 6:42)

**BM:** and they did all (Alma 19:33)

**KJV:** the selfsame thing (2 Corinthians 5:5)

**BM:** the selfsame thing (Alma 19:33)

**KJV:** That their hearts (Colossians 2:2)

**BM:** that their hearts (Alma 19:33)

- KJV:** that they had seen (Luke 19:37)  
**BM:** that they had seen (Alma 19:34)
- KJV:** things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10)  
**BM:** things of God (Alma 19:34)
- KJV:** were baptized: and (Acts 2:41)  
**BM:** were baptized; and (Alma 19:35)
- KJV:** we see that (Hebrews 3:19)  
**BM:** we see that (Alma 19:36)
- KJV:** believe on his name (John 1:12)  
**BM:** believe on his name (Alma 19:36)
- KJV:** the voice of the Lord came (Acts 7:31)  
**BM:** the voice of the Lord came (Alma 20:2)
- KJV:** when they had heard this (John 6:60)  
**BM:** when Ammon had heard this (Alma 20:3)
- KJV:** I go, that I may (John 11:11)  
**BM:** I go that I may (Alma 20:3)
- KJV:** do all things (Philippians 4:13)  
**BM:** do all things (Alma 20:4)
- KJV:** And Jesus said unto him, No (Luke 9:62)  
**BM:** And Ammon said unto him: No (Alma 20:5)
- KJV:** when they had heard this (John 6:60)  
**BM:** when Lamoni had heard this (Alma 20:6)
- KJV:** caused that (John 11:37)  
**BM:** caused that (Alma 20:6)
- KJV:** come, I will (Acts 7:34)  
**BM:** Come, I will (Alma 20:7)
- KJV:** Why did ye not (Matthew 21:25)  
**BM:** Why did ye not (Alma 20:9)
- KJV:** not come to the feast? (John 11:56)  
**BM:** not come to the feast (Alma 20:9)
- KJV:** that great day of the feast (John 7:37)  
**BM:** that great day when I made a feast (Alma 20:9)
- KJV:** who is one of (Colossians 4:9)  
**BM:** who is one of (Alma 20:10)
- KJV:** him, Whither I go (John 13:36)  
**BM:** him whither he was going (Alma 20:11)
- KJV:** unto him, All these things (Matthew 4:9)  
**BM:** unto him all these things (Alma 20:13)
- KJV:** are also come (Acts 23:35)  
**BM:** are also come (Alma 20:13)
- KJV:** him, that he should not (Luke 4:42)  
**BM:** him that he should not (Alma 20:14)
- KJV:** but that he should (John 1:31)  
**BM:** but that he should (Alma 20:14)
- KJV:** but I go, that I may (John 11:11)  
**BM:** but I go . . . that I may (Alma 20:15)
- KJV:** had heard these words (Matthew 22:22)  
**BM:** had heard these words (Alma 20:16)
- KJV:** when he had said these words unto (Acts 28:29)  
**BM:** when Ammon had said these words unto (Alma 20:19)
- KJV:** he answered him, saying (Luke 8:50)  
**BM:** he answered him, saying (Alma 20:19)
- KJV:** sought to destroy him (Luke 19:47)  
**BM:** sought to destroy him (Alma 20:19)
- KJV:** And he stretched forth his hand (Matthew 12:49)  
**BM:** And he stretched forth his hand (Alma 20:20)
- KJV:** lose his life (Mark 8:35)  
**BM:** lose his life (Alma 20:23)
- KJV:** whatsoever thou wilt ask (John 11:22)  
**BM:** whatsoever thou wilt ask (Alma 20:23)
- KJV:** And he [king Herod] sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom (Mark 6:23)  
**BM:** Now the king . . . said: . . . I will grant unto thee whatsoever thou wilt ask, even to half of the kingdom (Alma 20:23)

**KJV:** when he had said these words (Acts 28:29)  
**BM:** when Ammon had said these words (Alma 20:25)

**KJV:** began to rejoice (Luke 19:37)  
**BM:** began to rejoice (Alma 20:25))

**KJV:** great love (Ephesians 2:4)  
**BM:** great love (Alma 20:26)

**KJV:** he was astonished (Luke 5:9)  
**BM:** he was astonished (Alma 20:26)

**KJV:** may come unto me (1 Corinthians 16:11)  
**BM:** may come unto me (Alma 20:27)

**KJV:** Greatly desiring to see thee (2 Timothy 1:4)  
**BM:** greatly desire to see thee (Alma 20:27)

**KJV:** he was desirous to (Luke 23:8)  
**BM:** he was desirous to (Alma 20:27)

**KJV:** had suffered (Mark 5:26)  
**BM:** had suffered (Alma 20:29)

**KJV:** of afflictions (Hebrews 10:32)  
**BM:** of afflictions (Alma 20:29)

**KJV:** a more (Luke 14:8)  
**BM:** a more (Alma 20:30)

**KJV:** from house to house (Luke 10:7)  
**BM:** from house to house (Alma 20:30)

**KJV:** they were taken (Luke 8:37)  
**BM:** they were taken (Alma 20:30)

**KJV:** cast into prison (John 3:24)  
**BM:** cast into prison (Alma 20:30)

Since the two-or-more-word phrases which appear in the study above are not found in the Old Testament, it seems clear that there has been a great deal of plagiarism from the New Testament. Although it is true that some of the 166 examples may only be coincidences, there are far too many

strong parallels to brush the matter aside. The 166 examples, of course, were found in just three chapters of the Book of Mormon. It is very significant that the events mentioned in the Book of Mormon were supposed to have occurred about 90 B.C., which is about 120 years before Jesus even began his public ministry. Moreover, the books of the New Testament were not written until some years after that time.

We found forty-seven parallels to the book of John in the three Book of Mormon chapters and some of them provide very strong evidence of plagiarism.

Interestingly, there are at least twenty parallels in this section of the Book of Mormon with the book of Acts. This did not surprise us because we had previously discovered that the story of Alma contains many important parallels to the things that happened to Apostle Paul in the New Testament. Alma, in fact, had a conversion experience that closely resembles the story of Paul (compare Mosiah, chapter 27 with Acts 26). The parallels continue to appear in the book of Alma (see our book, *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, pages 86-87). There seems to be a great deal of evidence linking the book of Acts, which tells of Apostle Paul's experiences, and the epistles of Paul himself with the Book of Mormon. Much more work, however, needs to be done on this matter.

In any case, our discovery of very significant parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Gospel of John led us to make a very extensive comparison between the two books. What we found was really astounding: the Book of Mormon is filled with quotations from the book of John. In addition, the epistles of John were also plagiarized in Joseph Smith's work. Significantly, even Smith's *Doctrine and Covenants* is also permeated with material from the writings of John. Although we do not have the room to present this significant material here, we hope to be able to print it sometime in the future.

### Tanners' "Ludicrous Idea"

In his rebuttal to us Tom Nibley makes a false statement regarding our belief about the origin of the Book of Mormon. According to Nibley, we believe that Joseph Smith had to constantly jump back and

forth from one part of the Bible to another to create the Book of Mormon:

Finally, I have to say something about the absolutely ludicrous idea of anyone writing anything in the manner the Tanners say Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. In your trusty copy of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, we have one verse of the Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:11, being drawn from *seven* different books of the Bible (p. 148). All right, just for fun, why don't we all sit down and undertake a similar feat of larceny.

Now remember, everybody, at least a third of what you write must come from other sources, and you can't decide what you are going to say until you actually see something that fits sensibly with what goes before. (If Joseph knew what he was going to say before he found it in the Bible, he would simply dictate it, but our transcendent tutors allow for no such shenanigans! "It is clear," say they, "that the author of the Book of Mormon was holding a King James Version of the Bible in his hand when he produced it" [p. 81]). . . .

First, to get a feel for the work, let's take a look at Joseph, hunched over his Bible, frantically turning pages as he tries to find something that will go with "Wherefore, beloved brethren . . .," which he has just dictated to Oliver Cowdery. Finally his eye alights on 2 Corinthians 5:20, which says, in part, ". . . be ye reconciled to God." "That works!" he cries to himself, and to Oliver he dictates, ". . . be reconciled unto him . . .," keeping two of the words in the phrase exactly the same and the other words pretty close. He breezes through the next *five* words unassisted, but hits a stone wall after "through the atonement of Christ." What to say? what to say? . . . Suddenly inspiration strikes—he'll use a synonymous repetition! (Shall we let him cheat a little here? Oh, why not?) Remembering having seen it on a banner at a football game, his mind leaps to John 3:16, and, mumbling to himself to make sure he eliminates the unusable context, he then loudly says, "his Only Begotten Son." Oliver dutifully writes it down. Now he's on his own again. ". . . and ye may . . ." Drat! Stuck again! He picks up the Bible and begins to leaf through it. (Problem—does he read carefully, while at the same time holding the string of the narrative in his head so he'll know what to use when he finds it? Or does he just skim over the pages jumping here and there until something

strikes his eye? Either way, how much sense is this hodgepodge going to make?) Ah, finally! There it is in Luke 20:35, just what he needed: ". . . to obtain that world and the resurrection.' Again, he has to separate it from the context that doesn't fit at all, but that's easy enough; you just push a couple of keys on the ol' IBM, like the Tanners do, right? ". . . obtain a resurrection, . . ." a slight pause and he adds, ". . . according to . . ." Oh rats! According to what? Back to the Bible. According to . . . according to . . . Too bad he couldn't use a concordance, but that would mean he already knew what he was going to say, in which case he would be able to dictate it without having to have that open Bible in his hand. How long does it take to get from Luke 20 to Philippians 3?

And what is our friend Oliver doing during these long excursions into duplicity? Practicing cat's cradle maybe, or whittling decoys in anticipation of duck season? And why did he not, eight years later, as Joseph's enemy, bring up these egregious discrepancies in Joseph's story, thereby winning fame, fortune, and the undying gratitude of a nation that was looking for anything and everything it could find to discredit the prophet? It just doesn't make any sense.

Now, who would like to try the experiment? See how long it takes to write a paragraph in this fashion. And remember that that paragraph is only about an eighth of an average page in a book that is over 500 pages long. . . . Joseph's story is much more credible than the Tanners'—for people who can accept that God still cares enough to talk to men and that angels didn't die out after New Testament times.

Well, I've rambled on more than far enough. There are other points I could address, but why bother? Having waded through the miserable morass of misinformation found in *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, I have no desire to spend any more time on the Tanners. . . . their grasp of the rubrics of logic is tenuous at best. And they remain totally incapable of dealing with evidence contrary to their beliefs, which evidence they cheerfully ignore, misquote, quote out of context, or bury. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 286-289)

In the same volume, Professor William J. Hamblin, of the church's Brigham Young University, indicated that he also believed that we were claiming that Joseph Smith was jumping back and forth in the Bible to create the Book of Mormon:



It seems that the Tanners would have us believe that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by flipping back and forth through the Bible, randomly extracting four- or five-word phrases out of context, and somehow recombining them into a coherent narrative set in an entirely different context. (*Ibid.*, page 254)

Both Tom Nibley and Professor William Hamblin were completely off base when they claimed we believed that Joseph Smith jumped back and forth throughout the Bible to find small phrases to insert in his Book of Mormon. If these two gentlemen had taken the time to carefully read our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, they would have discovered that we do not hold such a view. We, in fact, plainly stated that we believed that Joseph Smith “depended on his memory” for brief quotations:

That Joseph Smith sometimes copied directly from the Bible seems evident from the fact that many of the quotations, as they appear in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, are almost identical to the King James Version of the Bible. In his thesis, page 216, Wesley P. Walters has photographically reproduced page 182 from the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon which has 112 words taken from Isaiah 52:7-10. There is not a single word difference in this lengthy quotation. . . .

As one studies the text of the Book of Mormon, it becomes clear that Joseph Smith *had a very difficult time accurately quoting brief portions of the Bible*. He would often make a number of mistakes within just a small portion of one verse. On the other hand, as we have already shown, when he quoted a number of verses, the text is often identical to the King James Version. We believe that the reason for this seeming discrepancy is that *when he used short quotations he depended upon his memory and did not bother to look them up in the Bible*. When he desired to use larger quotations he realized he needed help and, therefore, read the longer portions directly from the Bible. According to the theory of “automatic writing” proposed by Mr. Dunn, all of the quotations should have been stored in his memory. It seems reasonable, therefore, to believe that the small quotations would be as accurate as the large ones. That they are not seems to be a powerful argument against automatic writing and leads one to the only other alternative: that Joseph Smith knowingly copied

the longer quotations directly from the Bible but often made errors in the smaller quotations because he relied upon his memory. (*Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, pages 72-73)

The idea that Joseph Smith would spend a lot of time “flipping back and forth through the Bible, randomly extracting four- or five-word phrases out of context, and somehow recombining them into a coherent narrative” is, of course, ridiculous. Joseph Smith’s own diaries clearly show that his mind was steeped in biblical expressions. An excellent example of how Joseph Smith could use portions of scriptural passages is found in his 1832 autobiographical sketch concerning his early life, First Vision and an account of bringing forth the Book of Mormon. Below are just a few examples:

A History of the life of Joseph Smith, Jr.

An account of his marvelous experience and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Ch[r]ist the Son of the Living God of whom he beareth record. . . . I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday, to day, and forever. That he was no respecter to [of] persons, for he was God. . . . When I considered all these things that /that/ being seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. Therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy . . . I was filled with the spirit of God . . . (*An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, edited by Scott Faulring, 1989, pages 3, 5)

A careful examination of this account reveals that it closely resembles Joseph Smith’s writing in the Book of Mormon.

Mormon defender Matthew Roper argues that Joseph Smith did not use a Bible in producing the Book of Mormon:

The Tanners’ theory conjures up an image of Joseph Smith hiding behind a curtain, poring over his Bible, frantically plucking out choice tidbits of doctrinal matter here and there, splicing them into the Book of Mormon narrative . . . if Joseph had been cribbing from the Bible, it is strange that no one ever mentioned his using one. The apparent absence of a Bible during the work of translation makes the hypothesis of plagiarism less easy to maintain.

Why then does Joseph make use of King James English in the translation of the Book of Mormon? Simply because that was the accepted biblical language of the day. . . .

How did the translator do this without the use of a Bible? Although there is still much to learn, it seems perfectly reasonable to me that the Holy Ghost could have conveyed King James English to the mind of the Prophet, while he translated through the gift and power of God. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 171-172)

Roper's statement would lead the reader to believe that we are trying to deceive people by saying that Joseph Smith used the King James Version of the Bible while he was "translating" the Book of Mormon. The truth of the matter, however, is that some of the most prominent Mormon scholars have held to this view. For example, as early as 1909 the church's own *Deseret News* published *New Witnesses of God*, vol. 2. On pages 426-27, we find this question in a letter written by a Mr. H. Chamberlain:

"I find that Christ in quoting to the people on this side of the water, the third and fourth chapters of Malachi, quotes, according to the Book of Mormon, in the identical text of King James' version . . . I find chapters of Isaiah quoted practically in the same way. I find that in many instances, in his talks with the people . . . he used the identical language of King James' version, not omitting the words supplied by the translators. Now, I know that no two parties will take the same manuscript and make translations of a matter contained therein, and the language of the two translations be alike; indeed, the language employed by the two parties will widely differ. . . . I can conceive of no other way in which such a coincidence could have occurred, within the range of human experience, except where one writing is copied from another . . . Now, what I want to know is, how do you as a Church account for these things appearing in the Book of Mormon in the identical language of King James' version . . . Did Joseph Smith copy it from the Bible, or did the Lord adopt this identical language in revealing it to Joseph?"

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the Mormon Church, turned this letter over to the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts for an answer. In his response Roberts wrote the following:

"It is a fact that a number of passages in the Book of Mormon, *verses and whole chapters, run closely parallel in matter and phraseology with passages in Isaiah, Malachi, and some parts of the New Testament.* . . . It is a fact that no two persons will make translations of the same matter from one language into another, and the language of the two translations be alike. . . . I think we find a solution of the difficulty you present in the following way: When Joseph Smith saw that the Nephite record was quoting the prophecies of Isaiah, of Malachi, or the words of the Savior, *he took the English Bible and compared these passages as far as they paralleled each other, and finding that in substance, they were alike, he adopted our English translation;* and hence, we have the sameness to which you refer. . . . while Joseph Smith obtained the facts and ideas from the Nephite characters through the inspiration of God, he was left to express those facts and ideas, in the main, in such language as he could command; and when he found that parts of the Nephite record closely parallel passages in the Bible, and being conscious that *the language of our English Bible was superior to his own, he adopted it,* except for those differences indicated in the Nephite original . . . I recognize the fact that this is but a conjecture; but I believe it to be a reasonable one; and indeed *the only one which satisfactorily disposes of the difficulty you point out.*" (*Ibid.*, pages 427-430)

The noted Mormon scholar Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, who wrote his Master's thesis on "The Isaiah Problem in the Book of Mormon," had no trouble accepting the fact that Joseph Smith used the King James Bible in his production of the Book of Mormon:

Of about 433 verses of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Joseph Smith changed or modified about 234 of these in the course of his translation, leaving about 199 verses the same as in the King James Version . . . We shall not claim another miracle, however, in the translation, but will simply assume, as most translators would, that *the prophet realized the greatness of the King James Version and used it to help him in his work of translation* when he came upon familiar scriptures. It is true that *the Book of Mormon does contain many verses of scripture, other than those in Isaiah, which agree verbatim with their parallels in the King James Version.* (*Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, 1976, page 206)

**MORONI, 7**

44. If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have <sup>a</sup>charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

45. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

46. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

**MORONI, 10**

8. And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye <sup>a</sup>deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God.

And there are different ways that these gifts are administered, but it is the same God who worketh all in all, and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

9. For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

10. And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

11. And to another, exceeding great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

12. And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles;

13. And again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things;

14. And again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits;

15. And again, to another, all kinds of tongues;

16. And again, to another, the interpretation of languages, and of divers kinds of tongues.

17. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

**1 CORINTHIANS, 13**

2 And though I have the gift of <sup>a</sup>prophecy, and understand all <sup>b</sup>mysterles, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the <sup>a</sup>poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 <sup>a</sup>Charity <sup>b</sup>suffereth long, and is <sup>c</sup>kind; charity <sup>d</sup>envleth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

5 Doth not behave itself <sup>a</sup>unseemly, seeketh not her <sup>b</sup>own, is not easily <sup>c</sup>provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in <sup>a</sup>iniquity, but rejoiceth in the <sup>b</sup>truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never <sup>a</sup>falleth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

**1 CORINTHIANS, 12**

4 Now there are diversities of <sup>a</sup>gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the <sup>a</sup>Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is <sup>a</sup>given by the <sup>b</sup>Spirit the <sup>c</sup>word of <sup>d</sup>wisdom; to another the word of <sup>e</sup>knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another <sup>a</sup>faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of <sup>b</sup>healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of <sup>a</sup>miracles, to another <sup>b</sup>prophecy, to another <sup>c</sup>discerning of spirits; to another <sup>d</sup>divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of <sup>e</sup>tongues;

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

A comparison of verses from the 7th and 10th chapters of Moroni in the Book of Mormon (to the left) with the 13th and 12th chapters of 1 Corinthians in the bible (to the right). According to Moroni 7:1, in that chapter Moroni is quoting “the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity: . . .” In reality the words are plagiarized from Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (chapter 13). The 10th chapter of Moroni purports to be Moroni’s own words, but it is obvious that they are taken from the 12th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. That bothe Mormon and Moroni would independently come up with almost the same words as Paul over three centuries after he wrote 1 Corinthians seems totally beyond belief. The evidence clearly shows that the author of the Book of Mormon plagiarized the Bible.

Like many prominent Mormon scholars, we believe that Joseph Smith used the King James Bible when dictating lengthy extracts from the Bible. The difference between our view and that held by these scholars is that while they believe Joseph Smith utilized the King James text when it agreed with the Nephite record (which, of course, would be most of the time on long quotations), we feel that he simply dictated to his scribe from the biblical text. He did, however, make some changes as he went along, but these came from his own thinking rather than from the gold plates.

While Mr. Roper would lead his readers to believe that “The Tanners’ theory conjures up an image of Joseph Smith hiding behind a curtain, poring over his Bible,” we do not believe that it would have been necessary for Joseph Smith to use a curtain. He may have had the Bible open on the table before him or on his lap. If he felt that he had to conceal its presence, he could have had loose pages from a Bible hidden in the bottom of the hat he used when translating the book.

According to David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, “Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English” (*An Address To All Believers in Christ*, 1887, page 12).

It is interesting to note, that although the present leaders of the Mormon Church usually shy away from mentioning the fact that Joseph Smith used a “seer stone” in a hat, Apostle Russell M. Nelson recently quoted David Whitmer’s description approvingly in the church’s official publication, *The Ensign*, July, 1993, page 62.

Joseph Smith’s wife and other eyewitnesses confirm Whitmer’s statement concerning Joseph Smith using a stone in his hat to translate the Book of Mormon. It would have been easy to read anything in the bottom of the hat by simply letting some light shine in. For that matter, by this same method he could have had notes or even pages of material which he had previously written to read to his scribe.

## Stan Larson’s Study

In the Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi, chapters 12-14, we find a sermon attributed to Jesus which closely parallels the Sermon on the Mount found in the Bible. Dr. Stan Larson, however, has presented some very strong evidence showing that the Book of Mormon’s sermon is actually taken from the King James Version of the Bible, Matthew, chapters 5-7. Mormon scholars admit that the sermon is very similar but claim that Jesus delivered the same sermon when he came to the New World.

Although F.A.R.M.S. scholars are now very upset with Dr. Larson, before he publicly expressed his opinion on the matter he was considered one of the top scholars in the Mormon Church. Besides his work in languages, he has become known for his research with regard to the text of the original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. The church published articles by Larson in the official publication, *The Ensign* (see the issues for September 1976 and September 1977). The September 1977 issue, page 91, referred to him as “coordinator of the standard works translation in the Church Translation Services.”

Stan Larson’s attempt to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon turned into a real nightmare. The *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1985, quoted Dr. Larson as saying:

“I went into New Testament textual studies hoping that when I compared Greek and Syriac manuscripts with the Book of Mormon that I would find support for the Book of Mormon and be able to show its antiquity,” Larson said. “I hoped to find support for the church, but I haven’t, to be honest.”

When the Mormon Church found out that Stan Larson’s research had led him to question the authenticity of an important portion of the Book of Mormon, it was decided that he was expendable. On September 28, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

One church scholar said he was forced to resign his job after writing a research paper. . . .

Stan Larson, a scripture-translation researcher, said he was forced to resign his job at the church’s Salt Lake City Scripture Translation Division after writing a paper challenging traditional beliefs about the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Larson, who reads Greek, Latin, Syriac and Hebrew, compared passages in the Book of Mormon . . . with the King James Version and earliest existing biblical manuscripts. He concluded that because translation errors in the King James Version are mirrored in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith copied passages from the Bible rather than translate Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount from ancient plates. . . .

Dr. Larson said the director of the translation division suspended him from his job . . . He said he was given an option of immediately resigning with one month's pay or submitting to scrutiny from two church committees. If either committee reached a negative conclusion, he would be fired, dating back to the day he had met with supervisors. Dr. Larson said he elected to resign.

Fortunately, Stan Larson's work on the Sermon on the Mount's relationship to the Book of Mormon has been printed in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*. Dr. Larson gives the following information in that book:

Since about the turn of the twentieth century, Mormon writers have suggested that Smith quoted directly from the KJV [King James Version] of Matthew when dictating the Book of Mormon account of Jesus' sermon. B. H. Roberts of the First Council of Seventy said that Smith "adopted our English translation" . . . Sidney B. Sperry, Brigham Young University professor of religion, suggested that Smith used the KJV word for word "as long as the Sermon in the familiar rendering of Matthew 5-7 agreed substantially with the Nephite version" . . . Hugh Nibley concurred that as long as the KJV "is correct there is every reason why it should be followed" . . .

Such views imply that where the KJV has an incorrect text, it should not have been followed in the Book of Mormon. Thus Sperry maintained that in such cases Smith would have corrected the wording of the KJV "to conform with the text before him on the metal plates" . . . Roberts similarly affirmed that Smith first compared the KJV to the Book of Mormon records, and "when he found the sense of the passage on the Nephite plates superior to that in the English version he made such changes as would give the superior sense and clearness" . . .

Sperry went on to argue that if the Book of Mormon should fail to make such corrections

and instead copy corruptions or errors which accumulated over the centuries, then it "should be thrown out of court" because this "would be plain evidence that Joseph Smith did not translate from a really ancient text." In this context Sperry asserted that textual criticism could cast considerable light on "the asserted antiquity" of the Book of Mormon, since "critical tests can be most subtle and powerful in probing for slips on the part of unlearned impostors who offer amended biblical texts for the examination of the public" . . .

It is possible to identify places where errors, revisions, and additions have crept into the KJV. Published in 1611, the KJV relies on the Greek text of the New Testament available in the late sixteenth century. In the 381 years since then, hundreds of better and more ancient Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts have been discovered and brought us closer to the original Matthean text. This means that it is possible—given the opportunity of comparing the versions of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and 3 Nephi—to make tentative judgments about whether the Book of Mormon stands up to the tests of historicity Roberts, Sperry, and Nibley proposed. If the Book of Mormon varies from both the KJV and the earliest texts, one cannot pronounce judgment on the Book of Mormon version, since the Book of Mormon variation could be specific to its audience and setting in the New World. However, if the Book of Mormon text departs from the errors of the KJV and agrees with the most original Matthean texts, it supports the claim that the Book of Mormon is a genuine translation of an ancient document. On the other hand, if the Book of Mormon text sides with the later Greek text as seen in the KJV, this dependence would be strong evidence against its historicity. The reason for this is that the Book of Mormon on the American continent should know nothing of changes and additions to the Sermon on the Mount made in the Old World centuries after the original sermon, but should be a direct link to the real words of Jesus.

In this essay I will consider eight passages from Matthew about which a wide range of authorities agree that the KJV differs from the original text of the sermon and will then compare the Book of Mormon's version of these same passages. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 116-117)

After making a very tedious and careful study of the eight passages, Stan Larson concluded that the Book of Mormon completely failed the test:

Because the Book of Mormon version of the Sermon on the Mount agrees with the KJV rather than the earliest Greek text at these eight points, its dependence on the KJV is apparent. Wherever the Book of Mormon has revised or added to the KJV text, the variant in the Book of Mormon does not relate to the ancient variants known in the manuscripts. Not only do the distinctive Book of Mormon additions and revisions to the KJV never receive ancient support, but also the important Book of Mormon omissions—except one—do not receive such support (Legg 1940). . . .

It is significant to note that among the thirty-eight known variants and sub-variants of these eight secure examples, the Book of Mormon *always* aligns itself with the derivative text found in the Textus Receptus which was printed by Stephanus in 1550 and *never* agrees with either the original text or any of the other known variant readings. If the Book of Mormon were a genuinely ancient text, it would not always be expected to side with what modern scholarship concludes is the original text, but certainly there ought to be some agreement. . . .

Though many Latter-day Saint scholars now admit that the KJV was used in the production of the Book of Mormon, there are still a few who prefer the position that Joseph Smith did not use the KJV or that God chose to quote from the KJV . . . The issue then becomes to what extent does a direct connection exist between the Book of Mormon and the KJV. Precise parallelism challenges the claim that the Book of Mormon is an independent translation of the biblical passages. (*Ibid.*, pages 127, 129)

Dr. Larson goes on to demonstrate that the italicized words in the King James Version not only show that it was the source of the Book of Mormon text, but they also make it clear that Joseph Smith used a printing of the King James Version that cannot possibly be dated earlier than 1769—i.e., about sixty years prior to the time Smith wrote the Book of Mormon:

The Book of Mormon text often revises biblical quotations at the very point where the original 1611 edition of the KJV prints the word or

words in a different typeface in order to indicate that the words are not found in the Greek. This printing device was both inconsistently and sparsely applied in the 1611 KJV and improved in the 1769 printing. When Smith came to the KJV italics in the Sermon on the Mount, which he knew indicated that whatever was printed in italics was not in the original Greek, he would often either drop the word or revise it. The Book of Mormon sometimes revises the KJV italics that are *only found in the 1769 and later printings*. . . . On the other hand, the Book of Mormon fails to revise places where the KJV text ought to have been printed in italics but is not. In two places the Book of Mormon copies the noun “men” from the KJV, where it is not in the original Greek and has been improperly added in the KJV.

These considerations prompt one to date the origin of the Book of Mormon account of Jesus’ sermon after 1769 and before 1830 when the Book of Mormon was published. This analysis based on textual criticism confirms that of Krister Stendahl, former dean of the Harvard divinity school, that the Book of Mormon text of the sermon is not a genuine translation from an ancient language but Smith’s nineteenth-century targumic expansion of the English KJV. . . . Stendahl indicated that apocryphal documents have such clarifying expansions and rational explanations and concluded that “it seems very clear that the Book of Mormon belongs to and shows many of the typical signs of the Targums and the pseudigraphic recasting of biblical material” . . . The presence of relatively late Johannine elements in the Book of Mormon account in 3 Nephi also is telling evidence of its own dependence on the KJV. . . .

In terms of attempting to pinpoint the origin of the Book of Mormon, even more significant than Book of Mormon revisions are places where it follows the KJV into error, echoing mistranslations or including translations of late and derivative Greek texts. Certainly the Book of Mormon should not have the same errors which displaced the original and crept into the text over the centuries. Since to plagiarize means to appropriate and use, without acknowledgment, the words of another, one must here use the term—as harsh as it may sound—to characterize Smith’s dependence on the KJV. The Book of Mormon account of Jesus’ sermon in 3 Nephi 12-14 originated in the nineteenth century, derived from unacknowledged plagiarism of the KJV. Smith copied the KJV blindly, not showing

awareness of translation problems and errors in the KJV. . . . A variety of examples has shown that the Book of Mormon text follows errors of the KJV, but no clear evidence shows the Book of Mormon restoring the long-lost original. (*Ibid.*, pages 130-133)

Although we only have room for a small portion of Dr. Larson's study, it can be read in its entirety in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 115-163.

In 1988, Dawn Tracy reported that the church's Brigham Young University fired David P. Wright, a Hebrew teacher, because of his liberal views regarding the Book of Mormon and the Bible:

A Near Eastern language professor at Brigham Young University says he was fired because his personal beliefs on scripture are at variance with traditional LDS doctrine.

David P. Wright, 35, says he chose termination over resignation so school officials would have to spell out why he can no longer work at the Mormon Church-owned university.

"I wanted BYU to document its reasons so that other potential employees may know what they're required to believe to work here," said Mr. Wright. "These weren't issues of teaching. I was terminated because of my personal beliefs."

A BYU spokesman says the school makes no apologies on the termination because the school's two-fold mission is intellectual pursuits and the teaching of faith. . . .

Mr. Wright says his own research shows that the Book of Mormon is best explained as a 19th century "inspired" work rather than a document translated from ancient records. . . .

"Certainly my views are threatening," said Mr. Wright. "But the question is whether we can, as a people incorporate the findings of scholarship in a way where we still work as a unit to achieve many of our important goals while we rethink our tradition in faith." . . .

Mr. Wright received his bachelor's degree in Middle East studies at the University of Utah, and his master's and a doctorate in the same subject with an emphasis on Hebrew at the University of California at Berkeley.

He is a Mormon and a former LDS missionary, who served a church mission in Oregon. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 30, 1988)

Dr. Wright has presented some devastating evidence concerning plagiarism in the Book of Mormon in the book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*. He specifically centers in on Joseph Smith appropriating material from the New Testament book of Hebrews when he wrote Alma 12-13 of the Book of Mormon:

The most notable literary products of Joseph Smith's relatively short life were his ancient scriptures: the Book of Mormon, his revision of the Bible (JSR; portions of which are in the Pearl of Great Price), and the Book of Abraham. These were put forward as records of ancient peoples, restoring or revealing ideas, histories, covenants, and ordinances lost to humanity or "hidden up" to come forth in the last days. Mormon tradition at the beginning accepted these works as ancient, and today great reservation is shown in traditional circles to suggestions otherwise. Nevertheless, some studies in recent years have been making it clearer that these works are not ancient but recent compositions set pseudonymously or pseudepigraphically in the past. In my view these studies are on the right track, and in what follows I would like to add to the evidence for this view. Specifically I will show that Alma chapters 12-13, traditionally dated to about 82 B.C.E., depend in part on the New Testament epistle to the Hebrews, dated by critical scholars to the last third of the first century C.E. The dependence of Alma 12-13 on Hebrews thus constitutes an anachronism and indicates that the chapters are a composition of Joseph Smith. . . .

The citations and their contexts in Alma 12 and Hebrews 3 share four elements in the same general order (see the Appendix). Even though the two works are not citing the same passage, they both (a) begin their citations by reference to *divine instruction*: "as the Holy Ghost saith" (Hebrews) and "God did call on men . . . saying" (Alma). Then come the citations. The Alma citation has two motifs similar to those of the Hebrews citation in the same order: (b) the notion of *hardening of hearts* occurs first followed by (c) the notion of *God swearing* that hardened people will not *enter his rest*. Finally (d), each quotation is followed by exhortation with similar language: "Take heed, *brethren*, lest there be in any of you an evil *heart of unbelief*" (Hebrews) and "And now, my *brethren*, behold I say unto you that if ye will harden your *hearts* . . ." (Alma). Both address their audience as 'brethren' and refer to hearts.

The parallels between these two texts are too precise to be coincidental; some sort of interdependence must exist. This interdependence is confirmed by the texts' focusing on the same four motifs outside the quotations' contexts (see below). What is the nature of this dependence? On the basis of the texts that stand before us, the conclusion is that the Alma 12 passage depends on that in Hebrews 3. The logic is this. Hebrews 3 and Alma 12 depend ostensibly on different sources for their citations. But it would be a tremendous coincidence for them to have the same motifs and the same citation structure if they came from separate sources. The contradiction between their certain interdependence and their divergent citations is solved when the nature of the citation sources is recognized and considered. The citation in Hebrews 3 derives from an attested source, Psalm 95, whereas that in Alma 12 derives from an unattested source. This suggests that Alma 12's citation does not really rely on an unknown source but on the citation and context of Hebrews 3 itself. Alma 12 invents a citation, thus transforming the sense of the Hebrews material for its own ends.

This invented quotation is a good example of Smith's creative reworking of the Bible. . . .

A final implication pertaining to authorship needs to be brought out. The evidence I have reviewed indicates that Alma 12-13 were written by Joseph Smith. It goes without saying that this conclusion means further that the rest of the Book of Mormon was composed by him. Logical—even theological—consistency indicates that it is unlikely that these chapters would be his composition while others would be ancient. Furthermore, there is evidence for nineteenth century provenance of other parts of the Book of Mormon. And as I have noted, there is evidence that Smith's other "ancient" compositions are not actually ancient but arise out of his interactions with biblical texts and religious ideas of his period. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 165-66, 180-81, 207)

Like Stan Larson's article, the chapter written by David Wright really needs to be read in its entirety to get the full effect of the argument presented (see pages 165-229 of the book cited above).

## Alleged Plagiarism?

While Matthew Roper acknowledges that "Jerald and Sandra Tanner have presented perhaps the most extensive list of alleged plagiarisms ever assembled by hostile critics of the Book of Mormon," he claims that "the Tanner parallels are seriously flawed for several reasons" (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 170, 172). Both Roper and Tvedtnes apparently realize the serious implications of our work on New Testament material in the Book of Mormon and go to great lengths to try to undermine this part of our work.

In *Covering up the Black Hole*, pages 81, 82 and 84, we wrote the following:

At the time when the noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts was vigorously defending the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he maintained that there was hardly any evidence of plagiarism in the writings of Nephi:

The Unknown states the fact that Nephi wrote between 600 and 500 B. C. and then presents what he calls the first difficulty that I am to overcome. "How can a writer," he asks, "claiming to live at that time make repeated quotations from the writings of Christ's Apostles who were not born until 600 years after the time when Nephi wrote?" He then charges that Nephi quotes "passage after passage" from the writings of Christ's apostles, Matthew, John, Paul, Luke, Peter, etc.; and gives what he calls just "two or three examples" of such quotations. The gentleman very much overstates the difficulty he presents, by making it appear that the alleged quotations are very numerous, *when the fact is that the two or three cases he cites virtually exhausts the alleged quoted passages so far as the New Testament is concerned.* (*Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 1907, page 329)

From the study which follows we will show that B. H. Roberts made a very serious mistake with regard to this matter. There appear to be about 600 cases in the two books of Nephi alone. . . .

In the parallels which follow we have done our best to eliminate material which is found in both the Old and New Testaments. While we feel that most of those quotations probably were



plagiarized from the New Testament, we have tried to give the benefit of the doubt by not including them. . . . We should stress again that all of these parallels to the New Testament have been obtained from only the first six books in the Book of Mormon. In other words, the study only goes to the 143rd page of a book containing 531 pages. While it could be argued that some of the parallels are only a coincidence, some are so strong that it is impossible to escape the conclusion that their source is the New Testament. Even if some of the parallels just happened by chance, we feel that a more careful examination of the text of this portion of the Book of Mormon would yield many other examples. This would especially be true if we used the text found in the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon.

The parallels which we discovered are found on pages 85-164 of *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*.

On page 219 of *Review of Books*, vol. 3, John Tvedtnes commented: “The Tanners used the computerized scripture search program distributed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to find the New Testament passages from which they propose certain Book of Mormon passages borrowed. Their use of the computer to perform word searches is admirable, and I commend it to everyone.”

On page 224 of his criticism of our work, however, Tvedtnes points out a problem in our book:

The Tanners point to Revelation 2:24 (“the depths of Satan”) as the source for the words “the depths of hell” in 1 Nephi 12:16. But the words “depths of hell” are found in Proverbs 9:18. It is much more likely that, if the Book of Mormon is copying biblical idioms, it took this one from the Old Testament book—which, of course, may have been available to the Nephites.

John Tvedtnes is correct concerning this matter. Proverbs 9:18 does provide a four-word parallel which is better than the one found in Revelation 2:24. Although it is impossible to remember exactly how this mistake occurred, we undoubtedly looked up the words “the depths of” and found that there were six verses which used these words in the Old Testament. Following this is just one verse from the New Testament (the verse in Revelation) and then a number of verses from the Book of Mormon. If we searched for just the three words “the depths of,”

they would have been highlighted on the computer screen, whereas the words “hell” and “Satan” would not have been highlighted. Consequently, it would have been possible to have overlooked the word “hell” in Proverbs. In any case, if we had noticed the word “hell” in Proverbs 9:18, we would not have included this parallel. We will make a notation concerning this matter in the next printing of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*.

Those who have spent much time working with this computer program know how tedious the work can be. A person has to be very careful to prevent something from being overlooked. Although we have tried to be extremely vigilant with regard to this matter, it seems almost inevitable that a mistake will occur once in a while. As noted above, in our book on the “black hole” we stated that “we have done our best to eliminate material which is found in both the Old and New Testaments.” There are, of course, some cases where there is similar wording in both the Old and New Testament, but the context of the New Testament quote makes it clear that it was, in fact, taken from the New Testament. At any rate, the mistake regarding Proverbs 9:18 certainly does not destroy the validity of the hundreds of strong parallels we have found.

A careful examination of John Tvedtnes’ work shows he himself is not above making the same type of mistake. For example, on page 223 of his article, he stated that “the words ‘cried with a loud voice’” are “found ten times in the Old Testament.” Our work on the computer, however shows that they only appear eight times. We would not point out this minor mistake if it were not for the fact that John Tvedtnes and other Mormon scholars constantly accuse us of dishonesty if we make the slightest mistake. If we were to follow their example, we could accuse Mr. Tvedtnes of padding his case by adding two references that are not in the Old Testament. While we admit that we made the mistake of failing to see a reference containing the words “the depths of hell,” Mr. Tvedtnes thought he saw two references (containing 10 words) which were not there.

Furthermore, as we noted above, in our comparison of the Book of Mormon, Alma, chapter 19 with the Bible, John, chapter 11, we discovered that John Tvedtnes had overlooked one entire verse (Alma 19:9) which contains thirty-nine words. Moreover, we also demonstrated that he claimed the words “he shall rise again” appear “six times in the Old Testament.” This phrase, however, is

never found in the Old Testament! John Tvedtnes, therefore, sees six references, containing twenty-four words, that are just not there!

While we do not condemn Tvedtnes for what are undoubtedly honest mistakes, we do hope that he will give us the benefit of the doubt and retract his statement which appears on page 222 of his book: “I quite easily discovered this [i.e., that the words *rod of iron* appear in Psalm 2:9] using the same computer search the Tanners claim to have used. Since the Tanners must have seen the Old Testament use of the term, why did they cover up this fact?” (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, page 222)

In returning to our discussion of the quotation from Proverbs, it should be noted that John Tvedtnes cannot say for certain that the ancient Nephites even had the book of Proverbs. He merely says that Proverbs “may have been available to the Nephites.” The book of *Proverbs*, however, is never mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and the word *proverb* only appears once in the Book of Mormon in a quotation from the biblical book of Isaiah 14:4.

In his rebuttal, John Tvedtnes suggests that we may be guilty of a cover up with regard to some words which we believe came from the book of Revelation:

The Tanners compare small parts of 1 Nephi 8: 10, 13, with Revelation 22: 1-2, whence they believe Joseph Smith took them. But since the topic is the tree of life in both cases, we should not be surprised to find that both passages describe it as near a river and bearing fruit. Indeed, the Book of Mormon would be more suspect if its description of the tree differed from that of the Bible. As for the expression “river of water,” which the Tanners seem to think is found only in these two passages, compare Psalm 65: 9, “the river of God, which is full of water.” The Tanners also list Revelation 2: 7 as the source of the words “the tree of life” in 1 Nephi 11: 25. The expression, of course, appears first in Genesis (2: 9; 3: 22, 24) and is also found in Proverbs 3: 18; 11:30; 13: 12; 15: 4. The concept of the “fountain of living waters,” in the same Book of Mormon passage, found in a variant form (“living fountains of waters”) in Revelation 7: 17, is from the Old Testament. Zechariah (14: 8) wrote of the “living waters” (cf. Ezekiel 47: 1-12), and Jeremiah (2: 13; 17: 13) wrote of “the fountain of living

waters,” which is identical to the 1 Nephi wording rather than to the wording of Revelation 7. In the Song of Songs (4: 15), we read of a “fountain of gardens, a well of living waters.” Jesus referred to himself as the source of “living waters” (John 4: 10). The idea of the living waters being near the tree of life is, of course, paralleled in the story of the garden of Eden, where we have not only the tree, but also the river (Genesis 2: 9-10).

The “rod of iron” in 1 Nephi 8:19 need not come from Revelation 12: 5. The expression appears first in Psalm 2: 9, which is quoted in Revelation 2: 27 and then reappears in Revelation 12: 5 and 19: 15. I quite easily discovered this using the same computer search the Tanners claim to have used. Since the Tanners must have seen the Old Testament use of the term, why did they cover up this fact? From some of the material presented above, they seem to have covered up such evidence on a number of occasions. If not, then their attention to detail is surely to be questioned. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 221-222)

The reader will notice that in the quotation above John Tvedtnes criticized our parallel with regard to the “fountain of living waters” (1 Nephi 11: 25). Although he lists two good parallels from Jeremiah, there is additional evidence which leads us to conclude that the source of these words was the book of Revelation. It should be noted that although the words “living fountains of waters” appear in a different order in Revelation, the only word that is actually changed is “fountain,” which appears as “fountains.” As we pointed out above, Joseph Smith made many minor errors in his short quotations from the Bible. It is, therefore, easy to believe that he might drop the letter *s* from the word “fountains.” An interesting example is found in some words Smith plagiarized from the book of Matthew:

. . . the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire . . . (Matthew 3:10)

The reader will notice that when Joseph Smith borrowed these words for his Book of Mormon, he changed the word “trees” to “tree”:

. . . the ax is laid at the root of the tree, therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire . . . (Alma 5:52)

On the other hand, when Smith plagiarized the words, “and silk, and scarlet” from Revelation 18:12, he put the plural ending on both silk and scarlet: “and silks, and scarlets.”

Even experienced writers sometimes make this type of an error. For example, in his response to us John Tvedtnes says that “Jesus referred to himself as the source of ‘living waters’ (John 4: 10).” Those who take the time to look this verse up in either the King James Bible or the Computerized Scriptures will find that the word is actually “water,” not “waters.” *Clarke’s Commentary* provides another interesting example of such an error. On page 998 of the three-volume edition, we find the words “living fountains of waters” cited from Revelation 7: 17, yet when the words are cited again below, the word “waters” appears as “water.” We have made this same type of mistake on a number of occasions.

While it is true that the book of Jeremiah does have five words that agree with the words found in the Book of Mormon, it should be noted that in marking the parallel between Revelation 7:17 and 1 Nephi 11:25 for the first printing of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, we left out three important words which tend to strengthen our case (these words will be included in the next printing).

When more of the context is included, it becomes clear that the message given in Revelation is more congruent with that found in the Book of Mormon. Revelation 7:17 says that the Lord will “lead them unto living fountains of waters . . .” The passage in the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 11:25, likewise states that the word of God “led to the fountain of living waters.” In both cases the people were being drawn toward the fountain(s).

An examination of the book of Jeremiah, however, shows that the two verses cited by John Tvedtnes declare that the people have forsaken the fountain. In Jeremiah 2: 13, we read: “. . . they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters . . .” In chapter 17: 13, we find: “. . . they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.”

It is also important to note that the verse which uses the words “led to the fountain of living waters” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 11:25) also contains the phrases “rod of iron” and “the tree of life.” While John Tvedtnes would have his readers believe that these words came from the Old Testament, we will demonstrate below that they were really taken from

the book of Revelation. The words which we have been examining are actually sandwiched in-between the other phrases from the book of Revelation: “. . . the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life . . .” (1 Nephi 11:25). The reader will understand the importance of this matter as we proceed with our response.

Those who carefully examine our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, will find a number of examples of plagiarism from the book of Revelation in the section dealing with 1 Nephi, chapter 11. Just ten verses after the verse that contains the phrases “the rod of Iron,” the “fountain of living waters” and “the tree of life,” we find another obvious parallel to the book of Revelation:

. . . the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (1 Nephi 11:35)

. . . the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:14)

Since the book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible which has these words and they are only used once in that book, it would be very difficult to argue that they came from the Old Testament. The next verse in the Book of Mormon contains this interesting parallel:

. . . of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people . . . (1 Nephi 11:36)

. . . of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues . . . (Revelation 7:9)

In the same verse in the Book of Mormon we again find these words:

. . . the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (1 Nephi 11:36)

. . . the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:14)

The next chapter of the Book of Mormon uses these words again: “. . . the twelve apostles of the Lamb . . .” (1 Nephi 12:9). The following verse relates that because twelve Nephites will have great faith in the “Lamb of God their garments are made white in his blood.” (1 Nephi 12:10) This is remarkably similar to Revelation 7:14, which tells of some who

have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

The next verse in the Book of Mormon contains a parallel that is even more impressive:

And the angel said unto me: These are made white in the blood of the Lamb . . . (1 Nephi 12:11)

And he said to me, These are they which . . . washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14)

It seems very significant that the words “white in the blood of the Lamb” appear only in Revelation and the Book of Mormon. Mormon scholars must find it very difficult to close their eyes to these obvious examples of plagiarism.

On pages 174-175 of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, Matthew Roper makes some of the same criticisms as John Tvedtnes regarding the “tree of life,” “the fountain of living waters” and the “rod of iron.” Since it seems so clear that the book of Revelation is the source of the material in 1 Nephi, we find it surprising to find these scholars attacking this part of our work. While it is true that the four words, “the tree of life,” appear in the book of Genesis, there is actually a five word parallel to the Book of Mormon found in Revelation 22: 14: “to the tree of life.” These same five words are found in 1 Nephi 11:25: “to the tree of life.” The verses in the book of Proverbs which Tvedtnes mentioned (3: 18, 11: 30, 13: 12, 15:4) only have three words that are parallel (“tree of life”) and certainly could not have provided any structural material for the Book of Mormon. In 3: 18, for example, we read: “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her . . .”

It is also interesting to note that in Revelation 22: 2, we read of “the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month . . .” The reader will see that this verse contains both the word “fruit” and the word “fruits.” The Book of Mormon also uses these same two words when it speaks of the “tree of life, whose fruit is most precious and most desirable above all other fruits . . .” (1 Nephi 15: 36) This certainly seems to be more than just a coincidence. The book of Genesis never uses these two words in the same verse, and they are only found in the same verse five times in the Bible.

It should be noted also that in the quotation cited from 1 Nephi 15: 36, we find the words “most precious.” This is very interesting because these words never occur together in the entire Old

Testament. They are, however, found twice in the New Testament, Revelation 18: 12 and 21: 11. The reader will notice that the second occurrence is just 18 verses from the verse cited above which mentions “the tree of life” (22: 2).

Revelation 22: 1, 2, informs us that the tree of life was next to a “river of water.” The words “river of water” are only found once in the entire Bible (Revelation 22:1), but Joseph Smith used them four times in the Book of Mormon. The reader will remember that John Tvedtnes wrote: “As for the expression ‘river of water,’ which the Tanners seem to think is found only in these two passages, compare Psalm 65: 9, ‘the river of God, which is full of water.’” We have a difficult time understanding how the words “the river of God, which is full of water” compare with the words “river of water.” We are dealing with just three words (“river of water”) which are only found once in the entire Bible, whereas John Tvedtnes has set forth a string of nine words which, of course, is three times longer than our example!

The reader will remember that John Tvedtnes stated:

The “rod of iron” in 1 Nephi 8:19 need not come from Revelation 12: 5. The expression appears first in Psalm 2: 9, which is quoted in Revelation 2: 27 and then reappears in Revelation 12: 5 and 19: 15. I quite easily discovered this using the same computer search the Tanners claim to have used.

A careful examination of the evidence leads to the conclusion that the words found in the Book of Mormon were taken from Revelation rather than Psalms. While Psalms does yield a four-word parallel to the Book of Mormon, there is actually a five-word parallel to the book of Revelation.

In Psalms 2: 9, we find these words, “a rod of iron; thou,” whereas two places in Revelation (12: 5 and 19: 15) have “a rod of iron: and.” The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi, 8:19, uses these exact words, “a rod of iron, and.” Unfortunately, we neglected to circle the word “and” in our comparison, and this could have caused both John Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper to stumble at this point (see *Covering Up the Black Hole*, page 87). The reader will also note that the verse in the Book of Mormon mentions the “tree” which is identified in verses which follow as the “tree of life.”

Professor William J. Hamblin, of Brigham Young University argues that our five-word parallel “a rod of iron, and” is not impressive:

This verse from Revelation could not possibly be the source for the Book of Mormon passage, because 1 Nephi 8:19 has a comma, whereas Revelation has a colon! (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, page 254)

We feel this is a very poor argument. What difference would it make if Revelation has “a colon” and the Book of Mormon has “a comma”? Actually, an examination of the 1830 Book of Mormon reveals that the first printing of the book has a semicolon, not a comma!

While Matthew Roper and John Tvedtnes have diligently searched through the books of the Old Testament, they have been unable to successfully counter our work. It is obvious that the solution to the question regarding the source of the material in the Book of Mormon concerning the “tree of life,” the “rod of iron,” the “river of water” and the “fountain of living waters” is found in the book of Revelation. The close proximity of so much material used in the Book of Mormon in just a few chapters of Revelation (most of the material is found in chapters 19, 21 and 22) provides convincing evidence of plagiarism from that book.

It should be obvious to anyone who examines the evidence presented above and the work we have done in *Covering Up the Black Hole*, that the book of Revelation was the source of a great deal of the Book of Mormon. It was this very type of evidence which first led us to question the authenticity of Mark Hofmann’s Salamander letter in 1984. Fortunately, the criticism by Roper and Tvedtnes has spurred us on to do further research regarding parallels between the book of Revelation and the Book of Mormon. The evidence of plagiarism from the book of Revelation throughout the entire Book of Mormon is very devastating. We hope to be able to publish this work soon.

In his criticism of our work, Matthew Roper has a heading entitled, “Examples Where an Old Testament Rendering Is Equal to or Better Than the New Testament Reading Given by the Tanners.”

As we noted earlier, Roper attacks our research on the “tree of life” in the same way that John

Tvedtnes did. Since we have already demonstrated the weakness of these arguments, we will make some comments about other portions of his work.

On page 175 of his article, Mr. Roper notes that we have made a parallel between 1 Nephi 15: 16 (“true olive tree”) and Romans 11: 24 (“good olive tree”). Roper notes that Jeremiah 11: 16 mentions “a green olive tree” and therefore feels that he has countered our argument. What Roper has failed to tell the reader is that this is just one of a number of parallels taken from Romans, chapter 11. Both accounts, for example, mention “natural branches,” and both speak of the branches being “broken off.” Romans says that the branches will “be grafted into their own olive tree” (11:24) and the Book of Mormon uses the words, “be grafted . . . into the true olive-tree.” Anyone who examines page 102 of *Covering up the Black Hole*, will see that Mr. Roper has not done justice to this part of our work.

Just below his argument regarding the olive tree, Matthew Roper criticizes our parallel between 1 Nephi 2:10 (“steadfast, and immovable”) with 1 Corinthians 15:58 (“stedfast, unmoveable”). He claims he has found a better source in Psalms:

Psalms 78: 7-8, 37 That they might . . . not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; . . . whose spirit was not stedfast with God. . . Neither were they stedfast in his covenant. (see also Isaiah 48: 18-19 and 1 Nephi 20: 18-19)

In this last comparison, the authors have only circled the Book of Mormon phrase “steadfast and immovable” (p. 85), yet while the words steadfast and unmoveable occur together in the New Testament, it seems clear that the passage of 1 Nephi 2: 10-11, taken as a whole, fits best into the context of Psalms 78, especially since Nephi always compares his family’s experience with the Israelite Exodus from Egypt. (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, pages 175-176)

We cannot understand how Matthew Roper would think that he has given a parallel which is “Equal or Better Than” what we have set forth in our study. There is very strong evidence that Joseph Smith used 1 Corinthians 15:58 in producing the Book of Mormon. In Mosiah 5: 15, Joseph Smith wrote the following:

Therefore . . . ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works . . .

The reader will notice how similar this is to Apostle Paul's statement in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15:58:

Therefore . . . be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work . . .

The evidence that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the writings of Paul seems irrefutable.

On page 176 of his rebuttal, Matthew Roper has another section entitled, "Examples Where Old Testament Passages Are Nearly Identical in English to Those Found in the Book of Mormon." Roper's first example relates to a parallel we found between 1 Nephi 1:14 and Revelation 15:3. In the Book of Mormon we read: ". . . Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!" In the Bible we find almost identical wording: ". . . Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty . . ." Mr. Roper, however, feels that he has constructed something almost as good by combining two Psalms: "Psalms 139:14 Marvellous are thy works" with "Psalms 92:5 O Lord, how great are thy works!" (page 177)

The reader will notice that Mr. Roper had to skip back 47 psalms (from Psalm 139 to Psalm 92) to complete his parallel. Even after Roper's attempt to concoct a parallel, it lacks the words *God* and *Almighty*. The whole point of our study was to find chains of similar words in a row or within a reasonably close proximity. Anyone could combine words from different parts of the Bible to make many "parallels," but these would be artificial parallels which would have no value in proving or disproving plagiarism. Mr. Roper seems to have missed the whole point of our study.

Matthew Roper's next example is similar to the example cited above. This time Roper uses three different verses. None of them come close to providing the seven-word parallel we have cited. This is followed by an attempt to undermine a parallel we noted on page 88 of our book:

. . . cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; (1 Nephi 10: 8)

. . . crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.(Matthew 3:3)

Mr. Roper feels that the book of Isaiah provides a passage which is "Nearly Identical in English" to the passage cited in the Book of Mormon: "Isaiah 40:3 . . . crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." While it is true that the first part of the verse is the same, the reader will note that the last eight words are not found in either Matthew or the Book of Mormon. Isaiah, of course, was the original source that Matthew quoted in his book. However, he did not include the last part of the sentence. Joseph Smith, of course, should have used the quotation from Isaiah, but instead it is clear that he copied it from Matthew. This and many other examples provide strong evidence that the Book of Mormon is not a book written by the ancient Nephites, but rather by someone who had a copy of the New Testament.

If Matthew Roper had carefully read page 82 of our book, he might not have fallen into this serious error. On that page we wrote the following:

Sometimes just a word or two can make a difference when deciding whether a quotation came from the Old or the New Testament. For example, we have drawn a parallel between Hebrews 3: 8 and Jacob 1: 7. In Hebrews we read: ". . . as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:" Psalms 95: 8, however, is very similar: "as in the provocation, *and as in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:" The reader will see that the omission of the words "and as in," which appear in the Old Testament Psalm, show us that the quotation [found in the Book of Mormon] actually came from the New Testament.

Matthew Roper makes the same mistake again toward the bottom of page 177. In our research we found that both 1 Nephi 13:27 and Acts 13:10 have a string of seven words which read exactly the same—"pervert the right ways of the Lord." Mr. Roper countered with the following: "Jeremiah 23:36 for ye have perverted the words of the living God." We have a hard time understanding why Roper would feel that Jeremiah's passage is "Nearly Identical" to the Book of Mormon. While it is true that the word "perverted" is close to "pervert," "the words of the living God" can hardly be equated with "the right ways of the Lord." The longest string of identical words in Roper's example is "of the."

Matthew Roper's next example is extremely weak. On page 100 of *Covering up the Black Hole*,

we quoted the following from 1 Nephi 14:11: “. . . *the whore* of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters . . .” We then compared this with Revelation 17:1: “the great whore that sitteth upon many waters . . .”

The only quotation that Mr. Roper has produced to compare with this is a quote out of Jeremiah: “Jeremiah 51:13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters.” As the reader can see, Roper’s work entirely overlooks who was sitting upon the waters. While 1 Nephi 14:11 said that it was “the whore” of all the earth, the very next verse makes it clear that it was “the great whore.” This is very significant because Revelation 17:1 (see above) uses these exact words. Although these words appear twice in the book of Revelation, they are not found in any other book of the Bible. We have other parallels on the same page (100) which prove beyond all doubt that Revelations was the main source for this part of the Book of Mormon.

In the next section, page 178 of *Review of Books*, vol. 3, Matthew Roper shows, “Examples Where Similar Ideas Could Have Been Found or Formulated from the Old Testament.” His first example is very weak, and the second one is even worse. On page 88 of our book we cited the following from 1 Nephi 10:10: “. . . the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.” We compare this to John 1:29: “. . . the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” To counter this, Mr. Roper cites the following: “Genesis 22:8 God will provide himself a lamb” and “Isaiah 53:6-7 The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.”

The reader can see that Mr. Roper has not provided a satisfactory answer to our charge of plagiarism. We agree that there are some similar ideas in the Old Testament, but this does not even begin to explain away the comparison we have made.

On page 179 of his response, Matthew Roper tries to deal with a parallel we cited on page 89 of our book. We quote the following concerning the Lord from 1 Nephi 10:18: “. . . the same yesterday, to-day, and forever . . .” This is virtually the same as Hebrews 13: 8: “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Mr. Roper quotes from two of the psalms to try to weaken our case:

Psalms 102:24-27 Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old [yesterday] hast thou laid the foundation of the earth. . . . They shall perish,

but thou shalt endure. . . . They shall be changed: But thou art [today] the same, and thy years shall have no end [forever].

Psalms 90:2 From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (see also Malachi 3:6; Isaiah 46:10).

It is obvious from this that Mr. Roper could not find any verse in the Old Testament to match our parallel. He did not even find the words *yesterday*, *today* and *forever* in the psalms he quoted and had to add these words in brackets! This should show the reader the weakness of his argument.

On page 96 of *Covering up the Black Hole*, we cite the following from the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:7: “. . . gold, and silver and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner . . .” It is clear that this has been taken from Revelation 18:12: “. . . gold and silver . . . and fine linen . . . and silk, and scarlet . . . and all manner . . .”

On page 181 of his article, Matthew Roper cites from three different verses (6, 8 and 15) of Exodus, chapter 28, to counter our work. He finds the words “gold,” “scarlet” and “fine twined linen.” He states that the book of Revelation lacks the word “twined” in “fine twined linen” and notes that it is “used in Exodus.” The material he cites from Exodus, however, does not mention either “silver” or “silk” and also lacks the words “and all manner.” He apparently realizes that even with the three verses from Exodus, he has not presented a convincing case. He therefore turns to the book of Ezekiel 16:10-13, from which he is able to add the words “silver” and “silk.” Even after all this scratching around to fill the gaps, Roper has failed to provide us with the words “and all manner.”

Strange as it may seem, Matthew Roper then boasts that there “appears to be a closer relationship between 1 Nephi 13-14 and the Old Testament imagery of the temple than there is with the New Testament book of Revelation. Thus the case for plagiarism in this passage seems unwarranted.”

While Mr. Roper would have us believe chapters 13-14 have a closer relationship with “the Old Testament imagery of the temple” than the book of Revelation, a careful reading of these chapters reveals just the opposite. They actually contain what purports to be Nephi’s vision of things that would occur about 600 years later after the coming of Christ. 1 Nephi 13: 6 tells of the establishment of a “great and abominable church; and I saw the devil

that he was the founder of it.” (As noted above, early leaders in the Mormon Church identified this as the Roman Catholic Church.)

Verse 7 gives a list of the possessions of this “abominable church.” This, of course, is the verse from which we drew our parallels. The following verse (8) relates that Nephi is told by an angel that “the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church.”

Verse 40 goes on to speak “of the twelve apostles of the Lamb . . .” which is an exact parallel to a seven-word phrase found in Revelation 21:14: “. . . of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (It is interesting to note that this is the only place in the Bible where these seven words are found in a row.) In the next chapter, verses 27-28, Nephi even learns that one of the apostles was named “John” and that he would write a book concerning what would occur in the future.

We have already noted that Mr. Roper used the book of Ezekiel in his unsuccessful attempt to shoot down our parallel. This was certainly a poor choice of books. The Nephites could not have had this book because it was not written until after they sailed to the New World. According to the Book of Mormon, they left Jerusalem about 600 B. C. This was before the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel, however, was carried away into captivity. According to the Mormon Church’s own “*Bible Dictionary*,” printed with the King James Bible, Ezekiel “prophesied during a period of 22 years, 592-570 B.C.” It is clear, therefore, that Matthew Roper cannot use the book of Ezekiel to support his idea. We have a difficult time understanding why Mr. Roper goes to such great lengths to support an untenable position. Why is it that he cannot accept the obvious plagiarism from the New Testament?

### A Black Hole Remains

Brent Metcalfe, who was at one time a very zealous defender of Joseph Smith’s works, now indicates that there needs to be more probing of the “black hole” in the Book of Mormon:

Other areas of research needing further exploration include the ideational chasm or so-called “black hole” left by the loss of the Book of Lehi; effects of Mosian priority on Book

of Mormon internal organization . . . (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 433, footnote 49)

The number of Mormon scholars who publicly admit that they reject the Book of Mormon has increased dramatically in the last few years. *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, edited by Brent Metcalfe, has articles by ten different authors, two of whom are no longer members of the church (Dr. David P. Wright was excommunicated on April 5, 1994). All of these authors seem to have serious questions about the Book of Mormon and some of them go so far as to state that it was not translated from an ancient text.

Another Mormon scholar Edwin Firmage, Jr., wrote an article for *Sunstone* in which he told of his loss of faith in the Book of Mormon. Firmage, who studied at Hebrew University and the University of California, Berkeley, eventually came to the conclusion that Joseph Smith’s loss of the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon left a gaping hole in the book:

Ten years ago, as a first-year graduate student at Berkeley, my ambition was to become another Hugh Nibley, whose writings I had loved since I was twelve. As a young admirer, I didn’t understand everything I read. . . . But, Nibley was my mystagogue. Through him I had my first vision of a strange and exciting antiquity. Even now, despite a very different scholarly outlook, I admire Nibley . . .

As a neophyte, but armed with German, and a little Arabic, Greek, and Hebrew, and intent on acquiring the requisite apologetic tools, I went to Berkeley to study ancient Near Eastern languages, and particularly Egyptian, the language of mysteries par excellence. . . . My wife and I regularly attended church and the temple, and we prayed together. My history was nothing but faithful. I had every reason to expect that my study of the Book of Mormon would reward me, as it had in the past, with an increase of faith.

But, it didn’t. . . . within just six months I no longer believed the Book of Mormon to be an ancient text. . . . The particular problems that I encountered as I re-read the Book of Mormon were catalysts, not the active agents . . . One thing is certain: a close reading of the Book of Mormon provoked this change. How ironic, I thought, that after doing precisely what then Apostle Ezra Taft Benson had been admonishing us to do—studying



the Book of Mormon—I found myself regarding it as a work of historical fiction. . . . I was now free to enter into biblical study without having to perform mental gymnastics to make the Bible conform to a Mormon world view. . . . I hope to show how identifying it as a composition of Joseph Smith facilitates our understanding of the work, much as historical analysis illuminates the Bible. . . .

LDS readers who have noticed the two different genres that characterize 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon and Mosiah through Ether will perhaps observe that one need not resort to historical criticism to explain the difference; the Book of Mormon itself tells us that the “small plates” of Nephi were deliberately written to preserve prophetic rather than historical detail . . . All this necessarily means, however, is that the early Book of Mormon’s turn to prophecy was deliberate. The existence of a separate set of plates devoted to matters prophetic is, I think, demonstrably a device created to explain how new source material had turned up to replace the lost 116 pages, and why this new material focused on prophecy at the expense of history. The Book of Mormon itself provides the strongest reason for regarding the small plates as a literary fiction: nowhere in Mosiah to Mormon is reference ever made to a separate set of small plates. What the Book of Mormon record keepers pass from generation to generation is simply called the plates of Nephi, without ever a hint of separate historical and prophetic collections. There is a single set of plates called the plates of Nephi that is maintained right down to the end of the Book of Mormon history . . .

Another reason for regarding the existence of the small plates as a literary fiction is the peculiar way in which they are linked via the Words of Mormon to the rest of the Book of Mormon. The most striking thing about the Words of Mormon is that it is supposed to be Mormon’s last words: “And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record which I have been making into the hands of my son Moroni. . . . Wherefore, I chose these things to finish my record upon them. . . . And Now I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record . . .” (Words of Mormon 1:1, 5, 9). What, then, is this editorial intrusion doing in the middle of the Book of Mormon? If, indeed, Words of Mormon is Mormon’s valedictory, then it belongs at the end of his abridgment, not at the end of the plates of

Nephi. If, as Mormon says, his own abridgment had already been completed, what need is there for these transitional verses about King Benjamin, since they link not his abridgment of Lehi’s record but Nephi’s self-contained account to the beginning of Mosiah? In my opinion, there is no choice but to accept that Words of Mormon is nothing other than Joseph’s attempt to knit the two parts of his translation together, while explaining how it was that he so providentially had something like a duplicate of the lost translation.

Joseph’s sensitivity to the problems connected with that loss are apparent in the preface to the 1830 edition, which explains that he has substituted Nephi’s record for the lost material, and implicitly, therefore, that no one should expect the translations to match exactly. He is thus protected from the charge of fraud, should the two translations ever be compared. (*Sunstone*, July 1993, pages 58-59, 61)

Edwin Firmage’s article contains a number of important observations which tend to strengthen the case for a “black hole” in the Book of Mormon.

In spite of the efforts of Mormon scholars who desperately want to believe in the divine authenticity and historicity of the Book of Mormon, the “black hole” cannot be covered up. To those who are able to take an unbiased look at the evidence, it looms over the Book of Mormon as a serious threat to its validity.

In the book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, we quoted the noted Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley as saying that “a *forgery* is defined by specialists in ancient documents as ‘any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers’” (*Since Cumorah*, page 160).

In our work on the “black hole,” published in 1990, we set forth convincing evidence that the Book of Mormon is a nineteenth-century production by Joseph Smith. Mormon scholars have been unsuccessful in their attempt to overthrow the research which has been presented. It is clear, then, that regardless of Joseph Smith’s motives for producing the book, it cannot be accepted as a genuine document because it “was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.”

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## Appendix

### Tvedtnes' Attempt to Save the Book of Abraham

In the March 1968 issue of our newsletter, the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we announced the astounding fact that the papyrus Joseph Smith “translated” as the Book of Abraham (canonized in the *Pearl of Great Price*) was in fact nothing but a pagan Egyptian funerary document known as the Book of Breathings—also known as the “Sensen Scroll.” We obtained this information from Grant Heward who had an interest in studying the Egyptian language. This identification was later confirmed by a number of prominent Egyptologists.

Interestingly, John Tvedtnes accepted the identification without question. This, however, posed a serious problem: the introductory statement to the Book of Abraham clearly proclaims that “THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM” is exactly what it claims to be. It states that it was “TRANSLATED FROM THE PAPYRUS, BY JOSEPH SMITH.” Moreover, the statement goes on to say that the papyrus was written by Abraham’s own hand: “A Translation of some ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt.—The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus. See *History of the Church*, vol. 2, pages 235, 236, 348-351.”

John Tvedtnes could plainly see that there was a serious problem that needed to be faced. In an article he co-authored with Richley Crapo, he referred to the traditional view that the Book of Abraham is a literal translation of the papyrus as a “naive view.” This view, of course, was first set forth by Joseph Smith himself and held by the Mormon Church leaders up until the present time. Tvedtnes, however, apparently felt that his knowledge of the subject superseded that of the prophets of the church. In an article which appeared in the *LDSSA Commentary*, published by the Latter-day Saint Student Association, Institute of Religion, the following was printed:

The rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri . . . has made it possible to reformulate entirely our concepts about the process by which Joseph Smith produced the Book of Abraham. . . .

Lacking the original papyri or any significant amount of information about the materials which stimulated the writing of the Book of Abraham, *the members of the Church have always assumed that book to have been a literal translation of a document written by the hand of Abraham himself.* Now it is possible to supersede this naive view with a deeper understanding of the origins of that book. . . . One of the recently acquired papyri, it seems, *is directly related to the Book of Abraham.* . . . It appears, therefore, that *Joseph Smith connected the Book of Abraham to the Small Sensen Fragment* [not to be confused with Facsimile No. 1 which shows a picture of “Abraham fastened upon an altar” which is also part of the Book of Abraham]. . . .

Our own translation and those of several Egyptologists of the Small Sensen Fragment have demonstrated that this papyrus is part of an Egyptian funerary document. Its relationship to the Book of Abraham must, then, *be something other than has long been thought.* The possibility of its use as a mnemonic device in connection with an Abrahamic oral tradition was suggested by our further studies. (*LDSSA Commentary*, March 27, 1969)

The theory that John Tvedtnes helped formulate holds that although the papyrus is actually a pagan Egyptian text, it was used as a “mnemonic device”—i.e., the papyrus contains a limited number of key-words which help a person remember the story of Abraham. For example, Tvedtnes maintained that an Egyptian word meaning “in” or “inside of” found on the papyrus was used as the basis for Abraham 1:7b-10. As incredible as it may seem, Joseph Smith “translated” 122 words from this one Egyptian word and these words make over three verses in his published version of the Book of Abraham!

In any case, John Tvedtnes claims that the descendants of Abraham would notice the word *in* on the papyrus and this would jog their memory so that they would remember the other words (equivalent to 121 words in the English language) found in this part of the story concerning Abraham in Egypt. Tvedtnes also felt that Joseph Smith had some knowledge of the ancient hieratic Egyptian characters.

We feel that what Tvedtnes believes is evidence for Joseph Smith's work is merely a coincidence because Smith used the word *in* frequently in his Book of Abraham. In fact, it is found 100 times in that book. In just the first chapter alone—the chapter we are dealing with—it appears 17 times. Since this chapter has only 31 verses we would naturally expect to find it one or more times in the amount of material Tvedtnes deals with (verses 1:7b-10).

In *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* page 324, we pointed out that Joseph Smith “translated” most of Abraham 1:11 (59 words) from one Egyptian word meaning “the” or “this.” John Tvedtnes agreed that the Egyptian word means “this, the, (a specific thing),” and because the word *this* is found among the 59-word “translation,” Tvedtnes felt it provided evidence that Joseph Smith understood the hieratic writing. He found the word *this* toward the beginning of verse 11: “‘Now this priest...’ (previously mentioned)” (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, October 25, 1968, page 5).

Actually, we find the words *this* or *the* six times in just this 59-word segment. Moreover, these words are used 159 times in the first chapter of the Book of Abraham. It would, in fact, have been unusual if they did not appear in this 59-word portion of the text.

It is hard to believe that Brigham Young University's Society for Early Historic Archaeology would accept such a peculiar theory regarding the Book of Abraham. In 1970, however, the Society again printed a similar article by John Tvedtnes which contained the following:

It should, first of all, be made clear that Abraham (or whoever actually composed the text of the Book of Abraham—presumably in the Hebrew language) made use of an already extant Egyptian text, in all probability. . . . the person using the Egyptian text as a mnemonic device would have been required to know the Hebrew (?) text of the Book of Abraham by heart (or, at least well enough so that the key-words would bring to mind and fill any gaps in the memory). . . .

Moreover, the key-word in the Egyptian text need not represent the key thought in the oral text—and, indeed, probably will not so represent it, if the written text used as a mnemonic device predates the oral text. . . .

There remain two questions of major importance to be answered: (1) Why was the text orally transmitted? (2) How did Joseph Smith come by the text if, indeed, it was not written on any document that he possessed.

(1) The answer to the first question is, simply, that portions of Abraham's record dealt with the Temple ceremony (see Joseph Smith's explanations of Figs. 7 through 20 of Facsimile 2), and could therefore not be committed to writing. Additionally, we cannot be certain that the composer of the text knew how to write. . . .

I propose that the Book of Abraham was just such an esoteric oral tradition, passed down by word of mouth by the righteous descendants of Abraham until it was eventually lost.

(2) This being the case, we now come to the question of how Joseph Smith came into possession of the Abrahamic story. Here, I propose he received it by direct revelation or inspiration, possibly even from a heavenly messenger, who, during his lifetime, was one of the transmitters of the tradition. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, BYU, April 1970, pages 7-9)

The idea that the Book of Abraham is not a literal translation of the papyrus and that Joseph Smith received the story of Abraham “by direct revelation or inspiration,” or the claim that an ancient Hebrew “messenger, who during his lifetime, was one of the transmitters of the tradition,” may have brought the information to Smith is all pure speculation. It, in fact, contradicts everything Joseph Smith ever wrote on the subject. For example, Joseph Smith clearly stated the following in his *History*:

Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus . . . and with W.W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, *I 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 . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 236)

At the very beginning of the manuscript of the Book of Abraham, which Joseph Smith dictated to his scribe, he asserted that he was giving a “Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the catacombs of Egypt.”

As we have already shown, the Book of Abraham published by the Mormon Church itself still maintains Joseph Smith's original claim. Joseph Smith not only claimed that he actually translated it from the papyrus, but according to the *History of the Church*, he affirmed that it was an accurate translation:

Thus I have given a brief history of the manner in which the writings of the fathers, Abraham and Joseph, have been preserved, and how I came in possession of the same—a correct translation of which I shall give in its proper place. (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 351)

Joseph Smith's *History* indicated that in 1835 he spent a good deal of time working on his translation of the Egyptian papyri (see *History of the Church*, vol. 2, pages 238, 286 and 320).

Furthermore, Joseph Smith never said anything about a “mnemonic device” or an ancient Hebrew messenger bringing the text of the Book of Abraham to him. John Tvedtnes' work on these matters seems to have been built on nothing but conjecture and blind faith.

Another serious defect in the argument advanced by Tvedtnes is that part of it is based on parallels between the Book of Abraham and the Egyptian names *Hor* and *Taykhebyt* found in the text of the papyrus. (Joseph Smith, of course, did not even realize that these were names and mistranslated them into a large number of words relating to the story about Abraham.)

The two names mentioned above seriously affect Tvedtnes' theory. It is obvious that it would have been impossible for anyone to have used this part of the “Book of Breathings” papyrus as a “mnemonic device” until after the time that “Taykhebyt” lived and had a son named “Hor.” Egyptologists date the Book of Breathings papyrus possessed by Joseph Smith at sometime around the time of Christ. Even John Tvedtnes admitted that the papyrus dates “from Ptolemaic or early Christian times, and thus follow Abraham by about two millennia” (*Book of Abraham Symposium*, April 3, 1970, page 72).

As noted above, the papyrus scroll could not have been in existence prior to the time of Taykhebyt and Hor. Moreover, since it was a scroll made specifically to be buried with Hor the son of Taykhebyt, it probably would not have been written until after his death. Professor Richard A. Parker's translation of

the text on this particular scroll makes it clear that it was to be wrapped up with the mummy: “After (his) two arms are [fast]ened to his breast, one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm near his heart, this having been done at his wrapping and outside it.”

Now, because this particular Book of Breathings papyrus was created at the death of Hor, no one could have used it as a “mnemonic device” prior to the time it came into existence. Furthermore, since it was buried with him, no one could have used it after his death. The ancient Egyptians would have considered it a very serious matter for some grave robber to steal the papyrus which was supposed to protect Hor, the son of Taykhebyt, in the hereafter. While the text of the Book of Breathings might remain the same for many years, the names would have to be changed for each mummy. Even if the text of the Book of Abraham had been used as a memory device, or even if the entire text were in some way concealed in the Book of Breathings, the changing of the names would have completely fouled up the system. Tvedtnes, therefore, made a very serious mistake when he compared the names Taykhebyt and Hor with part of the text in Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham.

If a person could not buy the hypothesis of a “mnemonic device,” Tvedtnes and Crapo had another idea to save the Book of Abraham:

. . . the hieratic words in the “Alphabet and Grammar” are simply related to core-concepts in the corresponding English story of Abraham. Either hypothesis requires that Joseph Smith had a working knowledge of the hieratic words on the papyrus. In the second case, much of the English text may have been supplied by Joseph Smith as *an inspired commentary* on the hieratic words.

Viewed in this light, the Book of Abraham seems *not to be a direct translation* of the Egyptian text appearing on the Sen-Sen papyrus. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, Oct. 25, 1968)

The statements cited above demonstrate the great lengths some Mormon scholars will go to in their attempt to save the Book of Abraham. It seems that they will propose almost any fantastic thesis rather than accept the simple truth that the Book of Abraham is a spurious work.

One would think that John Tvedtnes would be embarrassed by the conjectures he proposed just after the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered. Instead, however, he still defends his work. Mormon scholar John Gee published an article on the Book of Abraham in the F.A.R.M.S. *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4. In this work Gee charged that Charles M. Larson, who wrote a book entitled *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus*, failed “to cite the published versions of the ‘Mnemonic Device’ Theory.” Mr. Gee then proceeded to cite a number of articles and then quoted from a personal communication from John Tvedtnes:

Mr. Larson, like other critics of the book of Abraham, has cursorily dismissed the work Richley Crapo and I did with the Sensen papyrus. He dwells on some minor points and ignores the overall work. The one point in which he felt our case was strongest is far from the strongest point in the original article, most of which he keeps from his audience. (He also didn’t note the two follow-up articles on the same subject.) Larson fails to note that we demonstrated that there was a consistency in the way Joseph Smith separated out Egyptian words from a text in which there are no spaces marking the division between words, and the meaning of each Egyptian word is consistently reflected in the English text of the book of Abraham to which it was juxtaposed in the book of Abraham manuscripts. Certainly this is evidence that Joseph Smith knew the meaning of those words! . . .

Larson also failed to note that Crapo and I suggested other possibilities for the tie between the Abraham story and the Sensen text, including the suggestion that a later descendant of Abraham had worded the story of his ancestor to fit the Sensen text. If this be true, then it doesn’t matter when the Sensen text was composed.

Larson’s citation of Klaus Baer from Jay Todd’s book is irrelevant. A reading of Baer’s letter clearly shows that he was talking apples, while Crapo and I were talking oranges. He was thinking about translation, while we were suggesting the use of the Sensen text as a mnemonic device. *Baer didn’t understand the concept* and I complained about his unfair treatment. He later had one of his students personally deliver an apology for his harsh words, though *he continued to disagree with the theory* we had proposed. Baer’s complaint about the lack of a systematic mnemonic theory

makes no real sense in the light of our study, for we suggested that the Sensen text was used as the basis for the wording of the Abraham story. This means that the Egyptian text placed its own restrictions on the wording of the Abrahamic text, so there could be no system. I demonstrated this in my April 1970 article . . . Larson made no reference to the article. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, pages 109-110)

The reader will notice that in the material cited above John Tvedtnes took offense at some criticism given by Klaus Baer in a letter to Jay M. Todd. Mr. Todd, a defender of the church, stated in his book that he had sought Baer’s help in his attempt to evaluate the work of Tvedtnes and Crapo. Baer, who is now deceased, was a noted Egyptologist at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. Todd wrote the following concerning the matter:

In order to obtain assistance in the appraisal of the work of Crapo and Tvedtnes, I requested the personal opinion of Dr. Klaus Baer on the matter. His opinion was sought for several reasons: he is an internationally regarded Egyptologist; he represents an honest non-Mormon—one of genuine good will—looking at the many aspects concerning the Book of Abraham; he was willing to discuss his views. (*The Saga of the Book of Abraham*, by Jay M. Todd, 1969, page 384)

On pages 386-87 of the same book, Todd quoted from Baer’s letter:

The English passages in the Book of Abraham corresponding to the Egyptian signs are long, and the parts cited by Crapo, in which he finds similarities to the Egyptian, are related to the whole *by no visible principle*—often they are a very secondary part of the text. This is most extreme in the case of the section corresponding to the Egyptian py (“the” or “this”); you are hardly going to find an English sentence without an article or a demonstrative, so what does the coincidence signify? Nothing. And the similarities are further weakened by such free associations as exemplified by the connection of the two parts of s (“pool,” sometimes used for sections of the Nile) with “Egyptians,” because they are people of the river, an expression never used, to my knowledge, by the ancient Egyptians in referring to themselves. By that method, similarities can be

uncovered between any two texts so long as one is willing to look long enough and you're willing to use your imagination. The important thing: Unless we can show, in detail, how Joseph Smith obtained the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian text, applying a rational method that others could follow, we cannot speak of 'translation' in any ordinary sense of the word, and this Crapo has not succeeded in doing, nor do I see how it can be done. Even if the signs were just key words somehow suggesting the text, the choice would be most strange, and one would expect, at the very least, to find Abraham mentioned, something to connect the Egyptian with the Book of Abraham.

Accepting for the moment the validity of the Book of Abraham, there is no way of obtaining it from the Egyptian text except with the help of so considerable an amount of direct inspiration (even according to Crapo's methodology) that one can only wonder what is to be gained by excavating a few, rather far-fetched instances of what just might perhaps be instances of translation by ordinary human means in a text the overwhelming majority of which (and the significant part) cannot have been so produced. So why bother to dig up a few examples of (bad) scholarship to validate a text that is not a work of scholarship?

You can reach an impasse from another angle: Try to obtain the Book of Abraham from the papyrus by applying the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar [i.e., a bound manuscript containing Joseph Smith's "translation" of Egyptian symbols which is preserved in the Church Historical Department] (leaving aside the question where that came from). So far as I can tell that won't work either. Willy-nilly, we are left with something completely isolated, whose connection with its material sources is non-rational. . . .

Anyway, this is, I believe, the major criticism of Crapo and Tvedtnes. The fact that there is an occasional mistake in their Egyptian is a secondary matter, and straightening out these errors won't make any essential changes. Basically, I think there isn't much point in trying to set up rules for the way in which a prophet, if such Joseph Smith was, received his inspirations.

Although John Tvedtnes would like his readers to believe that "Baer didn't understand the concept" of the hypothesis he and Crapo had set forth, it

seems evident from his letter that he comprehended what was presented but felt that it was very poor scholarship.

The reader will remember that Tvedtnes claimed that "Larson fails to note that we demonstrated that there was a consistency in the way Joseph Smith separated out Egyptian words from a text in which there are no spaces marking the division between words, and the meaning of each Egyptian word is consistently reflected in the English text of the book of Abraham to which it was juxtaposed in the book of Abraham manuscripts. Certainly this is evidence that Joseph Smith knew the meaning of those words!"

Both John Tvedtnes and Richley Crapo originally supported the idea that when Joseph Smith transcribed Egyptian words from the papyrus he usually took complete words and that this showed he had a knowledge of Egyptian:

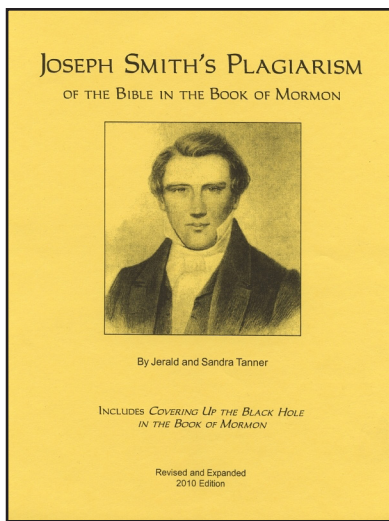
. . . when he transcribed a word composed of five hieratic symbols, he never made the mistake (statistically inevitable for anyone to whom the sign symbols are only a meaningless jumble of lines) of transcribing only three or four of the word's five signs, or of transcribing six or seven by including elements of the preceding or following words. . . . The transcription of only three of the words involved breaking them in two, and the breaks were always made at valid morpheme boundaries. . . . a person with no insight into the meaning of the symbols would have been bound to make a false division. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, October 25, 1968, page 4)

The claim that the transcription of the words showed that Joseph Smith had a knowledge of Egyptian could not stand up under investigation, and in 1970, Richley Crapo had the honesty to admit that he had been mistaken:

It has been pointed out that Joseph Smith transcribed individual words from the Egyptian papyrus as only one who understood the language . . . An emic test of this probability . . . involved simply the asking of persons untrained in the Egyptian language or script and uninfluenced by an appeal to inspiration to mark hypothetical

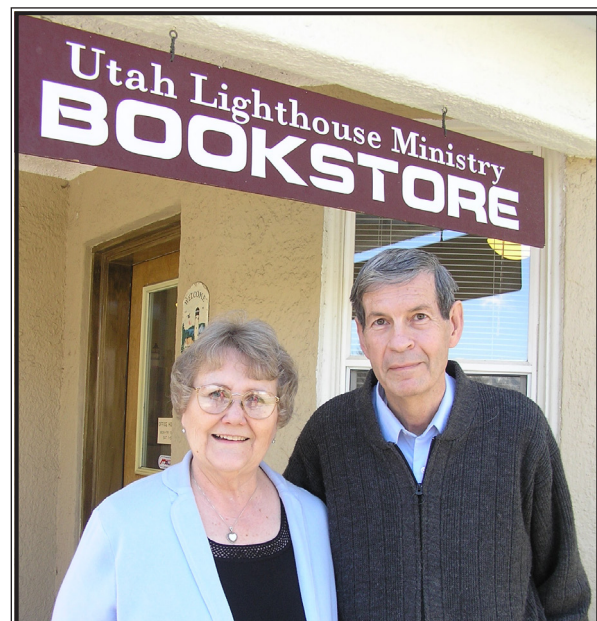
divisions between the symbols on a copy of this papyrus. The results were that every person requested marked acceptable divisions between words or morphemes. Thus, the conclusions reached by an emic study are the same as those of Dr. Nelson: Joseph Smith's handling of the Egyptian words was unremarkable; he did nothing in this respect that others could not do. (*Book of Abraham Symposium*, April 3, 1970, page 31)

It appears from John Tvedtnes' statement cited above that even though Crapo conceded that Joseph Smith did nothing "that others could not do" with respect to the division of words, Tvedtnes still holds stubbornly to the original hypothesis set forth in 1968. For more information regarding John Tvedtnes' ideas concerning the Book of Abraham see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 328-331.



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