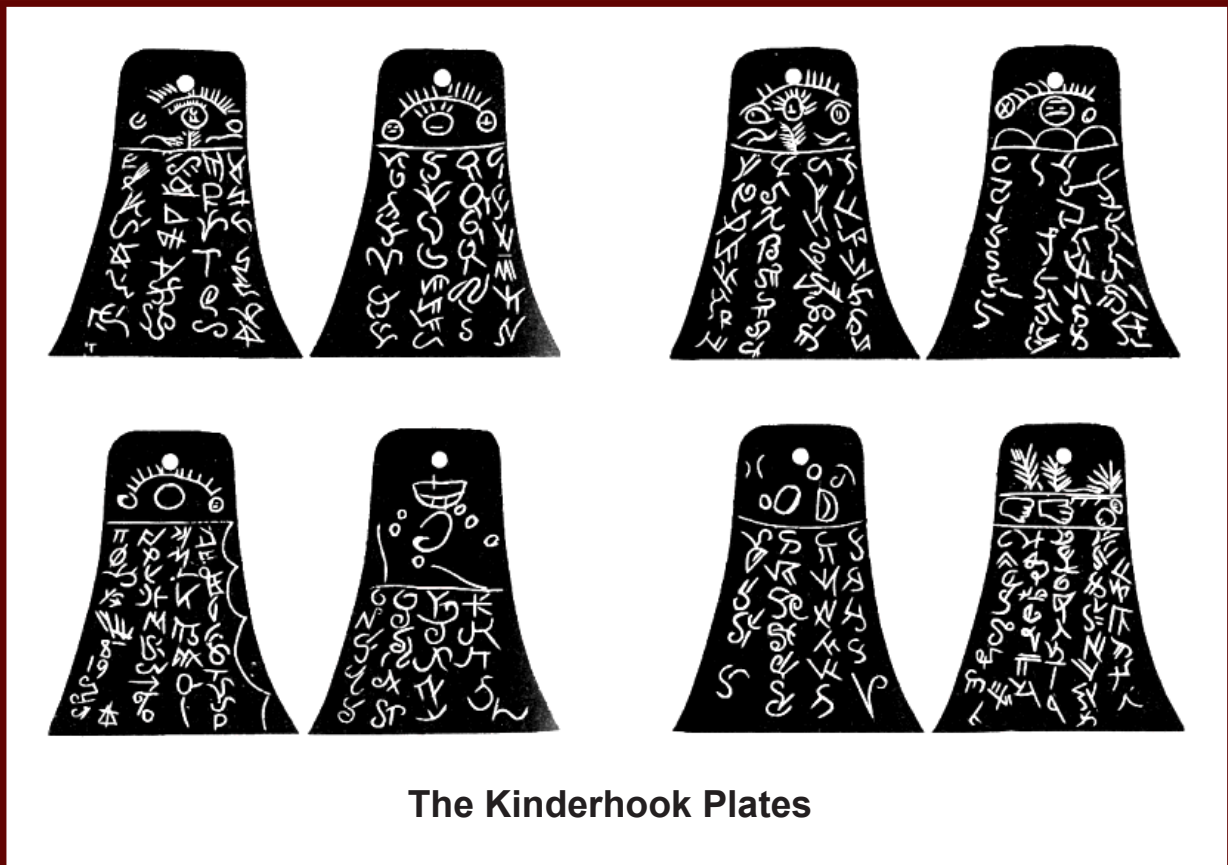


ANSWERING MORMON SCHOLARS

A Response to Criticism Raised by Mormon Defenders



Volume Two

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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1996

**Utah Lighthouse Ministry
www.utlm.org**



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1. Mormon Scholars Battle to Save the Book of Mormon

In the first volume of *Answering Mormon Scholars* we responded to some serious accusations made against our work by scholars from the Mormon Church's Brigham Young University. Most of the disparaging material was published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), a non-profit organization that claims to be independent of the church yet defends its teachings.

In this volume we will deal with some additional charges made against us by those who are bent on discrediting our work.

37 Years of Silence

The reader may remember that in the first volume of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, we quoted David Merrill as saying: "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)

In addition, we also quoted a man who talked to the Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards about our work. He claimed that Richards told him "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)

After quoting the comments attributed to Apostle Richards, we wrote that church leaders were engaged in "a conspiracy of silence" regarding our research. Mormon scholar Matthew Roper, who has criticized our work on a number of occasions since 1991, responded to our comments in an article published by FARMS:

"Since we began publishing in 1959," write Jerald and Sandra Tanner in their most recent booklet, "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 . . . Mormon leaders seem to feel that the 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-seven years while we have continued to distribute books throughout the world." While LDS scholars in the past have, in the authors words, "followed Church leaders' advice" by ignoring them, now, faced with the imposing bogeyman of their recent book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, "Mormon scholars have suddenly [come] out like an army to attack us" (p. 1-2). According to the authors, this can only be because their revolutionary ideas "were having a significant impact upon some," nay "thousands of members of the Church" (p. 2, emphasis added). . . .

Reading their rebuttal, I was reminded of several observations made by non-LDS historian Lawrence Foster a few years ago. With the Tanners, "Every bit of evidence, even if it could be most plausibly presented in a positive way, is represented as yet another nail in the coffin being prepared for the Mormon church." (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1994, pages 156-157)

In a longer version of the same article entitled, "A Black Hole That Is Not So Black," Matthew Roper defended the fact that church leaders have remained silent:

Since the Tanners began their careers, church membership has grown to nearly 9,000,000. In 1993 alone there were over 304,000 convert baptisms. Not only has the Church experienced more growth since the Tanners started fighting it, than it has in it's whole history of 161 years, it has more than quadrupled its membership since they began their ministry. . . .

Given the miraculous growth of the Church today, why should anyone respond to critics of the Church at all? . . . Given the tremendous responsibility that Church leaders are under and the challenges of administering a rapidly growing Church, I think that the Tanners' grumblings merit little of *their* time and attention. This does not mean, however, that individual members cannot or should not *ever* respond to attacks upon the Church or criticisms of the Book of Mormon. (pages 4, 6)

In another FARMS publication Mormon scholar John A. Tvedtnes wrote:

Jerald and Sandra Tanner seem to have gotten what they want at last—a debate. For thirty-four years, they complain, the LDS Church never rebutted their work and failed to “refute our allegations” (p. 1). This “conspiracy of silence,” they believe, was broken when several LDS scholars undertook to write reviews of their book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. . . . The Tanners' complaint that the LDS Church and LDS scholars ignored them for so many years struck me as strange. It's like saying, “We shot cannon at their wall and failed to dent it, but the damned fools don't have enough sense to shoot back! . . .” Indeed, all of the statements regarding the Church's wish to ignore them are hearsay only. . . . no church leaders have ever encouraged or discouraged me to respond to the Tanners. . . .

The Tanners' claim that the LDS Church has conducted a “conspiracy of silence” to ignore their work. This is what I call a “Brodieism,” from the remarkable ability of Fawn Brodie to read the minds of long-deceased historical personages such as Joseph Smith and Thomas Jefferson. (Review of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Answering Mormon Scholars: A Response to Criticism of the Book “Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon,”* volume 1, pages 1-3; a condensed and “edited version” of the same rebuttal is published in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1994)

While John Tvedtnes would like his readers to believe that “all of the statements regarding the Church's wish to ignore them are hearsay only,” there is good reason to believe that there has been a deliberate attempt to suppress discussion of our writings. Even Lawrence Foster, who has been extremely critical of our work, referred to the Mormon Church's reluctance to deal with the issues we have raised. In 1984, he wrote an article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* in which he stated:

Despite the Tanner's extensive publication record . . . to date *virtually no serious public analyses of their work have appeared*. When the Tanners' arguments have been attacked in Mormon publications, as has occurred on many occasions, *their names and the titles of their writings have almost never been cited*. Indeed, until very recently even independent Mormon scholarly journals such as *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*, which discuss all manner of controversial issues, have *largely avoided mentioning the Tanners by name, much less analyzing their work explicitly*. . . .

The reluctance of Mormon intellectuals to discuss the Tanners has more complex roots. Initially, serious historians were just getting into the relevant primary material and trying to make sense of it themselves. While these scholars had a better understanding of some of the difficult issues that the Tanners highlighted, their understanding was at first very tentative and certainly not sufficiently developed to go into print. The historians also had problems of their own as their research began leading them into a slow but major reconstruction of Mormon history (and most recently, theology) which itself posed a substantial challenge to the conventional wisdom of present-day Mormonism. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1984, pages 48-50)

We will show below that a Mormon apostle publicly urged members of the church not to contend with critics of the church.

While it is true that some Mormon scholars are now publishing rebuttals to our work, why do the church leaders refuse to publish a rebuttal under the church's own name? After all, scholars like Tvedtnes, Roper, and others who have attacked us are not spokesmen for the church. It is interesting to note that a statement on the first page of both of the longer rebuttals written by Tvedtnes and Roper warns that, “The opinions expressed are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.”

Clandestine Activities

While the church's apostles have sidestepped dealing with the issues, at one time the Church Historical Department became very disturbed because so many people were writing letters asking for answers to our material. Finally, it was decided that even though the apostles would be opposed to the idea, the Church Historical Department would set forth a response to our work. Surprisingly, in this case both our names and

the name of our book were mentioned. On the other hand, however, since it was necessary to hide the project from the top leaders of the church, neither the name of the author or the publisher appeared anywhere in the booklet!

The anonymous rebuttal to our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* appeared in 1977 under the title, *Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Lawrence Foster made these observations concerning the booklet:

The Latter-day Saint historian's critique and the Tanners' response to it highlight difficulties that Mormon scholars have in candidly and openly addressing the weaknesses of the Tanners' position. As the Tanners correctly argue in their response to "Dr. Clandestine," the primary reason that the pamphlet was produced anonymously was that if their historical critic had put his name to it, he would probably have gotten into trouble with more conservative Church leaders. Historians such as the Latter-day Saint critic are often as profoundly frustrated as are the Tanners by the historical naiveté of some Church leaders. . . . In effect, some of the less well-informed Church leaders are providing the very rope by which the Tanners are trying to hang them. . . .

Latter-day Saint historians, in their role as constructive rather than destructive critics of the Church, have great difficulty dealing with a two-front controversy with Church conservatives, on the one hand, and the Tanners, on the other. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1984, page 53)

The coming forth of the anonymous rebuttal was shrouded in absolute secrecy. While we knew Zion Bookstore was the distributor of the response, we were unable to find out where the booklets were printed. When we asked Sam Weller, the owner of the bookstore, where he had obtained them, he replied that he did not know! and that it was all a very secret operation. He claimed that he received a letter giving details of how he could handle the pamphlet, but that the writer was not identified. When we asked Mr. Weller to show us the letter, he replied that he would not because it was his own "personal property." He maintained that he received 1,800 free copies of the pamphlet and was told that he could use any money he made to make a reprint.

We talked with Wilfrid Clark, who worked for Mr. Weller. Clark claimed that all he knew about the matter was that Zion Bookstore received an anonymous letter containing a key to a room in a self storage company on Redwood Road. He said that he personally went to the

company and picked up the books. We eventually found out who the author of the booklet was and the truth about the secret project came to light. Our response to this booklet appeared in a publication entitled, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*. In this booklet we identified D. Michael Quinn as the author. Ironically, Dr. Quinn was later excommunicated from the Mormon Church. Quinn absolutely refused to go along with the suppressive policies of the Mormon Church and argued that the church should tell the truth about its history.

Unfortunately, while church leaders chose to outwardly ignore our research, a number of Mormons have been engaged in surreptitious attempts to overthrow our work and that of other critics of the church. For instance, sometime around 1976 a man by the name of Steven Mayfield assumed the alias "Stan Fields." Mr. Mayfield was at that time "employed by the FBI in a clerical capacity."

Mr. Mayfield not only assumed an alias, but he also opened up a post office box to help hide his deception. For a number of years he carried on an extensive spying operation through the mail and through personal contacts. Mr. "Fields," who professed to be our Christian brother, spied on our operation for about four years and also penetrated a number of groups of Ex-Mormons For Jesus. By dishonest means he obtained the names of many Mormons who had questions about their religion. He diligently worked to obtain photographs of critics of the Mormon Church and gathered large files of information.

In his zeal to provide a good cover for himself, Mr. "Fields" went so far as to claim that his own church (the Mormon Church) was "Satan Inspired" (Letter dated July 22, 1978). He even pretended to pass out anti-Mormon material around Temple Square. His scheme, however, was detected in July, 1980, when we discovered his true identity. We found out that he was employed at the Mormon Church Office Building in the Genealogical Department. When we directly confronted him in the Church Office Building, he made no attempt to deny the basic charges. Although he claimed that he "was not spying for the Church," he acknowledged he had used church equipment to carry out the duplicity. We have recently received information indicating that he had contact with church security while he was spying on Mormon critics.

Besides spying on those who had doctrinal differences with Mormonism, Steven Mayfield seems to have had an interest in the activities of homosexuals and feminists. On what we would term an "Enemies' List" Mayfield listed "Affirmation/Gay Mormons"

and “Mormons for ERA.” Mr. Mayfield even had a card stating that “Stan Fields is a Regular member of Mormons for ERA.” The card was signed by National President, “Sonia Johnson.” We have a photograph of this card in a book we published on the subject (see *Unmasking a Mormon Spy: The Story of Stan Fields*).

After his true identity was discovered in 1980, Steven Mayfield claimed that he no longer used an alias. Although he admitted that he secretly recorded telephone conversations in 1982 (Letter dated May 9, 1982), he insisted that he had not been engaged in any illegal activities. He has, however, continued to gather information on critics of the church. If there is anything of bad report regarding enemies of the church, Mr. Mayfield is probably the man who knows all about it.

In the FARMS publication, *Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 320, L. Ara Norwood, a writer who has attacked our work, gives credit to “Steven Mayfield for providing me with much useful information concerning James White’s debate escapades” (footnote 7). James White, of course, is a critic of the church. Mr. Mayfield currently works for an anti-anti-Mormon organization—i.e., an organization that tries to counter the claims made by critics of the Mormon Church.

On May 6, 1982, Mayfield appeared on a KBBX radio program. He commented:

. . . its been my hope to organize us in some way as kind of a counter to say ex-Mormons. . . . I’ve been in contact with a couple . . . called the Browns—Robert and Rosemary Brown. Well, I don’t approve of everything they do, but I have been in contact with them. . . . maybe someday we can be as productive as the ex-Mormons’ group . . .

While one would think that the exposure of Mr. Mayfield’s activities would discourage Mormons from entering into clandestine activities, subsequent developments prove just the opposite to be the case. In fact, in 1982, we discovered that there were a number of people using fictitious names who were trying to destroy our work. For instance, a spying operation involving two post office boxes was set up in Sacramento, California. Valerie Kuhn, a resident of that city, was deeply involved in that operation. (For more information on this matter see the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1983.)

Secret Tanner Project

In a letter dated August 3, 1981, “Elder Michael Griffith” wrote a promising young scholar a letter in which he stated:

. . . I thought I’d drop you a brief line and inquire about the possibility of you contributing to a work designed to rebut *Mormonism—S or R?* [*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*]

As _____ may or may not have passed on to you, there is a group of “us” who feel that *M—SR?* has for far too long gone unanswered. Oh, there was the brief analysis of 77’ [i.e., the anonymous rebuttal], but that . . . is far too incomplete. Something more is needed.

My question is simply this: Would you be interested in writing a chapter for the response to *M—SR?* . . . Please let me know if you would be interested on [in?] this long over-due project.

In the September-October 1981 issue of *The Sunstone Review* the following advertisement appeared:

FOR SOME time there has been concern about the impact of Sandra and Jerald Tanner’s *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality* (and its recent Moody Press version, *The Changing World of Mormonism*). No thorough, formal, direct response has been published, though a number of articles have been written dealing with specific aspects of their criticism. A project is now being organized to formulate an answer to the Tanners and to other prominent critics of Mormonism . . . Anyone interested in contributing to this effort should outline his or her specialty and send the information to: The Tanner Project, P.O. Box 191, Calabasas, Cal. 91302-0191.

Like the anonymous rebuttal, this move to destroy our work was carried on with great secrecy. In fact, the “Elder” whose letter was cited above denied all connection with the project when we confronted him about the matter. The evidence, however, seems to show that he was deeply involved.

In any case, at first we could not learn from the Post Office who had rented the box, but we were told that a “pen name” was apparently being used. Shortly after the ad appeared in *The Sunstone Review*, we were informed that a man by the name of Scott S. Smith was involved, and that he was using the alias “Steven Scott” to carry on his activities.

Later we were able to compare the signatures on letters written by “Steven Scott” and Scott S. Smith and concluded that they were written by the same person. The typewriter used by “Steven Scott” also appears to be the same as that used by Scott Smith. The only conclusion we could draw from this was that Scott Smith was using the alias “Steven Scott.” When we told a man who had previously corresponded with Scott Smith that we believed Smith was using an alias, he decided to do

some investigating on his own. Mr. Smith apparently realized that we were gathering evidence against him and did not try to deny the charge. In a letter reporting the conversation we find the following:

This night (Aug. 1, 1982) I personally talked to Scott Smith on the telephone about the Tanner project. . . . He says he was part of the first working group of people who started the project and opened the P.O. Box.

Smith told me he did not want to say who was the main coordinator of the project . . . Smith says there are about three dozen people who have access to the P.O. Box. . . . He also said that Griffith had some stuff but had not heard from him for some time. Smith . . . personally did not have very much time to devote to the project, adding that many of the others like [John L.] Sorenson didn't either and that it would be best if some young person headed the project . . .

When asked if he used the name Steven Scott, he said: "I used the name, but so did others." . . . He says there is a lot of switching and barrowing [*sic*], of names, and admits to using other peoples' names. He says others have used his name. The reason for all this? To confuse the Tanners! He says they want to make the Tanners go off on wild goose chases [*sic*] trying to figure out who is who and who is doing what. . . . I hope this helps. (Letter dated August 1, 1982)

On August 19, 1982, we had a very interesting conversation with Scott Smith concerning "The Tanner Project." Mr. Smith confirmed the admissions he had made on August 1, 1982. He said that he used the alias "Steven Scott" and that this was not the only alias he had used during his lifetime. In a letter to us Scott Smith sent a letter confirming the accusations we had made:

Your March *SLCM* just arrived. Its account of The Tanner Project is essentially accurate for what it covers . . . The P.O. Box in Calabasas was established because several key individuals lived or worked nearby but this has been discontinued . . . There was never any intention of my publishing the fruits of the efforts—there was already an offer from a major publisher to handle that. . . . One of the reasons for sending out press releases was to make contact with those already pursuing similar projects and, from what I gather, there were and are a number of these, which I'm sure will go forward. There was no "dubious foundation" to TTP [The Tanner Project]—pseudonyms were used for the logical reasons you cited and a few of the participants were people you would know and respect. . . . inevitably a "definitive response" to your work will be published. . . . In any event, while I heartily disagree with your conclusions I do appreciate the generally civil way

you go about your work, which distinguishes it from some of your allies. (Letter from Scott S. Smith, dated April 22, 1983)

The reader will remember that in the letter written by one of Mr. Smith's associates the writer indicated that Smith had told him that Professor John L. Sorenson was involved in The Tanner Project. On June 4, 1983, Scott Smith wrote us another letter in which he said he wanted to correct this remark:

. . . one statement needed to be corrected. That was the implication that John Sorenson was involved in The Tanner Project. . . . I may have said something like "Sorenson would be a good one to take it over but he's too busy" but I was never under the impression that he was in any way involved. He seemed up to his ears with FARMS and there were already three archaeology specialists involved with TP so there seemed no point in approaching him.

John L. Sorenson, emeritus professor of anthropology at the church's Brigham Young University, has served as a director at FARMS. He is probably the most well-known defender of "Book of Mormon Archeology." While we have no evidence that Sorenson took part in the clandestine activities involved in "The Tanner Project," he was, in fact, very concerned with the effect our work was having upon members of the church. In a handwritten note made before "The Tanner Project" was exposed, Professor Sorenson boasted:

Some of us here are talking about holding a conference with enough experts taking on the Tanners' garbage to blow them out of the water.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for March 1983, we wrote the following:

Now that we have exposed the dubious foundation of "The Tanner Project," we doubt that any respectable Mormon scholars will want to associate their names with it. The Tanner Project seems doomed to failure. Nevertheless, there is growing unrest among Mormon scholars who are not satisfied with the Church's silent treatment. Steven Mayfield's desire "to organize" is shared by many Mormons. Robert Brown's organization is certainly a move in that direction, and Professor Sorenson's threat of assembling "enough experts" to blow "the Tanners' garbage out of the water" may also be a sign of things to come in the future. The Mormon leaders, of course, are trying to prevent a confrontation because they know a discussion of the issues will hurt the Church. Apostle Marvin J. Aston, for instance, pleaded with his people to ignore those who find fault with the Church:

Whether accusations, innuendoes, aspersions, or falsehoods are whispered or blatantly shouted, the gospel of Jesus Christ reminds us that we are not to retaliate nor contend. . . . we declare there is no time for contention. . . . Probably we will never be free of those who are openly anti-Mormon. Therefore, we encourage all our members to refuse to become anti-anti-Mormon. (*The Ensign*, November 1982, page 63)

After telling of Apostle Ashton's attempt to restrain people like the Browns from contending with the Church's critics, Linda Ostler Strack comments that "It remains to be seen if the LDS membership can restrain themselves." (*The Sunstone Review*, November 1982, page 5)

FARMS to the Rescue

After "The Tanner Project" failed eight years elapsed in which defenders of the faith were virtually silent.

As noted above, Scott Smith had been hopeful that "a major publisher" would publish the rebuttal to our work. As it turned out, FARMS finally became the launching pad for the missiles which were supposed to counter the "Tanners' garbage" and "blow them out of the water."

After remaining virtually silent for over thirty years, Mormon scholars suddenly came out like an army to attack us. The plan to have a number of scholars simultaneously attack our work, which John L. Sorenson and other Mormon defenders had envisioned several years before, became a reality.

In 1991 FARMS published three reviews, containing seventy-five pages, castigating our work on the theory of a black hole in the Book of Mormon. These rebuttals were written by Matthew Roper, John A. Tvedtnes and L. Ara Norwood.

After the first three reviews appeared in the FARMS publication in 1991, we pointed out how unusual it was for our work on the Book of Mormon to suddenly receive so much attention.

The following year, Daniel C. Peterson, who edits *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, tried to explain away the sudden concern regarding our work. In our newsletter for August 1991, we had announced that FARMS had published critical reviews of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. We commented that this book "is one of the most important studies that we have published and that all our readers should be aware of its contents. Since Mormon scholars have publicly come out in opposition to it, we feel that this

would be a good time to get it into the hands of as many people as possible. Therefore, we are having a special offer at this time."

Dr. Peterson made these sarcastic comments about our book on the "black hole":

They claimed to be so gratified by the attention they were receiving that they announced a sale on *Covering Up the Black Hole*. . . . But maybe the real idea was to make a sale on the old car before the wheels and doors fell off and the customer discovered what a lemon he was looking at. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, Introduction, pages lxxiv-lxxv)

Fortunately, the "wheels and doors" have not fallen off from what Peterson calls "the old car." In fact, almost five pages were devoted to the book, *Covering Up the Black Hole*, in the July-September, 1995, issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, The Newsletter Publication of Personal Freedom Outreach. In a review of this book Stephen F. Cannon wrote:

Unknown to most of the world, valuable research into some of the more serious deficiencies in the Book of Mormon has been ongoing for the past several years.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Utah Lighthouse Ministry again have proved their importance and sound scholarship in the arena of Mormon historical investigation. Adding to their long list of published material exposing the historical and theological errors of the Mormon Church, in 1990 the Tanners published *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. (page 4)

After giving a favorable review of the book, Stephen Cannon stated:

The Tanners already have completed their first volume, *Answering Mormon Scholars*, and are at work on the second. Volume 1 shows just how weak the counter-arguments of Mormons scholarship are.

Christians interested in the study of Mormonism . . . would do well to acquaint themselves with the ongoing research into the Book of Mormon.

I can think of no better place to begin than with *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. (*Ibid.*, page 15)

In a footnote in *Review of Books*, vol. 4, page lxxiv, Professor Peterson tried to explain why there were three reviews and such a large number of pages devoted to our work in vol. 3. After giving his explanation, however,

Peterson went on to reveal that he had added a forty-seven page review of two chapters of our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* to vol. 4. He commented that “the Tanners will probably see the lengthy review 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.”

However this may be, when we added the pages devoted to the “black hole” to those concerning the book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we found that a total of a hundred and twenty-two pages appeared within a period of about one year. It certainly seems peculiar that the same type of work that was once deemed unworthy of “the dignity of a response” should merit this much attention.

In 1993, FARMS printed two more critical reviews of our work in the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5. One of these rebuttals was written by Tom Nibley. Significantly, it was another attack on our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. Since three rebuttals had already been written to this book, one would wonder why there would have to be still another critical review. The other rebuttal, by Brigham Young University professor William J. Hamblin, is an attack on our book *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*.

That scholars at FARMS would review this book in 1993 certainly raises an interesting question: why would they review a book which was originally written in 1969? In the five volumes of *Review of Books*, 1989-1993, no book that was written before 1983 was ever reviewed. Why, then, would FARMS review a book written twenty-four years earlier? The only logical explanation is that the book is still having an affect on the Mormon people and those who are trying to decide whether they should become affiliated with Mormonism. Professor William J. Hamblin tried to explain this marked departure from the usual policy:

The first question that should be answered is why a book written over twenty years ago is being reviewed in a journal dedicated to reviewing books on the Book of Mormon published in 1992. Part of the answer is that the Tanners’ booklet, despite its antiquity and obvious flaws, has either directly or indirectly been a fundamental source for many subsequent anti-Mormon attempts to discredit the Book of Mormon. Thus, understanding the background of current anti-Mormon “arguments” against the Book of Mormon is impossible without examining the Tanners. (*Review of Books*, 1993, vol. 5)

The two reviews published in vol. 5 contain an additional forty pages of material castigating our work. When we added this to the four reviews printed earlier, we found that a hundred and sixty-two pages have been devoted to our books in a period of about two years. Furthermore, the end did not appear to be in sight.

In 1993, Matthew Roper wrote another rebuttal entitled, “Comments on the Book of Mormon Witnesses: A Response to Jerald and Sandra Tanner.” This 30-page response was printed in the FARMS publication, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Fall 1993. This brought the total to 192 pages.

In 1994, both John Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper wrote lengthy rebuttals to our book, *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1. These responses deal mainly with our work on the “black hole.” As noted above an “edited version” of both these papers was printed in *Review of Books*, 1994, vol. 6, no. 2. The more lengthy versions are also available from FARMS. Tvedtnes’s review is 56 pages long, and Roper’s contains 71 pages. When these pages were added to the 192 already mentioned, we came up with a total of 319 pages! Besides all these reviews, in 1995 Matthew Roper wrote still another short criticism of an article we published in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (see *Journal of Mormon Studies*, Fall 1995, pages 142-143). In all there have been 10 critical reviews since FARMS began its attack. Furthermore, in other articles not specifically written against us there have been a number of derisive remarks about us and our work.

Now, we have no problem with these FARMS scholars trying to defend the Mormon Church. In fact, they have every right to publish thousands of pages criticizing our work. What is disturbing, however, is the attempt to make it appear that nothing out of the ordinary is going on.

Some of those who write for FARMS seem to want their readers to believe that our work has scarcely had any effect on members of the church. If this were really the case, however, they certainly would not have printed 319 pages of material. Although many people do not realize it, writing is actually a very difficult task. It is obvious to us that most of the writers for FARMS have spent a great deal of time and thought preparing their arguments. Why, then, do they try to make it appear that they are not engaged in a battle to destroy our work?

John Tvedtnes seems particularly sensitive about this issue in his Longer Review:

Why is it so important to the Tanners that “Mormon apologists” respond to their writings? . . .

They claim that their work is “having a significant impact upon some Mormon scholars” (p. 1). Who are these scholars? They also complain that Dan Peterson “was very careful not to mention the fact that our work has had a significant effect upon thousands of members of the church” (p. 2). Perhaps Dan doesn’t know any of these people. I have yet to meet anyone—scholar or no—who has claimed that the Tanners’ work influenced his or her thinking. No one has ever told me that he or she is one of the “large number of people [who] have left the Mormon Church because of [the Tanners’] publications” or that he or she is “very concerned because their church has not published a rebuttal” (p. 1). Perhaps we just travel in different social circles. . . . The Tanners seem to believe that FARMS is out to get them because it published negative reviews of their book. . . . to the Tanners, it seems, anyone who disagrees with them must be “upset.” “Mormon scholars were very upset with us” (p. 3). “Craig Ray . . . became rather upset” (p. 12). “Peterson . . . seems to be upset” (p. 11). “Even worse, Dan Peterson seeks to destroy our work” (p. 2). (Longer Review, pages 1, 3)

Tvedtnes comments as follows in footnote 5 at the bottom of page 3:

I don’t mean to suggest that Jerald and Sandra Tanner are paranoid (I am not qualified to make such a judgment), but such statements coming from other sources would undoubtedly be so classified.

In footnote 6, John Tvedtnes comments as follows concerning our statement that Daniel Peterson desires “to destroy our work”:

While only Dan knows for sure, I have seen no direct evidence that this is his goal. In any event, it is an unrealistic one. The Tanners are too well-established and too tied to their publishing efforts to either convince them to cease or to convince all of their clients to stop buying from them. . . . After so many years of making a living at writing material critical of the LDS Church, it seems unlikely that they could take up another profession.

While Tvedtnes may feel we are paranoid about Daniel Peterson’s intentions, it is interesting to note that Peterson himself commented as follows: “. . . most contemporary anti-Mormon writers depend heavily upon the Tanners. Attending to the roots seemed an efficient way of dealing with the branches” (*Ibid.*, page lxxiv).

The reader will notice that Professor Peterson is suggesting that it is 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.”

On page 2 of his longer rebuttal, John Tvedtnes commented: “The Tanners write that Matt Roper’s statement that their ‘black hole’ study ‘merits review’ ‘is in sharp contrast to what church officials have said in the past’ (p.2).” Actually, the comment we quoted from Roper had nothing to do with our “‘black hole’ study.” It was in reference to our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* which we published over three decades ago and continue to sell. In *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, page 2 (the page Tvedtnes cites), we commented: “It is interesting to note that in the quotation above Matthew Roper said the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* ‘merits review.’”

Before citing Matthew Roper’s comments about our book, we wrote: “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.” Roper’s statement read as follows:

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)

We contrasted Matthew Roper’s statement that the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* “merits

review” with the statement made by a spokesman from the church’s Deseret Bookstore:

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)

John Tvedtnes stated that he failed “to see the relevance of this statement, since Matt Roper is not a spokesman for the LDS Church. But then, neither was the ‘spokesman from the church’s Deseret Book,’ cited by the Tanners (p. 1)!”

Roper himself was irritated by the fact that we cited his comment that the book “merits review.” In his longer rebuttal, page 5, he wrote:

When I reviewed several of the Tanners’ publications, I, of course, recognized that generally speaking, criticisms such as theirs do little to impede the growth of the Church. I simply saw this was an excellent opportunity to help those few individuals who may have been negatively influenced by the [*sic*] their work by suggesting some of the reasons why I found their work unpersuasive. . . . I stated in one of those essays that two chapters on the Book of Mormon from their book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* merited review, which was another way of saying that it provided a convenient foil against which to highlight several elements in the Book of Mormon that I found significant. The authors, however, in a desperate attempt to find legitimacy, have now on at least two occasions cited my off hand comment as evidence that they have somehow “arrived.”

On the same page (5) Matthew Roper cited again from the writings of Lawrence Foster:

“The Tanners’ answer is simple: The Mormon church is *afraid of them*. In their view, it has been engaged in a ‘*conspiracy of silence*’ because it *cannot answer their objections*. The Tanners argue that if the church were to try systematically to answer their objections, it would realize the error of its ways and collapse.”

This statement by Foster certainly does not represent our position. The Mormon leaders are actually afraid of some of their own historical documents. Consequently, they have tried to suppress these documents from the general public. The fact that we have brought many of these documents to light has obviously caused them some concern.

Foster’s claim that we “argue that if the church were to try systematically to answer their objections, it would realize the error of its ways and collapse” is absolutely ridiculous. Where have we ever made such a statement?

Those who take the time to read Foster’s article will notice that he gives no reference to support this statement. We certainly do not believe that our arguments could cause the “collapse” of the Mormon Church. The church is far too large to crumble. We do believe, however, that the material we print could have a significant affect on Mormons if they take the time to read it.

Years before Lawrence Foster made his observation, Sandra was quoted as saying that most Mormons would not be affected by historical evidence presented against the church: “Sandra Tanner told this writer that . . . The main masses of members won’t be affected because they don’t read” (“The New Mormon History,” by Richard Steven Marshall, A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, page 60). Mormons, of course, read a great deal about their own church, but generally speaking they do not like to look at material that is critical of Mormonism.

We certainly do not think that our work could destroy the church. It would be virtually impossible to stop any organization that has the universities, money, and power found in Mormonism. While we sincerely believe that God can overthrow any stronghold, we realize that we of ourselves cannot bring about the “collapse” of the Mormon Church. All we can do is proclaim what we know to be true and pray that God will bless our efforts and reveal the truth to the Mormon people.

It seems to us that some of the FARMS writers are trying to ride two horses at the same time. On the one hand, they are claiming that our work is having virtually no effect on members of the church. On the other hand, however, they are writing hundreds of pages with the obvious purpose of blowing us “out of the water.”

As we will show later, a prominent Mormon writer, who served as president of the Mormon History Association, referred to our material as “dynamite” and admitted that “They have made their mark in many of our people.”

Notwithstanding some of the statements by writers for FARMS, there can be no doubt that the foundation wishes to destroy the work of Utah Lighthouse Ministry and that of other ministries working with Mormon people. Furthermore, as we will show below, they are willing to spend a great deal of money to silence critics of the church. In addition to its vast financial resources, FARMS has many professors who freely give their time and support to the Foundation.

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is actually a small organization that has only four people who work full time. Most of our time is spent on such things as waiting on customers, receiving phone calls from throughout the world, printing and collating books, processing mail orders, answering letters and many other mundane

operations. This, of course, leaves us with little time to do original research. Nevertheless, we are confident that our work will stand the test of time. We stand on the promise of Apostle Paul:

What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

Seven Million Dollars!

According to a catalog published by FARMS for the years 1988-89, the organization was incorporated in the state of California in 1979. It is “an independent, non-profit, tax-exempt organization.” FARMS claims that it “does not speak on behalf of any other organization. The opinions expressed in the articles and books it distributes are not necessarily the opinions of anyone except the authors.” The Foundation’s publication, *Insights: An Ancient Window*, May 1991, indicates that for a donation of “\$500 to \$100,000 per year” a person can become a member of the organization’s “Liahona Club.”

FARMS undoubtedly receives a great deal of support from affluent members of the church. For example, on page 6 of the FARMS publication *Insights*, June 1995, we find the following:

Karen and Alan Ashton of Orem, Utah, have established a significant FARMS endowment to support the timely implementation of new projects. Their generous gift will ensure that important new research opportunities are not missed while waiting for funding to become available . . . This new funding and the increased amount of research it will support both necessitate and make possible the creation of new projects and the supervision of ongoing projects . . .

Brother Ashton is president of the BYU 14th Stake and is recently retired as chairman of the board of WordPerfect Corporation. . . .

Brother and Sister Ashton have long been enthusiastic supporters of scholarly research on the Book of Mormon. This new gift combined with gifts from other FARMS donors raises support for such efforts in the LDS community to an exciting new level.

While the foundation claims that it is not in any way controlled by the Mormon Church, it acknowledges that it has offices at the church’s Brigham Young University: “The Foundation’s funds come from private donations, with the exception of the use of five offices in the Amanda Knight Hall kindly provided by Brigham

Young University.” In addition, FARMS has worked closely with the church’s Deseret Book Company: “The Foundation is co-publisher with Deseret Book Company of a series of scholarly studies on the Book of Mormon, including the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley.” FARMS also worked with the church’s Deseret Book Company in producing John L. Sorenson’s book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*.

The publication, *Insights*, August 1995, had an article entitled, “Upgrading the FARMS-BYU Connection.” This article indicated that the bond between FARMS and BYU is growing even stronger:

The unique and productive relationship that Brigham Young University and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies have enjoyed for nearly fifteen years has recently been elevated to a new level of cooperation. . . . the BYU Board of Trustees has now endorsed a protocol between BYU and FARMS that expands the range of opportunities for cooperation on scholarly work on the Book of Mormon and related topics.

The active involvement of almost a hundred BYU scholars in a wide range of FARMS projects demonstrated the need for a university policy regarding these kinds of faculty activities. . . .

This new agreement extends to FARMS an invitation to use a full range of campus facilities. . . . And it indicates that BYU will cooperate with the Foundation in its efforts to obtain better space to house the rapidly expanding FARMS activities, perhaps even allowing FARMS to build a new building on campus: “BYU and Farms will work together in locating—and possibly building suitable space on or near the campus.” . . . the enhanced level of cooperation between BYU and FARMS mean that more faculty members from more departments will likely be involved in scriptural research in the future.

It is interesting to note that “the BYU Board of Trustees” was agreeable to helping out FARMS. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, pages 220-221, “BYU functions under the direction of the Church through a board of trustees that includes the First Presidency, the general presidents of the women’s auxiliary organizations and selected General Authorities.” Obviously, then, the link between FARMS and BYU could never be approved without the consent of the highest leaders of the church.

On November 20, 1995, Farms sent out a letter informing its supporters that they needed a great deal of money to build a research center. The following is taken from that letter:

In the last newsletter we announced the campaign to raise the funds to build the Book of Mormon Research Center. . . . Your help is needed. Many of you have already responded with generous contributions for which we are grateful, but more is needed. Local building costs are escalating rapidly. Presently the architects estimate the project will cost some seven million dollars. . . . We invite those of you who have abundant means to be very generous. . . . Please don't delay.

A very impressive brochure was sent with the letter soliciting donations:

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is pleased to announce the construction of its new Book of Mormon Research Center. . . . FARMS scholars approach their research with a firm conviction of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and of the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . They publicize their findings for the benefit of serious students of the scriptures, as well as those who are investigating the Book of Mormon or who may be questioning its authenticity. . . . The library will be a resource center containing computers, books, and help for students working on papers and projects about the Book of Mormon. . . . The lecture hall . . . will be used for lectures on the Book of Mormon and other scriptural topics . . . The area will also be designed as a studio for filming lectures and presentations for broadcast and video production. . . . FARMS also maintains a site on the Internet, where users worldwide can go for answers. . . . Located on the southern periphery of Brigham Young University, the building will be a house "set on a hill" . . . the Book of Mormon Research Center is intended to be a landmark that draws attention to our rich scriptural heritage and invites all to come unto Christ. (FARMS brochure)

One portion of the brochure that is especially interesting to us acknowledges that the Foundation is actively involved in countering critics of the church:

A significant portion of FARMS's work is devoted to setting the record straight with regard to anti-Mormon literature.

It appears, then, that Mormon Church leaders have finally come to see that some answers need to be given to our work and the work of other critics. Unfortunately, however, instead of coming forth to directly deal with the issues and publishing a rebuttal under the church's own name they seem to have dropped the ball into the hands of FARMS. The church leaders, then, must be

in agreement with what FARMS is attempting to do. The fact that there is a plan to build a seven million dollar building on the campus certainly points to a close alliance with FARMS.

In addition to the support given by BYU, there are many faithful members of the church who would be willing to give money to FARMS if they thought it would silence the critics of Mormonism.

The Mormon Church is apparently pleased with the work done by FARMS. The church seems to be in a no-lose situation. If, on the one hand, the Foundation should make serious mistakes, the church would not be held responsible. On the other hand, if Mormon scholars present material that convinces people of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, the church will benefit from the work.

In any case, some of the scholars involved with FARMS believe that no other organization can compete with their knowledge of the Book of Mormon. Consequently, they are very offended if anyone ignores or is ignorant of the research emanating from FARMS. For example, Professor Daniel C. Peterson berates Mormon critics John Ankerberg and John Weldon for failure to have the proper respect for FARMS in their book, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*:

In his own person, Professor Nibley is essentially invisible in this book; his arguments are never faced. . . . John Welch, the founding president of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, shows up on only two occasions. . . . Noel Reynolds's fine anthology of essays on *Book of Mormon Authorship* [published by the Religious Studies Center at BYU] is left uncited, almost certainly because it was unread. And the ever more productive Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) is never confronted. Other than a couple of passing references to "the Foundation for Ancient Research on [*sic*] Mormon Studies," Ankerberg and Weldon don't even seem to be aware that F.A.R.M.S. exists (p. 273; cf. 127). (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 10-11)

In the same volume of the FARMS publication, page 234, Gary F. Novak chastises D. Michael Quinn, a prominent historian and former professor at BYU, for failure to recognize work done by the Foundation:

Quinn informs us that as a boy "he subjected any religious proposition to rigid analysis". . . . By the time he was eighteen he "had made a line-by-line comparison of the 1830 Book of Mormon with later editions" (p. 73). While this task is no doubt

noble, the footnote claims that “the most detailed presentation of all changes in the Book of Mormon’s published 1830 text is the non-scholarly study by Jerald and Sandra Tanner”. . . Quinn seems unaware of the *Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon* published by FARMS.

Dr. Quinn later acknowledged the value of the FARMS study, and said that it would replace our work on the subject. In our book, *3913 Changes in the Book of Mormon*, we did not deal extensively with changes in the manuscripts, but dealt mostly with changes in the printed text of the book.

FARMS and Nibley

The founders of FARMS were apparently enamored with the writings of the noted Mormon scholar Dr. Hugh Nibley. The organization almost seems to have been built around his work. He is eulogized as the great defender of the faith. In fact, as we have shown in the first volume of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, Richard Dilworth Rust commented that Nibley “might be called the patron saint of F.A.R.M.S. . . .” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 2, 1990, page 1).

The FARMS catalog for 1988-89, for example, listed about one hundred and sixty items written by Nibley. We examined the 1992 FARMS catalog and found that it lists ninety-two books, articles, audio tapes, videos and a computer disk. The total price for all of the Nibley material listed in the 1992 catalog amounts to \$1,770.75.

While it is certainly true that Hugh Nibley has turned out a great deal of material, we feel that it is unfortunate that FARMS would elevate him as an example to aspiring young scholars. We see two very serious problems with setting him forth as a role model.

One, although many members of the Mormon Church are very impressed with Dr. Nibley’s writings, a careful examination of his work reveals that he is very inaccurate. We discovered this fact over thirty years ago when we closely examined some of his work. Some historians were aware of the problems in his writings for many years but were afraid to challenge him because of the reputation he had acquired. In 1979, however, Edward H. Ashment, who worked in the Translation Department of the Mormon Church, made a serious attack on the work Hugh Nibley did in his attempt to establish the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham. Ashment, who studied Egyptology at the University of Chicago, pointed out that Nibley’s work was riddled with holes. His article appeared in *Sunstone*, December 1979, pages 33-48. Interestingly, on pages

49-51, Dr. Nibley acknowledged that he had erred. In response to Ashment he noted that “Everything in Egyptian is being reappraised” and he went on to make this astounding statement:

I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago. For heaven’s sake, I hope we are moving forward here. After all, the implication that one mistake and it is all over with—how flattering to think in forty years I have not made one slip and I am still in business! I would say about four fifths of everything I put down has changed, of course. . . .

Since hearing Brother Ashment I have to make some changes in what I have said already. Do I have to hang my head and go hide or something like that because I have been discredited? These things are being found out all the time. . . . Thank you, Brother Ashment! That is all I will say for now.

We feel that FARMS is doing a real disservice in reprinting so many of Nibley’s writings about the Joseph Smith Papyri and the Book of Abraham. About three years after Nibley admitted his mistakes, he was again taken to task by a Mormon scholar because of the work which he did in his book, *Abraham in Egypt*, published in 1981. Eric Jay Olson of the LDS Translation Division, who also studied the Egyptian language at the University of Chicago, criticized Dr. Nibley’s methods:

I approach a description of this latest book by Hugh Nibley with much hesitation. . . .

In *Abraham in Egypt*, Nibley has applied to an extreme the eclectic approach to history. The basis of that approach is the conviction that if you read everything that has ever been written, soon you will see how everything that has ever happened fits into a universal framework with a common origin and goal. In pursuit of this approach, Nibley collects information from all periods of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Israelite, Canaanite, Greek, and Christian history. . . .

As a result of Nibley’s method, a reader is not persuaded that Nibley’s reconstruction is convincing. He is merely worn down until he ceases to raise objections and ask questions. The avalanche of citations and footnotes does not elucidate; it overwhelms. References should help to clarify and give documentation, but these bewilder and confuse. If by chance one tries to look up a reference for further information or to check on accuracy, he often finds an error in the citation which makes the effort frustrating or he finds that the interpretation is based on conjecture. For example, a long quotation on page 5 . . . It quotes from the Book of Jubilees

saying, of Joseph: “He gave all his books and the books of his fathers to Levi his son that he might preserve them and renew them for his children until this day.” A check of the original reveals that Joseph did not have a hitherto unknown son named Levi but that the words were really those of Jacob, not Joseph. Such an obvious mistake so early in the book makes one wary of trusting any of the quotations, unless each and every one of them is checked. And since there are so many citations from so many different literary traditions and scholarly specialties, one’s next reaction is to find another book to read. . . . The historian must beware of the temptation of selecting only those pieces which fit a preconceived picture.

Unfortunately Nibley cannot allow himself the freedom to exercise this care. Even though he calls his book *Abraham in Egypt*, he knows and so does the reader that he is really writing about the Book of Abraham. . . . When he deals with a specific and restricted historical problem within his area of expertise, he can be coherent and direct. However none of these qualities is present in this latest work. It is unfocused, plodding, disorganized, confusing, and lacking a clear thesis or line of argument. It is unfortunate that such a prodigious collection of information could have been presented in a way that does more harm to his cause than good. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1982, pages 123-125)

In 1986, the church’s Deseret Book and FARMS published *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 1, *Old Testament and Related Studies*. Mormon scholar Kent P. Jackson, associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, was very disappointed with Dr. Nibley’s methodology and accused him of misrepresentation and using quotations out of context:

Hugh Nibley is the best-known and most highly revered of Latter-day Saint scholars. . . . Since his 1946 publication of *No Ma’am, That’s Not History*, he has been seen by many as the Church’s chief apologist. . . . Those of us who share his conviction that the restored gospel is true would do well to emulate his lifelong dedication to defending and sustaining it. My own serious misgivings about his methodology do not detract from my admiration for his life of scholarship consecrated to the highest cause. . . . editor John W. Welch suggests in his Foreword that most of Nibley’s lifetime total of nearly two hundred titles are classics (ix). If that is in fact the case, then this volume has been severely shortchanged; nothing in it can be called a classic. It is, in fact, a disappointing collection. . . .

1. In most of the articles Nibley shows a tendency to gather sources from a variety of cultures all over the ancient world, lump them all together, and then pick and choose the bits and pieces he wants. By selectively including what suits his presuppositions and ignoring what does not, he is able to manufacture an ancient system of religion that is remarkably similar in many ways to our own . . . The various religious communities from whose documents Nibley draws his material had mutually exclusive beliefs in many areas. By removing their ideas from their own context (thus rendering them invalid) and joining them with ideas from other communities—similarly removed from their own context—Nibley creates an artificial synthesis that never in reality existed. . . . In several places Nibley sees things in the sources that simply don’t seem to be there . . . This is what inevitably happens when scholars let their predetermined conclusions set the agenda for the evidence. . . .

2. In this book Nibley often uses his secondary sources the same way he uses his primary sources—taking phrases out of context with which those whom he quotes would likely not agree. I asked myself frequently what some authors would think if they knew that someone were using their words the way Nibley does . . .

3. Several of the articles lack sufficient documentation . . . The first article, for example, is riddled with undocumented quotations. Some of Nibley’s most puzzling assertions remain undocumented—or unconvincingly documented—even in those articles that are footnoted heavily. . . . The two most extensively referenced articles . . . display the opposite problem. The seemingly endless footnotes in those articles suffer from dreary overkill, and yet too often I was disappointed by searching in vain in them for proof for the claims made in the text. . . .

5. My final area of concern is more properly directed at the editors than at Hugh Nibley. What is the point of publishing some of this material? . . . Several of the chapters in this book . . . are so weak that the editors would have been doing Nibley a much greater honor if they had left them out. What is the point of resurrecting such material, which is now completely out-of-date and was not quality work when first published three decades ago? In doing so they have not done Nibley a service, nor have they served his readers. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Fall 1988, pages 114-118)

In 1993, David Rolph Seely, assistant professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, reviewed Hugh Nibley’s *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Semester 3* for FARMS. Professor Seely

frankly discussed the fact that a person should not “swallow” everything Dr. Nibley sets forth:

Reading Nibley is a roller-coaster ride, and the reader must hold on tightly and maintain his or her wits. Nibley is a master of rhetoric and often uses hyperbole to make his point. Likewise, occasionally he quotes passages from contexts which do not support his point. Sometimes his notes and references are vague or inaccurate, and frequently he relies on scholarship that is dated. The experienced student has learned to use Nibley to open doors, not to close them, not to swallow everything he says whole, and to carefully check the references for him- or herself.

Many of his statements in this volume could and should be disputed. . . . He claims Ishmael, who followed Lehi into the wilderness, was not a Jew “because a Jew isn’t going to be called Ishmael” But there are five Ishmaels (besides the son of Isaac, Genesis 16) mentioned in the Old Testament . . . at least two of them are specifically identified as Judahites (Jeremiah 41:11, 2 Chronicles 19:11). . . . In his discussion of the Day of Atonement, Nibley equates the *kippur* with the “veil of the tent” (p. 214). But in the Bible the word for the “veil of the tent” is *paroket* (Exodus 26:31); the noun from the root *k-p-r* is *kapporeth* and refers to the mercy seat at the top of the ark of the covenant He suggests the *Sepher Yetzira* is “one of the two oldest writings in existence” as it is “usually attributed to Abraham” (p. 229). In fact the scholarly consensus is that this Kabbalistic text was written in the third to sixth century A.D. and that its attribution to Abraham is even later. Perhaps there are concepts in this text understood by Abraham, but there is no evidence he wrote it. . . . Nibley has never claimed for himself the kind of infallibility that some have attributed to him. For example, in regards to his work on the Abraham facsimiles, he once said, “I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago.” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 193-195)

The second problem we have with FARMS elevating Hugh Nibley’s apologetic writings is Nibley’s sarcastic method of dealing with his opponents. Unfortunately, it is true that a number of the early anti-Mormon writers were very belittling in their discussion of Mormons and that some critics still use this approach. Dr. Nibley, however, has a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley and should have been above this type of methodology. In his review, published in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Professor Kent P. Jackson noted this serious defect in Nibley’s writings:

4. Nibley’s wit has made him one of the most sought-after speakers. But I am dismayed to find in this collection several passages in which his satire tends toward sarcasm and name-calling, which have no place in serious scholarship. A frequent vehicle for this is the straw-man approach. Nibley frequently misrepresents his opponents’ views (through overstatement, oversimplification, or removal from context) to the point that they are ludicrous, after which he has ample cause to criticize them. This may make amusing satire, but it is not scholarship. Nibley has made a fine career of responding to those who have either willfully or unknowingly misrepresented Joseph Smith and the gospel. Thus I am troubled that this book would contain the same kind of distortion. If it is unfair when directed against us, is it somehow an acceptable method when directed at our critics? (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Fall 1988, page 117)

In 1961, Hugh Nibley wrote an article which contained some serious mistakes. When the organist LaMar Petersen wrote a letter telling Dr. Nibley about his errors, Nibley fired back a response in which he called Mr. Petersen a fool:

That name [LaMar] rings bells—my earliest childhood memory listening to La Mare play his Andantino; he died in wretched poverty—*was* he a great organist? Anyway it’s lucky you wrote me when you did. It is *still* not too late; the Lord has extended the day of our probation: you would be insane to waste this priceless reprieve, & you could still be one of the few really happy men on the earth, but you’ll have to stop being a damned fool. I could find as many faults as you do without 1/2 trying, but a committee of characters like us couldn’t produce the B. of Mormon in 140 years. Why do you worry so much about what *other* people think? They don’t know anything about it. Ask the Lord for a change! (Letter from Hugh Nibley, dated July 17, 1961)

Dr. Hugh Nibley has clearly demonstrated his ability to skirt around any problem with regard to Mormonism or the Book of Mormon. While he quotes numerous sources and includes a vast number of footnotes, often what he says does not really deal with the important questions that have been raised. For example, in his work on Joseph Smith’s “Book of Abraham” Hugh Nibley carefully side-stepped the real issues.

In January, 1968, Nibley began a series of articles for the church’s publication, *Improvement Era*. It was promised that he would unfold “the meaning of the

hieroglyphics” of the Joseph Smith Papyri that were rediscovered in 1967. This series of articles ran for over two years, and was finally brought to a conclusion with the issue published May, 1970. Unfortunately, no translation of the papyri ever appeared in the church’s *Improvement Era*. It was obvious that Nibley’s main objective in this series was to divert people’s attention away from the fact that the original papyri were pagan Egyptian funerary texts and had absolutely nothing to do with Abraham nor his religion. Dr. Nibley was clearly stalling for more time. Although he used almost 2,000 footnotes in these articles, he completely side-stepped the main problem of whether Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham was a correct translation of the Egyptian papyri.

It is indeed unfortunate that a number of writers for FARMS seem to have patterned their writings after the condescending type of work found in Hugh Nibley’s books and pamphlets. A good example is found in the Foundation’s publication, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993. This is a review of our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, written by Tom Nibley, Hugh Nibley’s son.

Like his father, who castigated Mormon critics, Tom Nibley has a number of terms which he uses to refer to us in a mocking manner. Although we have already listed these in volume one, we felt that it would be good to remind our readers of the type of demeaning comments which appeared in a FARMS publication:

- “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

L. Ara Norwood, who also wrote a review of our book on the “black hole,” which we will deal with later, also uses condescending terms in an article which appears in volume 5 of *Review of Books*. On page 320

he calls Mormon critic James R. White, who wrote a book entitled, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, “a desperado who needs to win every argument,” and on page 321 he is referred to as “merely an anti-Mormon clone, maintaining the same shape of bigotry and shallowness that inevitably come from the anti-Mormon cookie-cutter that produces such phenomena.”

On page 326, Norwood spoke of “the sophomoric analysis” White did of the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham and said that “it took the entire book to whole new levels of ineptitude.”

Professor Daniel C. Peterson entitles his review of the book by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, “Chattanooga Cheapshot, or The Gall of Bitterness.” In this response he notes that “Ankerberg and Weldon’s own logical skills appear to be rather rudimentary” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 13-14, footnote). In a footnote on page 62, he speaks of “Ankerberg and Weldon’s weak grasp of logic.” On page 20 he refers to “the insufferable fantasist and demagogue Ed Decker.” On the same page Peterson refers to Ankerberg and Weldon’s use of sources: “But among all the apostates and scandal-mongers and professional enemies of the Latter-day Saints who are their sources, one name looms far above the rest. That name is ‘Tanner.’”

On page 46 he speaks of Ankerberg and Weldon’s “chief gurus, the ever-present Jerald and Sandra Tanner.” On page 84, Professor Peterson refers to the two Christian authors as “‘Rabbis’ Ankerberg and Weldon.”

In 1996, Daniel Peterson wrote the following in his Editor’s Introduction to *FARMS Review of Books*, vol. 8, no. 1, page xliii: “Ed Decker and Bob McKay and Marian Bodine and Ron Rhodes and Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson scarcely have the firepower (or the intellectual candlepower), in and of themselves to do much damage to the claims of the restored Church.”

On page x of the same book, Peterson commented concerning the work of Mormon critics: “Professor William Hamblin and I, who have been reading and responding to this sort of stuff for years, occasionally laugh about a film that might be made of our encounters. We like to call it *Bill and Dan’s Excellent Adventure in Anti-Mormon Zombie Hell*.”

Professor Louis Midgley, of Brigham Young University, reviewed a doctoral dissertation by Dean Maurice Helland. In this response Midgley refers to us as “the Tanners (those shadows of reality who operate the anti-Mormon Utah Lighthouse Ministry)” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 152).

In a footnote on page 139, Professor Midgley refers to Mormon critics as “antimormonoids”: “This is typical of the exaggerations of the extremist faction

of antimormonoids represented by Ed Decker, James R. Spencer, William J. (Bill) Schnoebelen, and Loftes Tryk. The more moderate faction of antimormonoids is best illustrated by the late Reverend Wesley P. Walters, who generally tended to be more circumspect on such matters.” On the following page, Midgley admits that the term “antimormonoids” is “a somewhat contemptuous label formulated by BYU Professor Daniel C. Peterson.” Peterson has served for a long time as editor of the FARMS publication, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*. The name of the publication was recently changed to *FARMS Review of Books*. On a radio station in Salt Lake City a spokesman for FARMS explained that the foundation had removed the words “on the Book of Mormon” specifically so that Mormon scholars could feel free to attack us and other critics on any subject we might choose to write about, not just writings concerning the Book of Mormon.

However this may be, Professor Midgley said that he is amused by the actions of “antimormonoids” and is “hooked” on the practice of observing their odd behavior:

With a little patience, one can find considerable diversion in anti-Mormon tracts. The dreadful formulaic and pedestrian character of anti-Mormon literature, the prosaic business of incompetents endlessly quoting each other and hence erecting an ever more rickety house of cards, the constant repetition of borrowed bromides . . . is all entertaining, at least to me. Looked at in one way, such a grotesque literature . . . is indeed amusing. And hence having an occasional glance at these things has become for me the adult equivalent of Saturday morning cartoons where Bullwinkle, or whoever it was, did his thing. . . .

But my interest in this literature goes deeper than a mild curiosity for the odd leaflet, tract, or book that happens to come alone. One might even say I am hooked on the stuff. I have even corresponded with some of those “antimormonoids.” My wife warns me about the utter futility of such behavior. And she is not mollified by my descriptions of the amusing side of anti-Mormon literature. . . . I occasionally resolve to leave the stuff alone. But then a newsletter will arrive in the mail or a rumor will surface . . . And then, like one who cannot pass the swinging doors of a bar, I am back into it again. (pages 139-140)

In a footnote on pages 140-141, Professor Midgley reveals, “There is, in addition an informal network of Latter-day Saint aficionados who are fascinated and amused by anti-Mormon literature. . . . I consult my

phone messages at Brigham Young University and there it is—a message with some juicy news about still another amusing or not so amusing anti-Mormon outrage or some lurid detail about the factional warfare going on . . . and I am once again off the wagon.”

Garbled and Slander Tantrum

Following Dr. Hugh Nibley’s example, some of the writers for FARMS seem to take a great deal of delight in insulting and laughing at critics of the church. Recently, John Tvedtnes, one of the most well-known authors who writes for FARMS, sent us a letter. The FARMS envelope which it came in is dated April 1, 1996—i.e., April Fools Day. A note on the first page reads as follows:

Someone was circulating the first of these a few months ago and I thought you might get a laugh out of it like I did. I tried, unsuccessfully, to find out who authored it. Someone told me it was an anonymous professor of English, but the language tells me this can’t be so. The second one obviously has a different author. Have fun reading them.

When we examined the other material in the envelope, we found that it contained a five-page parody regarding our newsletter, *The Salt Lake City Messenger*. Current issues of our newsletter contain the following at the top of the first page:

SALT LAKE CITY MESSENGER
Utah Lighthouse Ministry
PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
Edited by Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Unfortunately, the clever imitation of our newsletter contains some rather insulting language:

SALT LAKE CITY MESS
UTAH LIGHTHEAD MISANTRHOPES
PO’d Box 1830, Salt Lake City, Utah JS 666
Edited by Garbled and Slander Tantrum

The title of the article that appears under this is: “BOOK OF MORMON UTTERLY FALSE OUR OLD EVIDENCE IS DISGUISED AS NEW.” This title, of course, would lead the reader to believe that we are stuck in the past and have no new information about Mormonism.

Since it is our practice to provide our readers with information and prices regarding books that are available at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, we send out a booklist with our newsletter. FARMS and other Mormon bookstores do the same. In any case, the witty author seizes upon this to poke fun of us:

Early in 1970 we came out with the astounding discovery that there is an Italian wine called *Moroni* and that *Alma* is a common German woman's name. Now comes the most shattering evidence of all, in a new book from Chicago's evangelistic Moody Blues Press: Wesson Water's *Judgment at Zarahemla* (1995, 400 pages, with over 100 pages of valuable advertisements for our advertisements [*sic*] for Wesson Water's books; retail \$1.75, but through a special Utah Lighthouse order, only \$899.95). . . .

We were pleased to see that Dr. Waters also confirmed our conclusions in 1986 that there were no designer colors in the Book of Mormon! . . . Doubtless the most intriguing part of the book, a part whose complexity almost makes us want to finish high school, is the section on literary influences on the Book of Mormon. . . . He has found the following astonishing parallels: Titles 1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi: compare 1 Henry IV, 2 Henry VI, Richard III, Henry V. [*Note: we are unsure what the funny letters "I" and "V" represented could not reach Dr. Waters by phone. We think they mean, respectively, "Ignorant" and "Vile," code words used by the Danites at a time when they didn't exist.*]

When the writer mentions the "Chicago's . . . Moody Blues Press," he is apparently referring to Moody Press—the company that printed our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*. The name "Wesson Water's" is undoubtedly that of the noted scholar, Wesley P. Walters, a close friend of ours who is now deceased.

The next page contains some purported adds for books:

SOME SPECIAL OFFERS

(\$3,000 in small bills, please)

*Ridiculous Millennial Prophecies By
The Idiot Sodbuster Joe Smith
By Garbled and Slander Tantrum*

We recently advertised the new paper-back edition of Fawn M. Brodie's book regarding Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*. The crafty author of the parody has changed this to, "NO MAN HAS HYSTERECTOMY,"

and claims that access to the book is available at "our Christian midwife's office lobby! \$35 a peek!"

On the same page, the historian D. Michael Quinn, who printed many of the church's secrets and was recently excommunicated, seems to have been given the name "D. Mygosh Quid."

On the last page of the material we have there is another spoof regarding books we have advertised for sale:

MORMONISM—BUNK OR WHAT?
by Garbled and Slander Tantrum, \$38.92

THE CHANGING SIZE OF MORMONISM
by Garbled and Slander Tantrum, \$52.86

ANSWERING MORMON WRITERS
by Garbled and Slander Tantrum, \$24.13

*THE BROWN HOLE IN THE
PEARL OF GREAT PRICE*
by Garbled and Slander Tantrum, \$1.52

The reader will notice that the names of the books listed resemble those we actually sell—i.e., *Mormonism—Bunk or What?* is undoubtedly *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*; *The Changing Size of Mormonism* must be *The Changing World of Mormonism*; *Answering Mormon Writers* is presumably *Answering Mormon Scholars*, and *The Brown Hole in the Pearl of Great Price* must have come from *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*.

There are other titles listed on the last page. For example, Brent Metcalfe, the editor of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* seems to have been targeted in one of these titles: *BOOK OF MORMON: THE EVIDENCE* edited by Burnt Meatloaf, \$18.54.

We must admit that we found this parody regarding our work to be rather amusing and actually had a good laugh over some of the material contained in it. Nevertheless, portions of it are rather venomous and somewhat crude. While we cannot say for certain who authored this piece, it does resemble the strange style of Hugh Nibley's son, Tom Nibley. The reader will remember that Nibley wrote an article for FARMS which was extremely critical of our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*. As noted above, Nibley referred to us in a mocking manner using many insulting terms.

In his article for FARMS Nibley was extremely upset because we claimed that Joseph Smith plagiarized a great deal of material from the King James Version of

the Bible in creating the Book of Mormon. He tried in every way he could to counter the charge of plagiarism and resorted to a ludicrous example to get his point across:

An analogy demonstrates: take the sentence, “he really flew a six-week-long purplish red banana.” Right off we see, using the Tanners’ method, that “he really flew” was plagiarized from *Sports Illustrated* in an article on track and field. Then the phrase “a six-week-long” is quite obviously from a travel brochure, and “purplish red banana” comes out of a book on tropical fruit. So we have “proved” that I am nothing less than a sleazy no-good plagiarist. But all that has nothing to do with the idea contained in the sentence “He really flew a six-week-long purplish red banana,” which is pure nonsense concocted somewhere in the vast and airy open spaces that occupy my cranial bubble. . . . I have no desire to spend any more time on the Tanners. I find them naive and credulous when it comes to grabbing any straw . . . they thereby show that 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, pages 285-286, 288-89)

The reader will notice that in the quotation cited above, Tom Nibley made a statement about plagiarism from a current magazine in trying to refute our work with regard to the Book of Mormon: “Right off we see, using the Tanners’ method, that ‘he really flew’ was plagiarized from *Sports Illustrated* . . .”

Interestingly, in the attempt by the nameless author of the parody to discredit our observations regarding plagiarism in the Book of Mormon we find an absurd example regarding plagiarism from literature and magazines:

In our last issue, we clearly showed—for the umpteenth time—that the renowned charlatan, Joseph Smith, “plagiarized his Book of Mormon from various pieces of literature and magazines found in our homeopath’s waiting room—and notably from Shakespeare. . . .” Since then we have discovered shocking news that will finally bring the Mormon Church to its knees.

One would certainly be tempted to believe that these two examples are the product of one mind. For example, Nibley’s FARMS article spoke of material “plagiarized from *Sports Illustrated*,” and in the parody we read of material “plagiarized . . . from . . . literature and magazines.”

Judging from statements made in the parody, the nameless writer seems to have a great deal of interest in acting, movies, television and literature. One might even be led to believe that the author is in the acting profession. For example, on the very first page the writer says that “in ‘Gone With the Wind’ Vivien Leigh’s character was named Katie *Scarlett* O’Hara.”

A few lines below this the reader is informed about “the obscure allusions to Shakespeare, whose play we covered as high school sophomores: It’s called *Julius Caesar* . . . Dr. Waters . . . seems to think there are many other plays by Shakespeare besides the one we know.”

Below this the reader is told to compare Alma 37:44 with, “*Julius Caesar* 3.1.77 ‘*Et to, Brute?*’” A little further down we find mention of Shakespeare’s *Henry V* 1.2.233 . . .”

On the next page the following appears: “What ‘sightless, witless, blind . . . men’ these are, not to have caught such an obvious anachronism! (We were quoting, by the way, a little bit from Rex Oedipus’s great drama ‘Sophocles and the Antagonistic Colonials.’—learned during our junior year, a[n]d that’s where we stopped!)”

On the same page the nameless writer has this statement: “With every contribution to our cause of redeeming Mormons, because we love the filthy, blaspheming ‘warthogs from hell’ (junior year, Fannery O’Connor), we send you Peter J. Sorenson’s *How to Do Parodies of Nonexistent Anti-Mormons*.”

On the third page we read about material “from Shakespeare,” and below this we are told that “Joseph Smith borrowed . . . the belief in eternal marriage, from both Shakespeare and Tennyson.” A little further down we find a quotation from “William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act 1, Scene 1, lines 83-86.” Below this we read: “Another passage from Shakespeare also influenced Joseph Smith: ‘For IN THE TEMPLE, by and by, with us These couples shall ETERNALLY be knit:’ (William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act IV, Scene 1, lines 177-178).”

In the second column of the same page the following appears: “Another writer from whom Joseph Smith plagiarized material for his doctrine on the eternity of marriage was Alfred, Lord Tennyson. In his *Idylls of the King* . . .” The nameless writer then gives a short introduction and quotes seven lines from “Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*, New York City: Heritage Press, 1939, p. 270.” The writer then cites another quotation from Tennyson.

Tennyson is mentioned again on the next page. On the last page we find a television show mentioned:

In one episode of the late 1970s TV series “Battlestar Galactica,” a member of the “quorum of the twelve,” in a wedding ceremony, declares that his son and bride are “sealed together not only for time, but for all eternity.”

We get the impression that the author of this parody is more concerned with the stage and screen than with scholarly writing. Interestingly, on the very first page of Tom Nibley’s article for FARMS he wrote:

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) . . . 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*, vol. 5, page 273)

In his FARMS article opposing our work Tom Nibley could not resist bringing acting into the picture. On page 283 of the book he wrote:

“Robert Pierce gave the worst performance of ‘Lear’ last night at the Globe that his critic has ever had the misfortune to review,” screams the paper. But last night Robert Pierce was performing ‘Hamlet’ to a highly appreciative audience at the Forum, and the critic was basing his review on the hearsay of Mr. Pierce’s worst enemy. Is Mr. Pierce offended? Not at all if he recognizes that this is the same method of criticism that is so laudable when used by our revered gurus. Therefore most of what the Tanners use as evidence is simply a huge pile of non sequiturs . . . our perspicacious pedagogues point out that, “Our preliminary research convinces us that an entire book could be written on what is missing in the Book of Mormon” (p. 46). What! only one?! Why I could go to the market, get all the tabloids and start clipping and before long I’d have books on Elvis, UFOs, bizarre sex practices, the royal family, dieting and the private lives of Hollywood stars . . . just for starters; and not a word of it in the Book of Mormon . . . the only time missing information is valid in an argument is when that information was actually promised. (“I went to see ‘Hamlet’ last night. It was dismal: no fireworks, no tractor pulls. Not even dancing dolphins or killer whales. And they promised ‘An evening of sophisticated entertainment’!” “Oh, well, yes—there was that. But that’s not what I call entertainment.”)

While we have indicated above that we lean toward the view that Tom Nibley penned the parody, we cannot

absolutely prove this to be the case. In all fairness to Nibley we have to consider the possibility that someone else read his FARMS article and created the insulting document. However this may be, we are convinced that the condescending type of writing found in Tom Nibley’s article is unscholarly and should be repudiated by FARMS.

The reader will remember that John Tvedtnes, the FARMS writer who sent us the material, felt that more than one author was involved in creating the parody. It is true that the fourth page of the document contains a rather lengthy section that does not mention anything about acting or plays. In fact, it deals with Islam and the Koran, and scoffingly points out that there could be a relationship between Joseph Smith’s doctrine of polygamy and that of the prophet Mohammed.

This section of the parody seems to contain the most coherent writing found in all the pages. This portion may have been written because of an article printed in the April 1989 issue of our newsletter, *Salt Lake City Messenger*. In that issue we showed that both Joseph Smith and Mohammed received a special revelation allowing them to practice polygamy, and also that there are a number of striking similarities between the two revelations. Mohammed, of course, lived many centuries before Joseph Smith.

In any case, if Tvedtnes is correct in his belief that someone else besides the nameless writer was involved in the parody, it could be possible that that individual penned the portion of the document dealing with Islam. Some of the professors at Brigham Young University have an interest in the Koran, and there are at least two FARMS writers who are experts in that particular subject. One of these individuals, in fact, seems to have a penchant for jokes about “antimormonoids.”

In any case, the parody is certainly a very mean-spirited attempt to discredit us. Although we have been threatened with lawsuits by Mormon Apostles and have actually been dragged into court by a Mormon scholar, we have never tried to sue any of the Mormon scholars who have tried to destroy our reputation. In spite of the obvious facts, the nameless writer tries to turn the matter around and make it appear that we are the ones who threaten lawsuits against those who oppose our work:

This English professor tries to make it appear his parodies have no particular anti-Mormons in mind, but [t]he game was up when we found an acrostic of our names hidden in a long quotation from the entry on “persecution” in McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine*. If Sorenson does not say openly who he is mocking, we will sue. If he does in fact

state anything at all openly, we will also sue. If it turns out that the Book of Mormon really is true, we will sue God for misrepresenting himself in the Bible. If God cannot be subpoenaed, we will sue his plural wives. If we can't find a lawyer, we'll hire Harold Bloom. If Bloom turns out to be Jewish (we have heard rumors), we will cease sending him our newsletter. (page 3)

The last comment is obviously an attempt to make it appear that we dislike Jewish people. We find this part of the parody to be extremely offensive and it certainly does not represent our position.

Straining at a Gnat

Some of the FARMS authors can get very picky about minor mistakes found in books that are critical of Mormonism. For example, Professor Midgley seemed to feel that it was necessary to point out a spelling error in Charles Larson's book:

And unless one recognized that the "Forward" [*sic*—it most certainly should read "Foreword"] to Larson's book was written by the Reverend Walters, a lifelong enemy of the Church, one could read for many pages without discovering that this book is religious propaganda . . . (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 118-119, footnote 3)

If a person turns to page 318 of the same book, he or she will find that L. Ara Norwood also could not refrain from mentioning this terrible error. Speaking of James White's book, Norwood comments: "I was happy to see that the Reverend Walters attached his name to a 'foreword' and not a 'forward,' as he did in Charles Larson's work . . ."

It is interesting to note, however, that even FARMS scholars can make mistakes. A humorous example comes from an article written by John C. Welch, who was the founding president of FARMS. In a paper sold by the Foundation, Welch made an attack on "Brigham D. Madsen, professor emeritus of history at the University of Utah, and his collaborators" for allowing "careless errors" to creep into the book *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. Ironically, in a sentence attacking these people we find the following: "The editors of these papers have been [*sic*] some careless errors and have been selective" (*Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* 1985, page 2).

While we do not feel that this is a serious mistake, this example does point out that we all can make mistakes. Unfortunately, Professor Daniel Peterson goes to great lengths to point out spelling errors in the endnotes of

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism, by Ankerberg and Weldon. In a long footnote on pages 21-22 of his article (*Review of Books*, vol. 5) he speaks of "the striking sloppiness of their endnotes." He also refers to "our two experts' poor spelling." Peterson gives about 20 examples of errors in the endnotes. Although a few of the errors may be worthy of notice, most of them are minor—e. g., Gordon B. Hinckley is referred to as "Gordon B. Hinkley" on two occasions.

To give a little perspective to the matter, it should be pointed out that although 20 errors would be significant in a small list of notes, there are over 1,400 endnotes in this book! While it is possible that there are other errors Peterson did not find, what he has set forth only amounts to one mistake in every 70 endnotes. It should also be pointed out that the notes are set in very small print and it would be very easy to overlook some mistakes in proofreading the text. Moreover, a spelling check with a computer would not be of much help because of the great diversity of names and information in endnotes.

Interestingly, we checked Professor Peterson's work on the notes and found that he himself made an error when criticizing Ankerberg and Weldon's work. In his footnote on pages 20-21, Peterson charged: "Hugh Nibley's 'No Ma'am, That's Not History'—cited, not unexpectedly, from the Tanners rather than personally consulted—becomes 'No Man, That's Not History' (p. 466 n. 241)." When we looked at footnote "241" on page 466, we discovered it had nothing to do with Fawn Brodie. It, in fact, reads as follows: "241. From an analogy by Bob Witte, 'And It Came to Pass' (tract), Safety Harbor, FL: from Ex-Mormons for Jesus, Box 946, 33572, nd."

The endnote Peterson seems to be referring to is actually note 219. Now, while we believe Daniel Peterson tries to be very careful in his footnotes, it is certainly ironic that he made a blunder in this hypercritical section of his rebuttal.

Although we feel that Professor Peterson would undoubtedly make less errors than we do, it would be interesting to see just how many mistakes would be found if over 1,400 of his footnotes were carefully checked out. Since this would be just an exercise in futility, we would never take the time to make such a study. We wonder, however, why some of the writers for FARMS spend so much of their time focusing on such minor matters in an attempt to discredit their adversaries.

Anti-Mormon Mormons?

While FARMS scholars ridicule our research on Mormonism and claim it has no affect upon the church, Professor Daniel Peterson does admit that there is a significant problem within the church itself:

We have seen that George D. Smith and Signature Books reject the title “anti-Mormons.” Many conservative Protestant critics of the Church . . . also reject the title, declaring with varying degrees of plausibility that, while they despise Mormonism, they have nothing but love for the Mormon people. Are “anti-Mormons” mere mythical beasts, the stuff of persecution-fixated Latter-day Saint imaginations? If not, how would we recognize an “anti-Mormon” if we saw one? . . .

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

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

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

As we reported in the first volume of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, in 1993, Signature Books printed the book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, Explorations in Critical Methodology*—a book which caused consternation among Mormon Church leaders and other defenders of the church. We quoted Vern Anderson’s observations regarding that book (see volume 1, page 5). In another article written for the Associated Press, Anderson commented as follows:

To most Mormons, the volume of scripture that defines the faith is “a marvelous work and a wonder” of ancient origin, revealed to church founder Joseph Smith by an angel.

But to Brent Lee Metcalfe and a handful of other Mormon researchers, the weight of linguistic, textual, archaeological and other evidence place the Book of Mormon squarely at Smith’s 19th-century door. . . . what they question is among the most cherished and uniquely Mormon beliefs . . .

Last year, the Church . . . sold or distributed nearly 5 million copies of the 531-page work that Smith called “the most correct of any book on Earth.”

That was once the belief of all 10 contributors to *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* . . .

Nine of the 10 are church members with varying degrees of participation; three—Edward Ashment, Melodie Moench Charles and Stan Larson—formerly worked in the church’s Translation Services.

“Every one of us started as believing that the Book of Mormon was an ancient historical document translated from gold plates, and this is where we’ve come,” said Metcalfe . . .

Among many conclusions is that Smith’s extensive reliance on the King James Version of the Bible peppered the text with anachronisms, and that existing geographical and archaeological evidence in Mesoamerica does not “achieve even a partial fit” with Book of Mormon civilizations. . . .

He contends he isn’t out to shake the Mormon faith, but church-owned Deseret Book has banned the book from its shelves. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, June 5, 1993)

We are very pleased to see Mormon scholars standing up for their beliefs in spite of the fact that they may be faced with excommunication. The article cited above states that “A year and a half ago, Metcalfe’s Mormon bishop asked him if he wanted to voluntarily remove his name from membership rolls. He declined.” Mr. Metcalfe, who edited the book *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* was eventually excommunicated for questioning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

In addition, David P. Wright, one of the ten authors who wrote articles in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, was also excommunicated. Wright holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies and was on the faculty at Brigham Young University. Dr. Wright is now a professor of Biblical Studies and Hebrew at Brandeis University. Interestingly, before he was fired from Brigham Young University, Wright wrote a review of a book for FARMS (see *Review of Books*, vol. 1, pages 10-17).

As noted in the first volume, after *New Approaches* was published, FARMS produced a 566-page book in an attempt to refute the book (see *Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1). Since that time writers for FARMS have relentlessly continued to attack Metcalfe and others who had a part in writing the book. The assault has continued right up to the 1996 publication of *Review of Books*, vol. 8, no. 1.

2. Charged with Lying

Although Mormon defenders have criticized our work, we cannot see that they have even made a dent in our theory about Joseph Smith and the origin of the Book of Mormon. In their zeal to destroy our work some of them have charged us with dishonesty. For example, Martin Tanner, a lawyer who strongly supports and writes for FARMS, publicly charged us with lying.

Martin Tanner is an anti-anti-Mormon—i.e., a strong opponent of those who criticize the church. He was even chosen to write one of the FARMS articles attacking Brent Metcalfe’s book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (see *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994).

For some time Martin Tanner had a talk program on a local radio station (KTKK) in which he discussed religion. (He is now on the Mormon Church’s radio station KSL) Although he dealt with many issues, his main interest seemed to be that of defending the Mormon Church. He has tried to use FARMS material to refute us and claims that we have been badly defeated by the scholars associated with the Foundation.

On August 18, 1991, we were guests on Martin Tanner’s radio program and fielded questions from Martin and his listening audience for three hours (tapes of that program are available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry). Although Martin strongly disagreed with us, he was not vitriolic at that time. Some time after that encounter, however, he became extremely disparaging with regard to our work. When callers would say anything favorable concerning us, Martin would laugh and belittle us in every way possible.

At one time he stated that he was a distant relative to Jerald and went on to say that he wanted to emphasize the word distant. Professor William J. Hamblin, a writer for FARMS, has claimed in his rebuttal to our work that there is “no relation” between Martin and Jerald (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 254). As we have shown, however, Martin acknowledges that he is related to Jerald.

Unfortunately, Martin finally went so far as to publicly charge that we are “liars” because of a conversation he had with a noted Mormon historian. He asserted that we falsely claimed that Reed Durham used *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* as a textbook for a class he taught at the Mormon Institute of Religion (the Institute provides religious instruction for university students). Martin strongly maintains that when he spoke with Dr. Durham, he was told that it was not used as a textbook for the class. Consequently, he boldly

proclaimed over the radio that a person cannot even get through the Preface of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* without encountering a deliberate and major lie which invalidates our research.

We were shocked to hear Martin Tanner make this accusation on two different occasions on his radio program and feel that it demands a response. To begin with, it appears that Martin was careless when he read our book or else has chosen to withhold some important information. We did not make the statement Martin attributed to us. We did, however, quote a Mormon scholar by the name of Richard Stephen Marshall on the fourth page of the Preface as making this statement:

“Many prominent Mormons have expressed a high regard for the work the Tanners have done. . . . T. Edgar Lyon, a Mormon historian and long-time teacher at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah told this writer he thought the Church should subsidize the Tanners, although he said it tongue-in-cheek.

“Reed Durham using virtually the same words as Lyon said that he thought the Church should subsidize the Tanners because of all the historical research they do for it. He teaches a class at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah on the problems of Mormon history called ‘Special Studies in Mormon History.’ He uses the Tanner’s book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* as the text for the class. . . .

“Durham said he would like to write a book answering the accusations of the Tanners point by point. To do so, however, would require certain admissions that Mormon history is not exactly as the Church has taught it was, that there were things taught and practiced in the nineteenth century of which the general Church membership is unaware. He said that the Church is not ready to admit that yet. He also said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian’s Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners including advice on how to read anti-Mormon literature. This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. Because the article is an open and honest approach to the problem, although it by no means answers all of the

questions raised by the Tanners, it will probably be published anonymously, to avoid difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency.” (“The New Mormon History,” by Richard Steven Marshall, A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, pages 57, 61-62)

Mr. Marshall personally interviewed Reed Durham on April 11, 1977, for his thesis concerning New Mormon History. It is clear, therefore, that if Martin wants to accuse someone of lying it would have to be the Mormon scholar Richard Steven Marshall. (One, of course, could also postulate that Reed Durham gave misleading information to Mr. Marshall.)

In our opinion, however, it seems extremely doubtful that either Marshall or Durham misrepresented the matter. Martin Tanner, in his one-sided zeal to discredit our work, may have taken Marshall’s use of the words “the text” to refer to a textbook which Durham’s students had to obtain for the class. The second edition of *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, however, lists a number of definitions for the word “text.” For instance, the seventh item is “a topic; subject.”

According to a man who took the class, Reed Durham would bring his own copy of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* to class and read from it to his students. This, of course, did not preclude the use of other books in the class. We know, for example, that Dr. Durham had a great interest in some of our other works—e.g., *The Case Against Mormonism*, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, *Mormons and Negroes*, and *Mormonism Like Watergate*. Since Reed Durham’s class dealt with problems in LDS history and doctrine, it is likely that he used a number of our books as well as other books critical of the church.

All of the evidence leads us to conclude that Reed Durham used *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* as a significant reference text in his class. Although Dr. Durham believed that the book posed a threat to those who read it, he was also extremely interested in the historical discoveries we brought to light and felt they should be discussed.

Much to the consternation of church leaders, Durham had a difficult time keeping silent about these matters. Many of Durham’s colleagues at the Institute of Religion and others who had studied church history agreed with his desire for an honest history of the Mormon Church. The Mormon historian Max Parkin did not go as far as Reed Durham, but he certainly tried to be honest in his writings. His work, *Conflict at Kirtland*, is one of the best works on Mormon history. Richard Stephen Marshall gave this information in his unpublished thesis:

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new kind of anti-Mormon literature which uses Mormon historical records (history has long been used to attack the Church) to try to show that the Church was more human than divine. This new kind of literature is best typified by Jerald and Sandra Tanner . . . They have been prolific since 1961 and have at present, a world-wide reputation. The writer encountered materials published by them while living in Australia several years ago. Max Parkin, of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah calls them “publishers extraordinary,” and notes that one of their most recent volumes, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is the finest, most comprehensive and hard-hitting anti-Mormon book in history. . . .

The Tanners’ writing is characterized by tremendous albeit one-sided scholarship. They only print material which is well documented and should they find that something they have printed is in error, they are not slow to print a retraction or apology. . . . James Allen [of Brigham Young University] said that the Tanners have had an effect upon historians in the Church in helping them to be more open. . . .

Although they have an ax to grind, their writings are remarkably clear of the invective and animosity which typically clouds anti-Mormon literature. . . . The Tanners seem to be motivated by a desire to show members of the Mormon Church that they are in error. (“The New Mormon History,” pages 57, 60, 65)

Mr. Marshall went on to show that Reed Durham was very upset that church leaders have not been forthright regarding a revelation John Taylor, the third prophet of the church, gave in 1886:

The fundamentalists [those who believe the Mormon Church should still practice polygamy] look upon the Manifesto as a sign of Wilford Woodruff’s apostasy. . . . Many thousands of fundamentalists have been excommunicated since then, for believing that God required them to live the principle, and that the Manifesto was nothing more than a political maneuver.

They point to a revelation purportedly given to [President] John Taylor, in 1886, at Centerville, Utah, in which the Lord says, “I have not revoked my law, nor will I.” The fundamentalists interpret this as meaning plural marriage was not intended to be taken away. The official Church position on the 1886 revelation is that it never was given and does not exist. . . .

Elder Petersen’s book calls the 1886 revelation spurious. Historical evidence would seem to indicate,

in contradiction to the book, that the revelation was given and is at [the] present moment contained in the Church archives.

Reed Durham told this writer that it is “an out and out lie” to say that the 1886 revelation does not exist. He said, “I could stand before the Bar of God and prove that revelation was given. I have minutes of the meetings of the First Presidency and of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles refer[r]ing to it.”

While Durham calls it an “out and out lie” to deny the revelation was given, Max Parkin, one of his colleagues, calls it a “lie of expediency.” He says that the mandate to carry the gospel, as taught by the Church, to all the nations of the world, is compelling to the degree that historic doctrines which could prove embarrassing to the Church, and thus hinder missionary work, are better covered or disavowed. . . .

Mormon scholars have generally had difficulty being accepted by the mainstream Mormon community, who are largely conservative and middle class. Reed Durham . . . told this writer that Mormon history has been distorted and mythologized in order for it to conform to twentieth century society. These myths are made and perpetuated by General Authorities who teach the things they have learned in Sunday school, said Durham. He acknowledged that they are busy men and don’t have time to keep up with new developments in Mormon historical research. When a General Authority teaches a myth it is ratified, to a degree, by the fact that it was taught by a Church leader, and there is a certain stigma placed upon a historian who would try to cont[r]overt this myth. . . .

Virtually all scholars interviewed by this writer were of the opinion that history should be open and honest. He did, however, interview a member of the faculty of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, who teaches Church history. When asked what his opinion was he replied: “You say you’ve talked to Arrington, Parkin, and Durham? Well, take the exact opposite view from them and put me down for that.” He asked to remain unnamed in this paper because “I’ve already gotten too much criticism for my views. I don’t want to get any more than I have to.” He told this writer: “If you do your research right you’ll discover that almost all scholars want to open the history of the Church right up. Virtually all LDS historians agree with Arrington and Durham.” He appeared to be almost bitter as he spoke. His own philosophy is “exactly as outlined by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve,” Ezra Taft Benson. “We don’t need to tell everything we know. Some things just don’t need to be told.” . . .

Many of the scholars are critical of the Church’s attitudes as expressed by leaders such as Ezra Taft Benson. . . .

Reed Durham, in speaking on the subject of anti-intellectualism in the Church, said that the Church is structured so that people learn from priesthood and Sunday school manuals and nowhere else. He pointed out that the Church doesn’t encourage people to study history on their own, and that the Church creates “dumb, ignorant members.” He called it an injustice to give members “milk” and nothing else.” (“The New Mormon History,” pages 75-77, 82, 84, 85, 88)

Durham’s Purchases

After revealing that Reed Durham used *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in his class, Richard Steven Marshall went on to say:

Formerly he would purchase copies of the book in quantity from Modern Microfilm [now Utah Lighthouse Ministry] through the Institute. Because it did not look very good for the Institute to be purchasing quantities of an anti-Mormon work he now encourages his students to go down to Modern Microfilm (1350 South West Temple, Salt Lake City,) and buy the book on their own. (*Ibid.*, page 61)

While Martin Tanner will probably have a very difficult time accepting this statement by Mr. Marshall, we have a great deal of evidence to show that Marshall was telling the truth about the matter. Although it is not normally our policy to reveal who buys books from us or makes donations to our ministry, since Reed Durham himself told Mr. Marshall about the matter in an interview, there seems to be no reason to keep the matter secret.

We examined some of our old records and found that on September 8, 1972, Dr. Durham ordered 20 copies of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* for the Institute of Religion. The invoice we prepared is #9369. The check for this invoice was made out at the Institute of Religion on November 3, 1972. Fortunately, we saved the check stub from the Institute and the reader will find a photograph of it along with the original invoice included in this book.

This was only one of a number of orders; for example, on December 10, 1968, Durham ordered 12 copies of our book *The Case Against Mormonism*, Vol. 3. On September 25, 1969, he ordered 15 copies of *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, and on March 19, 1970, he requested 15 copies of *Mormons and Negroes*. As late as February 20, 1975, Dr. Durham ordered 20 copies of *Mormonism Like Watergate* and 20 copies of *Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials*, which we printed for Wesley P. Walters.

1919
 Dr. Reed Durham, LDS Institute
 1800 Hempstead Rd.
 SLC

20 Mormonism Like Watergate
 20 J. Smiths Benbridge NY Court trial

2-20-75
 30 days
 20 18.00
 25 5.00
 23.00

PP

9369
 LDS Institute of Religion
 Reed Durham

20 Mormonism - Shadow or Reality

9-9-72
 Phone - Durham
 @ 5.10 102.00

PP

REMITTANCE ADVISE		BALT LAKE INSTITUTE OF RELIGION - STUDENT FUND BALT LAKE CITY, UTAH		DETACH BEFORE DEPOSITING	
DATE	INVOICE NO.	DESCRIPTION	GROSS AMOUNT	DEDUCTIONS	NET AMOUNT
11-3-72	stmt. refers to #9369	Tanner's books, "Mormonism, Shadow or Reality", for Faculty			102.00

Photographic evidence showing just some of Reed Durham's purchases for the LDS Institute of Religion. The reader will notice that on these two invoices sixty books were ordered! Both invoices were marked paid. It should also be noted that the check at the bottom shows that the Institute paid for twenty copies of our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

In examining some of our records we found invoices showing that Reed Durham ordered one hundred and thirty-two books for the Institute of Religion. We should stress that we have only looked at a portion of our records and believe a more thorough examination would reveal that Durham bought other books for the Institute.

Besides using our publications in his class, Reed Durham distributed many copies to the faculty at the Institute of Religion. In addition, those who served with him have told us that he used our material to raise questions in faculty meetings. One instructor noted that such a thing would never be allowed at the Institute today.

Lecture on Tanners

Dr. Durham went even further in his attempt to spread the word concerning our publications. Richard Steven Marshall revealed: “Durham responded enthusiastically to the work of the Tanners in a talk given at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, March 7, 1972” (“The New Mormon History,” page 62).

The following extracts are taken from a tape-recording of Reed Durham’s speech:

There has been a lot written about the Tanners. And anyone here who perhaps has not heard of the Tanners perhaps hasn’t done enough reading to be aware of what’s going on in Mormon history, because the Tanners represent the most prolific production of anti-Mormon literature on the whole history of this Church. They are the most prolific producers of Mormon literature, anti-Mormon literature, we’ve ever had in the history of this Church. . . . And they’ve done perhaps the greatest pieces of research for and putting together sources and research that’s been done by other people than anybody that I know of in all of Church history. So they’ve become very important in understanding our Church history. . . .

Their first big work, the one that they felt was their first great tome was this one, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* That was their first big work. This seemed to incorporate all that they had done, all these publications, for these years since ’59 to ’64. They incorporated it all in one great anti-Mormon piece of literature. . . .

Presently Sandra and Jerald informed me that they are working on their big tome, the summum bonum of everything they have done to date. That’s right up to 1972; they’re going to wrap it together in a huge volume. . . . they may even . . . call it *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* The same title as their first important work . . . they really believe

. . . that the Mormon people have not had a chance to make a real intelligent decision as to where the truth is because the facts have never been given to them. . . . they feel that the Mormons have been blinded by tradition to such a point that its hard for them ever to be released. The freedom must come when Jesus emerges. . . . Mormonism, the institution of Mormonism, chokes, they believe, what is the true Christianity . . . they feel that they have been God-prompted in what their doing. . . . they bear testimony that they feel God has been with them in their work. . . . they feel that very keenly. . . . They believe that any Latter-day Saint should keep all the great Christian ethical moral principles which were taught in Mormonism, keep those and then leave all the rest alone, and come to Christ. . . . that’s their purpose, to liberate, to free.

Now, how can they do that? To go to the Mormon sources and let you see what the Church was like from start to finish, and oftentimes that will be a comparison—what it was like then and what it is like now. And there’s a lot of interesting things that occur when you show the contrast. . . . things that were going on in Joseph’s day as versus the things and teachings that go on today. One of the best ways to let you Mormons know what really was taught or/and practiced and believed in the early Church is to reprint documents of your own faith—that is, go to the primary sources and reproduce them for the Mormons, because by in large Mormons don’t operate on primary sources. They operate on secondary sources, secondary, secondary, secondary sources. Indeed, if you were to pick up a manual of a Sunday School class in Church history you wouldn’t know what a primary source was, it is so secondary. And so one of the main things they’ve done is to reproduce primary sources—primary documents. They aren’t anti-Mormon stuff, they’re our stuff.

Now, a poor teacher, like I am, teaching for the Church does not have the money to buy primary sources . . . You know, the originals of these documents that are my heritage . . . so come along the Modern Microfilm Company, who reproduces, and retypes—they have a process . . . where you photo a page in a book and it makes a plate, and they just run the plate off—so you have the exact source. It’s a photomechanically reproduced original. So I have to spend my money to buy these originals, because I want my primary sources. But it’s true, if I study my primary sources I’m in another world when I compare [them] with my Church today. Some of you may disagree, but I can take the time and show you that in so many regards we’re in another world today.

We do not live in the church of Joseph Smith today. We do not live in the church of Brigham Young today or any one of the Presidents. We live only in the church today with Joseph Fielding Smith, and it's different today than it was with David O. McKay. And it will be like that all the time. It's just totally different. And so if you're going to make comparisons, of course you could shake some people up.

Now, let me show you . . . here are the *Millennial Stars* . . . the great piece of literature in England. They have the first seven volumes reproduced. I can't go buy an original *Millennial Star* . . . So I pay the Tanners for the *Millennial Star*, because I want to study the original *Millennial Stars*. It's part of my heritage. . . . there's the first *Pearl of Great Price*. . . . I buy it from the Tanners 'cause I can't pay for an original edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*. This is my first *Pearl of Great Price*, in my Church. I want the first one. I want to study it. I want to compare it with my present *Pearl of Great Price*. . . all kinds of changes, but I want to understand the changes. I know what they are. So do they want me to know what they are! . . . the first time I could get an *Evening and Morning Star* was from Jerald and Sandra, a photomechanically reproduced *Evening and Morning Star*. That's my first newspaper; that's my first Church Section; that's my first *Improvement Era* . . . and by darn, I'm going to get it if I'm a student of Mormonism, and if they're the only ones producing it, I'm going to buy it from them. Shame! Shame on me! The *Confessions of John D. Lee* . . . I never had one . . . now I do, photomechanically reproduced. I don't have to worry about any hanky-panky in the reproduction . . .

Lucy Mack's history of the Church . . . which was condemned by Brigham Young and revamped by Brigham Young, reproduced in 1901, reproduced in 1921, with changes . . . and deletions all the way down through time. I want to see what the original looked like. I'd like to see the stuff we took out, just for kicks, just for my interest and for my information. The first edition of Lucy Mack's history was reproduced verbatim by the Tanners. . . . The *Temple Lot Case*, that whole case from the documents of the court and all the testimony that was there have all been reproduced for me . . .

Here's the *Messenger and Advocate*. That was my second newspaper, or official journal in the Church . . . and the *Elders Journal*. All of these primary sources of my church . . . have been reproduced by them for me to read. The idea is that if I read the primary sources and see all the differences with today, I'm supposed to lose my testimony . . .

Now, in order to get their licks in even stronger than simply letting you read for yourself, they will

pull out of these primary sources quotes on all the going problems. So you have books on the Negroes . . . *The Negro in Mormon Theology*, *Joseph Smith's Curse Upon the Negro*, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy* (a great big one, that's a good one, my, that's really a good one), *Falsification of Joseph Smith's History*, *Joseph Smith's 1826 Trial*, *Joseph Smith and Money Digging* (that's one of their latest), *The Bible and Mormon Doctrine*, and then—this is one they like, they like to show you the changes . . . so they'll take the *Key to Theology* as we used to print it and show you how we print it now, and we have really doctored the *Key to Theology*. They like to show you that. That's supposed to really shake you up.

We've doctored some other man's book after he's all dead and gone. . . . *Changes in Joseph Smith's History*, *Changes in the Pearl of Great Price* . . . they photo the *Pearl of Great Price* and mark all the changes out in the margin for you to look at. . . . 3,913 *Changes in the Book of Mormon*, this is an original 1830 photomechanically reproduced Book of Mormon, an 1830 Book of Mormon, and then in the margins they've pointed out all the changes that were there. Well, on and on they go. . . .

Lehi said "there must needs be opposition in all things." I can't help but think that what they're doing, though it has done damage—I've had people in my office who've been just totally devastated with things they raised. A Mormon who had never heard of Blood Atonement. And so now comes Blood Atonement crashing through the pages of primary sources, from the words of our own General Authorities, our own Presidents of the Church and it's devastating to lots of Mormons.

Some Mormons don't even believe Joseph Smith was a polygamist. We have come so far from those days to the present time. And then all of the evidence about polygamy and all of the issues, and then to get crushed with actually seeing the changes in *Joseph Smith's History* or in the Book of Mormon or the *Pearl of Great Price*. I tell you, though you may not believe it, I have seen people get utterly crushed, almost devastated, with some of the material that the Tanners have reproduced. They have made their mark in many of our people. I wouldn't in a group like this, but I could name to you professors . . . and some of their wives who read this and eat it up and have lost totally their testimony on this kind of thing. I will tell you, there was an Institute teacher here, not long ago . . . who lost his testimony and went out of the Church on the basis of this stuff. Oh, this stuff is dynamite!

I can't help but think that when they raise these issues it does something to us to have to defend. . . .

When I see something that counters what I've been taught or what I know or what I understand or what I feel, the way to counter research . . . unpleasant to me is not by sticking my head in the sand like an ostrich, but by more research. I may have to revamp, and knowledge is a dangerous thing. But I will revamp, and I will understand better my heritage.

And in a sense, what I'm trying to say is that they have become, in a sense, catalysts to sharpen our own historical understanding. We've had to get on the stick and do some study, and do some homework that sometimes we haven't done. If we don't do the homework that will kill us. "Leave it alone, don't touch it," see that's a kind of philosophy. . . . All right, you leave it alone, but in this world of knowledge and mass communications lots of other people are going to read it, and you'll be exposed to it somewhere. I think if you're going to be exposed to it, where's the best place to be exposed to it? Over there, next door, some meeting, some well-meaning friend, or maybe right here to be exposed to it. Bring the issues up here. Weigh them carefully. Do research. Have it in a framework of testimony and faith. That's where I think we should be exposed to it. (Speech by Reed Durham, Director, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, March 7, 1972)

It should be noted that toward the end of his lecture, Dr. Durham suggested that students should be "exposed" to our material at the Institute of Religion and that they should bring "the issues up here." This, of course, provides additional support to Mr. Marshall's statement that Durham used our work in some of his classes. The reader will also remember that Marshall claimed that Durham told him that he "encourages his students to go down . . . and buy the book on their own." A number of Reed Durham's students did come down to our bookstore and buy books which Durham had recommended.

At one time a number of his students came down to purchase our book, *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*—a document which clearly shows that Joseph Smith did not know the first thing about translating Egyptian characters and that his "Book of Abraham" is a work of his own imagination. They told us that Durham had specifically recommended that they obtain this book for a class they were taking from him. Some of the students who studied under Dr. Durham later told us they lost faith in the divine authenticity of Mormonism because of things they learned in his classes.

We had a number of interesting conversations with Reed Durham in the 1960s and early 1970s. At one time Durham said that if we would come back into

the Mormon Church and tone down our presentation of the facts, he believed that we could become church historians. He did not explain exactly what he meant by this statement. In any case, Dr. Durham appeared to seriously believe that we could play a very significant role in Mormon Church history.

This seems consistent with the statement he made concerning us in his lecture at the Institute of Religion: "And they've done perhaps the greatest pieces of research for and putting together sources and research that's been done by other people than anybody that I know of in all of Church history."

We, of course, could not accept Reed Durham's suggestion that we return to Mormonism and soften our approach. We felt that the truth had to be told and there was no way that we could compromise our beliefs.

Durham Was Silenced

Reed Durham became a respected scholar in the Mormon Church and served as president of the Mormon History Association. Our discussions with Dr. Durham led us to believe that he really loved the Mormon Church. He realized that there were serious problems in Mormon history, but he was always seeking to find ways to reconcile the discrepancies. Even though Durham held different opinions regarding Mormonism, we considered him a friend and were impressed with his kindness. We were really encouraged by his honesty with regard to Mormon history. Unfortunately, as we will show, Dr. Durham went one step too far after he became president of the Mormon History Association.

In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we examined the relationship between Mormonism and Freemasonry and presented convincing evidence that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonic rituals when he created his temple ceremony (see pages 484-492). Reed Durham was also interested in this subject and did his own study of Mormonism and Masonry. In 1974, Durham addressed the Mormon History Association concerning the ties between Mormonism and Masonry. Although Dr. Durham still maintained Joseph Smith was a prophet, in his address he made some shocking admissions concerning the fact that Smith had incorporated Masonry into his new religion:

One historian, who has spent at least 25 years exploring the topic of Mormonism and Masonry, finally concluded that any person who ventured into this area of study was something of a "foolhardy nitwit." So mote it be! Still I am convinced that in the study of Masonry lies a pivotal key to further understanding Joseph Smith and the Church. . . .

It commenced in Joseph's home when his older brother became a Mason. . . . The many parallels found between early Mormonism and Masonry of that day are substantial . . . I believe that there are few significant developments in the Church, that occurred after March 15, 1842, which did not have some Masonic interdependence. . . .

There is absolutely no question in my mind that the Mormon [temple] ceremony which came to be known as the Endowment, introduced by Joseph Smith to Mormon Masons, had an immediate inspiration from Masonry. This is not to suggest that no other source of inspiration could have been involved, but the similarities between the two ceremonies are so apparent and overwhelming that some dependent relation cannot be denied. . . .

It is also obvious that the Nauvoo Temple architecture was in part, at least, Masonically influenced. Indeed, it appears that there was an intentional attempt to utilize Masonic symbols and motifs. . . .

It was true that in orthodox Masonry . . . the inclusion of women was definitely prohibited . . . The Joseph Smith Masonry was daily becoming less orthodox and tended to follow more in the direction of some unorthodox Masonry . . .

The second type of unorthodox female Masonry was known as "Adoptive" Masonry. . . . The ceremonies for women in this order were quite similar to those later found within the endowment ceremony of the Mormons. . . . I suggest that enough evidence presently exists to declare that the entire institution of the political kingdom of God, including the Council of Fifty, the living constitution, the proposed flag of the kingdom, and the anointing and coronation of the king, had its genesis in connection with Masonic thoughts and ceremonies. . . . Can anyone deny that Masonic influence on Joseph Smith and the Church, either before or after his personal Masonic membership? The evidence demands comments. (Presidential Address by Reed Durham at the Mormon History Association, April 20, 1974, as printed in *Mormon Miscellaneous*, October, 1975, pages 11-13, 16)

After giving this speech, Reed Durham found himself in real trouble with church leaders. Richard Stephen Marshall reported:

Dr. Reed Durham of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah is a highly respected scholar who has encountered some difficulty with Church leaders because of his open attitude toward Mormon history . . . Durham delivered the presidential address of the Mormon History Association. . . . It was an examination of

Mormonism and Masonry, and an historical analysis of the influence of the latter upon the former.

He was evidently aware of the fact that he was treading on controversial ground in delivering his paper. . . .

He closed his paper with an appeal for an increased openness in the examination of Mormon history:

There are many questions which still demand answers. I earnestly hope I have raised some questions. Perhaps I have answered a few. But if we, as Mormon historians, respond to these questions and myriads like them relative to Masonry in an ostrich-like fashion, with our heads buried in the traditional sand, then I submit: there never will be "any help for the widow's son."

David Martin adds an editorial comment at the end of Durham's paper . . . He says:

In the year and a half since the above talk was given, the head in the sand attitude has prevailed. . . . Dr. Durham has been chastised by the church and made apology. And his talk has done a brisk business on the Mormon History underground.

Sandra Tanner, in an interview with this writer . . . said that Reed Durham was a very honest man, and a little naive because he thought Mormons would be more open minded than they were. She said that he had been under scrutiny for some time and that after he gave his paper on masonry he was called in to see President Spencer W. Kimball. Shortly thereafter he wrote a letter and circulated it reaffirming his faith in the Church, its temple ceremony and the present leaders. He was then given a year's sabbatical leave from the Institute to write a book, and returned not as director, as he had been, but as a teacher. Max Parkin . . . told this writer that the rumors to the effect that Durham had been released because of his talk in Nauvoo were without any truth. He said that it was his own decision not to return as Director of the Institute, so that he could devote more time to research. ("The New Mormon History," pages 51-54)

In a footnote on page 54 of the same thesis, Marshall revealed the following concerning the letter of apology Durham was forced to write:

Dr. Durham told this writer, in reference to his letter, that "I had to write that. They wanted me to bear my testimony. I hadn't done that in my talk. They had me do that so people would know where I stood." (Interview, April 11, 1977).

After Reed Durham was confronted by the "Brethren," one of the authors (Jerald) called him. Durham seemed

to be very depressed regarding the opposition he had encountered from church officials. He, in fact, commented that he had “been through hell” since giving the speech. After that, Dr. Durham never returned to our bookstore, and we have no recollection of him ever trying to contact us again. One of his colleagues told us that he was very concerned that he might be excommunicated.

Church History Aborted

Unfortunately, this was not the only crushing blow Reed Durham received from the General Authorities of the church. Dr. Durham and fifteen other noted Mormon historians were badly mistreated by the top leaders of the church. Each of these historians had been specifically chosen to write one of the volumes for a sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church. Church Historian Leonard Arrington was appointed to oversee the production of this history. It was to be his most important project. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 26, 1975, quoted Dr. Arrington as saying: “We hope all 16 volumes will be ready by 1980.” The idea behind the project was to have the volumes ready for the 150th anniversary of the Church—the sesquicentennial celebration of 1980. Unfortunately, however, 1980 arrived without a single book being published!

In our book, *The Mormon Purge*, we devoted a number of pages showing the devious plan the church used to scrap the sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history. We even included photographs of secret memos relating to the suppression of the history (see pages 11-16). Because of the importance of this matter we are including a condensed account of what actually occurred in this book. From what we were able to determine, some of the scholars were too frank in their presentation and this caused great consternation among some of the apostles.

As early as 1978, church officials were conniving to stop the publication of the sesquicentennial history. Since the authors were having problems meeting the deadline given in the original contract, it was apparently suggested that this might be a good pretext the church could use to cancel the contracts. In addition, the question arose as to whether the church could refuse to pay the authors for their manuscripts. In a memo dated April 4, 1978, church counsel Wilford W. Kirton, Jr. informed Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley, who is now president of the church, that it was impossible to break the contracts without the possibility of being sued by the authors:

I have met with James Mortimer and Lowell Durham of Deseret Book Company. They requested that I prepare and submit my opinion regarding

certain contracts with Deseret Book . . . I conclude that the publisher may not cancel the contract by reason of the author’s failure to meet the performance schedules. . . . The question has arisen as to whether the publisher has a right to refuse payment for the manuscripts.

Assuming the correctness of my opinion that the publisher in the circumstances of this case is not entitled to cancel the contract, it would necessarily follow that the publisher cannot refuse payment for the author’s work. . . . Where, as in this case, an author has devoted a great deal of time and effort in producing a volume of history over a period of several years, I would normally expect a court of law to resolve any doubt or ambiguity jeopardizing compensation in favor of the author and against the publisher. . . .

In summary, I conclude that the publisher under the facts of this case has a weak position if it were to attempt to cancel the Agreement and to refuse payment for the work . . .

I leave the matter to others to determine whether the Publisher should morally refuse to publish a manuscript against the affirmative provision in Paragraph 3 wherein the Publisher agrees to publish the work. . . .

In 1974, Leonard Arrington and Wm. James Mortimer, sent the authors a letter which said:

The Brethren of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve . . . have requested us to ask authors of the volumes of our sesquicentennial history to surrender their rights to royalties on their volumes in return for a flat payment of \$20,000. . . . We congratulate you on the fact that the Brethren feel sufficient confidence in you that they are willing to make such a substantial and unprecedented cash payment. . . . We trust you will sign the attached sheet and return it to Deseret Book Company at the earliest opportunity.

All of the writers apparently consented to this agreement. By 1980, however, church officials had apparently decided that the history must be scuttled. Instead of just coming out and telling the authors what was really on their minds, they devised a cunning plan. They would again amend the contract in such a way that they could escape printing part or all of the proposed history. It was suggested the contract should be sweetened up so that the authors would receive the full \$20,000 as soon as they delivered their manuscripts. On the other hand, however, the amendment to the contract would contain a bitter pill: the writers would relinquish their legal right to demand that the church’s Deseret

Book Company actually print their manuscripts. In a memo written by Wilford W. Kirton, Jr. to Lowell M. Durham, dated April 22, 1980, Kirton claimed that [Lowell] Durham had “suggested that the language should be carefully worded to avoid, if possible, disputes with the authors.”

Mr. Kirton, however, pointed out that if the language was camouflaged, it could later cause problems for the church. Consequently, a memo, dated May 1, 1980, included a proposed draft of the “Amendment to the Contract.” In this document we find the following:

2. In consideration of such payment, the Author hereby grants to the Publisher the exclusive right to determine when or if the Author’s manuscript will be published.

While we do not know whether this proposed draft was sent to the authors, we do know that the sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church was totally scrapped by the leaders of the church. As we understand it, in order to suppress the history without the possibility of lawsuits, the General Authorities of the church did pay each author who finished his work \$20,000 (those who had not finished their volumes may have received a smaller amount). Since there were sixteen authors to be paid off and other costs involved, the church leaders may have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to scuttle the history. That the General Authorities would approve this massive project and then abort it after some of the church’s top scholars spent years working on it shows a total lack of inspiration.

The reader will remember that Richard Steven Marshall said that Reed Durham took “a year’s sabbatical leave from the Institute” to work on the book. It must have been a crushing blow to Dr. Durham and the other authors when they found that the church rescinded the agreement it had originally made with them. It is obvious that the Mormon leaders simply could not face an open and honest history of the church.

Davis Bitton, who served as an assistant church historian under Leonard Arrington, reflected on the sad state of affairs that followed Arrington’s appointment as Church Historian:

When one remembers that all of this was assumed to be not only professionally meritorious but also a fulfillment of a commission from the Church, based on the idea that the time had come to write the history of the Church in a professionally competent manner, it is perhaps understandable that

we often had the strong feeling that God was in his heaven and all was right with the world.

A project that had been suggested in meetings with Elder Howard Hunter even before 1972 was a sesquicentennial history of the Church. . . . Given the opening up of new primary sources and the contributions of a new generation of historians after World War II, the time seemed ripe for a new monument to Mormon history. Proposals were made, approved, and, after many discussions, sixteen authors selected to produce as many volumes. . . . This project had the full backing of the First Presidency. At a kick-off dinner sponsored by Deseret Book, the authors gathered with their wives, enjoyed a delicious repast, and listened to a positive address by Elder Thomas Monson [now a member of the First Presidency] . . . there seemed every reason to believe that a superior history, one that could stand comparison with any other, was about to appear and remain the standard for many years to come. . . .

One of my personal disappointments was the lack of mutual respect and willingness to discuss. Never were our critics willing to sit down and talk over matters with us. If we were inaccurate, we could be so informed. If a book had errors, they could be corrected in future revised editions. If we were violating the procedures set up by Elder Dyer back in 1972 and approved by the First Presidency, we could be told about it. But such conferences did not occur. I may be pardoned a personal suspicion that critics, especially those who have not put in the same hours of back-breaking research in the archives, are afraid to discuss such matters across the table with historians who have done their homework. But civilized standards would presumably find room for some such discussion if differences of opinion arose.

I can state objectively that the decision was made to scuttle the sixteen-volume history . . . to sharply circumscribe the projects that were approved, to reject any suggestions, however meritorious, for worthy long-range projects, to allow the division to shrink by attrition, and finally to reassign the remaining historians to a new entity, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History . . .

Leonard J. Arrington was called as Church Historian in 1972. He was sustained at general conference that year and for the next couple of years. . . . Finally, in 1982, he received a letter honorably releasing him. That same year Elder G. Homer Durham . . . was named Church Historian. . . . Orwell’s Truthspeak did not have to wait for 1984. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1983, pages 15, 18-19)

Making an Example of Reed Durham

The leaders of the Mormon Church seem to have realized that Reed Durham's honest attitude with regard to the history of the church presented a serious challenge to the church. Consequently, they decided to make an example of him so that other scholars would not follow in his footsteps. Since Durham loved the church and wanted to continue teaching in the Institute of Religion, he bowed to the chastisement inflicted upon him. On May 4, 1977, a Mormon scholar wrote Durham a letter requesting more information concerning his speech on Mormonism and Masonry. Dr. Durham responded as follows:

Thank you so much for your kind letter & for the requests for further info. about my address —

I am sorry, but because of the nature of the subject matter, the Brethren [i. e., the leaders of the church] have requested that I do no more with the subject again—I am not to release info. or have any more to say on the subject. This hurt me very much—as I believe that nothing—no amount of study, exploration, nor research, will ever hurt the church or the cause of truth—ever! However, I will be obedient to my Brethren and be still.

I am sorry I can't help you — Sincerely Reed C. Durham, Jr.

This is certainly a very sad letter from a man who fought for truth and was slapped down by the “Brethren.” The treatment given to Reed Durham certainly shows the suppressive attitude concerning Mormon History which Mormon leaders want to perpetuate.

More About Lying

In *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, pages 12-14, we reported that Mormon scholar John A. Tvedtnes accused us of dishonesty, and cited the following from his rebuttal:

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). (*Review of Books on The Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, page 188)

In a footnote at the bottom of the same page, John Tvedtnes argued 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.

We noted that this was “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.

In *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, page 13, the reader will find photographic evidence that we were not lying about the matter.

We are happy to report that John Tvedtnes now acknowledges that he made an error about this matter:

In their response to my review, the Tanners take me to task for making “a very serious charge . . . against our integrity” (p. 12) and devote two pages to a reply . . . I had not “directly accused [the Tanners] of dishonesty” or of lying, nor did I say that they were without integrity. I merely stated that there was a “variance” (a fairly neutral term) between the two stories I had received from them, one in print, the other orally. . . . the report of my conversation with Sandra wasn't really “without foundation in fact,” after all, only my interpretation of it. Where I may have erred is in assuming that Sandra lost faith in the Book of Mormon at the same time that she lost faith in the LDS Church. . . . I will grant, therefore, that the Tanners may have believed in the Book of Mormon as late as 1962; I have no personal knowledge of that. (Tvedtnes, *Longer Review*, pages 12-13)

Unfortunately, however, after making this admission, Tvedtnes still seems to be trying to throw some doubt on our integrity by suggesting that even the Mormon forger, Mark Hofmann, outwardly professed a belief in Mormonism:

We could, for example, cite favorable opinions about Mark Hofmann's religious beliefs from prior

to his arrest, but subsequent events have shown that these opinions were in error. (*Ibid.*, page 11)

Matthew Roper also handles John Tvedtnes's mistake in a strange way. He acknowledges that we did "present evidence that they accepted the Book of Mormon at least in some form, as late as 1961" (Roper, Longer Review, page 7). Actually, on page 14 of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, we stated that we continued to believe in the Book of Mormon "until 1962." In any case, Roper went on to say:

While the authors claim that there is not a "scintilla of evidence" to support the charge (p. 14), it should be noted that even some of those who are sympathetic to the Tanners' anti-Mormon position have expressed a similar view. (*Ibid.*)

In footnote 19, on the same page, Roper cites just one person to prove his point—a man known to many as Kit Ballantyne:

Shortly after hearing a tape of the authors on Utah's KTKK Radio, discussing this same event, one anti-Mormon critic of the LDS Church expressed a view reminiscent of Tvedtnes' comment:

Dear Martin,

Thank you for sending the tapes of your *Religion on the Line* show with Jerald and Sandra Tanner. It was very interesting; especially the part where Jerald and Sandra explain how their experience in Mormon studies led to their research into the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon theory. I would say that this is a bit of journalistic license that is not exactly consistent with their insistence that Mormon Church leaders be perfect in everything they say and do. (Kit Ballantyne to Martin S. Tanner, 8 February 1992, emphasis added).

A copy of this letter is in the possession of the writer and if the Tanners ask me nicely, I'll give them a copy too.

When we asked Matthew Roper "nicely" if he would provide a copy, he immediately sent us the letter. While Roper believes that the letter helps him in his crusade against our work, we feel it tends to confirm our suspicion that "Kit Ballantyne" is playing some type of a game with the critics of the Mormon Church. We have been suspicious of Ballantyne ever since he contacted us in 1987. He had moved into a house just four blocks from where we live and wrote Sandra a letter in which he stated:

By way of introduction, I am a born-again Christian living in Salt Lake City. I feel I owe my new life commitment in part to books like yours. I am a former member of the LDS Church. . . . When I was first introduced to the missionaries I was too young to be baptised without consent of my parents . . . I was also told that the reason you wrote the books was because you were bitter after having been excommunicated for not living the moral laws of the Church. . . .

It was years later before I learned that they were all wrong about you and their other critics. I was reading your books in secret for over seven years of Church membership before I became open enough to actually receive the truth. Your books started me on the path that eventually led me out of Mormonism. . . .

I asked to leave the Church and was excommunicated for "adultery," even though I had never been married nor tran[s]gressed the sexual laws of God. . . . I was fighting the false accusations against me. . . . I thank God that your writings were there to show some light in very confusing situations. I learned more truth about God in your book "A Look At Christianity" and others than I learned in seven years of reading books published by the LDS Church. (Letter from Kit Ballantyne, dated August 20, 1987)

In the same letter, Mr. Ballantyne made the incredible assertion that he had "a vast collection" of material which had once belonged to Thomas Truitt. We knew that Mr. Truitt had worked for the Church Historical Department and that some Mormon historians felt that he had undermined their work by reporting any writings he deemed too liberal and giving copies of them to the top leaders of the church. We understand that he also underlined the portions which he felt were most offensive. Some Mormon historians felt that Truitt was overly sensitive about protecting the church, which led to some of his detractors referring to him as "True Tom."

In any case, both Mormon and non-Mormon historians would be interested in examining this "vast" collection of material. Interestingly, Kit Ballantyne described the contents of the Truitt collection to us:

Now, the main reason for this letter: I have recently come into possession of a vast historical collection of Thomas Truitt. As near as I can tell he worked in the LDS Church Historical Department at the Church office building at some time. It is comprised of photocopies of thousands of early Mormon publications, documents, and journals, along with his recent studies of Mormon History and the correspondences of his with several General Authorities on such subjects as polygamy,

blood atonement, changes in the Standard Works, contradictions of church teachings, the true successor of Joseph Smith, geography of the Book of Mormon, evidence against the Book of Abraham, false Mormon prophecies, and many other interesting LDS subjects. Included in the collection are pre-published versions of Priesthood Manuals, teaching guides, books, and instruction manuals for Bishops and Stake Presidents. These working-copies have the changes, updates and corrections written in by hand. The most interesting part of the collection, however, contains journals and diaries of early church members. . . . If you and your husband Jerald would like to see the collection, I would be glad to show it to you and you may take copies of whatever you like. Your intensive research efforts have been a great deal of help to me and if I can help your progress in the area of Mormon research I would be pleased to be of some service.

After reading this letter we immediately became suspicious of Ballantyne's so-called Truitt Collection. About three years earlier the Mormon forger Mark Hofmann had claimed to have the McLellin Collection—a large collection which he maintained was very damaging to the Mormon Church. Mr. Hofmann said this collection was worth about \$185,000. As it turned out, however, Hofmann had no such collection.

In Ballantyne's case, he was also claiming to have a large collection of sensitive documents which could prove damaging to the Mormon Church. Unlike Hofmann, however, Ballantyne did not seem to be seeking money.

After sending us the letter, Mr. Ballantyne contacted us again and we discussed the Truitt Collection. We, of course, were interested in knowing how he could have acquired such a collection. Kit maintained that he found it in a building where he worked. The material had been stored there and abandoned. Consequently, Kit was allowed to take possession of it. We thought this was an incredible story. One of Mr. Ballantyne's friends told us a different story: he claimed that Kit said he was "dumpster diving" somewhere near the Mormon Church office building and found the collection in the trash.

Since we began our work on Mormonism we have been concerned that someone might try to get us to print a false document in an attempt to discredit our work. Therefore, we have always tried to be very careful about material received from unverifiable sources. The reader will remember that Ballantyne freely offered us "copies of whatever you like." We felt, however, that material coming from such a source might be questionable.

We knew that Thomas Truitt had sent some material to the anti-anti-Mormons Robert and Rosemary Brown before his death. Consequently, we could not help but wonder if Kit had received some material from the Browns or someone connected with the Tanner Project.

Interestingly, after we did not bite on Kit's offer to obtain copies of the material, he finally told us that the collection had burned up in a fire. This, however, did not end the matter. A few years later it became clear that Mr. Ballantyne had forgotten that he had told us the collection was destroyed in a fire.

In a telephone conversation with Jerald, Kit Ballantyne asserted again that he did have the collection. When he was asked where it was, he replied that it was stored in his garage. Jerald jumped in his car, drove directly to his house and asked to see the massive collection. Kit took him to the garage, but was unable to produce the collection. The most impressive document he was able to come up with was a one-page typed letter written by Truitt to someone else.

The reader will remember that Mr. Ballantyne claimed there were "photocopies of thousands of early Mormon publications, documents, and journals, along with his [Truitt's] recent studies of Mormon History and the correspondences of his with several General Authorities Included in the collection are pre-published versions of Priesthood Manuals, teaching guides, books, and instruction manuals for Bishops and Stake Presidents. These working-copies have the changes, updates and corrections written in by hand. The most interesting part of the collection, however, contains journals and diaries of early church members. . . ."

Although Kit Ballantyne had a number of books and articles on Mormonism, Jerald did not find anything resembling the "vast historical collection of Thomas Truitt."

Before confronting Kit, we had learned that his name was not really Kit Ballantyne! When he was questioned, he admitted to Jerald that he had taken on an alias after he moved from California to Utah. In response to a request for some identification, he produced a 1989 driver's license which had the name "Kenneth C. Brown" written on it. He claimed that his full name is "Kenneth Carson Brown." When he was asked if he was related to the Browns who are anti-anti-Mormons, he replied that he was not.

He was married to Amy Lambert in 1994, and she now goes by the name of Amy Ballantyne. It is possible, of course, that at some point he legally changed his name to Kit Ballantyne. In any case, Kit and Amy have a ministry known as Praise Outreach Ministry in Salt Lake City.

At one time Kit told Jerald that after he came to Utah he became involved in a cult and that the leader of the group had exercised mind control over him. Moreover, the same man was involved in sexual child abuse.

As noted above, we have been suspicious of Mr. Ballantyne ever since he wrote to us. Although we could not prove it, we felt that it was likely that he was involved in trying to find out embarrassing information about different ministries to Mormons and stir up discord between the various groups.

In August 1991, we published a newsletter entitled, *Trojan Horses in Mormon Land*. This issue dealt with a Mormon man named Darrick Evenson who was trying very hard to discredit our work. At one time he was involved with the Browns. A long letter from Evenson attacking “the claims of the anti-Mormons” appears in the Browns book, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, vol. 1, pages 279-280.

Although Evenson used his own name when trying to get information from us, he also went by a number of “aliases” to conceal some other things he was involved in. Evenson was actually successful in infiltrating Christian organizations and was able to get two books published by Christian publishing companies.

In the book *New Age Messiah Identified*, page 55, which he wrote under the pseudonym Troy Lawrence, he stated:

Here we see a genuine delineation between the truth of the Gospel and the lies of the cults. . . . Some Mormons claim to believe in the resurrection of the body, but their error lines up with the esotericists in their belief that God is a man who advanced to a higher level of perfection.

When it became known to Christian ministries that Evenson was a Mormon, he publicly denied the charge. Al Kresta, of Wmuz FM in Detroit, Michigan interviewed Mr. Evenson and bluntly asked him, “Are you a Mormon?” Evenson replied as follows: “No, I’m not.” Later on the same radio show, Evenson again affirmed, “I’m not a Mormon.”

Notwithstanding his recorded statement that he was not a Mormon, Evenson wrote a book attacking critics of the Mormon Church. It was published by Horizon Publishers and is entitled, *The Gainsayers: A Converted Anti-Mormon Responds To Critics of the LDS Church*. Those who are interested in learning more about Darrick Evenson and his attempt to destroy our ministry and cause tensions between the various ministries can receive a free copy of our *Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1991, which contains the article, “Trojan Horses in Mormon Land.”

When we were working on the Evenson story we discovered an interesting parallel to Kit Ballantyne. As noted above, Darrick Evenson used the alias “Troy Lawrence” to carry on his deceitful work. The word “Troy” is interesting because it fits well with a statement Evenson made to Al Kresta. He claimed he used “a Trojan horse” technique in his secret operations. The reader may remember that in the story of the Trojan War, the Greeks left a huge wooden horse outside the city of Troy. The horse was actually filled with warriors, but the Trojans, not recognizing the trick, desired to have it and breached the wall of their own city to take the horse in. During the night the men who were in the wooden horse came out and the Greek troops destroyed the city of Troy and most of its inhabitants.

In the August 1991 issue of the *Messenger*, page 12, we referred to Kit Ballantyne, although we did not specifically identify him by name:

We feel that there are still many missing pieces to the Darrick Evenson puzzle. For example, he claimed that “a number of individuals” were involved with him in his “Trojan horse” activities. (We have become aware of another man [whom we can now identify as Kit Ballantyne] who professes to be a critic of the Mormon Church but is using an alias. Furthermore, in his writings this man sometimes refers to himself as “The Trojan Warrior.” We have reason to believe that “The Trojan Warrior” is in contact with another man who has used an alias in the past.)

Although we cannot prove that Kit Ballantyne was working with Darrick Evenson, it is interesting to note that both Kit and Darrick sought the legal services of the anti-anti-Mormon lawyer Martin S. Tanner. From what we have been able to determine, Darrick Evenson was originally hoping to be involved with Robert and Rosemary Brown in a non-prophet organization. (The Browns have written a four-volume work entitled, *They Lie In Wait to Deceive*.) Later, however, Darrick sent us a document purporting to be a “Proposal For A Non-Profit Organization For The Defense Of The Faith.” The organization was to be known as the “Watchtower Committee.” In this document we find the following:

It is proposed that a non-profit organization be formed to counter the campaign of misinformation promulgated [*sic*] by the powerful anti-LDS Movement . . . it will provide the Saints with reasonable and scriptural ans[w]ers to anti-LDS allegations and accusations. . . . The organization [*sic*] will also monitor anti-LDS activities . . .

Information will be gathered and organized on the anti-LDS Movement and message. Researchers

will then investigate the claims, credentials, and allegations of anti-LDS ministers, their publications, and its impact on the Saints. . . .

#14. SPECIAL SERVICES shall be responsible for the OPERATIONS of the Committee. Because of the sensitive, and sometimes hazardous, nature of this work the Committee shall deem some OPERATIONS overt and some covert. It shall be the job of SPECIAL SERVICES to conduct OPERATIONS; meaning activities of a special nature not covered by the other departments of the Committee. . . .

While Darrick Evenson's "Watchtower Committee" seems to have never been established, in 1990, he did set up a non-profit corporation known as "The Society for the Propagation of the Restored Gospel, Inc." The Articles of Incorporation for this organization were notarized by Martin S. Tanner. Mr. Tanner told us that although Evenson had to pay the filing fee charged by the State of Utah, he did not charge him for his work on the papers.

Interestingly, in the letter Kit Ballantyne wrote to Martin Tanner he stated: "You are also encouraged to contact me . . . if you would like to represent me in the legal matter we discussed after the radio program the other night." In a telephone conversation with Jerald, Martin acknowledged that he did, in fact, give Ballantyne some legal help but did not discuss what was involved in the matter.

Kit Ballantyne's letter to Martin Tanner does not contain anything that would indicate that he ever told Martin he was playing a dual role. However this may be, it is certainly strange that Ballantyne, who is known for his "anti-Mormon" statements on the radio and for publicly defending our materials, would seek the legal services of an anti-anti-Mormon like Martin Tanner. While both Ballantyne and Evenson used aliases at various times, we have no evidence to show that Martin knew anything about this matter.

In his attempt to create problems for critics of the Mormon Church, Darrick Evenson worked overtime to create discord. For example, when he realized that we had some disagreements with Ed Decker, he visited our bookstore and related to Sandra that Mr. Decker told him he had enough information on Jerald to put him away for life. Since we did not have any confidence in Darrick, we dismissed this statement as a trick on his part to create problems between the two ministries. On the other hand, he told Sandra at that time that he had evidence that Ed Decker was living an immoral life and said that he would give us this material if we would print it. Sandra, of course, replied that she was not interested in receiving the material.

Darrick Evenson even told Ed Decker that we were receiving information against him from the notorious anti-anti-Mormons Robert and Rosemary Brown. On a Phoenix radio program Mr. Decker stated:

About four weeks ago I got a phone call . . . it was Darrick . . . he called and said he had some very serious filth about me that he was going to expose . . . that he had control of it and that Jerald and Sandra Tanner had been in contact with Robert and Rosemary Brown to acquire this material to expose me as a phony . . . Darrick said . . . I have the ability to get rid of all this information from the Browns and the Tanners . . . something is going to come out about me and you have to keep your mouth shut. If you open your mouth, I'm going to reveal all this. And I said, "Darrick, you're blackmailing me."

Steven Mayfield, who previously spied under the name "Stan Fields" was also extremely interested in widening the rift and came to our bookstore on different occasions with the express purpose of causing further problems between us and Ed Decker.

In addition, Kit Ballantyne claimed to be very concerned about the problem and professed that he wanted to help straighten out Mr. Decker. Although we did not think he was sincere about the matter, he gave the impression that he was siding with us. He was, therefore, in contact with both us and Decker.

Interestingly, Kit Ballantyne's letter to Martin Tanner would seem to indicate that he was really siding with Mr. Decker:

I have read many of the Tanner books and have found that their research is quite good. On the other hand, I think it is safe to say that the older a Tanner book is the more it is reliable as honest research of real facts. For instance, their first few printed materials are much more on-target and accurate than some of the most recent things. I have trouble believing some of the things they print against other ministries such as ed decker, [*sic*] Bill Schnebelen [*sic*] and Chuck sackett, [*sic*]. I know some of their theories about me are based entirely in a paranoid fiction that has seemed to build up over the years. (Letter from Kit Ballantyne, to Martin S. Tanner, dated Feb. 8, 1992)

It is interesting to note that in the same letter Kit Ballantyne seemed to be seeking information from Martin Tanner concerning Mormon critic Walter Martin who had been dead for a year or two:

One of the topics brought up on the radio program was the reputation, actions and reliability of the late Dr. Walter Martin. This was brought up by at least one of your callers, who stated that Walter Martin has no earned degrees and that he

is a convicted wife-beater. You did not challenge these statements, which makes me wonder if you have some sort of materials that 3 [*sic*] would tend to backup this caller's claims. I have not heard about these things before and am anxious to find out if they are proven facts or just a rumor started by people who did not appreciate the materials that Walter Martin [*sic*] has made available. I would be interested in any information that you may have on this subject. . . . I am not being so pompous as to say these things are impossible, I am just saying I have not heard those accusations before and would like to look at any evidence corroborating materials that there may be. . . . You are also encouraged to contact me if you find anything regarding the Walter Martin accusations . . . (*Ibid.*)

Although Mr. Ballantyne professed that he had "not heard those accusations before," we find it very difficult to believe that a man who claimed to be deeply involved in dialogue with Mormons would not know that the Browns had printed the same type of allegations six years before he wrote his letter to Martin Tanner!

While some might feel that Kit Ballantyne was just trying to learn the truth about the allegations regarding Walter Martin, in view of the material we have presented here, one must also consider the possibility that he was hoping to obtain some additional information to discredit the tapes and books Walter Martin produced while he was still living.

Kit did his best to try to gain a foothold in our organization. Toward the end of his letter of August 20, 1987, he wrote: "Please let me know if anything I have (including time as a volunteer) would be helpful to your ministry. If so, we can work something out."

Many years ago another man offered to provide us with \$20,000 to use in our work if we would allow his mother to work for us. Twenty thousand dollars seemed like a great deal of money at the time, but we did not accept the offer. Although this may have been a legitimate offer, we did not think it would be wise to take a chance on compromising our work. Our mailing list, for example, could be used by unscrupulous people to identify Mormons who have questions about the church, and our list of contributions could be used to find out who is donating to the cause.

When Steven Mayfield was spying under the name "Stan Fields," he spent over a week at Ed Decker's home in Washington and was able to obtain at least some of his mailing list by posing as an "Ex-Mormon For Jesus" who wanted to help enlighten the Mormon people. Fields even requested permission to set up a chapter of Ex-Mormons For Jesus in Utah. Since it was apparent that

eventually a branch would be set up, Fields wanted to be in on the ground floor.

Since our mailing list and donors' names are kept on one of our computers, we are very sensitive about letting anyone use it. Anyone having access to our computer could easily copy the information.

Kit Ballantyne seemed to want access to our computer. In his letter of August 20, 1987, he wrote:

I would like to let you know that I have a computer program designed by the LDS Church containing the entire text of the Standard Works [i.e., The Computerized Scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. It was designed to help the General Authorities research their talks. It can search the entire Standard Works by subject quite quickly. . . . I got the program from a friend of mine who works in the Church Office Building. It could turn out to be a vital research tool. The program runs on IBM-compatibles with 640K memory and uses 11 meg of a hard drive. If the program would be useful to you, let me know. I am interested in trading for a few of your publications if you'd like the program. The program fits on 30 double-density double sided 5 1/4 inch disks and comes with complete documentation.

If we had accepted this offer, Kit would have undoubtedly come to our house and offered his services to install the program. Any distraction, such as a phone call, would have given him ample opportunity to learn what other material might be stored in the computer. In any case, a good deal of time passed and we bought our own version of the program and used it in writing the book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*.

Unfortunately for Kit Ballantyne, he completely forgot what he had written or else felt that we would not remember it. In any event, he contacted us and said he had heard that we had *The Computerized Scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* and was interested in coming to our house to see how it worked! Since we knew that he already had the program, we could only conclude that this might be a ruse to gain access to our computer.

Now, if Matthew Roper wants to put his confidence in "Kit Ballantyne" and use him as a witness against us, he is welcome to do so. Notwithstanding the fact that Ballantyne made many attempts to convince us that he is on our side, we still have serious reservations about the matter.

In light of this information, Mr. Roper must consider the strong possibility that Ballantyne's charge of "journalistic license" against us was motivated by the

fact that we refused to allow him to have a part in our work. We doubt very much that Mr. Ballantyne wanted Roper to make this information public.

Strangely, after referring to Ballantyne's critical note, Roper turned right around and acknowledged that we may be right about when we lost faith in the Book of Mormon: "I, for myself, am quite willing to accept the author's account . . ." (Roper, Longer Rebuttal, page 7).

(Anyone interested in more information on our decision to leave the church should read our statements at the back of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*)

Unfortunately, Roper goes on to say that he still suspects that there may be something sinister about our apostasy from the church:

their curious hypersensitivity regarding the issue make me suspect that there was more to their apostasy than the simple intellectual exercise it is sometimes represented to be. (*Ibid.*, pages 7-8)

In his review of our book on the "black hole" (Longer Review, page 2) John Tvedtnes commented: "I hadn't followed the Tanners' work for about two decades." While we can understand John Tvedtnes' hesitation about having contact with us, if he had called on the phone and asked us to explain what he perceived to be a contradiction in Sandra's story, we could have explained the matter to him and it would have saved a good deal of embarrassment.

Roper Trips at the First Hurdle

As we indicated earlier, Matthew Roper has made a rebuttal to a portion of our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* While *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* contains over 600 pages of material, Mr. Roper's response deals with only pages "50-125." Unfortunately for Mr. Roper, he stumbles and comes crashing to the ground on the very first hurdle (page 50). He boldly asserts that we have suppressed part of a statement by Brigham Young to "mislead" our readers:

The Tanners state, "The Mormon Church claims that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon never denied their testimony. There are, however, . . . statements in Mormon publications which would seem to indicate that the witnesses had some doubts" (p. 50). They then quote a statement by Brigham Young: "Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel." Unfortunately the Tanners have left out the rest of the

statement, giving the false impression that Brigham Young had reference to the three or eight witnesses. The full quote reads as follows:

Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. One of the *Quorum of the Twelve*—a young man full of faith and good works, prayed, and the vision of his mind was opened, and the angel of God came and laid the plates before him, and he saw the angel, and conversed with him as he would with one of his friends; but after all this, he was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy, and has continued to contend against this work. There are hundreds in a similar condition.

The Tanners would mislead their readers by using this quotation as evidence against the Book of Mormon witnesses. But none of the eleven were ever members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Brigham Young was referring to one of several other early Mormons who had similar experiences, but not to one of the official Book of Mormon witnesses as the Tanners clearly imply. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, pages 171-172)

Matthew Roper's accusation concerning this quotation by Brigham Young raises a serious question with regard to the superficiality of his review of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* If Mr. Roper had examined the very next page (page 51), he would have found a photographic copy of not only the quotation but also the entire page of Brigham Young's sermon! In the caption below the reproduction we clearly stated:

A Photograph of the *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, p. 164. In this sermon Brigham Young claims that some of the witnesses were left to disbelieve that they had seen an angel.

Now, this certainly raises a question with regard to Matthew Roper's claim that we were trying to "mislead" our readers. Why would we include a photograph of the document if we were trying to deceive people?

Even if we had not included the photograph of Brigham Young's statement, there would have been no reason for Roper to attack us in the way he did. We fail to see how we have misused the quote.

A careful reading of Brigham Young's statement reveals that he was referring to different cases of apostasy. First he spoke of some of the Book of Mormon witnesses having doubt and disbelief concerning the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated and also regarding the angel who

POETRY.

For the Times and Seasons.

BY J. H. JOHNSONS.

"The wise shall understand."—Daniel.

Amazed with wonder! I look round
To see most people of our day,
Reject the glorious gospel sound,
Because the simple turn away.
Or does it prove there is no time,
Because some watches will not go?
But does it prove there is no crime
Because not punished here below?
Or can it prove no gems remain,
Because some fools, throw their's away?
Or can it prove no king can reign
Because some subjects wont obey?
Or prove the gospel was not true
Because old Paul the Saints could kill?
Because the Jews its author slew,
And now reject their Saviour still?
Or prove that Christ was not the Lord
Because that Peter cursed and swore?
Or Book of Mormon not his word
Because denied, by Oliver?
Or prove, that Joseph Smith is false
Because apostates say tis so!
Or prove that God, no man exalts
Because from priests such doctrines flow?
O, no! the wise will surely say;
No proof unto the man that's wise,
Then O! dig deep ye wise to-day;
And soon the truth will be your prize.
Not like the fool who chane'd to see,
The Saint forsake his heavenly course,
And turn to sin and vanity—
Then cries your "scheme is all a farce."

For the Times and Seasons.

P S A L M.

BY

MISS E. R. SNOW.

Praise the Lord O my soul: Praise him all
ye sons and daughters of Zion.

Let us sing unto him a new song: let us
sing of his marvellous doings in the last days.

He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever;
therefore I will praise him for what my eyes
have seen, and my ears have heard.

He hath opened the fountain of knowledge:
he hath unlock'd the treasures of wisdom and
understanding.

He hath brought to pass that which he spake
by the mouth of his ancient prophets: yea, he
hath caused truth to "spring up out of the
earth, and righteousness to look down from
heaven."

In ancient time he call'd his servant David
from the sheep-fold to preside over the nation of

Israel; yea, from a tender of flocks did he raise
him to the sovereignty of his covenant people.

He call'd Elijah from the occupation of hus-
bandry, even when "ploughing in the field with
twelve yoke of oxen;" to be a prophet in Israel:

Yea by the hand of Elijah, was he anointed
to the office of his calling, even to proclaim the
word of the Lord—to declare the counsels of the
Most High to the people.

In these last days the Lord hath call'd his
servant Joseph—the son of an husbandman; to
be a prophet and a teacher: yea, to be a mighty
instrument in rolling forward and establishing that
kingdom which "shall fill the whole earth."

The Lord hath spoken to him from the heav-
ens—he hath instructed him thro' the ministra-
tion of angels—he hath taught him by the pow-
er of the holy spirit.

He hath opened the heavens, he hath rent
the veil thereof, before his face—he hath spread
the visions of eternity in his presence—he hath
drawn aside the curtain of futurity and showed
unto his servant things to come.

He hath anointed him with the oil of under-
standing, and instructed him in the great mys-
teries of the kingdom of heaven; even those
"mysteries which have been hid from ages and
from generations."

Rejoice all ye Saints of the Lord and listen
to the instructions of his prophet—be careful to
depart from evil—let your hearts be pure for
the great day of the Lord approaches.

He will perform a speedy work upon the
earth—he will cut it short in righteousness—he
will not suffer his word to perish.

Therefore, let the nations be wise—let the
great ones of the earth receive counsel; let the
honest in heart prepare and gather even unto
Zion:

For "the earth shall reel to and fro like a
drunken man," yea, she shall groan because of
iniquity which is already increasing heavily
upon her.

But "Zion shall be redeem'd with judgment,
and her converts with righteousness"—the na-
tions of the earth will honor her—the glory of
the Lord will encompass her round about; and
his praises will be heard in her midst.

COMMUNICATIONS.

Manchester, April 17th 1841.

DEAR BRO. JOSEPH:—

Once more I take my pen
to write a few lines to you; most gladly
would I embrace the opportunity of a per-
sonal interview with you, did it offer; but
vain is the indulgence of such thoughts
at present.

between the two, liable continually to
be operated upon by the power of the
enemy; and it is through that power
that the children of men are made to
doubt the evidences of their own
senses, when, at the same time, if they
would reflect for a moment and listen
to the intelligence which God has
placed within them, they would know,
when they saw what is termed a
miracle, the power by which it is
wrought: they would know when they
have seen with their eyes and felt
with their hands, or when they have
had a heavenly vision.

Some of the witnesses of the Book
of Mormon, who handled the plates
and conversed with the angels of
God, were afterwards left to doubt
and to disbelieve that they had ever
seen an angel. One of the Quorum
of the Twelve—a young man full of
faith and good works, prayed, and the
vision of his mind was opened, and
the angel of God came and laid the
plates before him, and he saw and
handled them, and saw the angel,
and conversed with him as he would
with one of his friends; but after all
this, he was left to doubt, and plunged
into apostacy, and has continued to
contend against this work. There
are hundreds in a similar condition.

In comparison, there is but a hair's
breadth between the depths of infide-
lity and the heights of the faith of the
Saints; and the organization of man
is perfectly independent in its sphere.
Life and death, truth and falsehood,
light and darkness, good and evil,
the power of the Devil and the influ-
ence of God, the things of God and
the things of the Devil, all these
inducements and powers are inter-
persed among the children of men;
and they of necessity must undergo
this ordeal to prove themselves; and
in the absence of the Spirit of revela-
tion, let their sound judgments arise
and declare, "Though he slay me, I
will not forsake him."

Some of the brethren come to me
and say, "Brother Brigham, is it my
duty to pray when I have not one
particle of the spirit of prayer in
me?" True, at times men are per-
plexed and full of care and trouble,
their ploughs and other implements
are out of order, their animals have
strayed, and a thousand things per-
plex them; yet our judgment teaches
us that it is our duty to pray,
whether we are particularly in the
spirit of praying or not. My doctrine
is, it is duty to pray; and when the
time for prayer comes, John should
say, "This is the place and this is
the time to pray: knees bend down
upon that floor, and do so at once."
But John says, "I do not want to
pray; I do not feel like it." Knees,
get down, I say; and down bend the
knees, and he begins to think and
reflect. Can you say anything? Can
you not say, God have mercy on me a
sinner? Yes, he can do this, if he
can rise up and curse his neighbour
for some ill deeds. Now, John, open
your mouth and say, Lord, have
mercy upon me. "But I do not
feel the spirit of prayer." That does
not excuse you, for you know what
your duty is. You have a passion, a
will, a temper to overcome. You are
subject to temptation as other men;
and when you are tempted, let the
judgment which God has placed within
you and the intelligence he has given
you by the light of the Spirit be the
master in this case.

If I could not master my mouth, I
would my knees, and make them
bend until my mouth would speak.
"But the cattle are in the corn."
Let them eat; you can attend to
them when you have finished pray-
ing. Let the will of the man be
brought into subjection to the law of
Christ—to all the ordinances of the
house of God. What, in his dark-
ness and depression? Yes; for that
is the time to prove whether one is a

A photograph of the *Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, page 482. The *Times and Seasons* was a Mormon publication. In the poem that appears on this page it is stated that Oliver denied the Book of Mormon.

A photograph of the *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, page 164. In this sermon Brigham Young claims that some of the witnesses were left to disbelieve that they had seen an angel.

supposedly showed them the plates. President Young then claimed that a member of the “Quorum of the Twelve” also had an experience in which an “angel of God came and laid the plates before him,” but he later “was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy.” Young then concludes with the statement that “hundreds” had likewise fallen into a state of unbelief.

The reader will notice that Brigham Young indicated there was more than one witness of the Book of Mormon who had grave reservations about the book. Young, in fact, stated that “Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon . . . were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel.” We know, therefore, that President Young felt that two or more of the witnesses had fallen into disbelief at some point in their lives.

It would appear that Mr. Roper would like his readers to believe that none of the original witnesses ever had seasons of doubt with regard to the Book of Mormon. He seems to be trying to redefine Brigham Young’s statement about “some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon” so that it does not refer to any of the original eleven witnesses whose names appear in the book. While there may be some exceptions to the rule, we believe that almost all Mormons would think of these eleven men when they read Brigham Young’s words, “the witnesses of the Book of Mormon.” (There are actually two separate statements by the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. The first contains the “Testimony of Three Witnesses” — Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. These men claim that an angel of God showed the plates to them. The second statement is by eight men who said they saw the plates, although they did not claim that an angel showed the plates to them.)

It is interesting to note that on April 6, 1855, Brigham Young gave another sermon in which he stated that “most of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon have died . . .” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, page 249). The reader will notice that President Young used exactly the same words as he did in the quotation cited in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* It is obvious that he was referring to the eleven men whose names appear in the Book of Mormon because he noted that most of these witnesses were dead. Research verifies that Brigham Young was correct about this matter; by 1855 only four of the eleven witnesses were still alive. Just above the portion we cited, Young indicated that “Martin Harris” was probably still alive, but “Oliver Cowdery has gone to his long home . . .” Harris and Cowdery, of course, were among the witnesses whose names appear in the Book of Mormon.

As early as 1839, John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was having a struggle with the question of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. While a statement in *Joseph Smith’s History*

indicates that John Whitmer still claimed that Joseph Smith had some kind of plates which he was allowed to handle, Whitmer expressed doubts about whether Joseph Smith’s translation was correct:

Turley asked him, “Why is not the translation now true?” He said, “I could not read it [in the original] and I do not know whether it [i.e., the translation] is true or not.” Whitmer testified all this in the presence of eight men. (*History of the Church*, vol. 3, pages 307-308)

Although none of the witnesses ever gave a handwritten statement repudiating the Book of Mormon, some of them did seem to have seasons of skepticism about the authenticity of that work. In our book, *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, page 16, we give photographic proof that after Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the Mormon Church, he joined the Methodist Church. Mormon writer Richard Anderson admits that Cowdery was affiliated with the Methodists, but he claims that Cowdery did not deny his testimony:

The cessation of his activity in the Church meant a suspension of his role as a witness of the Book of Mormon. Not that his conviction ceased, but he discontinued public testimony . . . he logically affiliated himself with a Christian congregation for a time, the Methodist Protestant Church at Tiffin, Ohio. (*Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 1981, page 57)

In 1885, G. J. Keen, who was a member of the Methodist Church which Cowdery joined, gave an affidavit in which he stated:

Rev. John Souder and myself were appointed a committee to wait on Mr. Cowdery and confer with him respecting his connection with Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. . . .

We accordingly waited on Mr. Cowdery at his residence in Tiffin, and there learned his connection, from him, with that order, and his full confession and final renunciation thereof.

We then inquired of him if he had any objection to making a public recantation.

He replied that he had objections . . . it could do no good . . . it would have a tendency to draw public attention, invite criticism, and bring him into contempt.

“But,” said he, “nevertheless, if the church require it, I will submit to it, but I authorize and desire you and the church to publish and make known my recantation.”

We did not demand it, but submitted his name to the church, and he was unanimously admitted a member thereof.

At that time he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism.

He continued his membership while he resided in Tiffin, and became superintendent of the Sabbath School, and lived an exemplary life while he resided with us. (Affidavit quoted in *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, by Charles A. Shook, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1914, pages 58-59)

On July 15, 1841, the Mormon Church publication, *Times and Seasons*, printed a poem which made it clear that the Mormons believed that Oliver Cowdery had denied his testimony to the Book of Mormon. The following appeared in the poem:

Amazed with wonder! I look round
To see most people of our day,
Reject the glorious gospel sound,
Because the simple turn away.
.....
Or prove that Christ was not the Lord
Because that Peter cursed and swore?
*Or Book of Mormon not his word
Because denied, by Oliver?*
(*Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, page 482)

Underhanded Use?

Under a section entitled, “Quotation and Misrepresentation,” Matthew Roper charges us with distorting an article written by Richard Anderson:

Nowhere is this more apparent than in their underhanded use of Richard Anderson’s material. They try hard to put the worst possible face on the Book of Mormon witnesses, but, in doing so, have distorted a number of Anderson’s statements, which, when read in their proper context, make the case for the witnesses quite compelling. A few examples are listed below, taken from just one page of the Tanners’ book. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, pages 172-73)

Mr. Roper does not say exactly what we distorted, but we would assume that it relates to the fact that in our quotation from Anderson’s article we did not state that Martin Harris still defended the Book of Mormon after he was excommunicated in 1837. On page 173 of his response, Roper included these words from Anderson which he felt should have appeared in our quotation: “A contemporary letter from Kirtland reported: ‘Martin Harris then bore testimony of its [the Book of Mormon’s] truth and said all would be damned if they rejected it.’”

Matthew Roper seems to have missed the fact that toward the end of chapter 5 of our book we included a letter by Stephen Burnett making it clear that even after his excommunication Martin Harris said that he believed the Book of Mormon:

“... when I came to hear Martin Harris state in public that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver nor David & also that the eight witnesses never saw them & hesitated to sign that instrument for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundation was sapped & the entire superstructure fell in [a] heap of ruins, I therefore three week[s] since in the Stone Chapel . . . renounced the Book of Mormon . . . after we were done speaking M Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or a handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city throught [*sic*] a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight was false, if it had not been picked out of ___ [him/me?] but should have let it passed as it was . . .” (Letter from Stephen Burnett to “Br Johnson,” dated April 15, 1838, Joseph Smith papers, Letter book, April 20, 1837—February 9, 1843, pp. 64-66, typed copy). (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 96-C)

If we were deliberately trying to suppress the fact that Martin Harris was bearing his testimony to the Book of Mormon after he was excommunicated, we could have left out the portion of this letter which said he knew “it was true”? (With regard to Burnett’s claim that Martin Harris said the Eight Witnesses did not see the plates, see the statements by Marvin Hill and Richard Anderson cited on page 96-C of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*)

Actually, the truth of the matter is that we have always held to the position that Martin Harris defended the Book of Mormon many times after he was put out of the church. In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, 1968, page 30, we cited a quotation from an interview Joel Tiffany had with Martin Harris in 1859 (reprinted from a book written by the Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham):

It is but simple justice to Mr. Harris, that we should state that he is still an earnest and sincere advocate of the spiritual and divine authority of the Book of Mormon. He does not sympathize with Brigham Young and the Salt Lake Church. He considers them apostates from the true faith; and as being under the influence of the devil.

On page 21 of the same book, we quoted Harris as saying: “No man ever heard me in any way deny the truth of the Book of Mormon . . .” We also included Burnett’s statement that “M Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true” in our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, published by Moody Press in 1980.

Even if our book had never mentioned that Martin Harris held on to the Book of Mormon after he was expelled from the church, there was really no reason for us to quote all the information Richard Anderson included in the part of the article in question. Toward the end of the material cited in our book, Professor Anderson made it clear that Harris still had a testimony to the Book of Mormon:

“The foregoing tendencies explain the spiritual wanderlust that afflicted the solitary witness at Kirtland. In this period of his life he changed his religious position eight times, including a rebaptism by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with some Mormon group, except when he was affiliated with the Shaker belief, a position not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony because the foundation of that movement was acceptance of personal revelation from heavenly beings.” (*Improvement Era*, March 1969, page 63)

The reader can see that Richard Anderson’s statement, which we quoted in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 58, shows that Harris was clinging to the Book of Mormon. It seemed superfluous to include more on that subject. We did, however, add information concerning Martin Harris’ involvement in two sects which had broken off from the Mormon Church. As we show on pages 55-57 of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Martin Harris joined the Strangites. This group was led by James Jesse Strang. Strang, like Joseph Smith, claimed that he found some plates which he translated with the Urim and Thummim. He also had witnesses who maintained they saw the plates, and their testimony is recorded in almost the same way that the testimony of the eleven witnesses is recorded in the Book of Mormon. Strang had forged a letter from Joseph Smith which appointed him as his successor. Martin Harris and other witnesses to the Book of Mormon were taken in by Strang. Strang’s group believed in both the Book of Mormon and the book Strang translated from his bogus plates.

After Martin Harris served on a mission for the Strangites, he and other witnesses to the Book of Mormon decided to follow William E. McLellin. McLellin was

a Mormon apostle whose name is still listed in the Mormon *Doctrine and Covenants*’ “Testimony of the Twelve Apostles to the Truth of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.” McLellin, however, later mounted an attack on Joseph Smith and stated that “ ‘All your trouble comes from your taking that mutilated and altered *Doctrine and Covenants*’ ” (As cited in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 31). McLellin, however, retained his testimony to the Book of Mormon.

In any case, five of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon supported McLellin’s church. Martin Harris was baptized on February 13, 1847, and David Whitmer became the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the McLellin sect. This, of course, means that two of the special group of “Three Witnesses” came out in support of McLellin. Harris even joined with Leonard Rich and Calvin Beebe in a “Testimony of Three Witnesses” that David Whitmer, not Brigham Young, was the true successor to Joseph Smith:

The Testimony Of Three Witnesses.

We cheerfully certify . . . we attended a general conference . . . on the 8th day of July, 1834 . . . Joseph Smith . . . arose and said that the time had come when he must appoint his Successor in office. . . . *The Lord has made it known to me that David Whitmer is the man.* David was then called forward, and Joseph and his counselors laid hands upon him, and ordained him to his station, to succeed him. Joseph . . . said, now brethren, if any thing should befall [I] me, the work of God will roll on with more power that it has hitherto done. Then, brethren, you will have a man who can lead you as well as I can. He will be Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator before God.

Martin Harris,
Leonard Rich,
Calvin Beebe.”

(*The Ensign of Liberty*, December 1847, pp. 43-44)

In our opinion the thing that really undermines Martin Harris’ testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon is that he was very unstable when it came to religious matters. He seemed to be willing to join any group that would provide some new excitement in his life. It is reported that Martin Harris had already changed religions a number of times before he became a Mormon (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 58). Besides the changes he made before he became a Latter-day Saint, Richard Anderson has admitted that Harris “changed his religious position eight times” while he was in Kirtland, Ohio. Although Professor Anderson would like us to put our full confidence in Harris’ testimony concerning

the Book of Mormon, he is forced to admit that his life shows evidence of “religious instability.”

Even the Mormon Church’s own publication, *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, had a great deal of negative things to say about Martin Harris when he was serving as a missionary for the Strangites:

One of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the devil a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy. He was filled with the rage and madness of a demon. One day he would be one thing, and another day another thing. He soon became partially deranged or shattered, as many believed, flying from one thing to another, as if reason and common sense were thrown off their balance. In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the “Shakers” or followers of Anne Lee. He tarried with them a year of two, or perhaps longer, having had some flare ups while among them; but since Strang has made his entry in the apostate ranks, and hoisted his standard for the rebellious to flock to, Martin leaves the “Shakers,” whom he knows to be right, and has known it for many years, as he said, and joins Strang . . . his own unbridled tongue will soon show out specimens of folly . . . if the Saints wish to know what the Lord hath said of him, they may turn to the . . . *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, and the person there called a “wicked man” is no other than Martin Harris . . . Elder Wheelock will remember that evil men, like Harris, out of the evil treasure of their hearts bring forth evil things. (*Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, vol. 8, November 15, 1846, pages 124-128)

One of the things which Matthew Roper felt we should have included in our quotation from Richard Anderson was the following:

One may well ask, since religious instability is so much in evidence, why Martin Harris did not abandon his signed testimony. Freely seeking and bound by no Mormon ties, the only constancy of this period is his witness of the Nephite record. If Martin Harris’ experience was an invention or emotional aberration, why didn’t it go the way of his other religious flirtations? But if his doctrinal commitments in Kirtland were fickle, his testimony of the angel and the plates remained an immovable certainty.

While it may be true that Martin Harris really believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, we think it is important to remember that his one real claim to fame was that he was chosen to be one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Harris loved to be the center of attention, and he would certainly obtain recognition in any of the groups he joined which were linked to Mormonism. This may have been an important

factor in his decision to come to Utah in his old age and be reunited with the Mormon Church. Harris was extremely poor and feeble at the time.

Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker inform us that Martin Harris’s wife took his five children and moved to Utah. Harris became very lonely and finally begged Brigham Young to give him enough money to make a trip to Utah. According to Van Wagoner and Walker, he

sent a message to Brigham Young through [William H.] Homer. “Tell him that Martin Harris is an old, old man, living on charity, with his relatives. Tell him I should like to visit Utah, my family and children—I would be glad to accept help from the Church, but I want no personal favor. Wait! Tell him that if he sends money, he must send enough for the round trip. I should not want to remain in Utah.” (*A Book of Mormons*, 1982, page 116)

Although Martin Harris was rebaptized into the Utah Mormon Church and remained in Utah, there is evidence that he was still unhappy with the church. Before his death, Harris was interviewed by Anthony Metcalf. According to Metcalf, Harris did not believe in the Mormon Church and felt that Joseph Smith had brought false teachings into the church:

Harris said that Joe Smith (he never called him Joseph in my presence) commenced having false revelations soon after, and, in fact, before the church was organized. . . . Harris further stated that the Kirtland Bank [a bank Joseph Smith was deeply involved with] was a swindle, and he would have nothing to do with it. About that time Harris began to lose confidence in Joe Smith, as a man of truth, honor and principle, yet he believed him to be a prophet of God. . . . Harris had good evidence that Joe Smith was practicing polygamy as early as 1838, five years before the revelation on polygamy was received by the prophet. *He also claimed that polygamy, baptism for the dead, and such endowments as were given in Nauvoo and Salt Lake City, were no part of Mormonism.* I asked why he had taken his endowments when he arrived in Salt Lake City. He answered that “his only motive was to see what was going on in there.” This was said in the presence of James Bowman, of Soda Springs, Idaho, and myself. . . . *Harris never believed that the Brighamite branch [the Utah Mormon Church], nor the Josephite church, was right, because in his opinion, God had rejected them;* but he did believe that Mormonism was the pure gospel of Christ when it was first revealed, and I believe he died in that faith. (*Ten Years Before The Mast*, by Anthony Metcalf, as quoted in *A New Witness For Christ In America*, 1959, vol. 2, pages 348-349)

As noted earlier, Richard Anderson asked “why Martin Harris did not abandon his signed testimony. . . . why didn’t it go the way of his other religious flirtations? . . . his testimony of the angel and the plates remained an immovable certainty.”

An examination of the historical data available to us does not give us a great deal of confidence in the “immovable certainty” of Martin Harris’ testimony to the Book of Mormon. In fact, his involvement with the Shakers raises some serious doubts regarding his belief in the Book of Mormon. The reader will remember that we cited the following concerning Harris from the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*: “In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the ‘Shakers’ or followers of Anne Lee.” As mentioned earlier, Richard Anderson claimed that Martin Harris’ “Shaker belief” was “a position not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony because the foundation of that movement was acceptance of personal revelation from heavenly beings.”

We cannot agree with Professor Anderson on this point. While it is true that the Shakers believed in revelation, a Mormon could not accept these revelations without repudiating the teachings of Joseph Smith. The Shakers, for example, felt that “Christ has made his second appearance on earth, in a chosen female known by the name of Ann Lee, and acknowledged by us as our blessed Mother in the work of redemption” (*Sacred Roll and Book*, page 358). Any Mormon who accepted the teachings of the Shakers would have to be out of harmony with Joseph Smith’s revelations. In a revelation “Jesus Christ” gave to Joseph Smith in March 1831, the Mormons were specifically warned against the teachings of Ann Lee:

. . . preach my gospel which ye have received, even as ye have received it, unto the Shakers. . . . they are not right before me and must needs repent. . . . And again, verily I say unto you, that the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman . . .
(*Doctrine and Covenants* 49:1, 2, 22)

Verse 15 of the same revelation warned that “whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God . . .” This is obviously a warning concerning the Shaker teaching regarding celibacy. Lawrence Foster referred to Luke 20:34-36, and then stated:

Ann Lee and the Shakers, following a common Christian interpretation of this passage, argued that no sexual relations would occur in the resurrection. Such carnal distractions would be eliminated there. In imitation of this heavenly model, truly

dedicated Christians should practice celibacy on earth. Celibacy thus became the symbol of triumph over sin, the chief factor separating believers from an impure world . . . (*Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*, 1984, page 16)

Mormons, on the other hand, believe that only those who are married in a temple for eternity can obtain the highest exaltation in the hereafter. President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th prophet of the church, emphasized: “Only through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way” (*Deseret News*, Church Section, November 12, 1977).

In light of this information we find it hard to believe that Richard Anderson would say that Martin Harris’ belief in the Shaker religion was “a position not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony . . .”

The Shakers, of course, rejected the Book of Mormon and all of the revelations received by Joseph Smith. They had their own book which they claimed came from heaven. It was entitled, *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth*. More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the “Sacred Roll and Book.” Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions. On page 304 of this book we find the testimony of eight witnesses: “We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.”

Joseph Smith only had the testimony of three witnesses in his Book of Mormon who claimed to see an angel. The Shakers, however, had a large number of witnesses who maintained they saw angels and the book. There are over a hundred pages of testimony from “Living Witnesses.”

The evidence clearly shows that Martin Harris accepted the Shaker’s “Sacred Roll and Book” as a divine revelation. Clark Braden made this revealing statement about this matter:

Harris declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon. (*The Braden and Kelly Debate*, page 173)

There is a Mormon source which indicates that Martin Harris even claimed to have a greater testimony to the Shakers than to the Book of Mormon. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler

Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, “Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young’s brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization” wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated:

There are in this place all kinds of teaching; *Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon.* (“Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,” 1955, page 52)

The fact that Martin Harris would even join with such a group shows that he was unstable and easily influenced by charismatic leaders. We feel, therefore, that his testimony that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin cannot be relied upon. How can we put our trust in a man who was constantly following after strange movements like the Shakers and the Strangites?

On pages 173-176 of his review, Matthew Roper has parallel columns. In the first column he shows “Tanners’ Partial Quotation” from Richard Anderson’s book. On the other side he has the “Full Quotation by Anderson.”

Two things should be noted concerning the comparison Matthew Roper has made:

One—it is clear that we made no changes in the material we quoted. In fact, the parallel comparison shows that every word we quoted in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* agrees with the quotation Roper took from Richard Anderson’s article. We have never deliberately changed any text to make it fit our conclusions. We, of course, do not mean to imply that there are no accidental mistakes in our books. It would be almost impossible to correctly transcribe every word from the many sources we have used.

Mistakes are bound to occur. For example, Matthew Roper or the person who prepared the type for his article made three word changes in one sentence copied from *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 95. Since these changes do not seriously affect the meaning of the text, we have no reason to believe that it was a deliberate alteration of the text. It is easy for a writer to accidentally skip or alter some words when copying from another document.

Two—all of the text in Richard Anderson’s material which we chose not to use was correctly marked with the use of ellipses points. Either three dots (...) or four dots (....) were added when any material was omitted. There was no attempt to distort anything Richard Anderson said in his article. As we have already demonstrated, the material removed was really irrelevant because we cited Anderson’s statement that “Every affiliation of Martin

Harris was with some Mormon group, except when he was affiliated with the Shaker belief . . .” In addition, we included in the book a statement that Martin Harris continued to believe in the Book of Mormon after he was excommunicated.

If we had incorporated the entire context of every quotation from other sources, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* would have been far too large for most people to read. Matthew Roper and other prominent Mormon scholars use ellipses points in their work and only take the parts of documents that they feel are important.

In his review, pages 170-71, Mr. Roper declared that “The best historical treatment of the Book of Mormon witnesses to date has been done by Professor Richard Lloyd Anderson. . . . Anderson presents a convincing case for the reliability of the witnesses’ character and testimonies, effectively putting to rest, in my view, the major arguments against them. . . . any critic of the witnesses who ignores it risks being insufficiently informed about the topic.”

Since Matthew Roper believes Richard Anderson’s *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, is the “best historical treatment of the Book of Mormon witnesses,” we decided to put it to the test to see how Anderson uses ellipses. In the example which follows we copy a quotation Professor Anderson made from David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, found on page 163 of his book. The book cited by Anderson is Whitmer’s *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 1887, pages 27-28. We follow the text until the point where Anderson uses ellipses (four dots), and then we add in the words he omitted from Whitmer’s book in brackets and bold type. At the point where the ellipses ends we return to regular type to finish Anderson’s quotation:

“If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to ‘separate myself from among the Latter-day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.’ . . . [In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. I had been striving with them for a long time to show them the errors into which they were drifting, and for my labors I received only persecutions. In June, 1838, at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed, Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the

brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the church, and certain things were to be done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avar's secret band.] I make no farther statements now; but suffice it to say that my persecutions, for trying to show them their errors, became of such a nature that I had to leave the Latter Day Saints. And as I rode on horseback out of Far West in June, 1838, the voice of God from heaven spake to me as I have stated above."

If we were to use Matthew Roper's judgmental approach, we could say that Richard Anderson has deliberately left out an important part of the quotation relating to the murderous Danite Band—a highly-secret organization which Joseph Smith used to put down dissent. Although we do not have room to show it here, a similar type of ellipses occurs at the top of the same page. Well over 100 words which throw a bad light on the leadership of the church have been omitted. The words which have been eliminated are found on page 184 of John D. Lee's book, *Mormonism Unveiled*.

Now, while it is true that Professor Anderson has omitted some material which we feel is important, we do not want to make an issue out of the matter. He has properly marked the places where material has been deleted. Being a believer in the divinity of the church, he does not see things from the same perspective we do. Consequently, he leaves out some things which we feel are significant. Anderson, of course, would probably argue that he simply did not have the room to include this material. In any case, while we do not agree with many of his conclusions, we do not charge him with dishonesty. In his favor we might add that we did not find one mistake in the material he quoted.

Unfortunately, Matthew Roper and some other Mormon scholars have used a double standard when evaluating our research.

In comparing the two parallel columns in Roper's review, which are supposed to show that we "misrepresented Professor Anderson's main points," we find a curious item. On page 174, three dots appear in the "Full Quotation by Anderson." When we examined this ellipses we found 53 words missing from Anderson's article. Now, we would ask, how can this be the "Full Quotation by Anderson," as Roper states at the top of the page, if 53 words have been deleted? It would be more appropriate to label it as, "Roper's Partial Quotation."

Reliable Witnesses?

On page 171 of his review, Matthew Roper charges: "The Tanners seek to discredit the character of the witnesses by citing several negative statements from the Missouri period in 1838, when certain Mormons accused them of dishonesty, immorality, and counterfeiting (pp. 53-54)." The reader will notice that Roper is careful not to reveal the fact that the "certain Mormons" who accused the witnesses of wrong doing were the top leaders of the Mormon Church. On page 53 of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we stated: "Some of the most damaging statements against the Book of Mormon witnesses, however, came from the pen of Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders."

Even before the Book of Mormon was published, Joseph Smith gave a revelation in which Martin Harris was called "a wicked man" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 3:12). Section 10, verse 7, also makes it plain that Harris is "a wicked man." Every one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon were eventually excommunicated.

Martin Harris accused Joseph Smith of "lying and licentiousness." The Mormon leaders in turn published an attack on the character of Harris. The following appeared in the church's paper, *Elders' Journal*, a publication edited by Joseph Smith:

One thing we have learned, that there are negroes who were [wear] white skins, as well as those who wear black ones . . . Granny [Warren] Parrish had a few others who acted as lackies, such as Martin Harris, Joseph Coe, Cyrus P[.] Smalling, etc. but they are so far beneath contempt that a notice of them would be too great a sacrifice for a gentleman to make. . . . While they were held under restraints by the church, and had to behave with some degree of propriety, at least, the priest manifested the greatest opposition to them. But no sooner were they excluded from the fellowship of the church and gave loose, to all kinds of abominations, swearing, lying, cheating, swindling, drinking, with every species of debauchery, then the priests began to extol them to the heavens . . . (*Elders' Journal*, August, 1838, page 59)

In a letter dated December 16, 1838, Joseph Smith made this statement concerning some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon:

Such characters as McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are too mean to mention . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 232)

On page 228 of the same volume, Joseph Smith referred to David Whitmer as a “dumb ass”:

This poor man [William McLellin] who professes to be much of a prophet, has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer . . . and this ass . . . brays out cursings instead of blessings. Poor ass! Whoever lives to see it, will see him and his rider perish like those who perished in the gainsaying of Korah, or after the same condemnation.

The Mormons finally drove the dissenters from Far West, Missouri. Before they did so, however, they sent a threatening letter to them. According to Mormon historian B. H. Roberts, the communication was “drawn up by Elder [Sidney] Rigdon, it is said, and addressed to the leading dissenters . . . commanding them to leave Caldwell county within three days under penalty of a ‘more fatal calamity’ befalling them if they refused to depart. The document was signed by eighty-four men . . .” (*A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1930, vol. 1, pages 438-439).

Sidney Rigdon was first counselor to President Joseph Smith. According to Ebenezer Robinson, Joseph Smith’s own brother, Hyrum Smith, also a member of the First Presidency, signed this letter. In this letter two of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon are accused of being involved in the “bogus money business.” The letter also implicates John Whitmer, one of the Eight Witnesses, with stealing:

“After Oliver Cowdery had been taken by a State warrant for stealing . . . in which nefarious transaction John Whitmer had also participated. Oliver Cowdery stole the property, conveyed it to John Whitmer . . . We wish to remind you that Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were among the principal of those who were the means of gathering us to this place by their testimony [to the Book of Mormon]. . . which testimony we believe now, as much as before you had so scandalously disgraced it. . . . Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson [one of the Twelve Apostles], united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property... During the full career of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer’s bogus money business, it got abroad into the world they were engaged in it, and several gentlemen were preparing to commence a prosecution against Cowdery; he finding it out, took with him Lyman E. Johnson, and fled to Far West with their families; Cowdery stealing property . . . he was saved from the penitentiary by two influential men of the place

. . . you kept up continual correspondence with your gang of marauders in Kirtland, encouraging them to go on with their iniquity . . . stealing, cheating, lying . . . selling bogus money, and also stones and sand for bogus; in which nefarious business Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson were engaged. . . . We have evidence of a very strong character that you are at this very time engaged with a gang of counterfeiters, coiners, and blacklegs . . . we will put you from the county of Caldwell: so help us God.” (Letter quoted in *Senate Document 189*, February 15, 1841, pages 6-9)

The “Far West Record” contains some very important information concerning Oliver Cowdery and the alleged bogus money business. This book contains minutes of meetings held by Mormon leaders in Kirtland and Far West. It was suppressed by church leaders for many years, but they finally allowed it to be printed by Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook in 1983. We cite the following from the portion of the record which deals with the excommunication of Oliver Cowdery:

Joseph Smith jr testifies that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he intrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting the girl business [Cowdery had accused Smith of committing adultery with a young woman]. Also that Oliver Cowdery took him one side and said, that he had come to the conclusion to get property and if he could not get it one way he would another, God or no God, Devil or no Devil, property he must . . . have . . .

F. G. Williams testifies that Oliver Cowdery told him that there was a certain man in the Church who could compound metal and make dies, that he could make money so that it could not be detected and if it was the case it was no harm to take that money and pass it. . . . Also that it was reported that Oliver was engaged in the Bogus money business. . . .

Joseph Smith jr testifies that Mr Sapham a man who did not belong to the Church came to him and told him that a warrant was about to be is[s]ued against Oliver Cowdery for being engaged in making a purchase of Bogus money & dies to make the counterfeit money with, after which himself and President Rigdon went to see him, (Oliver) and talked with him about it, when he denied it after which they told him if he was guilty he had better leave the country; but if he was innocent to stand a trial & he should come out clear; but that night or the next he left the country. (*Far West Record, Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1830-1844, pages 168-169)

From this information it would appear that if Oliver Cowdery was guilty, Joseph Smith was virtually an accessory after the fact. The reader will note that he warned Cowdery to flee from the law “if he was guilty.” One would think that a prophet would have advised Cowdery to face the consequences of breaking the law rather than advising him to become a fugitive from justice!

At any rate, according to Joseph Smith, the 8th charge against Oliver Cowdery, “For disgracing the Church by being connected in the bogus business,” was “sustained” and Cowdery was excommunicated (*History of the Church*, vol. 3, pages 16-17).

At this point in time, there is really no way to know whether the Mormon leaders’ charges against the witnesses of the Book of Mormon were true or false. Although all of the Three Witnesses were excommunicated from the church, whether they could have been convicted of a crime in a court of law would certainly be another matter. The important thing, however, is the fact that we have Joseph Smith and other top leaders of the church attacking the reliability of the witnesses.

These were not anti-Mormons making the charges. As we have shown, some of the most serious charges came from the mouth of Joseph Smith. If the witnesses were not really guilty of the crimes Smith charged them with, why would the prophet spew forth such terrible allegations? If he was not telling the truth, he would have been guilty of slander and libel against God’s chosen witnesses of the Book of Mormon. This, of course, would show a real lack of spiritual discernment on his part.

Over half (six) of the eleven witnesses of the Book of Mormon left the Mormon Church, and four of these never returned. Some of the witnesses who left the church made serious accusations against Joseph Smith. Smith was charged with teaching false doctrine, lying, stealing, and adultery. John Whitmer, one of the Eight Witnesses, wrote the following in his history of the church:

Joseph Smith, Jr., S. Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith . . . began to enforce their new organized plan, which caused dissensions and difficulties, threatenings and even murders. . . . on the 19th of June, 1838, they preached a sermon . . . in which these Gideonites [the Danites] understood that they should drive the dissenters, as they termed those who believed not in their secret bands, in fornication, adultery or midnight machinations. . . . They had threatened us, to kill us, if we did not make restitution to them, by

upholding them in their wicked purposes . . . when we were on our way home . . . we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L. E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes, and robbed them of all their goods, save clothing, bedding, etc.

While we were gone Jo. [Joseph Smith] and Rigdon and their band . . . abused our families, and threatened them, if they were not gone by morning, they would be drove out, and threatened our lives, if they ever saw us in Far West. (*John Whitmer’s History*, page 22)

Whatever one makes of the charges Joseph Smith brought against some of the Book of Mormon witnesses and the counter charges they made against him, these accusations certainly raise questions concerning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. If the witnesses were telling the truth about Joseph Smith, then it seems doubtful that he could have been either the Lord’s chosen vessel to bring forth the gold plates or His mouthpiece for the church. On the other hand, if Joseph Smith told the truth regarding the witnesses, their dishonesty would seem to preclude their being used as witnesses for the Lord’s work.

While many critics doubt that Joseph Smith had any metal plates to show the witnesses, others feel that he may have had a set of bogus plates. The testimony of the Eight Witnesses regarding the plates can be easily explained if one believes that Joseph Smith had a set of bogus plates. These witnesses probably would not be qualified to determine if the plates were authentic or if they were made in ancient times.

Mormons believe that the most important testimony concerning the Book of Mormon comes from the Three Witnesses. These men were supposed to have been visited by an angel of God who showed them the plates. This testimony, however, is not impressive when viewed in light of their other religious experiences. Oliver Cowdery, as we have shown, became a member of the Methodist Church. Later, however, he returned to the Mormon Church, although he did not go to Utah. While the fact that he returned to the church might impress some people, David Whitmer claimed that Cowdery died believing that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet and that his revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* must be rejected:

In the winter of 1848, after Oliver Cowdery had been baptized [into the Mormon Church] at Council Bluffs, he came back to Richmond to live, and lived here until his death, March 3, 1850. . . . Now, in 1849

the Lord saw fit to manifest unto John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself all the remaining errors in doctrine into which we had been led by the heads of the old church. We were shown that the Book of Doctrine and Covenants contained many doctrines of error, and that it must be laid aside . . . They were led out of their errors, and are upon record to this effect, rejecting the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. (An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon, pages 1-2)

As we have already shown, Martin Harris was so unstable that he changed his religious position “eight times” after leaving Mormonism. He then allowed himself to be rebaptized into the Mormon Church and moved to Utah. According to Anthony Metcalf, he still was not satisfied and confessed that he did not believe in the Mormon Church: “Harris never believed that the Brighamite branch [the Utah Mormon Church], nor the Josephite church, was right, because in his opinion, God had rejected them . . .”

If we did not know that at one time Martin Harris said that his testimony to “Shakerism” was “greater than it was of the Book of Mormon,” we might be more impressed by his witness to the Book of Mormon. Moreover, his testimony to the Strangites, who were founded on a forged Joseph Smith letter and a bogus set of plates, does not tend to instill confidence.

As far as David Whitmer is concerned, he never returned to the Mormon Church and died believing Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet who had been deceived by the devil. Mormons ask us to accept David Whitmer’s testimony to the Book of Mormon, but, we ask, will they accept his own statement that God himself spoke directly to him and told him to leave the Mormon Church? As we pointed out earlier, Whitmer proclaimed:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.” (*An Address to all Believers in Christ*, page 27)

Mormons cannot accept this testimony by their own witness without destroying faith in Joseph Smith. Richard Anderson tries very hard to explain away Whitmer’s assertion by saying that it may not have been an audible voice that he heard: “. . . he only implies that it was audible by comparing it with the command to

testify of the Book of Mormon.” This seems like a weak argument. Using this same reasoning, it could just as reasonably be argued that the voice which the witnesses to the Book of Mormon heard was not an audible voice.

Professor Anderson goes on to suggest that Satan might have deceived Whitmer:

. . . he may have only felt that God spoke to him because of the powerful indignation that swelled up in his soul; or if he gave way to the spirit of anger and retaliation, he invited Satan to inspire him and deceive him. For instance, once in later life he was tempted to lead, thereby dictating several revelations that he later considered false. The Far West “voice” might fall into this category. (*Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, page 164)

While he was with the McLellin group, David Whitmer gave a revelation from the Lord proclaiming that Mormon people were very wicked:

For verily, verily saith the Lord, even Jesus, your Redeemer, they have polluted my name, and have done continually wickedness in my sight . . . in the pride of their own hearts have they done wickedness in my name, even all manner of abominations, even such that the people of the world never was guilty of.

While he was with the McLellin group, David Whitmer even claimed to see a chest or box containing precious things. William E. McLellin wrote:

But here David said a vision opened before him, and the spirit which was upon him bid him stop and talk to me concerning it. He said that in the bright light before him he saw a small chest or box of curious and fine workmanship . . . (*The Ensign of Liberty*, August, 1849, pages 101-104)

The fact that David Whitmer can be in a state of apostasy from the Mormon Church and yet hear God speaking to him “by his own voice from the heavens,” dictate a revelation attacking the church and see a “chest or box” in a “bright light” certainly raises some serious questions regarding his credibility as a witness. It would appear that he was a very visionary man and could have revelations to suit his own purposes. Mormons cling tenaciously to his testimony concerning the Book of Mormon and yet reject the spiritual experiences he claimed to have during a period of fifty years when he was outside of the church.

While Matthew Roper would like his readers to believe he has punched holes in our case against the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, in our opinion it

stands as solid and impenetrable as it was before he came on the scene. As we state in *Mormonism—Shadow or Realty?* page 59, “the Book of Mormon witnesses have been ‘weighed in the balances’ and found wanting.”

Ancient or Modern?

Matthew Roper tries very hard to explain away the evidence we presented in *Mormonism—Shadow or Realty?* which shows the Book of Mormon is a modern production. Roper also attempts to minimize Joseph Smith’s exposure to books that could have provided structural material for the Book of Mormon. On pages 176-177 of his article, he stated:

In addition to time limitations, Joseph was also under serious economic constraints as well, making it highly unlikely that he could have made much use of local bookstores even if useful information had been available. The Tanners suggest that Joseph could have used the Manchester, New York, Library, which was only several miles from his home (p. 88), but this is also unlikely.

Actually, those who carefully examine page 88 of our book, will discover that we did not “suggest” that Joseph Smith used the “Manchester, New York, Library.” While it is possible that Smith may have seen books that came from that library, all we were trying to show is that there were many books available in the area in which he lived. A Mormon writer (J. N. Washburn) stated that he could find “no mention of any library or library catalogue either in Palmyra or Manchester.” In response, we quoted another Mormon writer who showed just the opposite—that there were a great many books available in the area:

The Mormon writer Milton V. Backman, Jr., has done a great deal of research with regard to this matter. His research shows just the opposite of what many Mormon writers have maintained in the past:

. . . on January 14, 1817, the inhabitants of Manchester organized a library which contained histories, biographies, geographies, religious treatises, and other popular works of that age. (*Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, Salt Lake City, 1971, page 32)

The early Genesee settlers’ zeal for knowledge is not only reflected by the appearance of a growth of newspapers but also by their establishment of libraries and bookstores throughout western New York. A Library was organized in the village

of Palmyra during the winter of 1822-1823. In January, 1817, also settlers of Manchester village established a public library. . . .

While the Smith family resided in Palmyra, many works were available in the T. C. Strong bookstore. During the month of October, 1818, for example, approximately three hundred volumes were advertised in The Palmyra Register . . .

While many works were available in Palmyra village, countless other books and pamphlets were being sold in Canandaigua, Geneva, West Bloomfield, and other surrounding communities. As early as 1815, a proprietor in West Bloomfield advertised that he had for sale more than one thousand volumes. Therefore, while the Smith family resided in western New York, many of the publications of that age were being circulated in the area, and the ideas of many eastern intellectuals and theologians were being disseminated among the settlers of the Finger lake country. . . .

As the population increased, new schools were established throughout the towns of Palmyra and Farmington. . . . Within the thirty-four towns of Ontario County there were at that time [1820] 434 schools with 23,439 children being taught. . . .

In the summer of 1820 an academy was opened in Palmyra village where students studied Latin and Greek. . . .

Even though young Joseph was probably not an avid reader and received a meager formal education, he was a humble, inquisitive youth who sought knowledge concerning the world in which he lived and God’s plan of salvation. (*Ibid.*, pages 48-51)

From this it is apparent that Joseph Smith had access to a great deal of source material from which he could have written the Book of Mormon. (*Mormonism—Shadow or Realty?* page 88)

Copying From a Bible

Matthew Roper seems unable to accept the obvious fact that Joseph Smith copied some portions of the King James Bible into the Book of Mormon. He argues that Smith did not use the Bible at all when producing the Book of Mormon. In fact, he went so far as to state:

Since the testimony of those who observed the dictation of the Book of Mormon makes it clear that he *did not have a Bible* in front of him while translating, it seems reasonable that the *Holy Ghost conveyed the translation to the Prophet* in a scriptural register. Since the language of the King

James Bible was the accepted version of the day, it would have been the most appropriate style in which to convey a new scriptural record. . . . although the King James English of our authorized version would not have been used by Alma or Mormon, the King James Bible, with both its Old and New Testaments was a part of the modern translator's reservoir of language and expression and could therefore quite properly have be [*sic*] used in translating an ancient scriptural text like the Book of Mormon. (Roper, Longer Review, page 20)

On pages 13-14 of the same rebuttal, Matthew Roper charged that we are inconsistent in our approach to the translation of the Book of Mormon:

One of the glaring inconsistencies in the authors' work is that while they accept the Testimonies of those who witnessed Joseph Smith dictate the Book of Mormon such as David Whitmer and Emma Smith (pp. 160), they still argue that the Translator deliberately pilfered from a Bible. . . . the authors recently wrote, "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" (p. 158). Not so. What I did argue was that none of those who witnessed Joseph Smith dictate the Book of Mormon mention his use of a Bible and that its apparent absence during the translation of the Book of Mormon poses serious problems for the Tanners' theory of biblical plagiarism. The Tanners, having misunderstood the point then go to great lengths to show that some LDS writers . . . have suggested that the [*sic*] when the Prophet came across passages which paralleled the King James translation he may have taken out a Bible and simply followed the KJV insofar as it agreed with the ancient text. While this is true, is [*sic*] the point is quite irrelevant since the argument for Bible use, whether made by Latter-day Saints or the Tanners, would seem to contradict the testimony of those who watched the prophet work.

The authors go on to cite David Whitmer's description of the Prophet placing the seer stone in his hat and putting his face into the hat drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light and then dictating what he read from off the stone. Yet while the Tanners clearly accept David Whitmer's testimony and that of other witnesses which describe the Prophet's use of the seer stone, their rebuttal reveals a failure to come to grips with some of the additional implications of that testimony. For example, in responding to my earlier point regarding the lack of a curtain to conceal the translator, the

Tanners said, "we do not believe that it would have been necessary for Joseph Smith to use a curtain. He may have had a 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." Then, after referring to the testimonies of Whitmer, Emma Smith and the others, they make the incredible statement that "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" (p. 160).

Those who have read volume 1 of our response will remember that we cited two of the most noted Mormon scholars—B. H. Roberts and Dr. Sidney B. Sperry—in support of our position that Joseph Smith sometimes used the Bible in writing portions of the Book of Mormon. B. H. Roberts claimed that "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 . . ."

Sidney Sperry also affirmed this position: "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" (see *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, page 158 for the context of the quotes by Roberts and Sperry).

Roper feels that "the argument for Bible use, whether made by Latter-day Saints or the Tanners, would seem to contradict the testimony of those who watched the prophet work." Many Mormon scholars agree with us on this matter. In fact, John Tvedtnes, who writes against us and has a great deal more experience with matters relating to translation than Roper, commented that "Some LDS writers believe that the Lord revealed the translation of the Book of Mormon Isaiah passages and Jesus's sermon in the language of the King James Bible (KJV). If one accepts the principle of divine revelation, that is certainly an acceptable possibility." Nevertheless, he went on to say that he is not opposed to the idea that Joseph Smith used the King James Bible:

For my part, I have no problem with Joseph Smith using the Bible directly and making changes only when there were serious differences. Not

having been present at the time, I do not know if he had a Bible with him when he dictated the Book of Mormon to his scribes. *The fact that he usually eliminated words that, in the KJV of Isaiah, are italicized, hints that he may have used the Bible itself.* (Tvedtnes, Longer Review, page 40)

Matthew Roper's idea that Joseph Smith did not use the Bible in his work on the Book of Mormon certainly does not fit with the preponderance of the evidence. Significantly, a book which was copyrighted "by the Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" supports our claim that Joseph Smith used a King James Bible:

Many critics have pointed out that many of Isaiah's writings in the Book of Mormon are identical, word-for-word, to the same passages in the King James Version. They conclude that while the meaning would be generally the same and the wording close, the verses would not be identical if Joseph were translating as he said he did. . . . Daniel H. Ludlow has written an explanation for how this could have happened:

In order to attempt an explanation of this problem, a person should consider the following points. Joseph Smith did not explain in great detail the process used in translating the Book of Mormon . . .

Also, translation is frequently concerned with general ideas rather than specific words; even *the best translators do not translate the same material from one language into another word-for-word the same.* There appears to be only one answer to explain the word-for-word similarities between the verses of Isaiah in the Bible and the same verses in the Book of Mormon. When Joseph Smith translated the Isaiah references from the small plates of Nephi, he evidently *opened his King James Version of the Bible* and compared the impression he had received in translating with the words of the King James scholars. If his translation was essentially the same as that of the King James Version, he apparently quoted the verse from the Bible; then his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, copied it down. However, if Joseph Smith's translation did not agree precisely with that of the King James scholars, he would dictate his own translation to the scribe. This procedure in translation would account for both the 234 verses of Isaiah that were changed or modified by the Prophet Joseph and the 199 verses that were translated word-for-word the same. (*Book of Mormon: Student Manual Religion* 121-122, page 90)

As strange as it may seem, Roper himself quoted an interview that M. J. Hubble had with Book of Mormon

witness David Whitmer on November 13, 1886. Significantly, Hubble claimed that Whitmer told him that a Bible was brought out to help Joseph Smith solve a problem he had when translating the Book of Mormon. The quotation Roper used reads as follows:

"Joseph Smith was a man of limited education and could hardly write. . . . Smith was ignorant of the Bible that when translating he first came to where Jerusalem was spoken of as a 'Walled City' he stopped until they got a Bible & showed him where the fact was recorded—Smith not believing it was a walled city." (Roper, Longer Review, page 18)

In another account of the same incident we find the following:

Once, as he translated, the narrative mentioned the walls of Jerusalem. Joseph stopped. "Emma," he asked, "did Jerusalem have walls surrounding it?" Emma told him it did. "O, I thought I was deceived," was his reply. (*Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 1984, page 26)

Matthew Roper apparently used the Hubble interview with Whitmer in an attempt to prove that Joseph Smith was an unlearned man who did not have the knowledge to write the Book of Mormon. A careful examination of the statements in the Hubble interview and *Mormon Enigma*, however, actually tends to raise questions about the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

The walls of Jerusalem are mentioned at the beginning of the Book of Mormon: ". . . they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 4:4). It would appear that as Joseph Smith dictated these words, he became worried that he was making a mistake. While the Bible speaks of the wall of Jerusalem being built, it also refers to when it was "broken down." In 1 Kings 3:1, we read: "And Solomon . . . made an end of building his own house . . . and the wall of Jerusalem round about." Nehemiah 1:3, however, says that "the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." Consequently, Smith may have been worried about whether the walls were standing in the time frame he had placed the Book of Mormon story.

In any case, if Joseph Smith were really translating from the gold plates, he would not have been concerned about checking to see what the Bible or even his wife had to say about the subject. That he would think he "was deceived" seems to provide additional evidence that the Book of Mormon was of human origin.

The reader will remember that Matthew Roper wrote: "One of the glaring inconsistencies in the authors' work

is that while they accept the Testimonies of those who witnessed Joseph Smith dictate the Book of Mormon such as David Whitmer and Emma Smith (pp. 160), they still argue that the Translator deliberately pilfered from a Bible.”

Actually, we do not necessary take these testimonies by David Whitmer and Emma Smith at face value. For example, on page 19 of the Longer Review, Mr. Roper cites statements by Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma Smith, who sometimes served as Joseph Smith scribe:

“When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word . . . and while I was writing them, if I made a mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling, although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time.”

While this sounds very impressive, an examination of photographs of the first pages of the original Book of Mormon manuscript clearly show that God did not protect the spelling used in the manuscript. There are, in fact, many spelling errors. For example, 1 Nephi 4:23-24 reads as follows in the current printing of the Book of Mormon:

And I spake unto him as if it had been Laban. And I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings, which were upon the plates of brass, to my elder brethren, who were without the walls.

In the original manuscript, however, it read as follows:

and I spake unto him as if it had ben laban and i also spake unto him that [word illegible] should carry the ingravings which ware uppon the [three words illegible] to my elder brethren which ware without [two words illegible]

There are a number of other examples in the early pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. We read that “the lord did soften the hart of ishmael”; “their famales did rebel”; “and ye shal know”; “his fammaly”; “an exceding great mist”; “a great and spesious bilding”; “i have seen a vission”; “menny were drowned . . . & many ware lost”; “but we heded them not”; “the power of the holy gost”; “geathered togeater to fight”; “i saw menny citties”; “out of heven”; “& i lookt.”

While many other examples could be cited, this should be sufficient to convince the reader that Emma

Smith was mistaken when she claimed God miraculously used her husband to correct spelling problems in the Book of Mormon.

On page 19, Matthew Roper cites the “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” pages 51-52, as evidence of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. While this testimony appears to be very impressive, one must also take into consideration that Emma Smith did not hesitate to use deception to protect her late husband’s reputation. For instance, in the very same document she covered up Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery have included some quotations from the Last Testimony of Sister Emma:

Emma’s conflicting loyalties were to the truth and to her sons. Her answers indicate that she chose her words in an attempt to satisfy both. . . .

“What about the revelation on polygamy? Did Joseph Smith have anything like it? What of spiritual wifery?”

“There was no revelation on either polygamy or Spiritual wives.” . . . She continued, “No such thing as polygamy, or spiritual wifery, was taught, publicly or privately, before my husband’s death, that I have now, or ever had any knowledge of.”

“Did he not have other wives than yourself?”

“He had no other wife but me; nor did he to my knowledge ever have.” . . . “Did he not hold marital relations with women other than yourself?”

“He did not have improper relations with any woman that ever came to my knowledge.” (*Mormon Enigma*, pages 301-302)

Matthew Roper and other Mormon scholars who have studied the life of Joseph Smith know that he gave a revelation that the early Mormons should practice polygamy (see the church’s own *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132) and actually entered into the practice himself. Nevertheless, Smith publicly denied that he was involved with plural wives:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.

I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 411)

Joseph Smith and other church leaders made a number of denials that polygamy was being practiced (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 245-248). That both Joseph Smith and his widow would lie to cover up the practice of polygamy, gives us very little

confidence in anything they might say about the origin of the Book of Mormon. This, of course, reminds us of the biblical story in which Ananias and Sapphira “agreed together” to deceive the church (see Acts 5:1-11).

The Seer Stone

While we have reservations about accepting some of the stories regarding the translation of the Book of Mormon, there is one common thread which runs through most of the statements by individuals who were most likely to know the facts about the matter. This is that Joseph Smith used a “seer stone” which he placed in his hat to translate the Book of Mormon.

Many Mormons are disturbed when they learn that the Book of Mormon was translated by means of a common stone. This is because Joseph Smith claimed that the book was translated by an instrument known as the Urim and Thummim. Smith, in fact, claimed that the Angel Moroni (Nephi in both the *Times and Seasons* printing and the first edition of Joseph Smith’s *Pearl of Great Price*) appeared to him and declared that the Urim and Thummim was especially prepared to translate the Book of Mormon:

Also, that there were two stones set in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:35)

Although Joseph Smith had been specifically told that he was to use the Urim and Thummim to translate the Book of Mormon, he used his own device—a stone that was found in a well. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts tried very hard to make sense of this thorny problem:

Relative to the manner of translating the Book of Mormon the Prophet himself has said but little. “Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God,” is the most extended published statement made by him upon the subject. . . . David Whitmer says that the translation was made by means of a Seer Stone. The apparent contradiction is cleared up, however, by a statement made by Martin Harris. He said that the Prophet possessed a Seer Stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as with the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he sometimes used the Seer Stone. Martin said further that the Seer

Stone differed in appearance entirely from the Urim and Thummim that was obtained with the plates . . .

The Seer Stone . . . was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well in company with his brother Hyrum, for a Mr. Clark Chase, near Palmyra, N. Y. It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since by means of it—as described above—as well as by means of the Interpreters found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraven on the plates. (*A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1, pages 127-129)

Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma, made it very clear that while Joseph Smith used the Urim and Thummim to translate the first 116 pages of the Book of Lehi which were later lost, her husband never used that instrument to translate what is now known as the Book of Mormon:

“Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color.” (Statement by Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma, as cited by James E. Lancaster in *Saints’ Herald*, November 15, 1962, page 15)

Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer agreed with Emma. He claimed that the Urim and Thummim was never used during the translation of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Lancaster quoted the following from an interview with David Whitmer which was published in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 17, 1886:

By fervent prayer and by otherwise humbling himself [after losing the 116 pages], the prophet . . . again found favor, and was presented with a strange, oval-shaped, chocolate-colored stone, about the size of an egg, only more flat, which, it was promised, should serve the same purpose as the missing Urim and Thummim . . . With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated. (*Ibid.*, page 16)

Joseph Smith may not have told Whitmer the whole story about the stone, since the evidence clearly shows that Smith had it years before he translated the Book of Mormon.

Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris apparently believed that Joseph was using the Urim and Thummim to translate when he was serving as scribe for the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi. It is interesting to note, however, that Smith kept himself separated from Martin Harris when he dictated to him. According to Mormon historian B. H. Roberts, Harris “had acted as the Prophet’s amanuensis

for some time, but while so employed a heavy curtain or other device had screened the Prophet and the plates from his view, and evidently doubts would sometimes arise in his mind as to whether or not the Prophet really had the plates . . .” (*Comprehensive History of The Church*, vol. 1, page 117).

Since the scribe was separated from the translator at this early period, it raises a question as to whether or not Joseph Smith was using some sort of manuscript or notes. The fact that Smith could not reproduce the lost 116 pages after they were stolen seems to run counter to that idea. Nevertheless, it could be possible that Joseph Smith did have a written text but destroyed the pages as soon as they were dictated to Harris.

Joseph Smith could have written the “translation” of the entire Book of Mormon in his own hand; instead, however, he preferred to dictate to scribes. Perhaps he felt embarrassed because he had a difficult time spelling and wanted someone else who was more educated to take the responsibility of spelling the words he dictated. Matthew Roper has two quotations in his Longer Review (page 18) which state that Joseph Smith was “illiterate.” We would not go that far. An 1832 account of Joseph Smith’s early life, which is in his own handwriting, shows that although he made a number of spelling and grammatical errors, he was not illiterate. Significantly, this account strongly resembles the style found in the Book of Mormon (see *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 1987, edited by Scott H. Faulring, pages 4-7).

At any rate, it should also be noted that there is additional confusion with regard to the Urim and Thummim because Joseph Smith’s seer stone is often referred to as the “Urim and Thummim” by some of Joseph Smith’s followers. For example, Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth prophet of the Mormon Church, commented about the matter:

The statement has been made that the Urim and Thummim was on the altar in the Manti Temple when that building was dedicated. The Urim and Thummim so spoken of, however, was the seer stone which was in the possession of the Prophet Joseph Smith in early days. This seer stone is now in possession of the Church. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1956, vol. 3, page 225)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who acknowledged that Joseph did have a seer stone, had a difficult time coming to grips with the idea that Joseph Smith would use a seer stone instead of the Urim and Thummim: “It hardly seems reasonable to suppose that the Prophet would substitute something evidently inferior under these circumstances” (*Ibid.*, page 226).

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie acknowledged that there is confusion over the two instruments: “The Prophet also had a seer stone which was separate and distinct from the Urim and Thummim, and which (speaking loosely) has been called by some a Urim and Thummim” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, page 818).

There is still another serious problem with the story of the Urim and Thummim. Joseph Smith originally did not try to equate this instrument with the Urim and Thummim mentioned in the Bible (see Exodus 28:30). This was a later idea which came into the church about three years after it was founded.

The Book of Mormon itself never uses the words Urim and Thummim. The instrument, however, is referred to six times in that book as “interpreters.” In Joseph Smith’s 1832 account of being visited by an angel he did not mention the Urim and Thummim. Instead he wrote in his own hand that “the Lord had prepared . . . spectacles for to read the Book” (*An American Prophet’s Record*, page 7).

Joseph Smith even had to change a revelation he claimed he received from God to support the idea that he had the Urim and Thummim. When his revelations were first published in the *Book of Commandments* in 1833, the following appeared at the beginning of chapter nine:

Now, behold I say unto you, that because you delivered up so many writings, which you had power to translate, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them . . .

In 1835, the revelation was reprinted in the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the words “Urim and Thummim” were interpolated into the text of the revelation. The current printing of the *Doctrine and Covenants* still contains the falsification. It appears as Section 10, verse 1:

Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings which you had power given unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them.

Richard P. Howard, Church Historian of the Reorganized LDS Church, frankly admitted that the words “Urim and Thummim” were interpolated into the revelation published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

The reference to the terms “Urim and Thummim” in the 1835 wording, absent in the 1833 publication, reflects the developing nomenclature of the early 1830’s with respect to the artifacts used by Joseph Smith, Jr., in the production of the Book of Mormon text. There is good cause to believe that when Joseph Smith was “translating” he had not applied the terms

“Urim and Thummim” to the artifacts employed in the process. Newspaper accounts of the 1830-1832 period gave detailed stories of the “translation,” but none of them designated the artifacts used as “Urim and Thummim.” Evidence of a more positive kind is found in *The Evening and The Morning Star*, January, 1833, page 2 . . . The author speaks of the “translation” of the Book of Mormon in the following terms: “It was translated by the gift and power of God, by an unlearned man, through the aid of a pair of Interpreters, or spectacles—(known, perhaps, in ancient days as Teraphim, or Urim and Thummim)”

The church leader who wrote the article has not been identified . . .

Significantly, however, he wrote with obvious uncertainty about the name of the artifacts employed by Joseph Smith in the “translation” of the Book of Mormon. . . . It is true that the terms “Urim and Thummim” were used in that January 1833 article . . . But the unmistakable uncertainty characterizing their use shows that as late as January 1833 their use was still speculative, balanced against the possibility of the use of such artifacts as “Teraphim.” The biblical student of today knows that Teraphim were the . . . household gods of Laban. He also knows today that in Old Testament times the Urim and Thummim were two stones employed by the high priest for the casting of lots in a manner not dissimilar to the throwing of dice. . . . There is no implication whatever in the biblical writings that either the Teraphim or the Urim and Thummim were related to any language translation function at all. . . .

Thus the evidence just introduced indicates the passage of from four to five years after the “translation” of the Book of Mormon before Joseph Smith definitely chose the names “Urim and Thummim” to describe the artifacts related to the Book of Mormon “translation.” Prior to that time they had been variously described as “spectacles,” “interpreters,” “Teraphim,” or “seer stones.” (*Restoration Scriptures*, 1969, pp. 207-209)

Joseph Smith indicated later in his life that when he first went to the Hill Cumorah in 1823 he became aware that the Urim and Thummim were in the stone box. The evidence, however, indicates that it was probably about a decade later before he came to that conclusion.

Under the heading “Method of Dictation,” Matthew Roper has five quotations from those who were acquainted with Joseph Smith. They all mention either the stone or a hat being used:

Joseph Knight “Now the way he translated was he put the urim and thummim into his hat and

Darkened his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would appear in brite [*sic*] Roman letters. . . .”

Emma Smith “In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.”

Martin Harris “The Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he used the seer stone. . . . By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet and written by Martin . . .”

David Whitmer “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. . . . Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principle scribe. . . .”

Elizabeth Anne Whitmer Cowdery Johnson “I often sat by and heard them translate and write for hours together. . . . He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat so as to exclude the light. . . .” (Roper, *Longer Review*, pages 15-16)

Linked to the Occult

While Matthew Roper has set forth information which establishes that Joseph Smith used a stone in his hat to translate the Book of Mormon, he has apparently not considered the serious implications of the matter. Smith’s method of translation has caused embarrassment to many believers in the Book of Mormon because it appears to be related to magical practices. The use of either the Urim and Thummim or the stone in the hat seem to be closely related to “crystal gazing.”

In a letter to John Wentworth, written in 1842, Joseph Smith described the Urim and Thummim as consisting “of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breast plate. Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God” (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 537).

Joseph Smith’s statement that he translated the Book of Mormon through “the medium of the Urim and Thummim” is, of course, contradicted by the testimony of eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, as noted above, he may have used it to translate the 116 pages which were lost or stolen. In any case, Joseph Smith’s statement that the Urim and Thummim consisted of “two transparent stones” reminds one of a medium looking into a crystal ball to reveal secret information from an occultic source. In a pamphlet entitled, *Remarkable Visions*, 1848, page 6, Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt said that “the Urim and

Thummim . . . consisted of two transparent stones, clear as crystal, set in the two rims of a bow.”

Crystal gazing is an ancient practice, and crystal gazers have claimed to see writings in their stones by the same method that Joseph Smith claimed he translated the Book of Mormon. In the book, *Strange Superstitions and Magical Practices*, page 53, we read:

Among primitive peoples there is a widespread belief in the magical efficacy of quartz crystals—one of the most common of all luminous stones. These mineralogical specimens are frequently the main prop of the magician. They are used for this purpose by the aborigines of Australia, Polynesia and North America, among others.

On pages 137-138 of the *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, by Rossell Hope Robbins, it is stated that in England “in 1467 a William Byg was convicted of using a crystal stone to locate stolen property . . .”

Crystal balls and “seer stones” (sometimes called “peep stones”) are closely associated with necromancy—i.e., “the pretended art of divination through communication with the dead.”

Long before Joseph Smith began translating sacred scripture, he was using his seer stone for the purpose of divination. According to Joseph Capron, Joseph Smith claimed he could see “infernal spirits” in his seer stone:

The family of Smiths held Joseph Smith Jr. in high estimation on account of some supernatural power he pretended to have received through the medium of a stone of peculiar quality. The stone was placed in a hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light, except that which emanated from the stone itself. This light of the stone, he pretended, enabled him to see anything he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits, mountains of gold and silver, and many other invaluable treasures deposited in the earth. (*Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834, page 259)

William Stafford gave an affidavit in which he testified that Joseph Smith and his father claimed that there were treasures buried by his house. Stafford noted that while work was being done to obtain these treasures, Joseph Smith “remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motions of the evil spirit . . .” (*Ibid.*, pp. 238-39).

In her history, Joseph Smith’s own mother, Lucy Smith, related that in 1825 Josiah Stowell traveled to Palmyra because he had heard of Joseph Smith’s gift of seership:

. . . a man, by the name of Josiah Stool, came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet*, 1853, pages 91-92)

Joseph Smith went with Josiah Stowell and used his seer stone in an unsuccessful attempt to locate the buried treasure. Smith was certainly not the only one engaged in the magical practice of money digging. Years before the Book of Mormon came forth many people were using seer stones to locate buried treasure, and the idea of placing the seer stone in a hat was not unique to Joseph Smith. The following, taken from the *Orleans Advocate*, appeared in the *Wayne Sentinel*, a newspaper published near Joseph Smith’s home:

MR. STRONG — Please insert the following and oblige one of your readers.

Wonderful Discovery. — A few days since was discovered in this town, by the help of a mineral stone, (which becomes transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it . . . a monstrous potash kettle in the bowels of old mother Earth, filled with the purest bullion. Some attempts have been made to dig it up, but without success. His Satanic Majesty, or some other invisible agent, appears to keep it under marching orders; for no sooner is it dug on to in one place, than it moves off . . . But its pursuers are now sanguine of success—they entrenched the kettle all round, and [have] driven a steel ramrod into the ground directly over it, to break the enchantment. . . . it is supposed to have been deposited where it now lies, prior to the flood. (*Wayne Sentinel*, December 27, 1825, page 2)

The reader will notice that this occurred sometime before Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. Smith’s fascination with the occultic eventually led him into trouble with the law.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for August 1971, we announced one of the most important discoveries made concerning Mormonism. This was the unearthing by Pastor Wesley P. Walters of an original document regarding Joseph Smith that is older than the Mormon Church itself.

It was preserved for 145 years and was found in the basement of a jail. This document proves that Joseph Smith was considered to be an “impostor” and a “glass looker” who was arrested and brought before Justice

Albert Neely for his occultic practices in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826. Since the arrest occurred well before Joseph Smith began proclaiming a new religion, there is no reason to believe that he was persecuted for his religious beliefs. The record, in fact, makes no mention of Smith's religious beliefs.

The importance of this document cannot be overstated, for it establishes the historicity of the account of Joseph Smith's run-in with the law which was published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1873. In his bill Justice Neely identified the man who later became the Mormon prophet as "Joseph Smith The Glass Looker." Wesley Walters also discovered the bill of Constable Philip M. De Zeng. De Zeng wrote in his bill that he wanted \$1.25 for "Serving Warrant on Joseph Smith . . ." According to the Constable's bill, Joseph Smith was guarded by De Zeng for "two days & 1 nigh[t]. . ."

The significant portion of Justice Neely's Docket Book, printed in *Fraser's Magazine*, contained a summary of the examination. Although this legal proceeding has usually been called a "trial," it may be more correct to refer to it as "an examination"—perhaps like the "preliminary hearings" we have today in which the accused is bound over for trial at a later date. For more information regarding this matter see our newsletter, *Salt Lake City Messenger*, July 1988, pages 7-11.

In the examination Joseph Smith acknowledged his magical practices. The following is taken from the printed record:

State of New York v. Joseph Smith.

Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an impostor.

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowel on his farm, and going to school. That he had *a certain stone* which he had occasionally looked at to determine where *hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth* were; that he professed to tell in this manner *where gold mines were a distance underground*, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them. That at Palmyra he pretended to tell *by looking at this stone* where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra

had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds; that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind and had always rather declined having anything to do with the business. (*Fraser's Magazine*, February, 1873, vol. VII, page 229)

The reader will remember that Joseph Smith's mother claimed that Josiah Stowel, who lived in Bainbridge, had sought Smith's help because he believed that "he could discern things invisible to the natural eye." Interestingly, Stowel defended Joseph Smith when he testified at the examination:

Josiah Stowel sworn: says that prisoner had been at his house . . . that he pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking through a certain stone . . . that prisoner had told by means of this stone where a Mr. Bacon had buried money; that he and prisoner had been in search of it; that prisoner had said it was in a certain root of a stump five feet from [the] surface of the earth, and with it would be found a tail feather; that said Stowel and prisoner thereupon commenced digging, found a tail feather, but money was gone; that he supposed the money moved down. . . that he never deceived him; that prisoner looked through stone and described Josiah Stowel's house and outhouses, while at Palmyra at Simpson Stowel's, correctly . . . That he had been in company with prisoner digging for gold, and had the most implicit faith in prisoner's skill. (*Ibid.*)

While Josiah Stowel defended Joseph Smith, Arad Stowel and two other men asserted that he was an impostor. Toward the end of the document we find Justice Neely's conclusion of the matter: "And therefore the Court find the Defendant guilty."

At that point Joseph Smith was confronted with the possibility that he might spend two or three months in jail if he could not meet the bail required. In addition, he would be required to face three justices in a Court of Special Sessions which would probably be held in June, 1826. If the justices reached the same conclusion as Justice Neely, Smith could have been facing a serious problem. In *A New Conductor Generalis*, 1819, page 109, we read:

A justice of the peace may convict disorderly persons . . . for a time not exceeding sixty days, or until the next general sessions. . . .

When a person has been thus committed by a justice, to remain till the next general sessions, if the justices at the sessions adjudge him to be a *disorderly person*, they may, if they think convenient, order him to be detained, at hard labor, for any future time not exceeding six months, and during his confinement to be corrected by whipping, according to the nature of the offence, as they shall think fit.

Although no records have been found to show how the case turned out, many times officials who wanted to cut expenses would be willing to let prisoners go if they would just agree to leave the county where the crime took place. This was apparently what happened in Joseph Smith's case. Writing just five years after the examination was held, A. W. Benton wrote the following about Joseph Smith:

For several years preceding the appearance of his book, he was about the country in the character of a glass looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c. Although he constantly failed in his pretensions, still he had his dupes . . . In this town, a wealthy farmer named Josiah Stowell, together with others spent large sums of money in digging for hidden money which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig, but they never found their treasure. At length the public, becoming wearied with the base imposition which he was palming upon the credulity of the ignorant, for the purpose of sponging his living from their earnings, had him arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of Justice. But considering his youth, (he then being a minor,) and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape. This was four or [word illegible] years ago. From this time he absented himself from this place, returning only privately, and holding clandestine intercourse with his credulous dupes, for two or three years. (*Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, page 120)

A careful examination of the whole story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and even the text of the book itself reveals that it originated in the mind of someone who was familiar with the practice of money-digging. For example, the so-called "seer stone" used in translating the book seems to have been nothing but a common "peep stone." Many people in Joseph Smith's day were using these stones to search for buried treasure. That Smith would use the very stone he had previously consecrated to occultic activities to translate the Book of Mormon is very disturbing to say the least!

If this were just a matter that involved a young man getting into trouble with the law, Mormon critics would be foolish to spend their time rehashing the story. Most people would allow Joseph Smith the right to make some youthful mistakes without maintaining that it would seriously affect his role as a prophet. The issue, however, is much more serious than just breaking the law.

What is involved here is the question of whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God or merely a man entangled in occultic practices. The implications of this matter are very serious indeed. It is evident that Joseph Smith was arrested while involved in activities condemned in the Bible—i.e., witchcraft and magical practices (see Lev. 19:26-31; 20:6; Deut. 18:10-12; Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-19).

It is even more disturbing to learn that Smith was engaged in these activities at the very time he claimed he was being tutored by an angel from God to live a righteous life so that he might receive the gold plates of the Book of Mormon!

The Neely court record shows that Joseph Smith was searching for buried treasure in 1826, and according to Smith's own story, the plates for the Book of Mormon were taken from the Hill Cumorah the following year. Joseph Smith claimed, however, that he knew that the plates were buried in the Hill Cumorah since 1823. Significantly, in the Neely record Joseph Smith confessed that "for three years" prior to 1826 he had used a stone to find lost property. According to Smith's own statement, then, he began his money-digging activities in about 1823.

The Angel Moroni was supposed to have informed Joseph Smith of the gold plates on September 21, 1823. Consequently, it would appear that Smith was deeply involved in money digging at the very time the messenger told him of the gold plates from which he would later translate the Book of Mormon. Moreover, he was still entangled in these occultic practices for at least three of the four years when God was supposed to be preparing him to receive the gold plates. These facts seem to undermine the whole story of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

Those who take the time to carefully read the Neely transcript can clearly see that the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is an extension of the money-digging practices so clearly portrayed in that transcript.

Significantly, the Book of Mormon itself mentions a seer stone: "And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth

in darkness unto light . . .” (Alma 37:23). In the 1968 edition of the Mormon Church’s *Doctrine and Covenants*, 78:9, “Gazelam” was identified as “Joseph Smith, Jun.” Interestingly, the name Gazelam no longer appears in Section 78, verse 9.

In any case, Mormon writer Arch S. Reynolds observed: “. . . Joseph Smith is the Gazelem. This stone did shine forth to us in darkness when he received the B. of M. characters with their English equivalents when he had his eyes hidden from natural light in a hat as testified by his associates” (*How Did Joseph Smith Translate*, 1952, page 7).

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie noted:

Alma in directing Helaman to preserve both the Urim and Thummim and the plates containing the Book of Ether, says that such records will be brought to light by the Lord’s servant *Gazelem*, who will “use a stone” in his translation work. . . . It may be that . . . Alma’s reference is to the Prophet Joseph Smith who did in fact bring forth part of the Ether record. Or it could be that the name Gazelem (Gazelam) is a title having to do with power to translate ancient records and that Alma’s reference was to some Nephite prophet . . . (*Mormon Doctrine*, pages 307-308).

The reader will notice that the first four letters of Joseph Smith’s coined word, Gazelem, make the word *gaze*. While this may only be a coincidence, it would fit well with idea that a “seer” would gaze at the stone to see the writing.

However this may be, Joseph Smith’s father-in-law, Isaac Hale, noticed a definite relationship between the method Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon and the way he searched for buried treasures. In an affidavit, published in 1834, Hale wrote:

I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called “money diggers;” and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. . . . young Smith . . . asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused, and gave him my reasons for so doing; some of which were, that he was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve . . . while I was absent from home [he] carried off my daughter . . . they were married . . . in a short time they returned . . .

Smith stated to me that he had given up what he called “glass looking,” and that he expected to work hard for a living . . . after this, I was informed they

had brought a wonderful book of plates down with them. . . . The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the *same as when he looked for the “money diggers,” with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was at the same time hid in the woods!* (Affidavit of Isaac Hale, as printed in the *New York Baptist Register*, June 13, 1834)

Isaac Hale’s affidavit certainly raises questions about the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Mormons who have not studied how the Book of Mormon was translated tend to believe that Smith actually looked at the gold plates through the Urim and Thummim. There are even illustrations that are used to support this idea by showing Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon in this manner. Unfortunately, this myth is perpetuated by many members of the church and people who should know better.

Mormon writer Arch S. Reynolds, however, set the record straight. He noted that “the plates were not always before Joseph during the translation. His wife and mother state that the plates were on the table wrapped in a cloth while Joseph translated with his eyes hid in a hat with the seer stone or the Urim and Thummim. David Whitmer, Martin Harris and others state that Joseph hid the plates in the woods and other places while he was translating” (*How Did Joseph Smith Translate?* page 21).

Mormon writers Richard Van Wagoner and Steven Walker observed:

Consensus holds that the “translation” process was accomplished through a single seer stone from the time of the loss of the 116 pages until the completion of the book. Martin Harris’s description of interchangeable use of a seer stone with the interpreters, or Urim and Thummim, refers only to the portion of translation he was witness to—the initial 116 pages. The second point of agreement is even more consistent: The plates could not have been used directly in the translation process. The Prophet, his face in a hat to exclude exterior light, would have been unable to view the plates directly even if they had been present during transcription.

A mental picture of the young Joseph, face buried in a hat, gazing into a seer stone, plates out of sight, has not been a generally held view since the early days of the Church. The view raises some difficult questions. Why, for example, was such great care taken to preserve the plates for thousands of years if they were not to be used directly in the translation process? (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1982, page 53)

Joseph Smith obviously did not need the plates to translate. It would seem, therefore, that they could have been left in the Hill Cumorah where they were safe. Since the Smith family were constantly fighting off people who wanted to steal the plates, this would have saved a lot of problems.

Many of the people who were digging for buried treasure were very superstitious and involved in witchcraft. There were many strange stories connected with these treasure hunts. Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris related the following: “Mr. Stowel was at this time at old Mr. Smith’s digging for money. It was reported by these money-diggers, that they had found boxes, but before they could secure them, they would sink into the earth” (An interview with Martin Harris, published in *Tiffany’s Monthly*, May, 1859, page 165).

On another occasion Martin Harris admitted that he participated in some money-digging and that a stone box slipped back into the hill:

Martin Harris (speaking to a group of Saints at Clarkston, Utah in the 1870’s: I will tell you a wonderful thing that happened after Joseph had found the plates. Three of us took some tools to go to the hill and hunt for some more boxes or gold or something, and indeed we found a stone box. . . . but behold by some unseen power, it slipped back into the hill. (Testimony of Mrs. Comfort Godfrey Flinders, *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, vol. 10, page 65, as cited in an unpublished manuscript by LaMar Petersen)

The reader will remember that Josiah Stowel testified that when Joseph Smith was helping him look for treasure they found the “money was gone; that he supposed the money moved down.”

Jonathan Thompson, a man who also testified at Justice Neely’s examination of Joseph Smith, was a firm believer in Smith’s occultic expertise. He testified that while working with Smith to find a “chest of money,” it kept slipping into the ground:

Thompson says that he believes in prisoner’s professed skill; that the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but on account of an enchantment the trunk kept settling away from under them when digging, that notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them.

The idea of treasures slipping into the earth, as related by Martin Harris, Josiah Stowel, Jonathan Thompson, President Brigham Young, and many others appears to have been incorporated into the Book of Mormon itself. In Helaman 13:34-36 we read:

Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle.

Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land.

O that he had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things become slippery, and we cannot hold them.

In Mormon 1:18 we read that the people “began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them.”

Those who carefully examine the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the light of the money-digging activities of the 1820’s, will notice how similar the account of the discovery of the gold plates is to Joseph Smith’s claims regarding the buried treasure he maintained he could see in the stone. When he worked for the money diggers he asserted he could see the treasures buried in the earth. According to Smith, the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were found in a “stone box” which had been buried in the Hill Cumorah. Smith said that he had to remove “a stone of considerable size” to obtain the plates.

Joseph Smith maintained that the Angel Moroni revealed to him where the gold plates were buried (see *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:50). Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, on the other hand, had a different story. He claimed that Joseph Smith used his seer stone to find the plates:

“Joseph had before this described the manner of his finding the plates. He found them by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase. The family had likewise told me the same thing.

“Joseph said the angel told him he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them.” (An interview with Martin Harris, published in *Tiffany’s Monthly*, May, 1859, page 169)

While Joseph Smith was working for the money diggers, he diligently sought after buried gold. Although he claimed he could see it in his stone, he apparently was unable to seize the gold from the spirits who guarded it. This seems evident from Matthew Roper’s longer rebuttal, pages 14-15, in which he argues that Joseph Smith was in very poor economic circumstances at the time he began his translation of the plates. Roper, in fact, quoted Smith as saying: “My wife had written some for

me to translate and also my Brother Samuel H. Smith but we had become reduced in property and my wives father was about to turn me out of doors . . .”

Interestingly, when Joseph Smith turned to religion, he claimed that he did find a great deal of gold—i.e., the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. This much gold, of course, would have made Smith a very wealthy man. Smith, however, claimed that the Angel Moroni instructed him not to use the gold for his own gain.

While it is possible that Joseph Smith had some makeshift type of plates that he created, it seems doubtful that they were either ancient or made of gold. Significantly, although Smith showed the plates to some hand-picked witnesses, he never allowed any expert to examine them to determine if they were actually made out of gold or contained ancient writing. It certainly seems like more than a coincidence that Joseph Smith would seek after a golden treasure in an occultic setting and then claim to find it when he turned to religion!

The idea of the angel Moroni guarding the gold plates before Joseph Smith obtained them may have stemmed from a story Smith told Jonathan Thompson while they were digging for money. In the 1826 examination of Joseph Smith in Justice Neely’s court Thompson testified as follows:

Prisoner [Joseph Smith] would not look [into his stone] again . . . pretending that he was alarmed on account of the circumstances relating to the trunk . . . the last time he looked he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk, that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hole beside the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed.

It is very difficult to resist the thought that the spirit guardian of the treasure was later transformed into the angel Moroni in Joseph Smith’s mind. Both the angel and the spirit guardian were sent to keep watch over the treasure. Joseph Smith, in fact, could not remove the gold plates from the stone box until the angel allowed him to do so.

Deception With Stones

Joseph Smith’s use of his “seer stones” reminds us very much of the tricks magicians or mind readers practice on the stage. When Justice Neely examined Joseph Smith in 1826, Arad Stowel strongly asserted that Smith was an impostor who was playing tricks with his stones: “. . . he went to see whether prisoner could

convince him that he possessed the skill he professed to have, upon which prisoner laid a book upon a white cloth, and proposed looking through another stone which was white and transparent, hold the stone to the candle, turn his head to book and read. The deception appeared so palpable that witness went off disgusted.”

A man by the name of McMaster also claimed that “he went with Arad Stowel, and likewise came away disgusted. Prisoner pretended to him that he could discover objects at a distance by holding this white stone to the sun or candle; that prisoner rather declined looking into a hat at his dark coloured stone, as he said that it hurt his eyes” (*Fraser’s Magazine*, February, 1873, vol. VII, page 229).

Arad Stowel’s testimony regarding Joseph Smith seems to indicate that Smith was claiming he could actually look through the cover of the book by means of the stone and read what was written inside. While we do not know whether Smith had previously memorized some portion of the book or intended to use some other type of deception, this seems to be the same type of trickery he used when he later wrote the Book of Mormon. The reader will remember that Joseph Smith maintained that God had given him the power to read through his stone a translation of the characters while the gold plates themselves were hidden in the woods or in some other location.

At the time when we still believed in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon, we were trying to convert others to its authenticity. One man was not convinced and indicated that when he read David Whitmer’s account of how a stone in a hat was used in the translation he felt that this was a very spooky procedure. Although we were already well acquainted with Whitmer’s statements, the more we thought about this, the more concerned we became. We knew that others were using seer stones in Joseph Smith’s day, but we did not believe that Smith used his for anything but his sacred work. It was extremely painful to us when we eventually found out that the Mormon prophet was involved in the occult and used his stone in his earlier years.

According to the sworn testimony of Willard Chase, Joseph Smith found his seer stone while he and his brother, Alvin, were helping dig a well for Chase. Interestingly, Mr. Chase claimed that the stone was found in 1822, the year before the angel Moroni informed Smith concerning the existence of the gold plates:

I became acquainted with the Smith family . . . in the year 1820. At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business . . . In the year 1822,

I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph Smith to assist me . . . After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone . . . I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. . . . After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it . . . (Sworn statement by Willard Chase, as published in *Mormonism Unveiled*, pages 240-241)

It is very clear from this that Joseph Smith did not receive his seer stone from either God or the angel Moroni. It was a magical “peep stone” found in a well.

Matthew Roper seems to be a firm believer in Joseph Smith’s ability to divine things not seen by the natural eye. He quoted the following from Martin Harris’ interview with *Tiffany’s Monthly*, page 164:

“I was at the house of his father in Manchester . . . and was picking my teeth with a pin while sitting on the bars. The pin caught in my teeth, and dropped from my fingers into shavings and straw. I jumped from the bars and looked for it. Joseph and Northrop Sweet also did the same. We could not find it. I then took Joseph on surprise, and said to him—I said, ‘Take your stone.’ I had never seen it, and did not know that he had it with him. He had it in his pocket. He took it and placed it in his hat—the old white hat—and placed his face in his hat. I watched him closely to see that he did not look one side; he reached out his hand beyond me on the right, and moved a little stick, and there I saw the pin, which he picked up and gave to me. I know he did not look out of the hat until after he had picked up the pin . . .” (Roper, Longer Review, page 16)

Although Mr. Roper does not cite it, just above the quotation he used from page 164 of *Tiffany’s Monthly*, Martin Harris claimed Joseph Smith dared him to run a very peculiar race with him: “‘In the first place, he told me of this stone, and proposed to bind it on his eyes, and run a race with me in the woods.’” This was certainly an unusual way for the Mormon prophet to prove his ability of second sight.

The reader will remember that Matthew Roper wrote the following concerning our work:

. . . their rebuttal reveals a failure to come to grips with some of the additional implications of that testimony. For example, in responding to my earlier point regarding the lack of a curtain to conceal the translator, the Tanners said, “we do not believe that it would have been necessary for Joseph Smith to use a curtain. He may have had a 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.” Then, after referring to the testimonies of Whitmer, Emma Smith and the others, they make the incredible statement that “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” (p. 160).

We certainly cannot understand why Mr. Roper would feel that this was an “incredible statement.” We took a hat and demonstrated that it is easy for a person to make it appear that all light has been excluded and yet be able to read from a piece of paper at the bottom of the hat. It should also be remembered that Roper quoted Martin Harris as saying that it was a “white hat” that Joseph Smith used. If this were the case, it would be even easier to see something at the bottom of the hat.

Moreover, we did some experimenting and found what may be an even better way to receive “revelation” out of a hat. That is to cut a fairly small slit in the top of the hat. When the hat is turned over and pulled slightly off the edge of a table, it is easy to look through the slit and read material which is placed in one’s lap.

Furthermore, if the table has a drawer, it can be used to hold many pages of written material. While it is possible that someone might try to come around the table, it would be relatively easy to close the drawer without being detected. Even if a person briefly saw some paper in the drawer, there would be no reason to believe it would be in any way related to the translation. After all, once believers become convinced that the “seer” is reading out of a stone in a darkened hat, there would be little reason to look for another explanation.

Although we did not use a seer stone, we made a successful demonstration of how easy it is to fool someone by this method. One of the writers (Jerald) gave a Book of Mormon to a woman and asked her to set on the other side of a table. She was asked to look at Helaman 4:1-4. Jerald then buried his head in the hat, moved the hat a few inches off the edge of the table, and looked through the slit in the hat at a copy of the portion of Helaman that was in his lap. He then proceeded to read the four verses (over 140 words). When the demonstration was finished, it became clear that the woman did not understand what kind of deception had taken place. She assumed, however, that Jerald had memorized the words. It is obvious, however, that if he proceeded to correctly quote hundreds of passages, she probably would have sought a different explanation about what was going on.

In any case, it should also be noted that since Joseph Smith's scribe had to write down the words as Smith dictated them, he or she would often be distracted and would not be able to keep a careful eye on Smith's maneuvers.

Skeptics like Martin Harris, of course, could cause a problem. Harris apparently had a great deal of curiosity about the translation process and was continually putting Joseph Smith to the test. The reader will remember that Harris challenged Smith to find a lost pin with the stone in his hat. In addition, Harris switched Joseph Smith's seer stone with a stone he found by the river. Smith, however, detected that it was a different stone. Harris' curiosity apparently disturbed Joseph Smith. As we have already shown, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts conceded that while Harris was employed as Smith's scribe, "a heavy curtain or other device had screened the Prophet and the plates from his view . . ."

Matthew Roper stated: "It appears that the curtain was used only with Martin Harris, whom Joseph had reason, at first, to distrust . . ." (*Review of Books*, vol. 3, 1991, page 171). If Joseph Smith were really translating by the power of God, he would have had no fear about anything Martin Harris might see and would not have needed a curtain to conceal his work from Martin.

When Harris was testing Joseph Smith's ability to find a pin he claimed that he knew that Smith "did not look out of the hat until after he had picked up the pin." Because of this demonstration Martin Harris was very impressed with Joseph Smith's ability. Perhaps, however, Harris should have taken a careful look at the hat to see if there was a hole in it.

It seems obvious that after Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon he did not want the general public to know much about how it came forth. In fact, even though his wife and many others spoke on the subject, he never did publish anything about using a seer stone in his hat to translate. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, a work authored by the church's Brigham Young University, contained this interesting observation:

Little is known about the translation process itself. Few details can be gleaned from comments made by Joseph Smith's scribes and close associates. Only Joseph Smith knew the actual process, and he declined to describe it in public. At a Church conference in 1831, Hyrum Smith invited the Prophet to explain more fully how the Book of Mormon came forth. Joseph Smith responded that "it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and . . . it was not expedient for him to relate these things (HC 1:220). (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, page 210)

In spite of Joseph Smith's reluctance to explain the translation process, Mormon scholars such as Matthew Roper seem to be very impressed with the final product. Apostle LeGrand Richards boasted that Joseph Smith was able to dictate a very significant book in a very short period of time:

. . . Joseph Smith was able to translate, into English from the gold plates, the Book of Mormon, consisting of over five hundred printed pages, in about sixty days time, from April 7, 1829 to the first week in June, 1829. We doubt if any other writer has ever written even a book of fiction of such magnitude in anything like such a short period of time. (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 1973, page 72)

While Apostle LeGrand Richards seemed very impressed with the speed with which the text of the book was dictated, Scott C. Dunn maintained that the occultist Pearl Curran could "look over at a friend, wave, or even write a letter while dictating. Her dictation was effortless and fluent and could be performed for hours without stopping. She was known to have dictated nearly 6,000 words in a single setting and was once timed at producing 110 words per minute" (*Sunstone*, June 1985, page 23).

While many members of the Mormon Church are impressed with the swiftness of the dictation process, we are more interested with how much time Joseph Smith had to give birth to the story. The fact that he had a great interest in the ancient inhabitants of the land prior to his "translation" of the Book of Mormon is no secret to those who have read his mother's book. Just before writing concerning her son's visit to the Hill Cumorah in September, 1824, Lucy Smith noted:

I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth—all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons, and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age . . .

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet*, 1853, pages 84-85)

It is clear, then, that Joseph Smith had a very active imagination and was interested in “the ancient inhabitants” of the land even before he “translated” the plates. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, page 210, Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates on September 22, 1827. In December 1827,

he copied and translated some of the characters . . . from April 12 to June 14, 1828, Harris acted as scribe while Joseph Smith translated the book of Lehi. . . . About July 15, Joseph learned that Martin Harris had lost the 116 pages they had translated . . . and subsequently the angel Moroni took the plates . . .

On September 22, 1828, the plates and translation tools were returned to Joseph Smith and during that winter he translated “a few more pages”. . . The work progressed slowly until April 5, 1829, when Oliver Cowdery . . . arrived in Harmony and offered his scribal services to Joseph. Virtually all of the English text of the Book of Mormon was then translated between April 7 and the last week of June, less than sixty working days.

While Mormon writers are impressed with the speed of dictation, they should really consider the length of time it took from the day Joseph Smith first allegedly received the plates from the angel Moroni until he was able to come forth with any kind of a finished manuscript. According to the calculation of Mormon scholars, twenty-one months elapsed!

While Mormons can blame this on the loss of the 116 pages and the assertion that the angel temporarily “took away the plates and translation tools,” we feel that a better explanation might be that Joseph Smith was somewhat confused with the loss of the first manuscript and needed a good deal of time to work on the Book of Mormon story. Consequently, he made a number of excuses for the delay.

It seems reasonable to believe that during the times when he was not dictating to his scribes he could have been fleshing out the story. David Whitmer noted:

At times when Brother Joseph would attempt to translate, he would look into the hat in which the stone was placed, he found he was spiritually blind and could not translate. He told us that his mind dwelt too much on earthly things, and various causes would make him incapable of proceeding with the translation. When in this condition he would go out to pray, and when he became sufficiently humble before God, he could then proceed with the translation. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 30)

The question naturally arises as to whether he was really praying during these times alone or if he was working on the Book of Mormon story. It is certainly possible that he may have prepared many notes or even an actual manuscript of the story at such times. If this is the case, it would be easy to fool the scribes by slipping pages into a hat or looking through a hole in the hat as explained above. While most people do not know how magicians get rabbits out of “empty” hats, the technique is actually very simple. Joseph Smith probably had enough experience with magical practices to be able to deceive his followers. In our opinion, Joseph Smith had plenty of time to come up with the story found in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Had No Bible?

When Matthew Roper appeared on Martin Tanner’s radio show on KTKK on August 8, 1993, he led the listeners to believe that Joseph Smith did not even have a Bible at the time he translated the Book of Mormon:

As a matter of fact, as far as we can tell from historical records, Joseph Smith did not even purchase a Bible until after the Book of Mormon was at the printer. And what this suggests is that— it strongly suggests that during the translation Joseph Smith did not have a Bible or manuscript of any kind, and so he is dictating this.

In *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 2, page 165, Mr. Roper went so far as to suggest that the Smith family may not have even owned a Bible:

The witnesses describe the extreme poverty of Joseph Smith and his family, making it unlikely that they even owned a Bible.

John Gee, another Mormon scholar who writes for FARMS, also argues that it is doubtful that Smith had a Bible:

How do we know Joseph Smith even owned a Bible when he translated the Book of Mormon? . . . Granted that Joseph’s parents owned a Bible when he was growing up, why would the family Bible go with Joseph when he left home to set up his own household in Harmony, Pennsylvania? (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 100)

It is evident that Matthew Roper and John Gee want to believe that Joseph Smith did not have a Bible so that

they can sidestep the issue of Smith plagiarizing from that book when he brought forth the Book of Mormon. As noted above, Roper stated he would much rather believe that “the Holy Ghost conveyed the translation to the Prophet in a scriptural register.”

Unfortunately for Gee and Roper, their argument is seriously flawed when it is compared to the available evidence. To begin with, it is obvious that Joseph Smith grew up in a biblical environment. According to Mormon author Richard L. Bushman, Smith’s mother was a student of the Bible:

Lucy Smith solemnly promised to serve God with all her heart when an illness brought her close to death in 1803 . . . For seventeen years she read the Bible and prayed with her family before becoming a Presbyterian. (*Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 1984, page 5)

Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery stated: “The family could not afford to pay a schoolteacher so they held school at home, using the Bible as their text” (*Mormon Enigma*, page 14).

Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy, wrote the following concerning what happened before her son was born:

I therefore determined to examine my Bible . . . the Bible I intended should be my guide to life and salvation. . . . I continued to read the Bible as formerly . . . (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet*, pages 48-49)

The evidence shows that Joseph Smith began studying the Bible when he was a young boy. In his earliest handwritten account of his First Vision, written in 1832, he relates that he became a student of the Bible when he was only about twelve years old:

At about the age of twelve years my mind became seriously impressed {page 1} with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing, as I was taught, that they contained the word of God. Thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly. . . . from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart . . . by searching the scriptures I found that . . . /mankind/ did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith. . . . I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday, to day, and forever. (*An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, pages 4-5)

Speaking of the period just before he had his First

Vision, Joseph Smith claimed that he had been reading the Bible:

. . . I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given.* (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:11)

Joseph Smith’s own mother made it absolutely clear that Joseph had his own Bible long before he translated the Book of Mormon. She revealed that shortly after the death of her son, Alvin, Joseph made this statement to her:

I can take my Bible, and go into the woods, and learn more in two hours, than you can learn at meeting in two years, if you should go all the time. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet*, page 90)

The reader will remember that John Gee asked the question, “why would the family Bible go with Joseph when he left home to set up his own household in Harmony, Pennsylvania? The answer is obvious: Joseph Smith did not have to ask for the family Bible because he had his very own copy of the Bible!

Both Gee and Roper try to make it appear that Smith was too poor to afford a Bible. Actually, there were a large number of Bibles available at that time. Even those who could not afford a new Bible could get one that was used. Moreover, it is likely that someone would give a Bible to a person who was poor.

The available evidence clearly indicates that Joseph Smith was not only familiar with the Bible, but that he had his own copy before he began working on the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, it is clear that he was using a Bible at the very time he was translating the Book of Mormon.

While Matthew Roper and John Gee try to downplay Joseph Smith’s knowledge of the Bible, Mormon scholar J. N. Washburn set forth a far more reasonable argument:

One thing appears to be beyond doubt: Joseph knew his Bible. All the way through the Book of Mormon . . . are words and expressions that could hardly have come from any other source. (This has no reference at all to the hundreds of quotations from Isaiah, Malachi, Matthew, and other writers of Holy Writ. It means rather that the language of the Book of Mormon is frequently Bible language, sometimes almost word for word, and often exactly the same.) One explanation for this is that in the process of translation Joseph used such terms as he could command for what he desired to say, and Bible language appears to have come readily to him. (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, 1954, pages 4-5)

Steven D. Ricks, associate professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages at Brigham Young University, made these comments in a review of Wesley P. Walters's book, *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*:

Walters asserts that Joseph Smith had a far more subtle knowledge of the Old Testament than Latter-day Saints have been willing to allow . . . I'm not quite certain which Mormons he is talking about. I, for one, have always assumed that Joseph's knowledge of the Bible, including the Old Testament, was already formidable by the time that he began translating the Book of Mormon. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, page 239)

John Gee responded to Professor Rick's statement by saying, "at age twenty-four, his knowledge was either recently acquired or not acquired by reading" (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 100).

While Matthew Roper seems convinced that the "Holy Ghost conveyed the translation to the Prophet in a scriptural register," Professor Ricks made it clear that it was Smith himself who put the translation into the King James style:

When Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, he quite understandably rendered it into what he regarded as a scriptural register. For him, this meant language like that of the King James Version, with whose phrases and cadences he was very familiar. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, page 237)

While Matthew Roper is adamant in his claim that Joseph Smith did not use the Bible in writing the Book of Mormon, Ricks is more flexible about the matter. He notes that the witnesses did not "mention anything about an English translation being present while the book was being translated." Nevertheless, he states: "I have not made up my mind whether Joseph had the King James Version to hand when he was translating the Book of Mormon. Some Latter-day Saint scholars assume that he did have one" (*Ibid.*, page 238).

Other Books Available

In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 81-84, we suggested that Joseph Smith could have used material from the writings of Ethan Smith and Josiah Priest in creating his Book of Mormon. Both of these writers claimed that the American Indians were actually Israelites, and this, of course, agrees with Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon. Matthew Roper, however, was very skeptical of the idea that Smith borrowed from these books. He claimed that "No critic ever suggested

that Joseph Smith used the works of Josiah Priest or Ethan Smith until the twentieth century."

While we are not certain exactly when the similarities between the works of these authors were linked to the Book of Mormon, it was a little presumptuous for Roper to make the claim that "no critic" suggested a relationship until the 20th century. We do know that Ethan Smith's work on the Indians being Israelites was mentioned by his grandson as a possible source for the Book of Mormon before the turn of the century. An article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which contains a number of errors, set forth the idea that Ethan Smith's work was used by Joseph Smith. In the heading to the article we find the following: "Rev. Ethan Smith's Semi-Historical Romance Identified With the Story as Told in the Book of Mormon" (*The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 24, 1887, as cited in *Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon*, by David Persuitte, page 251).

Stephen D. Ricks informs us that the book, *The Founder of Mormonism*, published in 1902 by Mr. I. Woodbridge Riley discussed the idea that Ethan Smith's work, *View of the Hebrews*, could be related to the Book of Mormon (see *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, 1992, page 247).

3. B. H. Roberts' Serious Doubts

As surprising as it may seem it was actually the noted Mormon historian, B. H. Roberts, who created a strong interest in the relationship between the two books.

Roberts was one of the greatest scholars the church has ever known. He not only prepared the "Introduction And Notes" for Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* (seven volumes), but he also wrote the six-volume work, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. He is also noted for his many works defending the Book of Mormon.

After studying Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, published in 1825, Roberts listed eighteen parallels between it and the Book of Mormon, which was printed in 1830. After B. H. Roberts's death, copies of his parallels were "privately distributed among a restricted group of Mormon scholars," and in January, 1956 Mervin B. Hogan had them published in *The Rocky Mountain Mason*.

A careful reading of Roberts's work leads one to believe that his faith in the Book of Mormon had been somewhat shaken. We reprinted Roberts's parallels in 1963 in *Mormonism: A Study of Mormon History and Doctrine*. Later, we published a photographic reprint of B. H. Roberts's own marked copy of *View of the Hebrews*. While the release of B. H. Roberts's list of parallels shocked many Mormons, it was later discovered that this was only "the tip of the iceberg."

As Roberts looked deeper and deeper into the problems in the Book of Mormon, his faith began to erode. He wrote two very significant manuscripts which were suppressed for many years because of the fear that the contents would prove harmful to the Mormon Church. Fortunately, we obtained copies of both manuscripts and printed some photographs from them in 1979. In 1980, we photographically reproduced both manuscripts under the title *Roberts' Secret Manuscripts Revealed*. The manuscripts were later printed by the University of Illinois Press in a hard-back book entitled *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. (Roberts' studies were recently reprinted by Signature Books in a paper-back edition.)

Mormon scholar Truman G. Madsen acknowledged:

... in March of 1922, Roberts prepared a draft of a written report to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. . . . The study of such books as those of Josiah Priest, Ethan Smith, and others led him to examine such questions as: What literary and historical speculations were abroad in the nineteenth century? Could Joseph Smith have absorbed them in his youth and could these influences have provided

the ground plan for such a work as the Book of Mormon? . . .

About this particular study, certain points must be kept in mind if it is not to be gravely misunderstood. First, it was *not intended for general dissemination* but was to be presented to the General Authorities to identify for them certain criticisms that might be made against the Book of Mormon. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1979, page 440)

In his private manuscripts B. H. Roberts acknowledged that Joseph Smith himself could have written the Book of Mormon from the information that was available to him at the time. Matthew Roper accepts the authenticity of the material by Roberts but tries to explain it away:

Although Roberts could not answer some of these criticisms in 1922, most of them are not problems today. The Tanners assert that these unpublished studies by Roberts indicate that he lost his testimony of the Book of Mormon, but such a position does not hold up historically. Roberts described the purpose of these studies as follows:

Let me say once and for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine. The report herewith submitted is what it purports to be, namely a "study of Book of Mormon origins," for the information of those who ought to know everything about it *pro et con*, as well as that which has been produced against it. I do not say my conclusions for they are undrawn. It may be of great importance since it represents what may be used by some opponent in criticism of the Book of Mormon. I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it.

(*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, page 193)

In a footnote at the bottom of the same page, Mr. Roper charges: "The Tanners are completely silent about Roberts's own explanation of the study's purpose, when in fact it sheds an entirely different light on the state of his faith and testimony."

While it is true that B. H. Roberts did write something similar to what Matthew Roper printed (Roper's quote is somewhat botched up as we will show later), it was not in the two secret manuscripts mentioned above. It was

actually a letter he intended to send to Heber J. Grant, the seventh president of the Mormon Church, and other church leaders. The letter is dated March 15, 1923, but scholars feel it was probably written in 1922. In any case, as it turned out, “this letter was never sent” (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 58, footnote 1).

As noted earlier, we were the ones who originally published B. H. Roberts’ revealing manuscripts to the world. We included a photographic reproduction of the two-page letter written by Roberts in our book, *Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed*. The letter is published on pages 114-15. In the “Contents” page of that book we included six items, and Roberts’ letter appears as fourth on the list: “Letter to ‘President Heber J. Grant and Council and Quorum of Twelve Apostles’ . . . [page] 114.”

Furthermore, on the third page of the Introduction to the book, we cited the work of Mormon scholar Truman G. Madsen. In the quotation from him we included the relevant portion of B. H. Roberts’ letter:

In his 1923 letter, Roberts wrote: “Let me say once and for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine. This report [is] . . . for the information of those who ought to know everything about it pro and con, . . . I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it.” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1979, page 440, as cited in our book, *Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed*, Introduction, page 3)

In 1985, when *Studies of the Book of Mormon* was published by University of Illinois Press, it included a new document which we had never seen before. This was the “Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd,” which included an account of comments made by B. H. Roberts to Lloyd. It is clear from this journal, that B. H. Roberts had grave doubts about the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Since it was written just before Roberts’ death and is dated about a decade after the letter mentioned above, the earlier letter has become almost irrelevant to the discussion. We will have more to say about the Lloyd journal below. In any case, we certainly had no fear of the contents of Roberts’ letter as Roper would lead his readers to believe.

About five years after penning the letter Mr. Roper mentioned, B. H. Roberts told Apostle Richard R. Lyman that he had prepared such a letter but had failed to present it to the General Authorities. He went on to inform Lyman that he had continued his research and

had discovered “a possible theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon that is quite unique” and that it could prove to be “very embarrassing” for the church:

. . . the other day I told you . . . that I had continued my investigations and had drawn up a somewhat lengthy report for the First Presidency [*sic*] and the Council of the Twelve. Then came my call to the Eastern States and the matter was dropped, but my report was drawn up nevertheless together with a letter that I had intended should accompany it, but in the hurry of getting away and the impossibility at the time of having my report considered, I dropped the matter, and have not yet decided whether I shall present that report to the First Presidency or not. But since I mentioned this matter to you . . . I thought I would submit in sort of tabloid form a few pages of matter pointing out a possible theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon that is quite unique . . . which in the hands of a skillful opponent could be made, in my judgment, very embarrassing.

I submit it in the form of a Parallel between some main outline facts pertaining to the Book of Mormon and matter that was published in Ethan Smith’s “View of the Hebrews” which preceded the Book of Mormon . . .

In addition to this publication of such matter Josiah Priest published at Rochester, N.Y., twenty miles from Palmyra his first work on American Antiquities, under the title of “The Wonders of Nature and Providence.” . . . in this book Mr. Priest quotes very copiously from the “View of the Hebrews” . . . (Letter from B. H. Roberts to Apostle Richard R. Lyman, dated Oct. 24, 1927, as cited in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, edited by Brigham D. Madsen, 1985, pages 58-59)

The deeper B. H. Roberts delved into the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the books by Ethan Smith and Josiah Priest, the more concerned he became about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. In his first manuscript, “Book of Mormon Difficulties: A Study,” B. H. Roberts does deal with some serious problems in the Book of Mormon. Roberts’ second manuscript, “A Book of Mormon Study,” however, goes far beyond his first study. It is, in fact, in this manuscript that he begins to really express his own personal doubts about the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In our book, *An Examination of B. H. Roberts’ Secret Manuscript*, we included an article from the pen of Wesley P. Walters which contained the following:

Whether Mr. Roberts wrote these works to summarize some of the main objections to the Book of Mormon’s divine origin, or whether he

himself had come to doubt the book's divinity seems difficult to determine. The letters that accompany the manuscripts suggest the former, but the manuscripts themselves give the decided impression that Mr. Roberts had come to doubt the book's divine origin. . . . Whatever the motive, the manuscripts deserve consideration on their own merit and present one of the strongest statements ever set forth by a recognized Mormon authority questioning the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

Matthew Roper should have taken a closer look at this matter before accusing us of suppressing B. H. Roberts' letter. In any case, there is one part of Roberts' letter which Mr. Roper did not use that we find rather revealing:

You will perhaps remember that during the hearing on "Problems of the Book of Mormon" reported to your Council January, 1922, I stated in my remarks that there were other problems which I thought should be considered in addition to those submitted in my report. Brother Richard R. Lyman asked if they would help solve the problems already presented, or if they would increase our difficulties. My answer was that they would very greatly increase our difficulties, on which he replied, "Then I do not know why we should consider them." My answer was, however, that it was my intention to go on with the consideration to the last analysis. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 57)

B. H. Roberts felt that Apostle Lyman was trying to dodge the issue, and did not forget the incident. About five years later, October 14, 1927, Roberts wrote Lyman a letter in which he chided him for not taking the Book of Mormon problems seriously:

You perhaps will recall our conversation of a few days ago . . . and how I reminded you that on the former occasion here alluded to I announced that what I had presented did not constitute all our B. of M. problems, that there were others. You then asked, "Well, will these help solve our present problems or will it increase our difficulties?" to which I replied, "It would very greatly increase our problems." At which you said (and I thought rather lightly) "Well, I don't see why we should bother with them then." To this I answered that I should go on with my studies nevertheless. (*Ibid.*, page 59)

Roper's Quotation Muddled

Interestingly, Roper's own quotation from Roberts's letter tends to cast some doubt upon his own method of operation. It could even cause some embarrassment to the foundation that publishes his work (FARMS). Mr. Roper claims to be giving a direct quote from the book edited by Brigham D. Madsen that contains Roberts's letter. In reality, however, it is a patchwork pieced together from three different paragraphs of the letter!

Below is another look at Matthew Roper's quotation from B. H. Roberts. The reader will notice that below we have included some information in brackets which explains how the quotation would have to be torn apart and then pieced together by Roper if he actually copied it from the book, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, as his footnote indicates. Except for two insignificant errors, one word added and another changed, the first seventy-four words, taken from paragraph two of the letter, are correct:

"Let me say once and for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine. The report herewith submitted is what it purports to be, namely a 'study of Book of Mormon origins,' for the information of those who ought to know everything about it pro et con, as well as that which has been produced against it. [At this point eight words were deleted without any indication. In addition, Roper would then have to move back a hundred and seventeen words and take ten words from paragraph one.] I do not say my conclusions for they are undrawn. [Roper would have to move down 251 words to paragraph four and insert twenty-four words from the end of that paragraph. The first sixteen words of the sentence, however, were not used.] It may be of great importance since it represents what may be used by some opponent in criticism of the Book of Mormon. [At this point, Roper would be forced to jump back 199 words to paragraph two and finish the quotation.] I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it."

It is plain from the information printed above that the extract from Roberts's letter is in reality a mosaic created from three different paragraphs of the letter without any ellipsis points to show omissions. It is also obvious that the text has been rearranged so that the statement

would end with the faith-promoting comment, “I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it.” If the quotation had been taken in the normal way, it would have ended on a negative note: “It may be of great importance since it represents what may be used by some opponent in criticism of the Book of Mormon.”

It is interesting to note that in the anonymous rebuttal mentioned near the beginning of this work, the author accused us of having a “bizarre editorial style” (see *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 26). As noted above, this rebuttal was actually written by D. Michael Quinn. Quinn felt that we misused “ellipsis,” used too much “repetition” and were too free in our use of emphasis (pages 26-28). Daniel C. Peterson, who served as editor for the FARMS publication that included Roper’s attack upon our work, spoke approvingly of the anonymous historian’s comment “on the Tanners’ ‘Bizarre editorial style.’” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, page lxxiv, footnote 186)

Although we have no reason to believe that Professor Peterson knew anything about the mixed-up state of this quotation from B. H. Roberts’ letter, we remember that Peterson said that he selected Roper’s article because he “thought it made a number of important points . . .” (*Ibid.*).

If Mormon scholars caught us rearranging the statements of church authorities, we would never hear the end of it. We felt that the way the quotation from B. H. Roberts was pieced together was something that could really be termed a “bizarre editorial style.” No real scholar could possibly approve of this cut-and-paste method of editing the letter.

Anyone who carefully examines this matter will find it is almost impossible to believe that this reworked extract could have been made by mistake. We felt that it had to be carefully crafted by someone who wanted to put the best possible face on Roberts’ statement.

In footnote 79 on page 193, Matthew Roper claimed that he copied the material from “Madsen, ed., B. H. Roberts: *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 57-58 . . .” Those who examine this book will find that Roper’s quotation actually begins on page 58. In order to get the words, “I do not say my conclusions, for they are undrawn,” a person has to turn back to page 57 and then return to page 58 to finish the quote.

Although Matthew Roper had been very critical of the way we used material from Richard L. Anderson’s book, we felt that we should not make such a serious charge

against him without exploring all the possibilities. While it seemed clear that someone had deliberately altered the quotation, we wondered if there was a possibility that he actually copied the material from some other Mormon scholar who was trying to explain away B. H. Roberts’ loss of faith in the Book of Mormon rather than from the book, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. Even if this were the case, however, Roper should not have stated that he obtained the material from pages 57-58 of that book.

Fortunately, on August 8, 1993, Matthew Roper appeared on Martin Tanner’s radio program broadcast on KTKK. At that time we were able to ask him about the jumbled reference:

Jerald Tanner — What I want to ask you [is] did you copy the quote directly from *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, as your book indicates here, or did you take that from somebody else that had reworked the quote?

Matthew Roper — I really don’t remember. I’ll go back and check that if you like. In any case, it does represent what B. H. Roberts was saying.

Tanner — You might have taken it from somebody else then?

Roper — There would only be two—I don’t remember. . . . I think I quoted it . . . from Madsen’s book. . . .

The fact that Mr. Roper was not absolutely certain where the quotation came from led us to believe that there was a strong possibility that he borrowed it from someone else. We suspected that the well-known Mormon scholar Truman G. Madsen (not to be confused with Brigham Madsen, the editor of *Studies of the Book of Mormon*) had used this quotation in his writings about B. H. Roberts.

We found in two of Madsen’s publications places where he had used a good part of the words found in Roper’s review but the text was not all mixed up. In both quotations Madsen made a minor mistake: he had failed to see that Roberts had used the Latin word *et* (and) in the words “*pro et con.*” Madsen had read it “*pro and con.*” Mr. Roper’s quotation, however, contained the Latin word. It was clear, then, that neither of these sources could have influenced Roper.

We decided to pursue the matter further, and obtained a report entitled, *Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* from FARMS. It was written by Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch and was revised on June 30, 1986. In the portion of the book written by Madsen (page 3) we found what appears to be the very place from which Matthew Roper derived his quotation. The word *and* has been corrected to *et* in Madsen’s work, and almost all of the words appear in the same order as

in Roper's article. In one place Madsen made a minor error in copying. He had written "The report" instead of "This Report." Roper, of course, blindly followed him into this error.

Mr. Roper's most serious mistake, however, was that he apparently failed to notice that Professor Madsen was using only selected portions taken from different places in the letter. Just before quoting these portions, Madsen wrote: "In a second letter Roberts declared his intent clearly. Published on pages 57-58 in the recent text, these explanatory sentences concern the *Study*."

We gathered from this statement that Madsen was not claiming to be copying the sentences in the order in which they appear in the original letter. He was acting as a good defender of the church and putting the sentences into an order which would be a little more faith-promoting.

Truman Madsen has added an extra space in three places, and this separates the wording into four parts. Unfortunately, however, toward the end of the second part he jumped back 116 words to add, "I do not say my conclusions, for they are undrawn." This gives the erroneous impression that these words are part of the second block of words. It is certainly possible that Madsen meant to add an extra space here and forgot to do it. As it stands, however, these words are completely out of place.

Although we cannot say for certain, it would appear that Matthew Roper was completely oblivious to Madsen's method of operation and blindly followed what he had written without realizing that it would cause him a serious problem.

Even though Mr. Roper must have believed that Professor Madsen's quotation correctly represented what B. H. Roberts said, according to scholarly practice he should have acknowledged the fact that he was quoting from Truman Madsen. In his footnote for the jumbled quotation (page 193) he refers to ". . . B. H. Roberts: *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 57-58 (emphasis added)." The footnote should have read something like this: ". . . B. H. Roberts: *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 57-58 (emphasis added), as cited in *Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon*, by Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch, Part II, page 3."

There are two very good reasons why authors using secondary sources should mention where they obtain their material:

One, when we use a quotation from a secondary source but fail to note that fact, we are not giving proper credit to the person who did the original research. We are actually taking a free ride on someone else's work while at the same time giving the impression that we are

doing our own original research. If Matthew Roper did not want to mention Truman Madsen's work, he could have obtained a copy of *Studies of the Book of Mormon* or at least made a photocopy from the original book.

Unfortunately, there are some authors who capitalize on the work of others and write books based almost entirely on secondary sources. They camouflage this by giving citations to original books and documents, when in fact they have lifted the material from other sources. Whereas the original writers may have spent years researching from primary sources, these people are able to complete books in months or even weeks. They appear to have done their homework, but the truth is that they have appropriated a great deal of their material from other sources that they do not cite. It is sad to note that there are both Mormons and their critics who inaccurately portray where their quotations are actually derived from. For an example of anti-Mormon borrowing see our book, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, pages 78-80.

Two, it is undoubtedly true that many people who do this sort of thing do not really realize they are making a serious mistake. Over three decades ago, when we first began our work on Mormonism, we had no real training to prepare us for the work. Consequently, we did not realize the problems involved when one cites a secondary reference without indicating that fact.

We soon learned a hard lesson when we found that we could not verify some of the words which appeared in a quotation we had used. Fortunately, in this particular case when we examined a photocopy of the actual document, we discovered that the wording was more damaging to Mormonism than the quote we originally used. Had it been the other way around, however, Mormon scholars may have made an issue out of the matter.

Matthew Roper has been trained in history. In 1992, he was listed in *Review of Books*, vol. 4, page 274, as "a senior in History at Brigham Young University." One would think that with that training and the work he has done for FARMS, he would be aware of how to correctly handle secondary quotations.

Those who quote secondary sources without giving notice that they are doing so lay themselves open to embarrassment and credibility problems. This is adequately demonstrated in Mr. Roper's case. If he had referred to Truman Madsen's book as the source of his citation, we would not have made an issue about the matter.

Although most of us who write use some secondary sources, whenever possible it is best to go to the original publications or at least photocopies of them. The reason for this is that if we use a secondary source, we have no

way of knowing for certain that the material has been quoted correctly by the author. If we make any additional mistakes, the errors will be compounded with those that have already occurred. Furthermore, it is wise to check the original source to be sure that the quotation has not been taken out of context and that the correct page numbers have been given.

The fact that Matthew Roper did not quote directly from *Studies of the Book of Mormon* raises another question: Did he ever actually take the time to read the entire book, or was he merely relying on the information provided by Truman Madsen and other FARMS scholars when he wrote his rebuttal?

It is certainly ironic that a scholar from FARMS would be using secondary sources when the Foundation's publications have attacked Mormon critics with regard to this matter. L. Ara Norwood, for example, rebuked James White because he felt he cited some secondary sources:

While attempting to show that various Latter-day Saint leaders believed in and practiced blood atonement, he claims he "will let [the citation] speak for itself" (p. 281). Yet he simply pilfers his references, not from the original Latter-day Saint sources where they are found, but from existing anti-Mormon sources which quote them out of context, offering no concrete analysis in the process. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1992, page 352)

In a footnote at the bottom of the same page, Norwood states: "Presumably, James White has obtained his citations from Bob Witte, comp., *Where Does It Say That?* . . . which does, in fact, contain all of the citations White has reproduced in his book."

As far as we can determine, L. Ara Norwood has made a serious charge against James White's scholastic ability without producing a scintilla of evidence to back it up. Four of the references cited by White, which relate to the doctrine of human sacrifices atoning for sin, came from the Mormon publication *Journal of Discourses*. The others are from the Mormon books *Doctrines of Salvation* and *Mormon Doctrine*.

Over two-thirds of the material cited concerning "blood atonement," came from the *Journal of Discourses*. If Mr. Norwood had carefully read the Introduction to James White's book, he would have discovered that White bought his own set of the *Journal of Discourses* from a local Mormon bookstore years ago:

. . . I began to become a regular at the local LDS bookstore. . . . Each time I would find a particular Mormon work being cited with any frequency by Christian writers, I would run and get the book and

read it . . . I also began to notice that a strange set of books called *The Journal of Discourses* was being cited over and over again, primarily in discussing the early Mormon theological views. So, I headed down to the Mormon bookstore to buy them. . . . I was directed to a 26-volume set of books . . . I bought them . . . they were indeed a great help in doing research into Mormon theology. (*Letters to a Mormon Elder*, Introduction, page v)

Since James White had his own copy of the 26-volume *Journal of Discourses*, which he obtained from a Mormon bookstore, why would he want to copy from Bob Witte's publication? Most of the print in Witte's book is so small that it does not seem reasonable that White would use it to type out his long quotes concerning "blood atonement." The books, *Doctrines of Salvation* and *Mormon Doctrine*, are very important to both Mormons and their critics. Since White said that he made it a practice to buy books that were "cited with any frequency," it seems very likely that he obtained these two books as well as the *Journal of Discourses*.

As noted above, Mr. Norwood claimed that "all of the citations White has reproduced in his book" can be found in Witte's work. Our research did not confirm this statement. In making his comparison, Norwood used a copy of the book which was published at the time Witte was living in "Safety Harbor, Florida." We examined both the second and third editions of Witte's work, printed at Safety Harbor, but did not find White's quotation on blood atonement which is taken from *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pages 134-135.

Interestingly, the reader will notice that in his footnote Norwood does not seem to be absolutely certain that Witte was White's source for the material: "Presumably, James White has obtained his citations from Bob Witte," yet in the text above he strongly asserts that White "pilfers his references" from anti-Mormon sources.

What kind of research is this? When we did our investigation of Matthew Roper's work, we found irrefutable evidence that he had borrowed from Truman Madsen. If Norwood had found the same type of evidence to support his theory, we would not protest his accusation. As it is, however, his conclusion seems to stem from his bias against James White. Such an accusation, made without any evidence to back it up, seems to be extremely unfair.

L. Ara Norwood also seems to be trying to defame Bob Witte in his attack on James White. He suggests that White "pilfers his references" from "existing anti-Mormon sources which quote them out of context."

Since he suggests that Witte is the source, the obvious conclusion is that Witte's references are quoted "out of context." Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who take the time to examine Witte's book, *Where Does It Say That?* will find that in the second edition he has actual photographs of sixteen full pages taken directly from Mormon books. There are thirteen pages from the *Journal of Discourses*. The other two pages are from Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* and Apostle Pratt's book, *The Seer*. The third edition has eleven full pages from the *Journal of Discourses*. How can Norwood say that the photographically reproduced pages from these Mormon Church books are taken out of context? Anyone who takes the time to examine the matter can see that neither Witte nor White have taken anything out of context. It would appear that Norwood is the one who is attempting to mislead his readers.

(The reader will remember that Norwood is the same man who has written a review of one of our books for FARMS.)

On page 334 of his article in *Review of Books*, vol. 5, Mr. Norwood tries again to show that White is not competent to write a book on Mormonism: "Here he demonstrates his incompetence in ways heretofore unrealized, apparently simply parroting what he has read from Jerald and Sandra Tanner's publications." On page 340, Norwood states that White is "merely parroting the writings of other anti-Mormons . . ."

On page 351, L. Ara Norwood makes this insulting comment regarding White: ". . . he is young and unable to conceal his naiveté . . . when James White matures a bit, we may expect good things from him, rather than the warmed-over 'Tanner' trivialities he has reworked."

The message from FARMS seems to be that scholars for the Foundation do original research from primary documents, whereas the "antimormonoids" use secondary or pilfered sources and are unable to set forth anything new or important. Professor Daniel Peterson writes:

Ankerberg and Weldon's heavy (indeed, almost slavish) dependence upon the writings of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. . . . Especially in the portions of the book dealing with the Book of Mormon, Latter-day Saint writers and scholars are rarely quoted directly; in a remarkable number of instances Latter-day Saint writing is cited from the Tanners or, far less commonly, from other anti-Mormons. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 20-21)

We can see nothing wrong with Ankerberg and Weldon using material from our books. Anyone is free to use as much of our material as they want as long as

they do not misrepresent it. Mormon scholars certainly use the work of Dr. Hugh Nibley extensively. The more important question, however, is what Professor Daniel Peterson has to say regarding Matthew Roper's improper use of the Madsen quotation. We seriously doubt that he will address this issue.

While we cannot deny that some Mormon critics rely heavily on the writings of others, we are convinced that some of the people at FARMS do exactly the same thing. There is undoubtedly a good deal of "parroting" going on at Brigham Young University and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. Matthew Roper's use of Truman Madsen's work may only be the tip of the iceberg.

In the September 1992 issue of our newsletter, *Salt Lake City Messenger*, page 8, we noted a good example of one scholar "parroting" another. Both John Gee and Michael D. Rhodes have studied the Egyptian language and both have written articles for FARMS in which they defended Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham. Unfortunately, an examination of their work clearly shows that one of these scholars has borrowed material from the other! Below is a revealing comparison of the work of the two authors:

In 1842, the fragments we now have in the Joseph Smith Papyri were mounted in "a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics." The next year, in 1843, a nonmember named Charlotte Haven visited Lucy Mack Smith and wrote a letter to her own mother about it: "Then she [Mother Smith] turned to a long table . . ." (John Gee, Review of Books, vol. 4, page 107)

In 1842, the fragments we now have were described as being mounted in "a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics." The next year, in 1843, Charlotte Haven, a nonmember, visited Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith and wrote a letter to her own mother about it, saying: "Then she [Mother Smith] turned to a long table . . ." (Michael D. Rhodes, Review of Books, vol. 4, pages 121-122)

It would certainly appear from the comparison shown above that one of these two authors has borrowed his wording from the other. We do not know, however, if Gee borrowed from Rhodes or Rhodes borrowed from Gee.

In any case, when Matthew Roper appeared on Martin Tanner's show on KTKK radio on August 8, 1993, he said he wanted to read from material written by the archeologist William G. Dever. A non-Mormon had

just called into the station and commented concerning the lack of archeological support for the Book of Mormon and also noted that archeologists had found a great deal of support for the Bible. In an attempt to counter this argument against the Book of Mormon, Mr. Roper said that he thought the evidence for the Bible had been exaggerated and then proceeded to read statements Professor Dever had written about the Bible and archeology.

Dever's material appeared in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1990, pages 52-55. A comparison of what Mr. Roper read with the original article clearly shows that he was not reading directly from it. He was instead quoting from a paper FARMS had prepared on the subject. The paper was written by BYU Professor William J. Hamblin in 1993 and was entitled, *Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon*. This article was later shortened and appeared in the FARMS publication, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1993.

Unfortunately, when Matthew Roper, read from the article, he made the mistake of repeating some of Professor Hamblin's comments, which, of course, gives the whole thing away. The portions taken from Hamblin are shown below are underlined and the parts added by Roper are in *italicized text*. We have also compared the text with Dever's original article in *Biblical Archaeology Review* and have made some minor corrections in brackets. The following was carefully transcribed from a tape of the radio program:

The Bible, *he says*, has its limitations as a historical document. . . . The myths of Genesis 1-7 [original article reads 1-11], comprising the "primeval history," which deal with the creation, the flood [and] the distant origins of the family of man, can be read today as deeply moving literature, with profound moral implications. They inform us about the thought-world of ancient Israel, but they, *according to Dever*, can hardly be read in the literal or modern sense as history.

And the situation is not improved for later chapters of Genesis and the Pentateuch. Quote: After a century of modern research, Dever notes, neither, Biblical scholars nor archaeologists have been able to document as historical any of the events, much less the personalities, of the patriarchal or Mosaic eras. Archaeology, Dever says, has not brought to light any [direct] evidence to substantiate the story that [an] Abraham lived, that he migrated from Mesopotamia to Canaan or that there was a Joseph who found his way to Egypt and rose to power there. The tradition is made up of legends that still may

be regarded as containing moral truths, but until now they must be regarded as of uncertain historical provenance.

And what of Moses and the spectacular events of the Exodus from Egypt? Absolutely no trace of Moses, or indeed of any Israelite presence in Egypt, has ever turned up. Of the Exodus of the wandering in the wilderness we have no evidence whatsoever. As an example, Dever cites, quote: Recent Israeli excavations at Kadesh-Barnea, the Sinai oasis where the Israelites are said to have encamped for 30 [38 in original] years. Surely such a lengthy stay by such a large group, somewhere during the period to 1200 B.C., would leave considerable evidence. And, indeed, the Israeli excavations at Kadesh-Barnea have revealed an extensive settlement, but not so much as a potsherd earlier than the tenth century B. C.

Moving forward in history to the settlement of the Israelites in Palestine, Dever notes once again the evidence is largely negative. In particular, the "conquest model," derived principally from the Book of Joshua, has been largely discredited. That Israel did emerge in Canaan in the early Iron Age is beyond doubt. But archaeology has not shown that the settlement followed a series of destructions, miraculous or otherwise. He also points out that Joshua and Judges give differing accounts of the so-called conquest and settlement of Canaan—accounts that cannot readily be [be readily in original] reconciled, especially when newer archaeological evidence is considered. Professor Dever's verdict is straightforward: The Bible cannot simply be read at face value as history. (Matthew Roper's comments on KTKK radio, August 8, 1993)

The reader will notice that Matthew Roper has quoted almost ninety words from the article written by BYU professor Hamblin. These inserts appear at exactly the same places in Professor Hamblin's article. They are clearly marked so that the reader does not confuse them with Dever's actual statements. When Roper read the material, however, the impression was given that thirty-nine of these words were uttered by Professor Dever himself. The reason that Hamblin needed to add so many words was because he was not starting at the beginning of the article and working toward the bottom. He was, in fact, taking extracts from a number of different places. While we have no problem with the way Hamblin did his paper, when Roper tried to read it on KTKK radio he had a difficult time keeping Hamblin's words separate from those written by Dever. If Matthew Roper had simply told his listeners that he was reading from a FARMS paper by William Hamblin, there would have been no

problem in his presentation. Unfortunately, in his attempt to make it appear that he was using a primary source, Matthew Roper fell into some revealing errors.

It seems ironic that Mr. Roper, the very man who scolded us for what he calls “their underhanded use of Richard Anderson’s material,” is the one who has been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Copied our material directly from Dr. Anderson’s work, not from some “anti-Mormon” source. On the other hand, when Roper cited B. H. Roberts’s letter, which he felt was very important to his case, he did not even bother to go to the original book. Instead, he used a secondary FARMS source. Moreover, when he wanted to present Professor Dever’s arguments about archeology, he did not even take the time to get a copy of Dever’s article, but seemed content to merely read from a FARMS article containing extracts from that article!

The reader may remember that earlier we quoted from Professor Louis Midgley who said he is amused by the actions of “antimormonoids.” Midgley spoke of the “dreadful formulaic and pedestrian character of anti-Mormon literature, the prosaic business of incompetents endlessly quoting each other and hence erecting an ever more rickety house of cards, the constant repetition of borrowed bromides . . .” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 139-140).

We feel that Dr. Midgley should take a closer look at what is going on in his own camp before jumping on the so-called “antimormonoids.”

Smith the Author?

As noted earlier, it was in his second manuscript, “A Book of Mormon Study,” that B. H. Roberts really began to openly express his own personal doubts about the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In the extracts which follow the reader will see that B. H. Roberts was seriously disturbed by many things he found in the Book of Mormon:

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

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which,

given the suggestions that are found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 243, 250)

If from all that has gone before in Part 1, the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin . . . if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

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

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

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

While Mormon scholar John W. Welch still maintains that B. H. Roberts did not give up his faith in the Book of Mormon, he has to admit that Roberts was “tough” in his argument regarding the authenticity of the Book of Mormon:

By writing the Study, filled with provocative questions, Roberts appears to be goading his colleagues toward a higher sense of the importance which Roberts placed on the need to deal with these issues. . . .

If Roberts was going to offer an answer to a problem, he needed to state the problem as clearly as possible. There can be no question that he does this in the Study. He is tough. (*Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* pages 29-30)

Writing in *The Ensign*, March 1986, page 58, John W. Welch commented:

For critics of the Book of Mormon, Roberts' notes have appeared to be a bonanza. Here is one of the most intellectual General Authorities of his day seeming to expose all the evidentiary weaknesses of his own case. It is like a military officer writing an intelligence report telling the enemy where his own troops are most vulnerable. In the study, Brother Roberts is blunt. He states a case against the Book of Mormon in tough terms. It is clear that Elder Roberts recognizes there may be no answers to some of his hard questions, but that does not deter him from asking the questions.

While Professor Truman Madsen, of Brigham Young University, has asserted that Roberts was merely using "the 'Devil's Advocate' approach to stimulate thought," a careful reading of the material leads one to the inescapable conclusion that Roberts was in the process of losing faith in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. Why else would B. H. Roberts have made the comment concerning the Book of Mormon stories which we cited above?: "The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history . . ."

In his earlier faith-promoting work, *New Witnesses for God*, a three-volume work published in 1909, B. H. Roberts insisted that Joseph Smith did not have access to books from which he could create a "ground plan" for the Book of Mormon. In his secret writings, however, Roberts acknowledged that in *New Witnesses for God* he

did not take sufficiently into account the work of Josiah Priest . . . Priest himself, indeed, published a book . . . *The Wonders of Nature and Providence*, copyrighted by him June 2nd, 1824, and printed soon afterwards in Rochester, New York, only some twenty miles distant from Palmyra . . . this book preceded the publication of the Book of Mormon by about six years. At the time I made for my *New Witness* the survey of the literature on American antiquities, traditions, origins, etc., available to Joseph Smith and his associates, this work of Priest's was unknown to me; as was also the work of Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews*—except by report of it, and as being in my hands but a few minutes. . . . it is altogether probable that these two books . . . were either possessed by Joseph Smith or certainly known by him. . . .

Moreover, on subjects widely discussed, and that deal in matters of widespread public interest, there is built up in the course of years, a community

of knowledge of such subjects, usually referred to as "matters of common knowledge" . . . Such "common knowledge" existed throughout New England and New York in relation to American Indian origins and cultures: and the prevailing ideas respecting the American Indians throughout the regions named were favorable to the notion that they were of Hebrew origin . . . And with the existence of such a body of knowledge, or that which was accepted as "knowledge," and a person of vivid and constructive imaginative power in contact with it, there is little room for doubt that it might be possible for Joseph Smith to construct a theory of origin for his Book of Mormon in harmony with these prevailing notions; and more especially since this 'common knowledge' is set forth in almost handbook form in the little work of Ethan Smith . . . It will appear in what is to follow that such "common knowledge" did exist in New England, that Joseph Smith was in contact with it; that one book, at least, with which he was most likely acquainted, could well have furnished structural outlines for the Book of Mormon; and that Joseph Smith was possessed of such creative imaginative powers as would make it quite within the lines of possibility that the Book of Mormon could have been produced in that way. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 152-154)

On page 192 of the same book, B. H. Roberts asked this question: "Could an investigator of the Book of Mormon be much blamed if he were to decide that Ethan Smith's book with its suggestion as to the division of his Israelites into two peoples; with its suggestion of 'tremendous wars between them'; and of the savages overcoming the civilized division led to the fashioning of chiefly these same things in the Book of Mormon?"

Roberts felt that "the likelihood of Joseph Smith coming in contact with Ethan Smith's book is not only very great, but amounts to a very close certainty" (page 235). Further on in the same chapter, B. H. Roberts made these observations:

But now to return . . . to the main theme of this writing — viz., did Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* furnish structural material for Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, but many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith's story of the Book of Mormon's origin. . . .

The material in Ethan Smith's book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the Book of Mormon . . .

Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence? (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 240, 242)

B. H. Roberts also felt that the Bible could have provided seeds for Joseph Smith's fruitful imagination: "Matthew and Zachariah, then, could well be thought of as furnishing material for the Book of Mormon signs of the Birth of Messiah" (*Ibid.*, pages 237-238).

Although Matthew Roper accepts B. H. Roberts' manuscripts as authentic, he will not allow himself to accept the serious implications of Roberts' comments. In his rebuttal to us he wrote the following:

The Tanners assert that these unpublished studies by Roberts indicate that he lost his testimony of the Book of Mormon, but such a position does not hold up historically. . . .

A review of Roberts's talks and addresses over the last eleven years of his life shows that he used the Book of Mormon extensively and frequently bore testimony of its divinity. . . . In April 1933, he described the Book of Mormon as "one of the most valuable books that has ever been preserved." . . . In light of Roberts's boldness in maintaining the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, especially over the last eleven years of his life, to argue, as the Tanners do, that he somehow rejected the Book of Mormon is intellectually indefensible, if not somewhat disingenuous. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, 1992, pages 193-195)

In the 1987 edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 96-E, we quoted Truman Madsen as saying:

"And it is a travesty to take such working papers as a fair statement of B. H. Roberts's own appraisal of the Book of Mormon, for, as this paper abundantly demonstrates, his conviction of its truth was unshaken and frequently expressed down to the time of his death." (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1979, pp. 440-442)

We did not contest the fact that B. H. Roberts continued to quote the Book of Mormon after he wrote his critical assessment of that book. On the same page we commented as follows:

While there is no evidence that B. H. Roberts publicly repudiated the Book of Mormon, a careful reading of his manuscript . . . leads one to believe that he was in the process of losing faith in its divine

origin. Although he may have started out merely playing the part of the "Devil's Advocate," [as Madsen maintains] we feel that he played the role so well that he developed grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. (*Ibid.*)

While Matthew Roper would have us believe that B. H. Roberts maintained a strong testimony to the Book of Mormon until the end of his life, the book, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, contains a document which sets forth compelling evidence that Roberts was struggling with serious doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon right up until the time of his death in 1933. As we noted earlier, this information comes from the "Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd, former dean of the Graduate School at Brigham Young University and a missionary under Roberts in the Eastern States Mission."

Lloyd claimed that he had a "surprising" conversation with B. H. Roberts and the revealing information Roberts related to him was recorded in his journal on August 7, 1933—less than two months before Roberts' death. Although the most important part of Lloyd's journal has been published in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, we have obtained photocopies of the handwritten journal from FARMS that contain some additional information. The account of the conversation with B. H. Roberts which we print below has been carefully checked against these photocopies:

The conversation then drifted to the Book of Mormon and this surprising story he related to me. That while he was Pres. of the Eastern States Mission a Logan man by the name of Riter persuaded a scholarly friend who was a student in Washington to read thru and to criticize the Book of Mormon. The criticism that the student made was that at the time of the discovery of America there were fifty eight distinct languages in existence among the American Indians, not dialects but languages as different as English is from Spanish and that all human knowledge indicates that fundamental languages change very slowly whereas at the time of the Book of Mormon the people were supposed to have been speaking all one tongue. The student ask[ed] Riter to explain that proposition. Riter sent the letter to Dr[.] Talmadge who studied it over and during a trip east ask[ed] Brother Roberts to make a careful investigation and study and to get an answer for the letter.

Roberts went to work and investigated it from every angle but could not answer it satisfactorily to himself. At his request Pres. Grant called a meeting of the Twelve Apostles and Bro. Roberts presented the matter, told them frankly that he was stumped and ask[ed] for their aide [*sic*] in the explanation.

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He explained certain literary
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civilization of another part
of the country. He sees none
of the cliffs of the Mayas
or the high mountain peaks
or other geographical environment
of early American civilization
that the entire story laid in
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of the things which has made
Bro Roberts shift his base on
the Book of Mormon. Instead
of regarding it as the strongest
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more ~~to~~ bolstering. His
greatest claim for the
divinity of the Prophet Joseph
now lies in the doctrine and
covenants.

A photograph from the Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd. According to the journal, just prior to B. H. Roberts' death, he told Lloyd that the gold plates were "not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith . . ." Lloyd also noted that Roberts shifted "his base on the Book of Mormon."

In answer, they merely one by one stood up and bore testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. George Albert Smith in tears testified that his faith in the Book had not been shaken by the question.

Pres. Ivins, the man most likely to be able to answer a question on that subject was unable to produce the solution. No answer was available. Bro[.] Roberts could not criticize them for not being able to answer it or to assist him, but said that *in a Church which claimed continuous revelation, a crisis had arisen* where revelation was necessary. After the meeting he wrote Pres. Grant expressing his disappointment at the failure and especially at the failure of Pres[.] Ivins to contribute to the problem. It was mentioned at the meeting by Bro[.] Roberts that there were other Book of Mormon problems that needed special attention.

Richard R. Lyman spoke up and ask[ed] if they were things that would help our prestige and when Bro[.] Roberts answered no, he said then why discuss them. This attitude was too much for the historically minded Roberts[.] There was however a committee appointed to study this problem, consisting of Bros. Talmage, Ballard, Roberts and one other Apostle. They met and looked vacantly at one and other [*sic*], but none seemed to know what to do about it.

Finally, Bro[.] Roberts mentioned that he had at least attempted an answer and he had it in his drawer. That it was an answer that would satisfy people that didn't think, but a very inadequate answer to a thinking man. They asked him to read it and after hearing it, they adopted it by vote and said that was about the best they could do.

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

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

He explained certain literary difficulties in the Book such as the miraculous incident of the entire nation of the Jaredites, the dramatic story of one man being left on each side, and one of them finally being slain, also the New England flat hill surroundings of

a great civilization of another part of the country. We see none of the cliffs of the Mayas or the high mountain peaks or other geographical environment of early American civilization that the entire story [is] laid in a New England flat hill surrounding.

These are some of the things which has made Bro[.] Roberts shift his base on the Book of Mormon. Instead of regarding it as the strongest evidence we have of Church Divinity, he regards it as the one which needs the most bolstering. His greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph lies in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. ("Private Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd," August 7, 1933, transcribed from Xerox copies of the handwritten journal reproduced in the FARMS publication, *Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* 1986, by Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch)

Mormon scholar John W. Welch argued that a man by the name of Jack Christensen said that on "about September 1, 1933," B. H. Roberts told him that "Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon. You accept Joseph Smith and all the scriptures" (*Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* Part 1, page 27).

Unfortunately for Welch's argument, however, he has to acknowledge that this was taken from an interview which Truman Madsen had with Christensen some forty-six years after Roberts was alleged to have made the statement. While we certainly would not want to question Mr. Christensen's honesty, the fact that no exact date can be given and that so much time elapsed makes the statement of little value.

The "Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd," on the other hand, contains a contemporary account which is clearly dated: "Monday aug 7-/33." Since it contains so much private information about B. H. Roberts's study that can be verified by the existing manuscripts and other sources, it would be very hard to deny its significance. It appears to be the last important statement B. H. Roberts made about the Book of Mormon before his death.

John W. Welch argues that B. H. Roberts finished writing his manuscripts in 1922, about a decade before his death. Welch maintains that, "The point is important, because the later in life he wrote the Study, the greater the likelihood that it represents his final and honest opinion about the Book of Mormon" (*Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon*, Part 1, page 3).

When one carefully examines the evidence, however, Welch's argument is not convincing. The reader will remember that on October 24, 1927, B. H. Roberts wrote Apostle Lyman a letter in which he stated:

I thought I would submit in sort of tabloid form a few pages of matter pointing out a possible theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon that is quite unique . . . I submit it in the form of a Parallel between some main outline facts pertaining to the Book of Mormon and matter that was published in Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews" which preceded the Book of Mormon . . .

It is clear, then, that Roberts was still very disturbed about problems in the Book of Mormon five years after he completed his original manuscripts. Welch has to admit that Roberts wrote "the 'Parallel' after his return to Salt Lake City in October, 1927" (*Ibid.*). While Roberts' manuscript, "A Parallel," takes up only twenty-two pages in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, it is highly significant. It undoubtedly took a good deal of time for Roberts to set up this parallel between the *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon.

Below we will show that about a year and a half before his death Roberts sent "an introductory chapter" of his Study to his daughter. At that time Roberts seemed concerned that church leaders were not "in a studious mood." In the same letter he made it plain that his manuscripts "contain a collection of facts which ought to be known by them."

The following year, less than two months before his death, B. H. Roberts met with Wesley P. Lloyd. At that time Roberts seemed distressed about the way the church leaders closed their eyes to the problems in the Book of Mormon. All of these facts combine to show that John Welch's argument is very weak.

Wesley Lloyd's journal also reveals some other interesting information regarding problems B. H. Roberts was having with Mormon Church leaders at that time. Roberts had written a manuscript entitled, *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, which he hoped the church would publish. Some of the LDS General Authorities took exception to the book. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth president of the church, was adamantly against some of the material Roberts had included. (This controversial material apparently did not relate to Roberts' views on the Book of Mormon.)

According to Lloyd, he asked Roberts "about his new book which some authorities of the Church would not accept. He explained that it was by far his best work, and a climax to a life of study." Lloyd went on to say that church leaders "wanted Bro. Roberts to change parts of the book but he said he would not. . . . Joseph F[.] Smith had very unethically published in the *Utah Genealogy Magazine* a veiled attack on Roberts unpublished work." Mr. Lloyd claimed that Roberts was thinking of printing

it himself "without Church backing if he can raise the money."

According to Lloyd's journal, Roberts had even "offered to resign" his position as a General Authority of the church over the problems he was having with the church.

Interestingly, in 1993, a controversy erupted regarding B. H. Roberts' manuscript. *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

Sixty years after his death, B. H. Roberts' long-suppressed treatise on Mormon theology soon may be published—and the Mormon Church wants to be the one who gives permission.

But there's a duel between the church and independent scholar Stan Larson for the copyright of *The Truth, The Way, The Light* . . .

The combatants' seconds are Signature Books, publishers of a number of books by authors the church considers dangerously critical of the faith; and Signature's polar opposite, *BYU Studies* . . . of church-owned Brigham Young University. . . .

To Larson, the church's sudden decision to seek the copyright means one thing—it doesn't want Roberts' writings widely available without an institutional stamp on the editing and interpretation.

Not so, says Richard Turley, director of the church's Historical Department. He said, permission to publish the manuscript has been informally granted to John W. Welch, editor of *BYU Studies*. . . .

Roberts' chief critic was Joseph Fielding Smith . . . Before Smith became church president in 1970, Hugh B. Brown, a Roberts admirer and first counselor to then-president David O. McKay, feared Smith might destroy the manuscript upon assuming the presidency, said Brown's grandson, Edwin B. Firmage.

Brown copied the work and gave it to Firmage . . . In 1992, Firmage presented the copy to the school's Marriott Library . . .

Larson . . . saw his chance. He let it be known he intended to publish the book, and delivered a paper on its troubled history at the August Sunstone Symposium.

Enter church historian Turley, who immediately applied for a certificate of copyright with the Library of Congress on behalf of the church. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 11, 1993)

One would think that the Mormon Church leaders would be embarrassed to suddenly seek a copyright on this manuscript after they had suppressed it for so many years. As it turned out, two separate printings of the document were published.

At any rate, Roberts also expressed to Lloyd some reservations he had regarding the leadership of Brigham Young, the second president of the church:

In discussing Brigham Young he said in spite of his outstanding qualities he was not a logical man in the sense that Joseph Smith was logical and that our present authoratative [*sic*] dictatorship in Church government was an out growth of Brigham Young[']s practice and that Joseph Smith was much more democratic. He said that Brigham Young had an early tendency to fatalism into predestination of Calvin which became very marked in his later life and that when some good Historian uncovers the real facts of his stand during the Johnson Army episode, some of his glory or fame will diminish.

In regard to Mr. Lloyd's credibility in relating the conversation he had with Roberts, John W. Welch, the founding president of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, acknowledges that Lloyd was a man who could be relied upon:

One question that can be asked about any such entry is how accurate the account is. By asking this question, I do not intend to impugn the character of the writer. Wesley Lloyd was a man of impeccable character and integrity. He was a man of faith and balance and scholarship, later rising to high levels of achievement in the academic world and rendering years of loyal service to the Church and to Brigham Young University.

Nevertheless, there are minor details which are in error in this account. They may be attributable to several things. They may be attributable to the fact that Roberts was old and ill and that he may not have been entirely concerned about detailed accuracy himself at that time. The minor errors in the journal account may also be a reflection of the fact that this account was written after Wesley Lloyd had returned to Provo.

He was at Jack's until 8:30 p.m. that evening . . . so it was either very late that night or on another day before this entry was finished. He would have reported as accurately as anyone could, what he recalled from his conversation with Roberts . . . one assumes they were written close to the time of the event and reflect the essence of what transpired. . . . Roberts was abrasive and argumentative. His temperament may have been somewhat aggravated during his last months of life due to his physical state. . . . It is obvious that Roberts expressed some complaints that day, as he discussed questions asked of him by Wesley Lloyd. Roberts remarked that his

book *The Way, the Truth, the Life* [*sic*] had been subjected to "severe criticism" and rejected, and that an article by Joseph Fielding Smith had been published in the *Utah Genealogy Magazine* as a "veiled attack" on Roberts' unpublished work. He was upset enough that he offered to resign (this was not the first time Roberts had made such a threat).

In response to the question of what he thought about the current Church missionary system, Roberts took issue with a new policy of not sending missionaries out without financial backing. He also commented that Brigham Young had made the Church into an "authoratative [*sic*] dictatorship" and warned that historians would expose Brigham Young someday. Finally he turned to the Book of Mormon, complaining that back in 1922 a "crisis had arisen where revelation was necessary" but that no answer had been forthcoming. (*Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* pages 35, 36, 38-38a)

Writing in *The Ensign*, March 1986, page 58, John Welch asked this question: "Is it possible that B. H. Roberts had a faithful facade which he wore in public but in private was a skeptical doubter?" Welch seemed to feel that it would be "extremely difficult to believe that he was two-faced." The "Private Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd," however, indicates that Roberts felt that the real truth about the Book of Mormon should not be shared with the average member of the church, but only with intellectuals who were ready for that information: "[t]his is an article far too strong for the average Church member but for the intellectual group he considers it a contribution to assist in explaining Mormonism."

B. H. Roberts seems to have found himself in a real dilemma. He had discovered devastating information with regard to the origin of the Book of Mormon, but when he tried to share it with other church leaders, they turned a deaf ear to his research. As we have noted earlier, according to Roberts, when Apostle Richard R. Lyman found out that Roberts's information would "increase" the difficulties for the church, he replied, "Then I do not know why we should consider them." In addition, in a letter written about a year and a half before his death, Roberts sadly told his daughter, Elizabeth, that the church leaders did not really want to face the issues:

I have long wanted to have the opportunity of writing to President Grant [the seventh president of the church], calling his attention to his mistake about referring [to] "cement" as not being known in modern times that the ancient people of America knew of it and used it, until after the publication

of the fact in the Book of Mormon. I referred to your meeting and to the young man who had called attention to the fact that it was previous to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon that it was quite commonly known and I gave him the citations . . . he thanked me kindly for calling his attention to these references and remarked quite pleasantly that he would have to change his argument, which, of course, means that he will have to abandon it. . . . I am forwarding you . . . an introductory chapter to a work of mine which is in typewritten form under the title of "Book of Mormon Study" it makes 450 pp. of typewritten matter. It was from research work I did before going to take charge of the Eastern States Mission. . . . I suspended the submission of it until I returned home, but have not yet succeeded in making the presentation of it, although the letter of submission to President Grant was made previous to leaving the E.S.M. I have made one feeble effort to get it before them since returning home, but they are not in a studious mood. (Letter dated March 14, 1932, taken from a photocopy of the original in *Did Joseph Smith Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon*, Exhibit 8)

Since the other Mormon leaders were so adamantly opposed to anyone questioning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, B. H. Roberts knew that if he publicly questioned Joseph Smith's most important work, he could be excommunicated from the church and would be considered a traitor to the cause in the eyes of his people. Only those who are familiar with the massive amount of apologetic material he produced and the years he spent in this work can really understand his dilemma.

If he had been a younger man (he was seventy-six at the time of his death), it is possible that he could have withstood the scorn that would have been directed against him if he revealed his unorthodox views about the origin of the Book of Mormon. As it turned out, however, B. H. Roberts did not make the matter public. Few people seem to have known about Roberts's serious doubts about the Book of Mormon until long after his death.

George D. Smith gave the following information regarding Roberts's secret writings in an article published in *Dialogue*:

Perhaps Benjamin Roberts was the source of the "fragments" A. C. Lambert, a member of BYU's faculty, recalls seeing in 1925: "A few of us at BYU got a few fragments of the manuscript back in 1925, but were ordered to destroy them and to 'keep your mouths shut,' and we did keep our mouths shut. I never got the fragments for my own meager files,

which were kept private even then. B. H. Roberts came about as near calling Joseph Smith, Jr. a fraud and deceit as the polite language of a religious man would permit. . . ." A. C. Lambert to Wesley P. Walters, undated but postmarked December 14, 1978, Special Collections, University of Utah Library. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1984, page 101, n. 25)

B. H. Roberts seems to have felt bad about the fact that earlier in his life he had misled his readers about the Book of Mormon in his work, *New Witnesses for God*. The reader will remember that Roberts insisted that Joseph Smith did not have access to books from which he could create a "ground plan" for the Book of Mormon. According to George Smith, "Mark K. Allen, secretary to the Eastern States Mission presidency just after Roberts, remembered his saying, 'We're not through with the Book of Mormon. We've got problems. I could do Volume III of *New Witnesses for God* the other way and be just as convincing'" (*Ibid.*, page 108).

Mormon scholar Truman Madsen wrote the following:

Roberts confidently spoke to his missionaries, Mark Allen recalls, of problems with the Book of Mormon. He quoted the *many parallels between the new scriptures and the Bible* . . . Says Allen, "His faith in the divinity of the book was strong, but he agonized over the intellectual problems in justifying it. His fervent expression was, 'O Brother Allen, we have many serious problems with the Book of Mormon.'" These conversations occurred in 1927-28 after Roberts had remained in Manhattan to write *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, his comprehensive doctrinal treatise, as a result of which Allen adds that Roberts wished he could call in his volume three of *New Witnesses*: "He was uneasy with attempts to build a case out of trivial coincidence and gratuitous parallels." (*Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?* page 9)

One of the most intriguing statements about B. H. Roberts' views regarding the origin of the Book of Mormon is found in the "Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd." The reader will remember that Lloyd wrote the following about Roberts: "He swings to a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon and shows that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience which he had in presenting to the world the Book of Mormon and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective."

While we do not remember any statement in Roberts's secret manuscripts about the Book of Mormon plates or Urim and Thummim existing only in Joseph Smith's mind, Roberts undoubtedly discussed this theory with Wesley P. Lloyd. It, in fact, fits very well with some of Roberts's statements regarding the stories found in the Book of Mormon. As we noted earlier, Roberts made this disheartening statement: "The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator." If Joseph Smith made up the stories in the Book of Mormon, as Roberts seems to be suggesting, then it is obvious that there could not have been any ancient gold plates, Urim and Thummim or a breast plate. (Smith, of course, could have created imitations of these items.)

In his paper entitled, "A Parallel," B. H. Roberts set forth material showing that the idea of a "Urim & Thummim & Breast Plate" could have been derived from Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews (Studies of the Book of Mormon, pages 327-328)*.

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

. . . B. H. Roberts, a seventy, had problems directly involved with the writing of Church history. In November 1910, Church President Joseph F. Smith told the Salt Lake Temple fast meeting that Elder Roberts doubted that Joseph had actually received a priesthood restoration from John the Baptist. Church president Heber J. Grant also required B. H. Roberts to censor some documents in the seventh volume of the *History of the Church*. Elder Roberts was furious. "I desire, however, to take this occasion of disclaiming any responsibility for the mutilating of that very important part of President Young's manuscript," Roberts replied to President Grant in August 1932, "and also to say, that while you had the physical power of eliminating that passage from the History, I do not believe you had any moral right to do so." Despite such strident defense of maintaining the integrity of LDS church history, B. H. Roberts received no formal censure. (*Sunstone*, February 1992, pages 13-14)

It should be noted that it was in August 1932 that B. H. Roberts accused President Grant of being behind the mutilation of President Young's manuscript. It was just a year following this serious confrontation with the prophet of the church that Roberts told Wesley P. Lloyd of his serious doubts regarding the origin of the Book of Mormon.

B. H. Roberts' opinions regarding Mormonism must carry a great deal of weight because he had access to some of the most important records in the church archives. He was, in fact, permitted to examine secret material that was not available to the public because it would be embarrassing to the church.

According to Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, Roberts "Became senior president of the First Council of Seventy" and was appointed "assistant Church historian in 1901 . . ." (*A Book of Mormons*, 1982, pages 246-247). James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard inform us that "In May 1901 President Joseph F. Smith appointed B. H. Roberts to edit Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* for republication" (*The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 1976, page 447). As noted earlier, Roberts also wrote the six-volume *Comprehensive History of The Church*. Former Church Historian, Leonard J. Arrington, wrote the following about B. H. Roberts:

In preparation for this paper, the writer sent out a questionnaire to some fifty prominent L.D.S. intellectuals—all of them, I think with Ph.D. degrees or the equivalent. I asked them to list the five most eminent intellectuals in Mormon history. Thirty-eight responded. Leading the list of those most frequently nominated was B. H. Roberts. . . . Roberts seems fully justified in being regarded—to use Davis Bitton's phrase—as the pioneer Utah equivalent of Renaissance Man. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1969, pages 22-23)

Although it is certainly understandable why Matthew Roper and other Mormon defenders would not want to acknowledge that B. H. Roberts lost faith in the Book of Mormon, the evidence clearly points in that direction.

4. Important Parallels

Matthew Roper acknowledges that “The Tanners correctly point out that the Book of Mormon appeared at a time when many people believed that the Indians were descendants of the lost ten tribes” (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, 1992, page 186). Nevertheless, he tries to discredit both our work and that of B. H. Roberts which tends to link the Book of Mormon to books available in Joseph Smith’s time. The reader will remember that in his letter to Apostle Lyman, Roberts pointed out that “Josiah Priest published at Rochester, N.Y., twenty miles from Palmyra his first work on American Antiquities, under the title of *The Wonders of Nature and Providence*. . . . in this book Mr. Priest quotes very copiously from the *View of the Hebrews* . . .”

We have done some research in Josiah Priest’s book, and have pointed out some important parallels to the Book of Mormon in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

For many years it has been recognized that there is a statement in the Book of Mormon that is similar to some wording concerning death found in the works of William Shakespeare. Since Shakespeare was not born until 1564, one would not expect the Book of Mormon to quote from his words. According to the Book of Mormon, Lehi spoke the following words almost 600 years before Christ: “. . . from whence no traveler can return . . .” (2 Nephi 1:14). The reader will notice how similar this is to the words of Shakespeare: “. . . from whose bourn no traveller returns . . .” (Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1, as quoted in *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, page 237).

A number of years ago we were reading Josiah Priest’s book, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, printed in 1825, and found a story which cites the words of Shakespeare. In quoting the words, however, the writer gets them twisted around. Significantly, the mistake makes the end of the quotation almost identical to that found in the Book of Mormon:

Book of Mormon: . . . from whence no traveler can return . . . (2 Nephi 1:14)

Wonders of Nature: . . . from whence no traveller returns. (page 464)

(It should be noted here that there were two printings of *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed* in

1825 and that the page numbers differ somewhat between these printings. For example, the same reference is found on page 469 of the other printing.)

The reader will notice the striking similarity between the two quotations. While it is possible that this could be a coincidence, there is additional evidence which seems to suggest that Joseph Smith used Priest’s work in writing the Book of Mormon.

On pages 190-191 of *Review of Books*, vol. 4, Matthew Roper tried to counter the parallel by presenting four quotations from translations of ancient writings. None of his examples, however, contain the vital four-word parallel, “from whence no traveler.” Only one of Roper’s examples contains the word “from.” None of his quotations have the word “whence,” and just one example has the word “no.” Significantly, only one of the quotations has the word “traveller” actually in the text. (It is added in brackets in the second example.) Roper’s quotations do not even begin to compare with the parallel found in *The Wonders of Nature*.

It is interesting to note that just five pages after the important words “from whence no traveller returns” appear in Josiah Priest’s work, another important parallel is found. Priest’s book speaks of the isthmus of Darien and uses the words “narrow neck of land.” These same words appear in the Book of Mormon. Below is a comparison of the two books (in the quotations which follow we have abbreviated the Book of Mormon to BOM and the *Wonders of Nature* to WON):

. . . the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land. (BOM , Ether 10:20)

. . . a narrow neck of land is interposed betwixt two vast oceans. (WON, page 469)

The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed quotes extensively from Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*. Thirty-five pages are devoted to “Proofs that the Indians of North America are lineally descended from the ancient Hebrews” (see pages 290-325). There are a number of important parallels to the Book of Mormon. For example, both use the Indian term “Great Spirit” in a similar way:

. . . the Great Spirit, who created all things . . .
(WON, page 293)

. . . the Great Spirit created all things . . . (BOM,
Alma 22:11)

Terrible Destruction

In the Book of Mormon we read that a “terrible destruction” occurred upon this land at the time Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem. This was followed by three days of darkness. After the destruction “there was a voice heard” among all those who were spared. Sometime later Christ himself appeared to the Nephites. In the Book of Mormon story we find that the wicked on this land were supposed to have been completely destroyed, leaving only “the more righteous part” of the people (3 Nephi 10:12).

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts acknowledged that the Bible could have furnished structural material for this dramatic scene:

It should be remembered, however, that while it may be claimed with much force that many of the Book of Mormon traits were supplied by *View of the Hebrews*, it does not follow that every one should be supplied from that source. There are other sources whence might come suggestions, and equally available to Joseph Smith if he was the merely human author of the Book of Mormon. . . . Matthew and Zachariah, then, could well be thought of as furnishing material for the Book of Mormon signs of the Birth of Messiah.

So also as to the Book of Mormon signs of Messiah’s death and resurrection. These events in the Book of Mormon are described as being attended with great terrors—with storm and tempest, and three hours of tremendous earthquakes which caused mountains to rise from plains, and mountains to sink to valleys; which buried cities beneath new raised mountains . . . cities were destroyed by fire, and the whole face of the land was changed by tremendous upheavals of the land. There followed intense darkness through three days while the Christ was entombed. . . . I know of no more dramatic bit of writing in human literature than this account of the signs of Messiah’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection given in the Book of Mormon; and yet the germ of it, the suggestion of it may well be said to be found in the New Testament scriptures. Matthew in his story of the crucifixion tells us that while the Christ was hanging upon the cross and

the thieves mocked him, behold, “From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour”—three hours of darkness. And when he “yielded up the ghost,” “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent” . . . The items of the Book of Mormon story are practically all here; the darkness, the earthquake, the renting of the rocks, the fear of men impressed with these things—with all this in hand, it becomes a matter of expanding the several items to the required limits of the Book of Mormon story. The *three hours of darkness, expanded to three days of darkness*; the evidently *momentary earthquake of Matthew, to three hours of earth quaking; the local rending of rocks in Matthew, to the rending of a continent*; and the fear of a Roman centurion and those that were with him, to the terror of a whole people.

With these things as suggestions as to signs for Messiah’s birth and death and resurrection, and one of conceded vivid, and strong and constructive imaginative powers to work them all out, need not be regarded as an unthinkable procedure and achievement. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 236-38)

We have to agree with B. H. Roberts’ suggestion that the New Testament may have provided raw material for Joseph Smith’s story in the Book of Mormon. For example, Matthew’s statement about the earthquake and the rocks rending is certainly parallel to the Book of Mormon account. In Matthew 27:51 we read: “. . . the veil of the temple was rent in twain . . . and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent . . .” In the Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 8: 18 we find: “. . . the rocks were rent in twain . . .” In 1 Nephi 12 we read another account of the calamity. Nephi informs the reader that he had a vision in which he saw that there were “earthquakes . . . and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent . . .”

We are convinced that the New Testament provided material for the great destruction that took place in the Book of Mormon and that the books of Matthew and Revelation would have been especially helpful. Nevertheless, the evidence seems to also point to Josiah Priest’s *Wonders of Nature*. It contains an abundance of material that could have been used. For instance, on pages 354-56, we find an article concerning “The darkness at our Saviour’s crucifixion, supernatural.” This article stresses that the darkness was not a natural event, and could tend to focus Smith’s mind on this phenomenon.

On pages 495-504, there is an article giving “A description of the Day of Judgment, the Coming of Christ at, and of the General Conflagration.” About nine pages are devoted to the “second coming of our Saviour,” when “The crucified God is returned in glory, to take vengeance upon his enemies . . .” (page 499). This article regarding the end of the world is very vivid and could certainly suggest the major catastrophe described in the Book of Mormon.

As we indicated above, the Book of Mormon described a “thick darkness upon all the face of the land” at the time of the crucifixion (3 Nephi 8:20). Pages 527-528 of Priest’s book contain some material reprinted from *Clarke’s Commentary* which has strong parallels to the period of darkness mentioned in the Book of Mormon. While part of the material found in the Book of Mormon could have come from the story of the plague of darkness which came upon the Egyptians (see Exodus 10:21-23), there are some significant parallels which are not found in the Bible.

Pages 252-279 of *Wonders of Nature* deal with “The Phenomena Of Fire And Earthquakes.” This part of Priest’s book has important parallels to the Book of Mormon.

While it is obvious that the books of Exodus, Matthew and Revelation could have provided inspiration for the judgment scene described in the Book of Mormon, Josiah Priest’s book seems to furnish some important structural material not found in the Bible.

Below are some interesting parallels between *Wonders of Nature* and the Book of Mormon:

ONE — Both books speak of lightning, thunder and earthquakes:

And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.

And there were exceeding sharp lightnings . . . the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah that in the place of the city there became a great mountain. . . .

And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth . . . the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams and in cracks, upon all the face of the land. (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 6, 7, 10, 17-18)

That appearance of God upon Mount Sinai will help us a little to form an idea of the last appearance. . . . “There were thunders and Lightnings . . . and the whole Mount quaked greatly.” . . .

When, therefore, this mighty God returns again . . . not Mount Sinai only, but all the mountains of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world will tremble at his presence. Earthquakes and subterraneous eruptions will tear the body and bowels of the earth, and thunders and convulsive motions of the air rend the skies . . . noises of the sea will be answered again from the land, by falling rocks and mountains. (WON, pages 498-499, 503)

TWO — Both speak of cities and people being burned.

And many great and notable cities . . . were burned . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8:14)

. . . here are millions shrieking in the flames at once . . . here is an universal fire through all the cities of the earth . . . (WON, page 502)

THREE — Both use the words “thick darkness.”

. . . there was thick darkness . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 20)

. . . thick darkness, and pillars of smoke . . . (WON, page 503)

FOUR — Both accounts speak of a vapor or vapors. This is very interesting because the book of Exodus says nothing about a vapor being involved.

. . . the vapor of darkness . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 20)

Probably this was occasioned by a superabundance of aqueous vapours . . . (WON, page 527)

FIVE — Both Priest's book and the Book of Mormon mention that the darkness could be felt.

. . . the inhabitants . . . could feel the vapor of darkness . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8:20)

Darkness which may be felt. (WON, page 527)

SIX — Both accounts speak of a mist. The Bible story says nothing about a mist.

. . . there was thick darkness . . . And there was not any light seen . . . so great were the mists of darkness . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 20 and 22)

. . . aqueous vapours . . . were so thick as to prevent the rays of the sun from penetrating through them: an extraordinary thick mist . . . (WON, page 527)

SEVEN — In both cases artificial light could not be used:

And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all; (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 21)

. . . no artificial light could be procured, as the thick clammy vapours would prevent lamps, &c. from burning . . . (WON, page 527)

EIGHT — In both cases the darkness lasted three days.

. . . it did last for the space of three days . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 23)

. . . the darkness with its attendant horrors, lasted for three days. (WON, page 528)

NINE — The portion of Josiah Priest's book which tells of various earthquakes and volcanoes recorded in history has some interesting parallels to the Book of Mormon. Both books tell of a city or cities being swallowed by the sea.

And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned. (BOM, 3 Nephi 9:4)

. . . the great earthquake at Port Royal . . . in the space of two minutes . . . drowned nine-tenths of the town. The houses sunk outright thirty or forty fathom. . . three quarters of the houses with their inhabitants were sunk under water. . .

Calao, the port of Lima . . . was totally destroyed . . . The inhabitants ran from their houses . . . immediately all was silent, the sea had quite overwhelmed the city and buried it forever in its bosom. (WON, pages 277, 279)

TEN — Both speak of whole cities being swallowed up in the earth.

And many great and notable cities were sunk . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8:14)

And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face . . .

And behold, the city of Gigal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth;

Yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocom and the inhabitants thereof . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 9: 5-7)

By this means many earthquakes have been occasioned, and whole cities swallowed up. This was undoubtedly the cause of the great earthquake at Port Royal, and that which swallowed up Lima. . . when the subterraneous fires break through . . .

these fires cause tremblings and concussions, or violent eruptions: and perhaps open wide and deep gulphs, wherein whole cities, yea mountains, are swallowed up. . . . Pliny tells us that in his own time, the mountain Cymbotus, with the town of Eurites, which stood on its side, were totally swallowed up. . . . Galanis and Garnatus . . . are recorded to have met the same fate. . . .

The greatest earthquake we find in antiquity is that . . . in which twelve cities in Asia Minor were swallowed up in one night. . . . at Port Royal . . . the earth cracked... people were swallowed up . . . A thousand acres of land were sunk . . . (WON, pages 272, 274, 275, 277-78)

ELEVEN — Both books tell of inhabited areas sinking into the ground and water coming up in their place.

. . . the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk . . . and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof; and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 9: 6-7)

. . . during an earthquake . . . the mountain in an instant sunk into the bowels of the earth: and no token of it remained, but a vast lake of water. The like happened in the mountainous parts of China, in 1556: when a whole providence, with all its towns, cities and inhabitants, was absorbed in a moment; an immense lake of water remaining in its place . . .

The following account of a dreadful earthquake . . . is related by the celebrated father Kircher . . .

“After some time this shock ceasing, we stood up in order to go to Euphaemia . . . I turned my eyes towards the city, but could see only a dark cloud resting over the place. . . . We waited till the cloud was past away, then looking for the city, it was totally sunk. Nothing but a putrid lake was seen where it stood. . . .”

Of the great earthquake . . . in Jamaica, an eye witness writes thus. . . . Scarce a planter’s house or sugar work was left throughout all Jamaica. A great part of them was swallowed up, frequently houses, people and trees at one gap, in the room of which there afterwards appeared a large pool of water. . . . A large mountain . . . was quite swallowed up, and in the place where it stood, remained a lake four or five leagues over. (WON, pages 274-278)

TWELVE — The Book of Mormon lists the names of many cities that were buried or burned (3 Nephi 9: 1-10). *Wonders of Nature* also tells of many cities being destroyed.

And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants slain . . .

And there were some cities that remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8:14-15)

The walls were dashed from their foundations, and no less than fifty four cities, with an incredible number of villages, were either destroyed or greatly damaged. (WON, page 275)

THIRTEEN — Both books refer to people groaning.

. . . yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 8:23)

. . . and the groans of the dying, all contributed to raise my terror. (WON, page 276)

FOURTEEN — Ungodliness is mentioned as a cause for destruction in both works.

And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness . . . (BOM, 3 Nephi 9: 9)

. . . I had been reading prayers, (which I have read every day since I came to Port Royal, to keep up some shew of religion amongst the most ungodly people). . . in less than three minutes, Port Royal, one of the fairest towns in the English plantations, was shattered in pieces, and left a dreadful monument of the justice of God. (WON, page 279)

FIFTEEN — Repentance was preached in both cases after earthquakes had occurred.

Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people. . .

O all ye that are spared . . . will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? (BOM, 3 Nephi 9:2, 13)

By the time I had been half an hour longer with them, in setting their sins before them, and exhorting them to repentance, some merchants came . . . (WON, page 279)

SIXTEEN — The words “the God of nature,” which do not appear in the Bible, are used in both books.

. . . the God of Abraham . . . yieldeth himself . . . into the hands of the wicked . . . to be crucified . . . and to be buried in a sepulcher, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness . . . And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many kings . . . shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers. (BOM, 1 Nephi 19:10, 12)

For if an artificial powder, made only of nitre, sulphur and charcoal, has so wonderful effects, what force must that combustible matter have, which arises from sulphur, nitre, sal ammoniac, bitumen, gold, copper, iron, arsenic, mercury and other metallic and mineral spirits, with which the womb of the earth abounds, when the subterraneous fires break through into the hollow vaults, where these are repositied by the God of nature? . . . these fires cause tremblings and concussions . . . whole cities, yea mountains, are swallowed up. (WON, page 274)

One thing that is puzzling about the Book of Mormon is that before the Nephites came to the New World, they were in Palestine, which is near the Mediterranean Sea. Instead of sailing from there, however, they spent a number of years in the Arabian desert. The Book of Mormon says that they did “sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 17:4).

The Book of Mormon makes it clear that they traveled by the Red Sea. Mormon scholar Sidney B. Sperry felt that they eventually ended up “on the eastern side of the Arabian peninsula, possibly in the Oman or Hadramaut region” and set sail through the Arabian Sea (*The Book of Mormon Testifies*, 1952, page 61). This, of course, would be a far greater voyage than if they had sailed out through the Mediterranean Sea.

In any case, the question arises as to why the Nephites ended up in Arabia. One suggestion might be that Joseph Smith was borrowing from the biblical account of the Israelites’ sojourn in the wilderness. In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, pages 77-80, we noted many important parallels between the two accounts. Josiah Priest’s *Wonders of Nature*, however, has a section which could have provided Joseph Smith with ideas. On pages 57-62, Priest included an article entitled, “Of the Fiery Simoom of Arabia.” This is an account of the explorer Bruce’s trip through the “desert of Nubia” to Grand Cairo.

While Bruce and his companions were on the other side of the Red Sea, his story could have stirred Smith’s fertile imagination. Like Nephi and his father, Bruce took a party into the wilderness. A guide by the name of Idris “promised Bruce that he would live and die with him . . .” (WON, page 57). Nephi also took a man named Zoram with him, and Zoram “made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth” (BOM, 1 Nephi 4:35).

One of the men Bruce took with him was named “Ismael” (WON, page 58). Nephi took a man named “Ishmael . . . down into the wilderness . . .” (BOM, 1 Nephi 7: 5). It should be conceded, however, that Joseph Smith may have simply borrowed the name Ishmael from the Bible.

At any rate, Bruce’s company was terrified by the “whirlwinds of moving sand, from which they should never be able to extricate themselves . . .” (WON, page 58). While Nephi does not refer to this danger in the wilderness, the idea of life threatening whirlwinds is mentioned with regard to the great destruction which occurred at the death of Christ: “. . . the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds . . . there were some who were carried away in the whirlwind . . .” (BOM, 3 Nephi 8: 12, 16).

Because of the trials Bruce's group became insubordinate and "all was discontent, murmuring, and fear" (WON, page 58). A number of Nephi's followers also began to murmur: ". . . Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael did begin to murmur exceedingly, because of their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness; and also my father began to murmur against the Lord . . ."

Bruce reported that "thirst, began to stare us in the face . . ." (WON, page 58) Nephi's followers complained that they had "suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue . . ." (BOM, 1 Nephi 16: 35)

Bruce said that, "An universal despondency had taken possession of our people. . . . I easily guessed their discourse was not favourable to me . . . I called them together, and reprimanded and exhorted them in the strongest manner I could . . . I believe I never was at any time more eloquent, and never had eloquence a more sudden affect" (WON, page 60).

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi also reprimanded those who were in rebellion, and they submitted to his authority:

. . . my brethren . . . began to murmur against me, saying: Our brother is a fool . . . thus my brethren did complain against me . . . And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake unto them . . . And now it came to pass that when I had spoken these words they were angry with me, and were desirous to throw me into the depths of the sea . . . And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren, insomuch that they were confounded and could not contend against me; neither durst they lay their hands upon me . . . they said: We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee . . . and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer them . . . (BOM, 1 Nephi 17: 17, 23, 48, 52, 55)

Both accounts speak of the borders by the Red Sea. Bruce referred to a tribe that drove their cattle "from the borders of the Red Sea to the banks of the Nile . . ." Nephi talked of the "most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea" (BOM, 1 Nephi 16: 14). It is also interesting to note that while the Book of Mormon uses the word "near" instead of the word "of," in a revelation given by Joseph Smith in June, 1829, a perfect six-word parallel is found to *Wonders of Nature*. It speaks of "the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness, on the borders of the Red Sea" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 17:1).

In the Bible, Joshua 10:12-14, we read the story of Joshua commanding the sun to stand still so that the Israelites could prevail over their enemies. In his book, *Wonders of Nature*, Josiah Priest included a seven-page article by Adam Clarke defending this miracle against those who claimed it was impossible for the sun to stand still. While there is nothing in the Bible explaining the miracle, the Book of Mormon, like Priest's book, offers a defense against the argument raised by critics. In *Wonders of Nature*, pages 344, 345, 348, we find the following:

Phenomenon of The Sun's Standing Still. . . .
I consider the present accredited system of the universe . . . that the Sun is in the centre of what is called the solar system; and that the earth and all the other planets . . . move round him . . . I consider the sun to have no revolution round any orbit . . . he [Joshua] certainly spoke as if he had known that the solar influence was the cause of the earth's rotation, and therefore . . . he requested . . . that influence might be for a time restrained, that the diurnal motion of the earth might be arrested, through which alone, the sun could be kept above the horizon, and the day prolonged.

The reader will notice that Joseph Smith's explanation in the Book of Mormon, Helaman 12: 14-15, is similar, although it is worded in the old King James style to make it appear ancient:

Yea, if he say unto the earth—Thou shalt go back, that it lengthen out the day for many hours—it is done; And thus according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.

As we have shown, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts noted that the author of the Book of Mormon seemed to expand on biblical themes. This trait seems to be evident with regard to the story of Joshua. While the miracle in the book of Joshua took place on one day, the Book of Mormon tells of a prophet known as "Samuel the Lamanite" who proclaimed that on the night before Jesus was to come to earth, "there would be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day. Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this

shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting; therefore they shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born.”

This would certainly surpass Joshua’s miracle. It is also interesting to note that this is found just two chapters after the discussion of the fact that “it is the earth that moveth and not the sun” (see Helaman 14: 3-4).

While we have not had the time to thoroughly research the book, *Wonders of Nature*, we feel that it contains enough parallels to warrant a closer examination. A computer comparison of the text with the Book of Mormon would probably reveal many other important similarities.

5. Problems in Book of Mormon Archeology and Geography

Although many scholars from FARMS would like their readers to believe otherwise, the problems with regard to archeology and geography in the Book of Mormon are very serious indeed. They are, in fact, much more obvious than they were when B. H. Roberts wrote his critical study of the Book of Mormon. The situation becomes more critical every year as more and more archeological research is conducted and yet no sign of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites appears.

As noted above, Matthew Roper criticizes the section of our work, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* which deals with archeological and geographical problems in the Book of Mormon (see pages 97-125J of our book). In addition, Brigham Young University professor William J. Hamblin, made an attack on our book *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*. Since Professor Hamblin was coeditor of the *Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, it is significant that he would write the rebuttal.

We have already pointed out that it is strange that Hamblin would review a book which was originally written in 1969, with a second appendix added in 1972. William Hamblin, of course, argued that even though he felt our work is of no value, it “has either directly or indirectly been a fundamental source for many subsequent anti-Mormon attempts to discredit the Book of Mormon.”

To verify this statement, Hamblin gave “a partial chronological listing of anti-Mormons who have in the past two decades either directly or indirectly used the Tanners’ work on archaeology as definitive . . .” Hamblin then proceeded to use thirty-three lines of his review to list about twenty books, articles and other writings which he felt stemmed from our work (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, pages 250-251).

Since a great deal of the material in our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, is also in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we have decided to deal with the criticisms set forth by both William Hamblin and Matthew Roper in this section of our book.

Professor Hamblin, as would be expected, uses a good deal of space ridiculing us in various ways:

Archaeology and the Book of Mormon is a vintage Tanner publication. It bears all the hallmarks of what has been astutely called the Tanners’ “bizarre editorial style.” The reader can expect none of the standard accepted norms of editing from the Tanners. My advice to the potential reader is, “lasciate ogne

speranza, voi ch’intrate.” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 252)

In footnote 7, at the bottom of the same page, William Hamblin gives the reader an English translation: “Dante, *Inferno*, 3:9, ‘Abandon all hope, O ye who enter here,’ an inscription found over the gates of Hell.” Professor Hamblin then continues his criticism:

The eye strains and the mind balks at the unrelieved tedium of the poorly reproduced, densely packed, single spaced, nine-point font with nearly nonexistent margins. . . .

Granted that little of what the Tanners publish can be characterized as having sterling editorial or publication values, what of the content of *Archaeology?* In many ways this booklet provides a perfect picture of the Tanners at the height of their ineptitude. Hard as it may be for readers of the Tanners’ current publications to believe, their work of twenty years ago was substantially worse. The Tanners have matured over the years, and their writing and analysis has improved somewhat with age. They are now actually occasionally publishing some things with which I basically agree.

This is not to say that readers will find much of substance in their current work, only that it is superior to their previous literary efforts. . . .

The most striking feature of *Archaeology* is how little of it the Tanners actually wrote. It consists for the most part of a confused hodgepodge of quotations from various sources, interspersed with brief transitional sentences written by the Tanners. . . . Since the Tanners are well known for their unwillingness to present the Latter-day Saint case in anything but the most unfavorable light, my advice to potential readers—both Mormon and non-Mormon—is to ignore the Tanners and read the original sources which they anthologize. . . .

The result of the Tanners’ anthologizing method is that this booklet is frequently only semicoherent.

... The Tanners seem to be making two fundamental arguments in their booklet, although they do not make this explicit: (1) Latter-day Saints disagree among themselves about Book of Mormon geography and archaeology; and (2) many archaeological discoveries which some Latter-day Saints have attempted to use to authenticate the Book of Mormon are either fraudulent, or have been misinterpreted. Both of these statements are accurate.

However, they seem to draw the further conclusion that these two propositions somehow imply that there is therefore no archaeological evidence for, or defensible interpretation of, the Book of Mormon. Their quotations by no means support this flawed conclusion. Even if Latter-day Saints disagree about various aspects of Book of Mormon history, archaeology, and geography, and even if all of the antiquities examined by the Tanners are not authentic, these still would not demonstrate that the Book of Mormon is unhistorical. (*Ibid.*, pages 252-256)

The reader will notice that Dr. Hamblin claimed that “The most striking feature of *Archaeology* is how little of it the Tanners actually wrote.” Hamblin is correct about this matter. We did not do a great deal of writing because we wanted to show our readers what both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars had to say about the matter. If we had done a great deal of the writing, Hamblin probably would have complained that we did not let the scholars speak for themselves.

In any case, on page 270 of his article, William Hamblin stated: “Book of Mormon geography and the location of the Hill Cumorah are extensively discussed by the Tanners . . . Their treatment of the topic is so outdated as to be fundamentally worthless.”

On page 255 of the same article, Hamblin accuses us of using outdated material:

Furthermore, the Tanners were obviously unfamiliar with technical literature on New or Old World archaeology of the late sixties. For example, they rely on an 1887 book by anti-Mormon M. T. Lamb as one of their fundamental sources on Mesoamerican archaeology.

In footnote 17, at the bottom of the same page, Hamblin says that “Nearly six pages (almost 9%) of their original 64-page booklet consists of quotations or illustrations from Lamb. This is a classic example of the intellectual inbreeding of anti-Mormons.”

In making the claim that “almost 9%” of our “original booklet” consisted of “quotations or illustrations from Lamb,” William Hamblin is not counting the appendix to the book. It contains 6 additional pages, making a total of 70 pages. None of these 6 pages have material from Lamb’s book. Furthermore, in 1972 we added another appendix containing 22 more pages. These pages also contain nothing by Lamb. The introductory statement for Hamblin’s article acknowledges that the book actually contains “92” pages (see page 250).

Hamblin claims that there is material taken from Lamb on page “22” of our book. A careful examination,

however, reveals nothing written by Lamb on that page. Since the book most people have read is the one with 92 pages, we used this in making our own computations. We discovered that only 5.76% of the total book was taken from Lamb’s work and this included both quotations and illustrations. We also discovered that 1.41% was from illustrations. This means that only 4.35% of the text is taken from Lamb’s book, *The Golden Bible*.

We certainly feel justified in our use of Lamb’s work because it contains copies of drawings of ancient Mayan writing and ruins. The same type of drawings are found in books produced by Mormon scholars.

As far as the text we have quoted from Lamb’s book is concerned, Hamblin has not demonstrated that this material is incorrect or outdated. In fact, in at least one case, Lamb seems to have been way out in front of the Mormon scholars. On pages 54-55 of our book, we quoted him as saying that the story of Mormon marching his army from Central America to meet the Lamanites at the Hill Cumorah in the state of New York is impossible to believe.

Interestingly, Professor Hamblin, John Sorenson and other prominent Mormon scholars have conceded that this is the case. These scholars, as we will show below, would have us believe that the Hill Cumorah is actually in Central America! M. T. Lamb seems to have sensed the depth of this problem long before FARMS came into existence.

We feel that Lamb’s observations that we cited are just as true today as when he wrote them a century ago. Mormon scholars quote information concerning the Mayans and Aztecs which is far older than what we have taken from Lamb. For example, in the book, *The Messiah in Ancient America*, we find the writings of Ixtlilxochitl, the sixteenth-century historian, cited. The works of Lord Kingsborough, published between 1830 and 1848 are also used. Other writers from the sixteenth and seventeenth century are freely quoted. Bruce W. Warren, a well-known Brigham Young University scholar, is the co-author of this book.

We feel that defenders of the Mormon Church are using a double standard when they criticize our work in this way.

Like William Hamblin, Mormon scholar Matthew Roper uses the same flawed argument: “The Tanners are highly dependent on the arguments of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics M. T. Lamb and Charles A. Shook” (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, page 204).

Matthew Roper seems to feel that John Sorenson’s work on the Book of Mormon provides important answers to the issues we have raised:

This last decade in Book of Mormon research has seen numerous strides in this direction. For instance, in 1985, John Sorenson published his work *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. . . . Sorenson gave his opinion that, “the Book of Mormon shows so many striking similarities to the Mesoamerican setting that it seems to me impossible for rational people willing to examine the data to maintain any longer [as the Tanners do], that the book is a mere romance or speculative history written in the third decade of the ninetieth century.” (*Ibid.*, pages 203-204)

Professor Hamblin comments that, “The fundamental flaw of the Tanners’ booklet . . . is that it completely fails to deal with serious, up-to-date Latter-day Saint interpretations of Book of Mormon geography and archaeology . . . Until anti-Mormons are able to produce cogent responses to the ongoing substantive professional and analytical Latter-day Saint studies of Book of Mormon antiquities, their rehash of decades-old writings on the subject deserves to be dismissed as pointless” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, 1993, page 257).

In the footnote to this statement, Hamblin gives a list of the “substantive professional and analytical Latter-day Saint studies of Book of Mormon” At the head of that list we find Sorenson’s book: “See, for example, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985). . . .”

We obtained Professor Sorenson’s book and found that it contained nothing substantive that affected the research which we had done. While it did contain a great deal of speculation about the location of Nephite ruins, it had nothing concrete to support the theories. Anyone who honestly examines our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, will see that we used many of the latest sources available at that time and that a great portion of our quotations came directly from Mormon scholars.

Cumorah Story Questioned

While a number of things in the Book of Mormon have been debated by Mormon leaders and scholars, one thing that seems to be beyond question from the text of the book itself is that the ancient Nephites and Lamanites possessed the lands of both North and South America. The Book of Mormon itself contains this statement about the matter:

And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from

the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east. (Helaman 3:8)

At one time the Book of Mormon contained footnotes explaining some geographical locations. The footnotes in the 1888 edition made it clear that the “sea south” was the “Atlantic, south of Cape Horn.” The “sea north” was explained as the “Arctic, north of North America.” The “sea west” was identified as the “Pacific,” and the “sea east” was the “Atlantic” (Book of Mormon, 1888 edition, page 434).

Besides the clear teaching in the text of the Book of Mormon regarding this matter, Joseph Smith and the other early Mormon leaders identified North and South America as the lands of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. The traditional view concerning the Hill Cumorah and Book of Mormon geography was clearly presented by Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt:

The Lamanites at that time dwelt in South America, and the Nephites in North America.

A great and terrible war commenced between them . . . and resulted in the complete overthrow and destruction of the Nephites. This was commenced at the Isthmus of Darien . . . the Nephites were driven before their enemies, a great distance to the north and north-east; and having gathered their whole nation together . . . they encamped on and round about the hill Cumorah, where the records were found, which is in the State of New York about two hundred miles west of the city of Albany. . . . the nation of the Nephites were destroyed . . . (*Remarkable Visions*, page 10, as reprinted in *Orson Pratt’s Works*, Liverpool, 1851)

As we noted earlier, in 1887 M. T. Lamb, a critic of Mormonism, cast a dark shadow of doubt on the Book of Mormon’s teaching that Mormon marched an army from Central America to meet the Lamanites at the last great battle at the Hill Cumorah in the state of New York. To Lamb this claim appeared to be absolutely absurd:

Mormon is recording the rapid destruction of his people, the Nephites. They have been driven out of all their strongholds in Central America: one after another their principal cities have been taken and destroyed by the victorious Lamanites. . . . Mormon finally writes a letter to the king of the Lamanites, making the following strange request:

“And I, Mormon wrote an epistle unto the King of the Lamanites, and desired of him that he would grant unto us that we might gather together our people unto the land of Cumorah, and there we could give them battle. And it came to pass that the King of the Lamanites did grant unto me the thing which I desired. And it came to pass that we did

march forth to the land of Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains; and here we did hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites.”

Now, reader, do you think any sane general of an army would write such a letter as the above to his deadly foe? And if such a letter had been written, do you think such a deadly foe, if in his senses would have consented? Please bear in mind that the Lamanites’ home was in South America, and that the principal possessions of the Nephites, their largest cities . . . are found in Central America, while this hill, Cumorah, is located in western New York, from two to three thousand miles distant.

Would the Lamanite king be willing to transport an army of several hundred thousand, at least two thousand miles away from his base of supplies, into a sparsely settled country, where provisions were necessarily scarce, for no other reason than to allow his enemy to secure a good position where they “had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites”?

But again, why do you suppose the good prophet Mormon was so anxious to reach that particular hill Cumorah, so far away from the homes and possessions of his people? Was it really because said hill was a natural fortification, a famous strategic point? Not at all; it is only a little hill, while in reaching that hill he had climbed over hundreds of mountain fastnesses, had marched by scores of magnificent cañons or river gorges and other of nature’s hiding places or of Thermopylae passes—a thousand places had been presented that were a hundred times better adapted to the object he had in view: “to gain some advantage over the Lamanites.”

Why then does he ignore all these strong places and march his army a thousand miles from the mountains to a little hill in western New York that was utterly valueless as a natural barrier against an enemy? Reader, we will whisper the reason. Joseph Smith found his golden plates in this hill Cumorah, and he must needs get Mormon and Moroni up there with their sacred records before these worthies are swept out of existence, or his ancient history will not tally with the modern facts!! (*The Golden Bible; or, The Book of Mormon. Is it From God?* by M.T. Lamb, New York, 1887, pp. 204-206)

This observation by Lamb undoubtedly had a sobering affect on LDS scholars who read his work. It seems likely that Lamb’s criticism may have served as a catalyst to Mormon intellectuals who decided that the geography of the Book of Mormon had to be greatly compressed. It is interesting to note that B. H. Roberts was familiar with Lamb’s work (see his book *New Witnesses for God*, 1909, pages 424-425, 442-443).

Like M. T. Lamb, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts later had problems with the portion of the Book of Mormon which told of the extinction of the Nephites at the Hill Cumorah. He pointed out that the nation of the Jaredites was destroyed at the same hill and noted many similarities between the two great wars which could lead to the conclusion that both stories came from the same mind. Roberts even wondered if it could be “a wonder-tale of an immature mind” (see *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 277-283).

Shrinking the Land

While M. T. Lamb’s ridicule of the story of the long march to Cumorah to fight the last great battle must have seemed blasphemous to the leaders of the LDS church when he first presented it, today many of the top scholars in the church agree that the idea of two armies traveling two or three thousand miles to fight this war does not make much sense. They, in fact, have come to reject the idea that the Hill Cumorah is in the state of New York. The evidence has forced them to the conclusion that the Hill Cumorah was actually in Central America.

Notwithstanding the clear-cut teachings of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s endorsement of these pronouncements, these modern scholars have apostatized from the traditional teachings of the church on this subject. In their zeal to save the Book of Mormon they have crunched the lands of the Book of Mormon people into a relatively small area in Mesoamerica. As strange as it may seem, FARMS seems to be deeply involved in promoting the new theory, and John Sorenson appears to be leading the parade.

While William Hamblin and Matthew Roper set forth Sorenson’s book as an extremely significant piece of work in proving the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, their enthusiasm was not shared by some members of the church. In the book *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis present information showing that the publication of Sorenson’s book was delayed for at least six years because of opposition by one of the Mormon Church’s top leaders, Apostle Mark E. Petersen:

John L. Sorenson, BYU archaeology department chair . . . recently argued, for example, that “either the Book of Mormon promised land was in some portion of Mesoamerica or it was nowhere” . . . The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) . . . endorses Sorenson’s speculations and has suggested that the capital city of Nephi was located in Guatemala City . . . Sorenson’s

own reconciliation of Book of Mormon archaeology and Mesoamerican cultural geography, “An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon,” was rejected for publication by BYU’s Religious Studies Center because Elder Mark E. Petersen found the topic to be “too touchy” (Administrative Council Minutes, 31 May 1978). Only after Petersen’s death in 1984 did FARMS and the church’s Deseret Book Company announce plans to jointly publish Sorenson’s and other related works. (*Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, 1985, pages 85-86)

In footnote 73, on pages 408-409, the authors inform us that the “Religious Instruction Administrative Council Minutes” for “27 July 1978” contain the following: “‘Elder [Mark E.] Petersen said it should not be published by our center’ . . .” While the attempt to stop publication was successful for a number of years, we were aware that many copies of Sorenson’s manuscript were being circulated. In his book, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, 1990, John L. Sorenson stated that, “requests for access to my manuscript were persistent and as a result a total of 1200 photocopies were distributed at cost. I was surprised and gratified by the widespread interest” (page 43). It now seems evident that this method had to be used because of the resistance to the book being published. Dr. Sorenson also tells of a nine-year struggle he had to get a series of articles published in the church’s *Ensign* magazine:

. . . Jay Todd, managing editor of *The Ensign*, invited me to prepare a series of articles; they were completed early in 1976.

For the next nine years we worked together trying to find a style and range of content acceptable for publication in *The Ensign*. Not surprisingly, reluctance was manifested on the part of various constituencies that would be affected by such a discussion appearing in the Church periodical. (*Ibid.*)

As we have shown above, B. H. Roberts was very disappointed by the fact that the Mormon Prophet, who was supposed to be led by direct revelation from God, could not help in solving the problems in the Book of Mormon. Like Roberts, Dr. John L. Sorenson became concerned that Joseph Smith and other church leaders could not provide inspired answers to important questions regarding the Book of Mormon. In the book cited above, Sorenson warned that it was unwise to put one’s trust in these leaders when it came to the subject of Book of Mormon geography:

It has often been supposed that the Church authorities (particularly Joseph Smith) must

have been accurate, and by implication revealed knowledge about Book of Mormon geography. The evidence is against that view; too many statements from those authorities are in contradiction to the text and to each other to allow us to suppose that anybody knew for sure the answers to the crucial geographic questions. (*The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, page 362)

On page 226 of the same book, Sorenson plainly stated:

We must stop asking, as so many do, what have the Brethren [i. e., the church leaders] said about this in the past? What if none of them knew the answer (which is what some of them have said often enough)? And equally we must stop asking, what ancient civilization known to the archaeologists must the Nephites have participated in? This is completely irrelevant at the present stage of study.

Much of the opposition by church leaders to John Sorenson’s work undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that Sorenson advocated a very limited view of Book of Mormon geography and maintained that the Hill Cumorah was in Central America rather than in New York.

Like other church leaders, Apostle Petersen may also have been concerned about scholars attempting to identify certain Book of Mormon sites. In any case, in his book Dr. Sorenson made this startling statement about the home of the ancient people mentioned in the Book of Mormon:

We can now be certain that the Book of Mormon story took place in a limited portion of the western hemisphere shaped roughly like an hourglass. The size of that territory was measured in hundreds, not thousands, of miles. The movements of peoples, the individual journeys, and the times involved in travels recorded in the scripture fit reasonably in a land southward around 350 miles long and not much more than half that wide at one point north of Zarahemla. The land northward is less well specified but seems not so long. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 1985, page 22)

The reader will remember that the Book of Mormon itself plainly states that the people descended from Lehi and the Mulekites “began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east” (Helaman 3:8). This would mean that these people spread themselves abroad throughout

both North and South America. In *The 1989 Information Please Almanac*, page 465, we read that there are approximately 16,000,000 square miles of land area in these two continents. From this it would appear that John Sorenson has shrunk the size of Book of Mormon lands to less than a hundredth part of the area Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders ascribed to them. On page 16 of his book, Sorenson remarked: “Many Latter-day Saints will have to change their thinking markedly to adjust to the dimensions we have discussed.”

The idea of such a drastic reduction in the size of the Book of Mormon lands caused a great deal of consternation among Mormon leaders. It would appear, however, that notwithstanding the many problems involved in making such a transition, many LDS scholars currently hold to the limited view.

Although John Sorenson appears to be the chief spokesman for the limited theory of Book of Mormon geography, the idea actually originated decades earlier. In his work, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, 1990, pages 28-29, Sorenson revealed the following concerning a book published in 1927:

Sjodahl’s book respectfully summarized the Reynolds 1880 Model [i. e., the traditional view of Book of Mormon geography]. . . The fourth view presented by Sjodahl was that of Willard Young, “The Central American Theory.” In it Lehi’s group landed in El Salvador, the Nephites and Lamanites inhabited that country, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize. *The hill Cumorah was in eastern Guatemala.*

On pages 37-38, Sorenson went on to state that in 1947 Thomas Stuart Ferguson “published *Cumorah, Where?*, a short book specifically confronting the New York view by mustering arguments from the scriptural text that require a limited geographical scene; a few statements said that the scene had to be entirely in Middle America. This was the first publication proposing such a small scale model since Sjodahl 20 years before. In the face of Apostle Smith’s support for a hemispheric scale, Ferguson’s piece was generally greeted with suspicion or hostility.”

John Sorenson, as mentioned above, fully accepted the idea that the Hill Cumorah was in Central America, not in New York:

A question many readers will have been asking themselves is a sound and necessary one: how did Joseph Smith obtain the gold plates in upstate New York if the final battleground of the Nephites was in Mesoamerica?

Let’s review where the final battle took place. The Book of Mormon makes clear that the demise of both Jaredites and Nephites took place near the narrow neck of land. Yet *New York is thousands of miles* away from any plausible configuration that could be described as this narrow neck. Thus *the scripture itself rules out the idea that the Nephites perished near Palmyra.*

Then how did the plates get from the battleground to New York? We have no definitive answer, but we can construct a plausible picture. (*An Ancient American Setting*, pages 44-45)

Dr. Sorenson went on to suggest that Moroni himself could have transported the plates to the hill which was by Joseph Smith’s home.

Sorenson and other Mormon scholars connected with FARMS and Brigham Young University seem to be embarrassed by certain claims made by church leaders regarding Book of Mormon geography. They not only question the location of the Hill Cumorah in the state of New York, but they also reject the long-held view that the “narrow neck of land,” is the “Isthmus of Darien” in Panama. Most of these scholars, including Sorenson, claim that the “Isthmus of Tehuantepec” in southern Mexico is the “narrow neck of land” mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Sorenson wrote: “The saddle-shaped Isthmus of Tehuantepec was long considered a good site for the canal that was eventually built across Panama. . . Total width from Atlantic shore to lagoon edge is 120 miles on a straight line.” (*Ibid.*, page 32)

Unfortunately for those who accept this theory, this isthmus is far too wide to match the description given in the Book of Mormon, Alma 22:32:

And now, it was *only the distance of a day and a half’s journey*, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from *the east to the west sea*; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a *small neck of land* between the *land northward* and the *land southward*.

The Book of Mormon is obviously describing the two continents North America (“the land northward”) and South America (“the land southward”) with a “small neck of land between” them.

Dr. Sorenson has already told us that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is “120 miles” wide at its narrowest point, it seems impossible to believe that the ancient Nephites could travel across it in a day and a half. While

Sorenson Mormon pioneers driving ox teams across flat Nebraska averaged 10 to 11 miles a day. In Guatemala it takes drovers eight days to herd pigs 90 miles through mountainous terrain to market—an average of a little more than 11 miles a day. Other groups of travelers don't move even this fast. R. E. W. Adams, an archaeologist who has worked in Guatemala, reports that travelers on routine trading trips on jungle trails and streams from the Corzal Valley to the Peten, *about 120 miles away, take 19 days or more, averaging a little more than six miles a day.* . . . in the nineteenth century small groups of Mohave Indians in California could cover nearly 100 miles a day, sometimes going without food or even water for days. . . . Averaging six miles an hour, not a day, was not exceptional in their case. . . . If we assume that Alma's people [i. e., a group of people mentioned in the Book of Mormon] and animals went at ordinary speeds, they might plausibly have traveled at a rate of 11 miles a day (*An Ancient American Setting*, pages 8-9).

On page 18 of the same book, Sorenson says that, "we may infer it was about a regular day's march for soldiers from Mulek to Bountiful—say nearly 25 miles. . . . Captain Moroni's army pursued the retreating Lamanites . . . With adrenaline flowing, the armies might have gone three miles or more per hour for 15 hours, or nearly 50 miles."

While Dr. Sorenson uses examples of slower travel when formulating his theory of a very limited Book of Mormon geography, when he speaks of the journey from the east sea to the west sea, he has to really speed up the process. Unless the width of the isthmus has drastically changed, Sorenson certainly could not use a figure of six miles a day because it would take almost three weeks to go to the other side. Even "a regular day's march for soldiers" which he says is "nearly 25 miles" in a day is not sufficient. At that rate it would take almost five days to get across. Sorenson, therefore, suggests that a man moving "six miles an hour" could make it to the other side in less than a day.

While this might be true, it would take a real athlete to accomplish the feat. The Book of Mormon does not claim that the journey required a person to run at breakneck speed to make it across the isthmus. It merely states that it "was only the distance of a day and a half's journey, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea . . ."

One would certainly conclude from this that the individual would be traveling at a normal rate of speed. Dr. Sorenson, as we have shown, felt that "Alma's people and animals went at ordinary speeds," which he identified

as "around 11 miles a day." It would appear that the only reason Sorenson would send a "Nephite" across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in seven league boots is to save his theory of a limited Book of Mormon geography.

Furthermore, there is another problem with regard to this matter. While Alma 22:32 says that it was "a day and a half's journey" across the isthmus, in Helaman 4:7 we read that it was only "a day's journey for a Nephite . . ." This contradiction in the Book of Mormon, of course, makes it even more difficult to solve the problem.

In a book published in 1957, Dr. Hugh Nibley expressed surprise that some would even consider the Isthmus of Tehautepec to be the "small neck of land" mentioned in the Book of Mormon:

To call the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, one hundred and thirty miles wide, a "narrow passage" is of course out of the question.

As we noted earlier, Josiah Priest's book, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, 1825, page 469, mentions the place where "a narrow neck of land is interposed betwixt two vast oceans." This, of course, is similar to the Book of Mormon's description of "the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land" (Ether 10:20). In Priest's book this is identified as "the isthmus of Darien" (i. e., the Isthmus of Panama). Joseph Smith, of course, could not use a modern name for the "narrow neck of land" in his Book of Mormon. It is obvious, however, that he agreed with Priest's identification. This is the place that separates both the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans and North and South America.

Those who take the time to examine the matter will see that Panama is very narrow in some places and best fits the description of "a narrow neck of land." We find the following in a geography book that Joseph Smith may have studied in school: "These tw[o] regions called North and South America, are joined toget[h]er by the Isthmus of Darien, which in its narrowest part, is about 27 miles in width, some say 60 or 70" (*Geography Made Easy: Being An Abridgement of the American Universal Geography*, 1813, pages 53-54).

If Joseph Smith read that the isthmus was "about 27 miles in width" at its narrowest part, it could have suggested to him that it was only a day or a day and a half's journey from one side to the other. As far as distance is concerned, that would not be too far off. However, there is another problem that would have presented a serious obstacle to travel.

Professor Ross T. Christensen, of Brigham Young University, explained:

The terrain of Tehuantepec fits the requirements of the “narrow neck of land” much more satisfactorily than does that of Panama. . . . The Isthmus of Panama . . . presents a very difficult terrain: dense jungle superimposed upon a rugged mountain range extending the entire length of the republic. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, July 7, 1960, page 3)

While Professor Christensen leans toward the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as being the narrow neck of land, there is still another serious obstacle confronting those that accept this identification. Dr. Sorenson has told us that it is 120 miles across that isthmus on a straight line. The problem, however, is that the terrain makes it very difficult for one to go straight across. Mormon scholar David A. Palmer, who accepts the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as being the narrow neck of land, concedes that there is a problem here:

Movement through the isthmus on the Gulf of Mexico side of the divide is extremely difficult unless the ridge running from Acayucan past Minatitlan is followed, as shown on Map #4. Elsewhere the area is too swampy for travel. In fact, going back through time, it appears that there never have been trade routes crossing the isthmus in a true east-west direction except along that ridge and along the Pacific side. . . .

During seasons of flooding, approximately half of the year, it would indeed appear that there are seas on each side of the ridge. In fact, when we crossed it at the height of the dry season, we still saw large expanses of water on the Gulf Coast side which was exposed to our view from the road. (*In Search of Cumorah: New Evidences for the Book of Mormon from Ancient Mexico*, by David A. Palmer, 1981, pages 31-32)

Palmer’s Map #4, on page 242 of his book, shows that a person would have to add about twenty-five miles to the trip because of the terrain, which would make it a journey of about one hundred and forty-five miles. John Sorenson suggests that an athletic Nephite could move at about six miles an hour for a long period of time. We seriously doubt, however, that such an individual could move very fast at night over the terrain Palmer speaks of without having some type of an accident.

Dr. Palmer seems to have trouble accepting the claim that a person could travel across the isthmus in a day and a half. Consequently, he suggests that, “The Journey may have been from some strategic point within the isthmus

to the west sea. . . . the entire isthmus was not being spoken of” (page 31-32). While Palmer would have us believe that Alma 22:32 is speaking of only a part of the isthmus, a careful reading of the wording in the Book of Mormon makes it clear that he is in error about this matter. It clearly states that “it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea . . .”

We have already mentioned the idea that the isthmus may not have been as wide when the Nephites were in existence. Ross T. Christensen speculated:

There is, to be sure, one apparent disadvantage in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec: it seems too wide to be the “narrow neck of land.” There may be a good explanation for that, however, for the Coatzacoalcos and other rivers of this isthmus must have unloaded enormous deposits of silt over the past 1500 years, without reasonable doubt widening it beyond what it was in Book of Mormon times. It must have been much narrower, then. (*U.A.S. Newsletter*, BYU, July 7, 1960, page 3)

David Palmer’s book, however, provides some evidence that seems to refute the idea that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was “much narrower” in Nephite times. Palmer mentions the fact that on the west side of the isthmus there is “Laguna Zope, a large area of ruins surrounding the city of Juchitan. . . . Abundant figurines have been discovered, which relate Laguna Zope to Olmec sites during the late Jaredite period. . . . The ruins at Laguna Zope were abandoned at the end of the preclassic period. . . . Archaeologically it has been determined that it was a port of trade in the isthmus for a two-thousand-year period” (*In Search of Cumorah*, page 207).

These ruins appear to be only about seven or eight miles from the water. This shows that centuries before the purported statement about how long it took to cross the isthmus was recorded in the Book of Mormon, the west seashore was in approximately the same place as it is today. While it could have extended further out, it could not have been much narrower. The Olmecs, of course, could not have built up the site if it was under water.

The same thing applies to the sea on the east side of the isthmus. Dr. Palmer informs us that La Venta was “located near the coast” (page 161). It appears to be about ten miles from the seashore. On page 112, Palmer gives this information: “The Pyramid at La Venta is in the form of a volcano . . . Entirely manmade, it apparently served as a focal point for the Olmec religion from about 1000 B. C. to 600 B. C.”

The early dating for the Olmecs is confirmed in a book published by the National Geographic Society:

“These Olmec appeared on the Mesoamerican scene around 1200 B. C. and flourished for some eight centuries. . . . At La Venta, Tabasco, the Olmec center until 400 B. C., lies a mile long set of platforms, replete with massive sculptures” (*The Mysterious Maya*, by George E. Stuart and Gene S. Stuart, 1977, page 24).

In his Map #4, pages 242-243, Dr. Palmer shows “Archaeological Sites Dating to Book of Mormon Period.” He lists two sites that are fairly close to the place where Ross T. Christensen says the river “Coatzacoalcos and other rivers of this isthmus must have unloaded enormous deposits of silt.” These sites are Labrada and Pilapan. Unfortunately for Christensen’s theory, Palmer’s map shows these ancient archaeological sites to be only a few miles from the seacoast.

When the evidence is closely examined, it becomes apparent that the theory that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is “the narrow neck of land” is not supported by the facts.

Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth president of the Church, could see that the idea that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is “the narrow neck of land” and that Cumorah is in Central America rather than in the state of New York did not match up with the text of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Fielding Smith felt that the theory of a limited geography was not compatible with either the Book of Mormon or the teachings of Joseph Smith. Consequently, he strongly rebuked those who held the new theory:

Within recent years there has arisen among certain students of the Book of Mormon a theory to the effect that within the period covered by the Book of Mormon, the Nephites and Lamanites were confined almost within the borders of the territory comprising Central America and the southern portion of Mexico; the isthmus of Tehuantepec probably being the ‘narrow neck’ of land spoken of in the Book of Mormon rather than the Isthmus of Panama.

This theory is founded upon the assumption that it was impossible for the colony of Lehi’s to multiply and fill the hemisphere within the limits of one thousand years, or from the coming of Lehi from Jerusalem to the time of the destruction of the Nephites at the Hill Cumorah. . . .

This modernistic theory of necessity, in order to be consistent, must place the waters of Ripliancum and the Hill Cumorah some place within the restricted territory of Central America, notwithstanding the teachings of the Church to the contrary for upwards of 100 years. Because of this theory some members of the Church have become confused and greatly disturbed in their faith in the Book of Mormon. It

is for this reason that evidence is here presented to show that it is not only possible that these places could be located as the Church has held during the past century, but that in very deed such is the case. . . . In the light of revelation it is absurd for anyone to maintain that the Nephites and Lamanites did not possess this northern land. . . .

In the face of this evidence coming from the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, we cannot say that the Nephites and Lamanites did not possess the territory of the United States and that the Hill Cumorah is in Central America. Neither can we say that the great struggle which resulted in the destruction of the Nephites took place in Central America. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, Feb. 27, 1954, pp. 2-3)

After President Joseph Fielding Smith died in 1972, church leaders continued to take a strong stand against those who tried to remove the Hill Cumorah from the state of New York. The editorial portion of the church’s own *Deseret News*, Church Section, contained an article warning against those who speculated on Book of Mormon sites and who challenged “the prophets” statements regarding the location of the Hill Cumorah:

THE GEOGRAPHY OF the Book of Mormon has intrigued some readers of that volume ever since its publication. But why worry about it.

Efforts to pinpoint certain places from what is written in the book are fruitless because the record does not give evidence of such locations in terms of our modern geography.

Attempts to designate certain areas as the Land Bountiful or the site of Zarahemla . . . can bring no definite results. So why speculate?

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

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

Why not leave hidden the things that the Lord has hidden? If He wants the geography of the Book of Mormon revealed, He will do so through His prophet, and not through some writer who wishes to enlighten the world despite his utter lack of inspiration on the point.

Some authors have felt “called upon” to inform the world about Book of Mormon geography and have published writings giving their views. These books, however, are strictly private works and represent only their personal speculations. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, July 29, 1978)

In a letter dated April 23, 1993, F. Michael Watson, Secretary to the First Presidency of the church, stated:

The Church emphasizes the doctrinal and historical value of the Book of Mormon, not its geography. While some Latter-day Saints have looked for possible locations and explanations [for Book of Mormon geography] because the New York Hill Cumorah does not readily fit the Book of Mormon description of Cumorah, there are no conclusive connections between the Book of Mormon text and any specific site. (Letter by F. Michael Watson, as cited by William J. Hamblin, *Journal of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1993, page 181)

While it is true that the text of the Book of Mormon does not specifically locate any site except “the narrow neck of land,” the leaders of the Mormon Church firmly maintained that the Hill Cumorah was in the state of New York. They were so certain that this was the case, that the following was printed in a footnote in the 1888 edition of the Book of Mormon:

The hill Cumorah is in Manchester, Ontario Co., N. York. (page 559)

Although the Book of Mormon does make it very clear that the descendants of Lehi lived throughout both North and South America, it is surprisingly vague with regard to significant geographical details. There are, however, some things with regard to the land of Cumorah that point to the area in which Joseph Smith lived. In a book copyrighted by the “Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” in 1981, we find the following comments by Joseph Fielding Smith cited from *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3:

“It is known that the *Hill Cumorah* where the Nephites were destroyed is the hill where the Jaredites were also destroyed. . . . Mormon adds: ‘And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents round about the hill Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains; and here we had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites’ [Mormon 6:4].

“It must be conceded that this description fits perfectly the land of Cumorah in New York, as it

has been known since the visitation of Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith, for the hill is in the proximity of the Great Lakes and also in the land of many rivers and fountains. . . .

“Further, the fact that all of his [Joseph Smith’s] associates from the beginning down have spoken of it as the identical hill where Mormon and Moroni hid the records, must carry some weight. It is difficult for a reasonable person to believe that such men as Oliver Cowdery, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, David Whitmer, and many others, could speak frequently of the spot where the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained the plates as the Hill Cumorah, and not be corrected by the Prophet, if that were not the fact.” (*Book of Mormon, Religion 121-122, Student Manual*, pages 461-462)

According to the geographical information given in the Book of Mormon, the Hill Cumorah was in North America. This land was known to the Nephites as the land Desolation. While Mormon scholars like John Sorenson would have us believe that the land of Desolation is in Central America, the official church publication, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, October, 1832, plainly stated that it was in North America:

To return: this beautiful region of country is now mostly, excepting Arkansas and Missouri, the land of Joseph or the Indians . . . and embraces three fine climates: First like that of New-York; second, like Missouri, neither northern nor southern; and third, like the Carolinas. This place may be called the centre of America; it being about an equal distance from Maine, to Nootka sound; and from the St. Lawrence to the gulf of California . . . The world will never value the land of Desolation, as it is called in the book of Mormon, for any thing more than hunting ground . . . (page 5)

The Hill Cumorah, of course, would have to be a great distance north in the land Desolation where there were “many waters, rivers, and fountains.” In the Book of Mormon, Helaman 3:3-4, 6, we find that hundreds of years before Mormon marched to meet the Lamanites in battle, a group had traveled deep into the “land northward” and spread throughout the land. This group had encountered the “many waters” mentioned above:

. . . there were an exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land.

And they did travel to an exceedingly great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water and many rivers. . . . because of the greatness

of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate.

It seems obvious that the setting for this part of the story is the area of North America where the Great Lakes are located. The reader will notice the words, “large bodies of water.” An examination of a map of North and South America reveals that as one moves north from the Isthmus of Panama, there is no place short of the Great Lakes which fits the description given in the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith, of course, lived near Lake Ontario and must have been referring to this area when he wrote regarding the Hill Cumorah.

The church publication, *Book of Mormon, Religion 121-122, Student Manual*, page 479, quoted the following from President Marion G. Romney, who served as first counselor to President Spencer W. Kimball:

“In the western part of the state of New York near Palmyra is a prominent hill known as the ‘hill Cumorah.’ . . . I stood on the crest of that hill . . . my mind reverted to the events which occurred in that vicinity some twenty-five centuries ago—events which brought to an end the great Jaredite nation.”

The reader can see that the limited theory of Book of Mormon geography, which places the Hill Cumorah in Central America, is out of step with the belief promoted by the leaders of the Mormon Church for over a hundred and fifty years. Although it is set forth by many scholars associated with FARMS as the ultimate answer to geography problems in the Book of Mormon, it obviously runs counter to traditional teachings on the subject. This is clearly set forth in a letter from the First Presidency’s Office written in 1990:

I have been asked to forward to you for acknowledgment and handling the enclosed copy of a letter to President Gordon B. Hinckley from Ronnie Sparks of your ward. Brother Sparks inquired about the location of the Hill Cumorah mentioned in the Book of Mormon, where the last battle between the Nephites and Lamanites took place.

The Church has long maintained, as attested to by references in the writings of General Authorities, *that the Hill Cumorah in western New York state is the same as referenced in the Book of Mormon.* (Letter from F. Michael Watson, Secretary to the First Presidency, to Bishop Darrell L. Brooks, dated Oct. 16, 1990)

The fact that the Hill Cumorah was in the state of New York, was clearly laid out in the Mormon Church’s

official publication, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, in 1835. This information appeared in what was called “a full history of the rise of the church . . .” This history, which was written by Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, tells of the coming forth of that book. Page 13 of volume 1, assures the reader that Joseph Smith himself was involved in the project: “That our narrative may be correct, and particularly the introduction, it is proper to inform our patrons, that our brother J. Smith jr. has offered to assist us. Indeed, there are many items connected with the fore part of this subject that render his labor indispensable. With his labor and with authentic documents now in our possession, we hope to render this a pleasing and agreeable narrative . . .” The history is given in a series of letters prepared for the *Messenger and Advocate*.

In the issue for July, 1835, the following appeared:

You are acquainted with the mail road from Palmyra, Wayne Co. to Canandaigue, Ontario Co. N. Y. . . . before arriving at the little village of Manchester, say from three to four, or about four miles from Palmyra, you pass a large hill on the east side of the road. . . .

By turning to the . . . book of Mormon you will read Mormon’s account of the last great struggle of his people, as they were encamped round this hill Cumorah. . . . In this valley fell the remaining strength and pride of a once powerful people, the Nephites . . . From the top of this hill, Mormon, with a few others . . . gazed with horror upon the mangled remains of those who, the day before, were filled with anxiety, hope, or doubt. . . .

This hill, by the Jaredites, was called Ramah: by it, or around it, pitched the famous army of Coriantumr their tents. . . . in this same valley, and near by, from day to day, did that mighty race spill their blood . . . Here may be seen where once sunk to nought the pride and strength of two mighty nations . . . In this vale lie commingled, in one mass of ruin, the ashes of . . . tens of thousands of the human race—blood mixed with blood, flesh with flesh, bones with bones, and dust with dust! (*Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, pages 158-159)

Mormon historian B. H. Roberts said that, “Joseph Smith’s association with Cowdery in the production of these letters make them, as to the facts involved, practically the personal narrative of Joseph Smith” (*Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 78).

It seems reasonable to believe that if there had been a mistake in the identification of the location of the

Hill Cumorah, Joseph Smith would have corrected it. Instead, however, Smith allowed the description to stand as printed, and it was even reprinted in another official church publication three years before the prophet's death (see *Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, April 15, 1841, pages 378-79). This history has been reprinted a number of times since that time. If this identification of the Hill Cumorah was inaccurate, Joseph Smith would have been very negligent to let it stand without correction.

In his paper, *Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon*, pages 9-10, Professor William Hamblin stated: "In fact, the correlation of the hill of New York where Joseph Smith found the golden plates with the Hill Cumorah mentioned in the Book of Mormon as far as we know comes not from Joseph Smith, but from Oliver Cowdery." Brent Metcalfe, however, noted that Wilford Woodruff, who later became the fourth president of the church, wrote in his journal in 1834 that while traveling with Joseph Smith and others through Illinois they found a body buried in a mound. Joseph Smith received a vision concerning the matter and learned that it was a "white Lamanite" named Zelph. We copy the following from a photocopy out of *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*:

. . . we visited many of the mounds which were flung up by the ancient inhabitants of this continent probably by the Nephites & Lamanites[.] we visited one of those Mounds . . . [Eight lines of text are added interlinearly at this point; see transcription by Kenneth W. Godfrey in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1989, page 36] and several of the brethren dug into it and took from it the bones of a man[.] Brother Joseph had a vision respecting the person[;] he said he was a white Lamanite[.] the curs[e] was taken from him or at least in part[.] he was killed in battle with an arrow[.] the arrow was found among his ribs . . . his name was Zelph[.] Some of his bones were brought into the camp . . . Zelph was a large thick set man and a man of God[.] he was a warrior under the great prophet Onandagus that was known from the hill Cumorah or east sea to the Rocky mountains. The above knowledge Joseph Smith received in a vision[.] ("Wilford Woodruff's Journal," May 8, 1834; also printed in the book, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, vol. 1, page 10)

The words "or east sea" and "Onandagus" were added in above the line. The journal of Reuben McBride, as cited by Kenneth Godfrey in *BYU Studies*, Spring 1989, page 34, agrees with Woodruff that "Joseph, said his name was Zelph a great warrior under the Prophet

Omandagus" (spelled Onandagus in Woodruff's account) and that he was "a white Lamanite" who was "known from the atlantic to the Rocky Mountains." These last eight words were added interlinearly.

Since the Rocky Mountains are mentioned in both journals, it is obvious that these men were referring to North America, not Central America. Furthermore, the hill from which Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates is relatively near the "east sea."

As noted earlier, John Sorenson and others who believe in the limited view of Book of Mormon geography believe the story of the Nephites is confined to a small area of Mesoamerica. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, was convinced that the Nephites lived in the area where Zelph was discovered. While the Mormon Prophet was on the journey mentioned above, he wrote a letter to his wife in which he commented:

The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting . . . occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity . . . (Letter written by Joseph Smith "On the banks of the Mississippi, June 4th 1834," as cited in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, by Dean Jessee, 1984, page 324)

When Professor William Hamblin's article was printed in *Journal of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1993, page 172, he refused to acknowledge the reference in Wilford Woodruff's Journal as being of value: "In fact, the earliest explicit correlation of the hill in New York . . . comes not from Joseph Smith, but from Oliver Cowdery." On page 177, we read: "Thereafter, beginning with Oliver Cowdery (possibly based on a misreading of Mormon 6:6), early Mormons began to associate the Book of Mormon Cumorah with the hill in New York where Joseph Smith found the plates."

Unfortunately for Hamblin's argument, Brent Metcalfe has demonstrated that there is evidence in the Mormon Church's very first newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, that Oliver Cowdery's 1835 statement was not the first reference to identify the Hill Cumorah as being in New York. In an article printed in 1833, we find this lucid statement regarding the matter:

In the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven, the plates came forth from the *hill Cumorah, which is in the county of Ontario, and state of New-York*, by the power of God. (*The Evening and the Morning Star*, January, 1833, page 1)

Professor Hamblin argues vigorously that the gold plates were not buried in the Hill Cumorah and claims that Mormon critics are the ones who are off base about the matter:

This issue poses an interesting dilemma for critics of the Book of Mormon. We are expected to believe that, on the one hand, Joseph consciously forged the Book of Mormon, while, on the other hand, he personally identified the hill in which the golden plates were buried as the Hill Cumorah—the only hill in the world in which the Book of Mormon explicitly states *the plates were not buried!* This is another manifestation of what I call the “Idiot Savant” theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon. (*Journal of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1993, page 173)

William Hamblin’s assertion that the “Hill Cumorah” is “the only hill in the world in which the Book of Mormon explicitly states the plates were not buried” is not supported by the text. One would certainly assume that Moroni hid them together with all of the other records his father, Mormon, buried in the Hill Cumorah. William Hamblin, however, appeals to John Sorenson’s speculation that Moroni may have brought the records thousands of miles from the Hill Cumorah, which he believes is in Central America, to the hill near the Smith farm in New York. There is nothing in Moroni’s writings to support the idea that he made such a journey. Moreover, Hamblin’s statement that “the plates were not buried” in the Hill Cumorah is diametrically opposed to the information given in the Introduction to the Book of Mormon:

After Mormon completed his writings, he delivered the account to his son Moroni, who added a few words of his own and *hid up the plates in the hill Cumorah*. On September 21, 1823, the same Moroni . . . appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, who translated them by the gift and power of God. (Book of Mormon, 1992 printing, Introduction)

A footnote in the 1989 printing of the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church, also flies in the face of Professor Hamblin’s idea concerning the location of the Hill Cumorah. In Joseph Smith—History 1:51, Smith wrote: “Convenient to the *village of Manchester*, Ontario County, New York, stands a hill of considerable size . . . not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box.”

Footnote 52a at the bottom of the page refers the reader to “Morm. 6:6.” In Mormon 6:6 Mormon says

“I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.” This footnote clearly links the Hill Cumorah to the hill near Manchester, New York.

Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, claimed that he referred to the Hill Cumorah even before he obtained the plates:

“Stop, father, stop,” said Joseph, “it was the angel of the Lord: as I passed by the hill of Cumorah, where the plates are, the angel met me . . .” (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 1853, page 99)

Although John Sorenson questions the accuracy of the statement by Joseph’s mother, David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, also claimed that he was made aware of the place “Cumorah” before the book was translated (see *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, page 388).

The fact that Joseph Smith equated the hill near his home with the Hill Cumorah mentioned in the Book of Mormon, seems clear from a revelation he gave on September 6, 1842:

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca County, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 128:20)

Those who have read Joseph Smith’s story know that he claimed the angel spoke to him at the Hill Cumorah near his home, not in Central America. The three visitations mentioned above all are supposed to have occurred in places where Joseph Smith either lived or visited. Even John Sorenson had to acknowledge that Joseph Smith was referring to the hill in New York when he made this statement: “It is clear that by the date of this revelation, Joseph Smith, and seemingly his readers generally, commonly recognized the term Cumorah to refer to the hill in New York” (*The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, page 378).

It should also be noted that in current printings of Joseph Smith’s statement about Cumorah, a footnote refers the reader to the Hill Cumorah in New York (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1989 printing, 128:20, footnote 20a).

Joseph Smith definitely taught that the Indians were Lamanites, who were the descendants of the Prophet Lehi. As noted above, he also believed that they were scattered throughout North America. It is difficult for Mormon scholars to contradict this evidence because Joseph Smith incorporated the idea in his revelations. According to Smith, God revealed to him that the Lamanites were living in the United States, and the Mormons were to do missionary work among them:

And now, behold, I say unto you that you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them . . . no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 28:8-9)

And now concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt . . . he shall go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jun., into the wilderness among the Lamanites. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 32:2)

And thus you shall take your journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites. (*D&C* 54: 8)

The evidence seems to show that Joseph Smith believed all the Indians were descendants of the people who came from Jerusalem. In a letter to John Wentworth, Smith revealed:

We are informed by these records [published as the Book of Mormon] that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites, and came directly from the Tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites . . . The Jaredites were destroyed about the time that the Israelites came from Jerusalem . . . The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. *The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country.* (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, pages 537-538)

In his article in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1993, page 173, Professor William Hamblin argued fervently that the Hill Cumorah was really in Central America, but he acknowledged that “Joseph Smith may have” believed that it was in New York. In a letter to Brent Metcalfe, written in 1993, Hamblin admitted that Joseph Smith probably had a “Hemispheric” view of the Book of Mormon:

Let me set the matter straight: I agree that JS [Joseph Smith] and most early Mormons conceived of the BOM [Book of Mormon] as happening throughout the entire New World. . . . Furthermore, I can state with certainty that everyone at FARMS with whom I’ve discussed the issue agrees that JS and the early LDS interpreted the BOM as hemispheric.

The issue now becomes, so what? There are lots of things that early Mormons (and modern Mormons) believe that are wrong. So what? . . . It is quite common for translators to misunderstand the text they are translating . . . I am quite willing to accept the possibility that JS was mistaken in his interpretations of the geography of the BOM. Again, so what? As I argue in my paper . . . if this is true, then JS did not write the BOM, since the BOM by itself is internally consistent on a limited geography. . . . I agree that JS and the early Saints were hemispherists. (Letter from William Hamblin, dated April 19, 1993)

Deanne G. Matheny, who has been involved in archeological work in Mexico and Guatemala, gives this information regarding the belief held by the early church leaders:

In a recent paper Mormon educator Kenneth W. Godfrey examined statements about geography written during Joseph Smith’s lifetime by various church leaders and others. He noted that it is clear “that the early Church leaders and saints alike believed the Book of Mormon history was broad enough and had lasted long enough to have included the peopling of both North and South America.” Godfrey’s research led him to conclude that “early saints had no concept that Book of Mormon history should be limited to a small area on the American continent” (1989, 14, 15; see also Metcalfe 1989). (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 270)

On page 181 of his article in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 1993, William Hamblin spoke of the “Limited Geography Model” and commented that “Some Latter-day Saint leaders have disagreed with the model. Others, however, support it.” One would think that this would be a good place for Hamblin to mention the names of those who support his view. Unfortunately, he does not provide any example of a living General Authority of the Mormon Church publicly supporting the limited view.

If we wanted to take the time, we could probably find hundreds of statements by General Authorities of the church from the days of Joseph Smith to the present time who have supported the “hemispheric” view. The best example, of course, is the current prophet of the Mormon Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Significantly, Hinckley published a book which totally supports the view that the Hill Cumorah is in the state of New York:

Moroni, prior to his death, buried the record in the *Hill Cumorah*, where Joseph Smith received it some fourteen centuries later. (*Truth Restored*, 1979, page 19)

Page 12 of the same book shows a photograph of the “Monument to the angel Moroni on the crest of the Hill Cumorah.” It is obvious that this is not a hill in Central America, but rather the hill in the state of New York that has traditionally been known as the Hill Cumorah.

William Hamblin can be hypercritical with those who do not share his opinions. For example, on page 172 of his article in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 1993, vol. 2, no. 1, he made this comment concerning Mormon critic Luke Wilson:

Wilson’s repeatedly sloppy handling of details is annoying; Joseph Smith identified the hill where he found the plates as being near Manchester, not Palmyra (JS—H 1:51).

While it is true that the Hill Cumorah is in the township of Manchester and Joseph Smith lived near the hill, it is within two or three miles of the township of Palmyra. Palmyra village grew rapidly in the early 1800’s, whereas Manchester lagged behind; consequently some writers refer to Joseph Smith as the “Prophet of Palmyra.” In his book *Truth Restored*, page 11, President Gordon B. Hinckley locates the “Hill Cumorah” as being “About four miles south of Palmyra . . .” Since Professor Hamblin and his friends at FARMS want to move the hill thousands of miles away to Central America, it seems strange that he would be so picky about Wilson’s statement.

Nephite Lands Skewed?

The Book of Mormon clearly describes the continents of North and South America, with the Isthmus of Panama separating the two lands. While there are certainly serious problems with the story (e. g., the Nephites and Lamanites traveling thousands of miles to battle with each other), those who take an unbiased look at the matter have to conclude that this is what

Joseph Smith had in mind when he wrote the Book of Mormon. North is north; south is south; east is east and west is west.

Unfortunately, those who want to confine the Book of Mormon story to Mesoamerica absolutely refuse to accept what is so clearly laid out in the book itself because it tends to discredit Joseph Smith’s work. Consequently, they have developed some rather strange theories to explain away the problems that occur if they take the story at face value.

For example, John L. Sorenson contends that “The only ‘narrow neck’ potentially acceptable in terms of the Book of Mormon requirements is the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico” (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, page 29). Nevertheless, Sorenson himself has to admit that there is a “major anomaly” with regard to this theory:

Many features of south and central Mexico and Guatemala seem to match up decisively with the requirements for the Book of Mormon territory, except perhaps for one major anomaly. The Book of Mormon writers talk about their geography in terms of “northward” and “south” or “southward,” while Mesoamerica seems skewed from those standard compass directions. . . .

Labeling directions has always presented linguistic and cultural challenges to the world’s peoples. Like other customs the whole business is actually quite arbitrary rather than logical . . .

Israelites of Palestine . . . derived directions as though standing with backs to the sea, facing the desert. *Yam* (“sea”) then meant “west,” for the Mediterranean lay in that direction, while *qedem* (“fore”) stood for “east.” Then *yamin* (“right hand”) meant “south,” while *semol* (“left hand”) denoted “north.” . . .

Suppose, for a moment, that you were with Lehi’s party as it arrived on the Pacific coast of Central America. . . . the first step you took inland, away from the sea, would be “eastward” (“to the fore,” literally in Hebrew; we today would say the motion had been northeastward. In the absence of a conscious group decision to shift the sense of their Hebrew direction terms by 45 degrees or more, the little group of colonists would have fallen into a new directional language pattern as their Semitic-language model encountered the new setting. . . . we are not surprised that the Nephite and Mesoamerican terminologies could have differed conceptually from ours.

Besides, it turns out that Mesoamerican territory is just plain awkward to label directionally in terms of the European compass because it angles across our neat grid. (*Ibid.*, pages 36, 38-41)

While Sorenson feels that the direction problem “has been plausibly resolved” (page 42), others do not agree. For instance, Deanne G. Matheny made these observations about the matter:

In order for his model to fit the geography of Mesoamerica, one must assume that the Nephites had a system of directions with cardinal directions skewed “45 degrees or more” off of the usually observed cardinals . . . Sorenson never gives an exact figure and provides no map showing Nephite cardinals. Works by Palmer . . . and Bruce Warren and Thomas Stuart Ferguson . . . do have maps, based on Sorenson’s model, showing true north and “Nephite north” which are more than 60 degrees apart. In other words, the whole directional card must be shifted more than 60 degrees to the west for this model to fit geography of the chosen area. Otherwise, as Vogel (1985) has pointed out, the land north will be on the west, the land south on the east, and so forth. . . . in such a Nephite directional system the sun would come up in the south and set in the north.

Sorenson advances several arguments to explain why Book of Mormon peoples might adopt such a system. . . . Still the Book of Mormon account offers what appears to be a standard scheme of cardinal directions, presumably a scheme brought from the Near East. . . .

As Mormon writer John A. Tvedtnes has noted, the ancient Israelite directional system discussed by Palmer and Sorenson was one of two systems. In the second and more common Israelite system, the term for east means “dawn” and the term for west means “entering, setting” (1982, 9). Both Israelite directional systems were sun-oriented, specifically oriented toward the rising sun. . . .

Surely the Israelites, who had some knowledge of nearby lands, realized that west was not always seaward. Lehi and his party should have been aware of this fact after their own extensive travels. Once they arrived in the promised land, they would have had several directional guides, including the path of the sun from east to west and the constellations. . . . None of those who argue in favor of Sorenson’s model have shown any evidence from the Book of Mormon account suggesting that anything other than a standard traditional interpretation of the direction system is called for. They must argue that the directionality system is not what the plain meaning of the terms would suggest because otherwise the model will not work. . . . The fact that the terms for east and west were sun related in many languages argues strongly against a shift of these same terms to a different orientation.

Certainly the problem of directionality is a critical issue in the Sorenson geography, but there are other problems as well. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 277-279)

In a response to Deanne Matheny, Dr. Sorenson replied:

If “unfortunately Sorenson never gives an exact figure” for the difference between “cardinal north” and “Nephite north,” it is because our informant, Mormon, has given us insufficient basis for any specific figure. (It is possible that he thought in terms of a north quarter, not a north point—see below.)

Disappointing ethnocentric naiveté is shown in pages 274-77. For example, the statement is made that “The Book of Mormon account offers what appears to be a standard scheme of cardinal directions” or the “standard traditional interpretation of the direction system.” But the only directional scheme we can find is what we infer from incidental statements made by Mormon in the text, for he never consciously “offers” us the direction scheme in his mind. A greater lapse is the idea that the “standard scheme of cardinal directions” has a long history. That is folk thinking. This supposed “standard scheme” is actually a mental artifact of Western European culture developed largely since the rise of the compass and of science not many centuries ago. I should have thought that anthropologist Matheny would have been aware of the historical lateness and arbitrary nature of this cultural construct. (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 305)

We, of course, believe that Joseph Smith himself was responsible for the directional system found in his Book of Mormon. He seems to have simply accepted the thinking of his own time and probably never even thought about how things may have differed in the past.

Deanne Matheny noted that the Book of Mormon says that “Lehi’s party had the Liahona, which is called a ‘compass’ a number of times in the Book of Mormon . . .” (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 278). In 1 Nephi 18:12, Nephi referred to “the compass, which had been prepared by the Lord . . .” Alma 37:38 speaks of “the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director—or our fathers called it Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass . . .” Consequently, many critics of the Book of Mormon ridiculed the idea of Nephi having a compass 600 years before the birth of Christ.

John Sorenson, however, argues that Matheny “falls into a nominalist fallacy (p. 278) by letting the translated

word ‘compass’ determine how she thinks about the ‘Liahona.’ . . . she supposes that the device must have pointed out (cardinal) directions to Lehi and Nephi” (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 310).

The Book of Mormon first refers to this compass in 1 Nephi 16:10. It states that Lehi found “a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.”

While it is true that the Book of Mormon states that God made this “compass” work and that he could suspend its operation, it should be noted that just three verses after it is first mentioned (1 Nephi 16:13), Nephi makes a very specific reference to the direction in which his people traveled: “And it came to pass that we traveled for the space of four days, nearly a south-southeast direction . . .” In view of this, it might be speculated that this compass also provided information about which direction a person was going. It should be added, however, that most Mormon writers dispute the idea that it was a magnetic compass.

That the Nephites would get their directions tilted “more than 60 degree” seems difficult for many people to believe. Mormon anthropologist F. Richard Hauck, a believer in the Book of Mormon, has difficulty accepting this idea. In a review of his book, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, John Clark noted that in “contrast to Sorenson, Hauck rejects the idea that the directions given in the Book of Mormon could be anything other than the cardinal points of our own modern compass” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, 1989, page 20).

Those who believe in Dr. Sorenson’s idea that the Book of Mormon lands are “skewed from those standard compass directions” will have a very difficult time explaining Helaman 3:8. The reader will remember that the Book of Mormon plainly states that the people “did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east” (Helaman 3:8). This description fits very well with the traditional idea taught by church leaders since the time of Joseph Smith that both North and South America were populated by the people mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

On the other hand, those who would try to compress the immense area mentioned in Helaman 3:8 into a small area in Mesoamerica face a serious challenge. While they can find a “sea west” and a “sea east” where is the “sea south” and the “sea north”? Until they can explain where the two missing seas are, their argument is far from convincing. The footnotes we mentioned earlier in the 1888 edition of the Book of Mormon make much more

sense than the statements of Sorenson and those who follow his way of thinking. The “sea south” = “Atlantic, south of Cape Horn”; the “sea north” = “Arctic, north of North America”; The “sea west” = “Pacific”; and the “sea east” = “Atlantic.” (Book of Mormon, 1888 edition, page 434)

Horses Are Deer?

In his book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, Dr. John L. Sorenson made a desperate attempt to explain away a serious problem found in the Book of Mormon. Sorenson’s work with archeology led him to conclude that some of the animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon did not fit with what has been found in Mesoamerica:

Just as the Book of Mormon’s statements about metals require precise reading and extensive comparison with scientific and historical information if we are to appreciate their significance, so the things said about fauna in Nephite territory have to be carefully analyzed and compared in full awareness of what is known and not known about nature in Mesoamerica as well as the principles known to govern the labeling of natural categories in various cultures.

What sorts of animals are there to consider? Twelve creatures are specified in the Book of Mormon: ass, cow, dog, goat, wild goat, horse, sheep, ox, swine, elephant, “curelom,” and “cumom.” Some other expressions—calf, cattle, fowl, lamb, fatling—are special cases of the animals just named, we can suppose. It is easy enough to list these names, but what do they signify? The answer is not obvious. Consider for a moment Nephi’s statement that upon reaching the promised land they found both “the goat and the wild goat” in the forests of their new found land (1 Nephi 18:25). How did an untamed “goat” differ from a “wild goat”? The traits distinguishing the categories are not apparent. Then there are those incomprehensible names *cumon* and *curelom* (Ether 9:19). In order to make sense of these, we must consider a wide range of historical, linguistic and natural scientific information in a search for clues to interpret the scripture’s statements.

Some animals were included in the flocks and herds that the Nephites began to raise (2 Nephi 5:11). In fact, they had “flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind.” (Cattle in Hebrew means either large or small quadrupeds.) Still, goats, wild goats, and horses that the early Nephites were said to “raise” were not included in either the flocks or herds (Enos 1:12). Moreover, the Jaredites ‘had’ animals in two categories, those “useful for the food of man” and

others merely “useful unto man” (Ether 9:18-19). So far, not so good. The text does not clarify itself. Then when we read of “flocks of herds” (Enos 1:21), we almost despair of understanding the labeling system.

One thing is clear. The terminology the Nephite volume uses to discuss animals follows a different logic than the scheme familiar to most of us whose ancestors came out of western Europe. . . . Obviously, translation of zoological labels across cultural boundaries has to be approached without the presuppositions we are likely to bring to such questions. We are left to assume that the “goat” and “wild goat” discovered running in the forest by Nephi need not have been more than generally similar to the Old World creatures we think of when we hear the term goat.

We must return to the naming problem later, but another issue has to claim our attention first. What animals were actually present in the area where the Nephites and Jaredites lived? Scientists now feel somewhat confident of their ability to identify which species lived in what areas. If they lack evidence that a particular animal was present in Mesoamerica, they believe there is only a limited possibility that evidence to the contrary will still be forthcoming. Yet we must not rule out the possibility that surprises are waiting; thus, a certain caution is justified about the conclusiveness of the picture. . . .

Scholars writing on Mesoamerica hold that the number of animals of potential value to the inhabitants anciently was small. . . . Considering all we now know about animal use in Mesoamerican cultures, it is fair to state that most of what the Book of Mormon says about animals is plausible. Some of the book’s statements remain hard to square with present knowledge, but the picture is considerably more acceptable to scientists than a few years ago.

The terms *flocks* and *herds* are easy to account for. Deer and pigs (peccary) could have fallen under those terms. . . . The term *flocks* could have included such smaller animals much used by native peoples in Mesoamerica as hares, rabbits, and the *paca* and *agouti* (both rodents the size of small pigs). . . . Perhaps Nephite “flocks” included fattened dogs. . . .

It is with the big quadrupeds that some readers think problems exist with the scriptural text. As we examine the writings about Mesoamerica’s large fauna, we find the linguistic problem assails us at every turn. Natives and Spaniards shared the difficulty. The lowland Maya at first named all the big animals of the Spaniards—horse, mule, ass—with the name of the nearest native of equivalent size—the tapir. The Spaniards, however, thought the tapir looked like a pig, although it weighs up to 700 pounds. . . .

But isn’t it obvious that the “cow” of the Book of Mormon was our familiar bovine, straight out without all this hedging? No, it is not at all obvious. First, we are trying to find out what the Book of Mormon really means by the words we have in English translation; we are not trying either to simplify or to complicate the matter, but only to be correct. In the effort to learn the truth, nothing can be assumed obvious. Second, there is a lack of reliable evidence—historical, archaeological, zoological, or linguistic—that Old World cows were present in the Americas in pre-Columbian times. The same is true of some of the other creatures mentioned in the Nephite record, where modern readers may feel they are already familiar with the animals on the basis of the translated names. In these cases we have to find another way to read the text in order to make sense of it.

So what might the Nephite term translated by Joseph Smith as cow actually have signified? When Cortez’s party crossed the base of the Yucatan peninsula during their conquest, they observed herds of docile deer that some scholars think were semi-domesticated. Perhaps they were “cows.”. . . But if deer do not seem satisfactory as cows, then how about bison? They were present as far south as Nicaragua . . . Or, we might consider the llama or alpaca—American cameloids—as cows. . . .

Perhaps we have identified enough candidates for the Nephite cow, but what about the horse? True horses (*Equus* sp.) were present in the western hemisphere long ago, but it has been assumed that they did not survive to the time when settled peoples inhabited the New World. I recently summarized evidence suggesting that the issue is not settled. Actual horse bones have been found in a number of archaeological sites on the Yucatan Peninsula . . . Still, other large animals might have functioned or looked enough like a horse that one of them was what was referred to by horse. A prehistoric figure modeled on the cover of an incense burner from Poptun, Guatemala, shows a man sitting on the back of a deer holding its ears or horns, and a stone monument dating to around A.D. 700 represents a woman astride the neck of a deer, grasping its horns. . . . Possibly, then, the deer served as a sort of “horse” for riding. . . . As for pulling a vehicle, there are no data to suggest such a function in ancient America (northern Asiatic people did use reindeer in that manner). Thus, we simply do not understand what might have been the nature of the “chariot” mentioned in the Book of Mormon in connection with “horses” (Alma 18 and 20; 3 Nephi 3:22). . . . Whatever was involved in the way of animal vehicle, it may not have been widely used. Obviously, we

will want to search for further sound information on “horses.” . . . Discoveries may yet clarify remaining obscurities. At the same time, we need to study the Book of Mormon text with extreme care to be clear about what it does and does not say. For example, the way “horses” are referred to in 3 Nephi 4:4 suggests that their major use was as food, not to carry things. We need constantly to be clarifying our reading of the scripture. . . . The Eurasian sheep is not supposed to have been in pre-Columbian America either, yet real sheep’s wool was found in a burial site at Cholula, Puebla, Mexico, in an archaeological setting that gave no other indication of dating after the Spaniards arrived. This lone specimen doesn’t take us far toward a literal reading of the Book of Mormon term sheep, but perhaps we should keep this door too ajar a little. . . .

It’s time to summarize. A table will do that best. In one column are listed Book of Mormon terms for various animals. In the other are names in modern and scientific nomenclature that could reasonably correspond. Several beasts are possible for each Book of Mormon name. Usually there is no basis for preferring one candidate above another. Take your choice. But the purpose is not to finalize identifications. Instead it is to show that there are plausible creatures to match each scriptural term. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 288-299)

On the left side of his table Dr. Sorenson lists the “Book of Mormon Name” and on the right side he has the “Candidate Animal on the Scene.” For example, opposite the word “Elephant” Sorenson suggests the “Mastodon (*Mammuth americanum*)” or the “Mammoth (*Mammuthus columbi*).”

Sorenson, as we have shown, has already stated that the animals known as “*cumon* and *curelom*” are “incomprehensible.” In other words, he has no idea what they are. Nevertheless, he offers some suggestions. Opposite the word “Curelom” he lists “Sloth (*Megalonyx* sp.), Bison (*Bison* sp.), Tapir (*Tapirus* sp.), Mastodon or Mammoth.” Opposite “Cumom” he has “Same possibilities as ‘curelom.’”

Beside the word “Cow” Sorenson lists: Deer (*Odocoileus* sp.), Brouket (*Mazama pandora*), *Camelidae* (*Paleolama* sp., *Lama* sp.), Bison.”

Opposite “Horse” we find “Deer, Tapir, Horse (*Equus* sp.)

Sorenson equates the “Ox” with the “Tapir, *Camelidae*, Bison.” The “Ass,” he suggests, could be a “Tapir, *Camelidae*.” The word “Sheep” he relates to

Camelidae, Paca or Agouti (both *Dasyproctidae*) He feels that the “Goat” may be the “Brouket, Deer.” The word “Swine” is placed opposite “Peccary (*Pecari* sp., *Tayassu* sp.), and the “Dog” appears beside “Dog *Canis familiaris*).

While John L. Sorenson seems to feel that he has presented a good defense of the Book of Mormon statements regarding animals, we feel that he has actually raised many questions which most Mormons have not even thought about. It should be noted that Joseph Smith claimed that when the angel showed the gold plates to the Book of Mormon witnesses, he declared:

These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been *translated by the power of God*. The translation of them which you have seen is correct . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 54-55)

Joseph Smith wrote the following in the eighth Article of Faith: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God” (*Pearl of Great Price*, The Articles of Faith, page 60 of the 1989 printing). The reader will notice that Joseph Smith clearly makes the Bible secondary to his Book of Mormon.

On one occasion, Joseph Smith proclaimed:

I told the brethren that *the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth*, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 461)

Those who accept these statements by Joseph Smith, must find it very difficult to believe that the text of the Book of Mormon would be riddled with inaccuracies. One would certainly think that the prophet Nephi would know the difference between a “cow” and a “deer,” or a “horse” and a “deer” (see 1 Nephi 18:25). Although Dr. Sorenson tries very hard to save the Book of Mormon, his suggestions actually seem to undermine it. Anthony A. Hutchinson, a Mormon writer, observed:

My second example is John Sorenson’s *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* . . . Its scholarship is vigorous. But to my mind it is wholly wrong-headed because of a basic lack of methodological perspective. Sorenson tries to soften the fact that “a few statements in the Book of Mormon cannot yet be squared with what we know today about the Mesoamerican area” (31) by stating the bottom line of his argument:

“the Book of Mormon account actually did take place *somewhere*. We who believe the book is authentically ancient are confident that there were indeed real places where real Nephis and Almas did the things the volume says they did” (31-32). Because he has taken this stance *a priori*, he fails to see the problems in his efforts at handling the incongruities between the Book of Mormon’s picture of ancient American life and the life of ancient Mesoamerica as known from its artifacts and texts. . . . He states that animals unknown in ancient America yet described in the Book of Mormon such as cows, asses, or swine perhaps are simply bad translations for animals such as deer, tapirs, or peccaries (299).

The question arises: when is a cow not a cow, when is north not north? The answer: when you believe in a book which makes claims that do not square with things as they are in the world but which you nevertheless feel forced to harmonize with reality. If it is only by ridding a text of its plain meaning that it can be found to cohere with reality and the only reason you want it to cohere is that you want to believe what it says, you have a problem. How can you believe what it says when the only way of doing that is changing its meaning—in other words, by not believing what it says. . . . The book describes Nephites and Lamanites as ethnicities, with race, religion, culture, language, and politics all playing a role in group identity. But Sorenson prefers to see them as small classes in a much larger sea of humanity. Nephites are basically a small ruling class. This apparently accounts for their not having left any clear trace in the area where they supposedly lived. Unfortunately the pictures of ancient America drawn by the Book of Mormon and Sorenson simply do not match . . .

Sorenson’s “lineage history” theory notwithstanding, I cannot read the Book of Mormon without being impressed that early Mormons understood the plain meaning of the book fairly well. It seems to speak of hemispheric dispersions and the ancestors of what the early Mormons called American Indians. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 10-11)

Dr. Deanne Matheny says that she has had a good deal of experience in the area where John Sorenson believes the Book of Mormon people lived: “Many of the opinions expressed in what follows were formed as a result of my own archaeological field experience in the Mexican states of Chiapas and Campeche and in Guatemala during the past twenty years.” Matheny is very critical of Sorenson’s speculation regarding the animals in Mesoamerica:

There are several avenues of inquiry which might be pursued in considering what animals were found in Mesoamerica during prehistoric times: representations of animals in art, animal remains recovered from archaeological sites, and records from the time of the Spanish conquest describing the animals present. Trying to fit the Book of Mormon animals into the Mesoamerican setting creates many of the same kinds of problems encountered with metallurgy, tents, plants, and other categories. In order to make the model work, we must assume one of two things. Perhaps the actual animals named in the Book of Mormon existed in the proper area at the proper time although no evidence has yet been discovered to demonstrate this. Or perhaps many of the animal names found in the Book of Mormon actually refer to different animals present in the proper area of Mesoamerica at the proper time.

Difficulties beset either approach. It is difficult to argue, for example, that animals other than those named are being referred to when specific characteristics of an animal are described. For example, there are two references in Mosiah to people having burdens put upon their backs and being driven like a “dumb ass” (12:5, 21:3). Sorenson has demonstrated from a number of sources that when humans are confronted with animals they have not seen before they often give the animals names based either on their characteristics or on their similarity to previously known animals, however, there is usually some qualifying term added in to point out the difference between the two animals. For example, the tapir was called *anteburro* (“formerly an ass”) by the Spaniards who recognized both its similarities to and differences from an animal they were familiar with. What we do not seem to see in the Book of Mormon account is any indication that the animals named were merely similar in some respects to the animals whose names they were given. . . .

References to horses are found throughout much of the chronological scope of the Book of Mormon, and in a number of instances horses are associated with chariots. . . . Twice King Lamoni’s horses and chariots are prepared for traveling (Alma 18:9-10; 20:6). Horses and chariots also are among the items which Nephites assembled before their battle with the Gadianton robbers (3 Ne. 3:22). These references indicate that horses functioned in several areas to pull conveyances of some sort.

Sorenson offers several possible candidates for the horse. One is the horse itself, but he also suggests the tapir and the deer. The suggestion that the horse was present in Mesoamerica during Book of Mormon times is problematic. The horse . . . is considered to have become extinct after the end of the last Ice Age. . . . At this point then there is no

convincing evidence that the horse survived until the period of the Mesoamerican civilizations.

A final point that might be made concerning the presence of the horse during Preclassic and Classic times in Mesoamerica is that no ancient depictions of the horse have been found there. There are thousands of ancient art works which show native plants and animals of Mesoamerica, but in none thus far discovered are horses shown. Certainly the horse is an impressive animal, and it would be expected that it would be depicted along with the deer, jaguar, peccary, tapir and other large mammals. . . . The Maya writing system, utilized in at least some parts of the areas . . . portrayed many animals but *the horse is not among them*.

Problems also exist with the suggestion that the horses referred to in the Book of Mormon could have been deer or tapirs. It seems unlikely that both Jaredites and Nephites, who were well-acquainted with horses, would have mistaken a deer or a tapir for a horse. Their experience in the Old World should have led them to categorize the small New World deer and the squat stout tapir as animals considerably different from the horse. . . . tapirs . . . are short animals averaging about one meter in height which, even if domesticated for some purpose seem unsuitable for riding . . . No evidence has been offered that tapirs were being used for riding or to pull chariots or carts in pre-Columbian times or that they have been used to any extent for either purpose since the arrival of the Europeans.

Sorenson's evidence that deer could have been used for riding or as beasts of burden is also very thin . . .

Neither the depictions on the polychrome ceramic vessels nor that on the modeled censer cover present adequate evidence that deer were being ridden by the Maya. . . .

Another point for consideration is that the subspecies of the white-tailed deer found in tropic climates in the Americas are significantly smaller than those found in the northern latitudes. This deer is one of the largest native mammals in the area chosen by Sorenson, but it is probably not large enough for riding. . . .

The view held by most Mesoamerican scholars about the existence of pre-Columbian animals suitable for riding or as beasts of burden is summed up in a recently published volume about the ancient Maya. In discussing the kind of technology available to the Maya, Schele and Freidel note, "All they accomplished was done by means of stone tools, utilizing human beings as their beasts of burden: *No animals large enough to carry cargo lived in Mesoamerica before the coming of the Spanish*" (1990, 60). (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 304-307, 309-310)

As noted above, Matheny referred to the Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 3:22. This verse claims that in about A.D. 17 the Nephites still had horses and chariots:

. . . the proclamation of Lachoneus had gone forth throughout all the face of the land, and they had taken their horses, and their chariots . . . and did march forth by thousands and by tens of thousands . . . to defend themselves against their enemies.

Unfortunately for Mormon defenders, archeologists have been unable to find the remains of any of these chariots. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts seemed to be concerned about the fact that chariots are mentioned in the Book of Mormon but have never been found. He quoted the following from *Aboriginal American Antiquities*, page 20:

"The aborigines were without Old World beasts of burden, wheeled vehicles, and *sail-rigged craft* . . . it would appear that the wheel as a means of transportation might readily appeal to the most primitive mind. That no extended contact with the civilized peoples of the Old World occurred in pre-Columbian times is strongly suggested by the fact that this device was unknown in America except possibly as a toy. It appears in no pictographic manuscript or sculpture, the highest graphic achievements of the race." (As quoted in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 100)

We have previously quoted John L. Sorenson as saying: "Thus, we simply do not understand what might have been the nature of the 'chariot' mentioned in the Book of Mormon in connection with 'horses.'"

The noted FARMS scholar John W. Welch tried to explain away this serious problem by saying that Nephite and Lamanite chariots may not have had wheels:

Note here again that the Book of Mormon never mentions the word "wheel." Only "chariots" are mentioned . . . Since the word for "chariot" in Hebrew is *merkavah*, literally just meaning a "riding thing," it is possible that Nephite chariots were just about any kind of riding thing (not necessarily wheeled). Moreover, we may simply be dealing here with another case of lost technology. (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts's Questions and An Unparallel*, 1985, page 9)

Since the Nephites supposedly came from the Old World where both wheels and chariots were well known, we find it very difficult to believe that they would be using "chariots" that were devoid of wheels. Deanne Matheny commented: "The peoples of Mesoamerica possessed a stone age technology . . . Wheeled toys

indicate that the principle of the wheel was known in some areas of Mesoamerica, but no evidence indicates that wheels were employed beyond this limited context” (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 276).

Book of Mormon Metals

Dr. Matheny noted that “metal appears to have arrived late in the sequence of most regions, where it was little used for utilitarian objects” (*Ibid.*). She went on to state:

In discussing metals, it is important to distinguish between metalworking, “the act or process of shaping things out of metal,” and metallurgy, the “science and technology of metals” which may involve such processes as smelting, casting and alloying. Many groups in both the Old World and the New developed the art of cold-hammering naturally occurring nuggets of copper, gold, and meteoric iron. This art did not require the smelting of ores. . . . The references to metals in the Book of Mormon strongly imply an advanced knowledge of metallurgy including the casting and alloying of metals.

JAREDITE METALLURGY[.] Direct references to metals and metallurgy early in the Book of Ether indicate that the Jaredites apparently arrived in the promised land with a knowledge of metallurgy and applied their knowledge in the New World. They worked ores including gold, silver, iron, brass, and copper, and to obtain these ores “they did cast up mighty heaps of earth” (Ether 10:23). . . . An early reference to metallurgy in the Jaredite record notes that Shule . . . went to the hill Ephraim and “did molten out of the hill and make *swords of steel* for those whom he had drawn away with him”. . . The “heaps of earth” produced in getting ore suggests a mining system for finding and successfully extracting ores. . . . The Book of Ether specifically mentions gold, silver, iron, brass, and copper. Each metal would require special techniques of reduction, the use of fluxes to separate the metal from its matrix, and a specific heat range for smelting ores also requires appropriate fuel and the technology to make the fuel perform. . . .

Such complex technological processes generally leave traces in the archaeological record. Expected traces would include old mine shafts in the mining district containing broken and discarded tools, the remains of smelting operations and considerable slag deposits, and the remains of the objects produced and the tools used to produce them. . . .

As might be predicted, many sites in the Near East documenting mining and processing metals have

been discovered. . . . Thus archaeological research has confirmed the existence of the technology which the Jaredites could have brought to the New World. One would expect to find some such traces of such ancient metallurgy wherever it occurred.

There are a few clues available in the Book of Mormon about the kinds of metal artifacts which the Jaredites produced. . . . The most frequently mentioned artifact is the sword. . . . Two references, the first and last references to Jaredite swords, are specifically to metal swords. . . . in the final reference the people of King Limhi recover Jaredite swords, breastplates and engraved gold plates. It is noted that the swords’ hilts “have perished, and the blades thereof were cankered with rust” (Mosiah 8:11). This suggests that Jaredite swords were made of ferrous metal. . . . The Jaredites are not the only group in the Book of Mormon demonstrating advanced metallurgical expertise. Nephite records offer ample evidence that metallurgy was important and practiced throughout their history as well.

NEPHITE METALLURGY[.] There are numerous references to metals and metallurgy in the Nephite account and it is clearly indicated, time after time, that the promised land possessed abundant metallic ores and that the Nephites possessed the skills to recognize and take advantage of them. Just after the arrival of Lehi’s party in the promised land, they found “all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper” (1 Ne. 18:25). In listing the skills he taught his people, Nephi records that he taught them to work in “all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance” (2 Ne. 5:15). . . . The first sword mentioned in the record is the sword of Laban, with its hilt of “pure gold” and blade of “most precious steel” (1 Ne. 4:9). This sword accompanied Lehi’s party to the promised land, and there Nephi “after the manner of it did make many swords” to be used in defense of his people (2 Ne. 5:14).

The Book of Mormon suggests additional forms given to metals in Nephite society. For example, the people “became exceedingly rich in gold, and in silver . . . in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools . . . and weapons of war . . .” (Jarom 1:8). . . .

METALS AND METALLURGY IN MESOAMERICA[.] The Book of Mormon indicates that there was an abundance of gold, silver, and precious metals in both the land north and the land south. Such metals should then be discoverable in the areas chosen as Book of Mormon lands by Sorenson and Hauck. Some areas of Latin America are rich in

precious minerals and other ores, but the areas chosen by Sorenson as the scene of the Book of Mormon are not among these areas. Mineralogical maps of Mexico show no deposits of gold, silver, copper, or other ores in the states of Veracruz, Tabasco, or Chiapas . . . A major source of gold and silver exists in Oaxaca located in the north central portion of the state near its border with Veracruz. A few scattered deposits of copper, silver, gold, and other ores can be found in the highlands of Guatemala, although the most significant are located near the present frontiers with Honduras and El Salvador . . . If current assessment of these resources reflects what was available in the past, it does not appear to have had the great wealth of metallic ores described by the Book of Mormon.

Scholars generally agree that metallurgy was probably introduced in Mesoamerica near the beginning of the Postclassic period (about C.E. 900). Metallurgical technology was probably diffused to Mesoamerica from South America where it had been invented 2,500 years earlier. Thus Sorenson's date of 3000 B.C.E. for the Jaredite arrival produces difficulty in accounting for their work in metals and metallurgy. There is no evidence for metal working at this early date in either the area chosen by Sorenson or in Mesoamerica generally. . . . Sorenson suggests that use of metals among Book of Mormon peoples was primarily ornamental. He argues that after the reference in Jarom 1:8 about gold, silver, iron, copper, brass and steel for weapons of war, the references to metal are either actually or in an implied sense references only to precious metals. In other words he is suggesting that after that time, utilitarian objects were *no longer made of metal*. This approach downplays the importance of metals and offers alternate interpretations for the various tools and weapons mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Others have taken this approach as well. William Hamblin and Brent Merrill (1990) suggest that swords referred to in the Book of Mormon could be *wooden sword-like weapons* with inset stone blades used by Aztecs, Maya, and others at the time of the Spanish conquest. . . .

There was a sword-like weapon present in Mesoamerica . . . at the time of the Spanish conquest but there are problems making it fit into a Limited Tehuantepec Book of Mormon scene. One must be willing to accept that the swords mentioned in the Book of Mormon were not of metal even though the only type of material ever specified for swords is metal. . . .

Concerning swords, in summary, no case has been made that metal swords existed in Mesoamerica before the Spanish conquest . . . The analysis I have conducted concerning swords could be applied to

armor and other weapons mentioned in the Book of Mormon. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 283-287, 292-293, 297)

As Dr. Matheny has shown, John L. Sorenson has tried to downplay the importance of statements concerning metal in the Book of Mormon. Sorenson, however, claims that

words for "metal" existed in nearly all the Mesoamerican languages which linguists reconstruct as going back to Book of Mormon times. In *An Ancient American Setting* I have said, "comparative linguistics shows that metals *must have been known*, and presumably used, at least as early as 1500 B.C. That date extends back to the time of the Jaredites, for which *so far we have not a single specimen of actual metal*. Does it not seem likely that specimens are going to be found someday?" . . . Compare the statement by Earle R. Caley and Dudley T. Easby, Jr.: "Direct archaeological evidence of smelting operations is rare in pre-Conquest Peru and unknown in Mexico for all practical purposes." That does not mean there were no smelting operations—quite surely there were—but that their locations have yet to be discovered due to inadequacies of archaeological strategy and technique. (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pages 320-322)

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

Dr. Sorenson apparently seems to be concerned about the mention of brass in the Jaredite record. On page 322 of his article, he went so far as to suggest that the "brass" may have been created by the unexpected presence of both copper and zinc in the same ore:

Yes, brass is an "alloyed metal," usually intentionally made by mixing copper and zinc, yet sometimes the alloy results from smelting ore which naturally contains both copper and zinc, hence mention of "brass" objects does not necessarily imply "a sophisticated development of non-ferrous . . . metallurgy among the Jaredites" but perhaps only a modest knowledge. The Book of Mormon text says almost nothing about metallurgical techniques, and what is said need not be interpreted as involving particularly complex operations.

Sorenson is obviously working overtime to make the Book of Mormon statements concerning metals into

a rather primitive operation. He seems to be particularly worried because of the lack of Jaredite and Nephite steel swords:

Matheny first refers to the Jaredites' manufacture of "swords of steel" (Ether 7:9). Whatever this statement may have meant to the original writer, they are never again credited with using "steel." Millennia later, Mosiah 8:11 informs us, Zeniffite explorers brought back from the zone of the final Jaredite battle "swords, the hilts (of which) have perished, and the blades (of which) were cankered with rust." Matheny supposes that the reference to "rust" means that those objects were "of ferrous metal," that is, by implication, some form of real "steel." But they could just as well have been copper, which also rusts. On the slim basis of these two time-bracketing statements, she supposes that "metal swords" were "the weapon of choice" over the intervening thousands of years, since no other material is mentioned. Maybe so and maybe not . . .

I believe she also misconstrues 2 Nephi 5:14: "I, Nephi, did take the sword of Laban and *after the manner of it* did make many swords." The next verse continues: "And I did teach my people . . . to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores" (2 Nephi 5:15). Verse 16 uses language parallel to verse 14: "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; for they were not to be found upon the land. . . . But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon." As I read verse 14, "after the manner of" does not refer to the material used but to the "manner of construction." That is, the general pattern or form of the Judahite temple, and no doubt its function, were copied, but different materials were necessarily used. So when the phrase "after the manner of" is applied to copying Laban's sword, should we not construe it similarly? That is, Laban's weapon was replicated in function and general pattern, but different material could have been used for the new weapons . . . The copies *might* have been of metal, but need not have been. (*Ibid.*, pages 324-325)

In his attempt to get around the implications of the text of the Book of Mormon Dr. Sorenson has come up with a very poor illustration to prove his case. To begin with, it is obvious that there was no way Nephi and the limited number of people who followed him could have built a temple like Solomon's. Nephi says that he did not use "so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land . . ." (2 Nephi 5:16). In the case of Laban's sword, however, the Nephites certainly had everything they needed to make replicas of the sword of Laban. In 1 Nephi 4:9, Nephi explains that "the hilt

thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel." The reader will notice that the very verse Sorenson refers to (2 Nephi 5:15) plainly says that Nephi taught his people "to work in all manner of . . . steel, and of gold." Therefore, when we read that Nephi took "the sword of Laban, and after the manner of it did make many swords" (2 Nephi 5:14), we can only conclude that the blades would have been made of steel. Why would he even think of using some other second-rate material when he had steel? The lives of Nephi's people depended upon the swords he made to protect them from his wicked brothers, the Lamanites. After all, Nephite's brothers undoubtedly knew about iron and steel. Nephi was working with ore and had a bellows before the family split into two groups (see 1 Nephi 17:9-11, 16). If the Lamanites had steel swords and the Nephites used wood or copper "swords," they would have been greatly handicapped when they went to war.

On page 331 of his response to Dr. Matheny, Sorenson wrote:

Matheny is correct that "no case has been made that metal swords existed in Mesoamerica before the Spanish conquest" (p. 287). Neither I nor anyone else has seriously attempted to do so, yet. This does not mean it might not be possible.

Dr. Sorenson suggests:

Perhaps difficulties of access to, or technological problems in treating, the local ores made it difficult for craftsmen after Nephi's day to continue some of the technical practices which he optimistically initiated. (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 328)

While it is obvious that the Book of Mormon sets forth a picture of a people who were skilled in metallurgy, Mormon scholars like Sorenson try very hard to discourage their readers from fully accepting the serious implications of the claims found in that book. John W. Welch, for example, wrote the following:

But here again we must beware not to assume a higher degree of expertise or wider usage for metals than the Book of Mormon actually calls for. For example, the Lamanites used metals much less frequently than the Nephites . . . A good argument can be made that shortly after Nephi taught his people the secret processes of metal working . . . *this technology was lost*. . . . Thus, Roberts is overstating the text when he asserts that "throughout the Nephite period, as well as throughout the Jaredite period, an iron and steel culture . . . is found" (p. 122). (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts's Questions and An Unparallel*, page 10)

Sorenson and Welch downplay statements made in the Book of Mormon so that members of the church will not see the vast gap between the book and archeology.

Plants and Wine

In a discussion of plants mentioned in the Book of Mormon, Dr. Matheny noted:

Many economically important plants are mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and some have proved difficult to locate in a Mesoamerican setting.

... An investigation of which plants were used and domesticated by ancient Mesoamericans can move in several directions, including the study of artistic representations of plants beginning with the Preclassic period, ethnohistorical accounts about plants dating from the Spanish conquest, and the archaeological record in some areas of Mesoamerica beginning with the Archaic period. Archaic period occupations with preserved plant remains have been discovered in caves and rock shelters in areas such as the Tehuacán Valley in central Mexico . . . and the Valley of Oaxaca. . . . These sites document at least part of the basic sequence of plant domestication in Mesoamerica, with evidence of such plants as maize, beans, squash, avocado, chili peppers, and the bottle gourd. Fortunately plant remains have been recovered from some sites dating to the proper time periods in the areas chosen by Sorenson and Hauck as possible Book of Mormon lands. For example, Martínez Muriel recovered plant remains in excavations at the site of Don Matrín, Chiapas. This site is located near Santa Rosa, which is Sorenson's candidate for Zarahemla . . . (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 300-301)

Interestingly, our computer search of the text of the Book of Mormon reveal that it does not mention beans, squash, avocado, chili peppers, or the bottle gourd. The Book of Mormon not only fails to mention important plants which were in the area, but it also leads one to believe that seeds were brought over from the Old World by both the Jaredites and the Nephites. It is claimed that the Jaredites "did carry with them . . . all manner of that which was upon the face of the land, seeds of every kind" (Ether 2:3).

One would expect, then, that we would find these plants in abundance in Mesoamerica. In addition, as the Nephites were preparing to come to the New World they "gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind" (1 Nephi 8:1). In 1 Nephi 16:11 it is again stated that they had "seed of every kind . . ."

As they set out for the New World, they were careful to load "our seeds, and whatsoever thing we had brought with us . . ." (1 Nephi 18:6).

After they reached the New World, Nephi stated: ". . . we began to till the earth, and we began to plant our seeds into the earth, which we had brought from the land of Jerusalem. And it came to pass that they did grow exceedingly; wherefore, we were blessed in abundance" (1 Nephi 18:24).

Many years later (about 188 B.C.) Zeniff wrote: "And we began to till the ground, yea, even with all manner of seeds, with seeds of corn, and of wheat, and of barley, and with neas, and with sheum, and with seeds of all manner of fruits . . ." (Mosiah 9:9). One would expect, therefore, to find an abundance of plants brought to the New World by the Jaredites and Nephites.

Deanne Matheny stated:

At other archaeological sites in Mesoamerica dating to pre-Columbian times, pollen studies and studies of seeds and other plants have revealed similar plant assemblages. But thus far no Old World plants have been identified by the presence of their pollens or other remains. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 302)

John Sorenson, however, argues:

A substantial number of Old World pre-Columbian crops have been identified in America. This is fact, even though diehard isolationist archaeologists and botanists . . . are uncomfortable with the point. Yet regardless of the fact that certain crop plants did obviously cross the oceans, we cannot confidently state whether any of those cultigens were, or were not, brought or used by Lehi's group. (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 342)

Sorenson admits that the Book of Mormon's statements regarding wheat and barley in the New World are problematic:

As we have noted, corn appears as the most prominent food. That is what we would expect in most parts of Mesoamerica. But the "wheat" and "barley" mentioned as among their crops are another story. Botanists today believe that the earliest wheat in the New World was *introduced by the Spaniards*. I am aware of no clear-cut evidence to the contrary, although there are hints that warrant closer examination. Wheat now grows in Guatemala but only at elevations higher than our Nephi. Possibly the Nephites brought seed with them and grew wheat for a time, only to have it disappear from cultivation later on, a not uncommon phenomenon in the experience of migrating groups. . . .

Another possibility is that edible seeds not familiar to most of us were labeled with the names “wheat” or “barley”. . . . Could the name translated in the Book of Mormon as “wheat” actually have been amaranth? (*An Ancient American Setting*, pages 184-85)

Dr. Matheny noted that “in 1982 a native American species of barley was found in an archaeological context dating to about C.E. 900 in Arizona. It is not an Old World import, however, and up to this point no evidence of the native American species has been found in Mesoamerica” (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 302).

The Book of Mormon uses the word “wine” almost forty times. For example, Nephi claimed that before he cut off Laban’s head he noticed that he “was drunken with wine” (1 Nephi 4:7). This, of course, occurred just before he left the Old World. Wine, in fact, is referred to three times in the last book found in the Book of Mormon. For example, Moroni 6:6 reads: “And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.”

In Mosiah 11:15 we are informed that sometime between 160 and 150 B.C. king Noah had a great interest in the production of wine:

And it came to pass that he planted vineyards round about in the land; and he built wine-presses, and made wine in abundance; and therefore he became a wine-bibber, and also his people.

While a person would naturally assume that this verse is referring to wine made from grapes, Dr. Sorenson seems to have some doubt about the matter:

“Wine” and the “vineyards” in King Noah’s land (Mosiah 11:15) can definitely be clarified by attention to linguistic matters. Those terms seem puzzling at first glance, since wine was apparently not made from grapes in the New World. (Certain grapes were present, but we do not know that they were used for food or drink.) However, the Book of Mormon nowhere says that “grapes” were present, only “vineyards.” The Spaniards spoke of “vineyards” referring to plantings of the maguey (*agave*) plant from which pulque is made. And various sorts of “wine” were described by the early Europeans in Mesoamerica: one from bananas in eighteenth-century Guatemala, another from pineapples in the West Indies, palm wine from the coyol palm trunk . . . and the *balche* of the Mayan area, made from a fermented tree bark. Clearly Noah the “wine”-bibber in the book of Mosiah could have been drinking something intoxicating besides the squeezings of the grape. (*An Ancient American Setting*, pages 186-187)

Many people will probably have a difficult time accepting Sorenson’s explanation concerning wine because it seems to be just another attempt to side-step the contradictions between the Book of Mormon and archeology. It is doubtful that Joseph Smith thought anything about “wine” made from bananas, pineapples or cactus fruit when he dictated Mosiah 11:15 of the Book of Mormon. When he spoke of “vineyards,” he was presumably referring to grape vines, and when he mentioned “wine-presses” he must have been thinking of a vat in which the grapes were crushed. The word “wine” found in the same verse undoubtedly referred to fermented grape juice, and the fact that king Noah became a “wine-bibber” must mean that he indulged too heavily in the “squeezings of the grape.”

The fact that Joseph Smith named the king “Noah” is also interesting, since it could be a clue that he was merely borrowing from the Bible. In Genesis 9:20-21 we read: “And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.”

The Kinderhook Plates

In his attack on our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, Mormon professor William J. Hamblin tried to downplay our work on the Kinderhook plates:

The Tanners relish in linking Joseph Smith with this early nineteenth-century forgery . . . This topic has been analyzed in detail, and it has been demonstrated that Joseph Smith was only mildly interested in the Kinderhook plates. Whatever the significance of this forgery for early Latter-day Saint history, it has absolutely no relevance for the modern study of Book of Mormon antiquities. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, pages 269-270)

Dr. Hamblin is certainly not correct in his statement that Joseph Smith was only mildly interested in the Kinderhook plates. Smith was, in fact, extremely interested in them. He accepted these forged plates without question and even went so far as to “translate” a portion of the fake writing found on the plates. Later the perpetrators of the fraud confessed that the Kinderhook plates were modern forgeries created specifically for the purpose of entrapping Joseph Smith.

On May 1, 1843, the Mormon Church’s own publication, *Times and Seasons*, reprinted an article which claimed that a “resident in Kinderhook” dreamed “three nights in succession” that in a mound near his home “there were treasures concealed.” Ten or twelve men dug into the mound and “found SIX BRASS PLATES.”

The plates were later brought to Nauvoo. In a letter written from that city, dated May 2, 1843, Charlotte Haven said that when Joshua Moore “showed them to Joseph, the latter said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, and if Mr. Moore could leave them, he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them” (*Overland Monthly*, December 1890, page 630).

There is definite proof that Joseph Smith claimed he had translated a portion of the plates. The evidence comes from the diary of William Clayton, Joseph Smith’s private secretary. Clayton wrote the following:

I have seen 6 brass plates . . . covered with ancient characters of language containing from 30 to 40 on each side of the plates. *Prest J. has translated a portion and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found* and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth. (*William Clayton’s Journal*, May 1, 1843, as cited in *Trials of Discipleship—The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon*, page 117)

The information in Clayton’s journal was deemed so important that it was used as a basis for the story of the Kinderhook plates which is printed in the *History of the Church*. The following is attributed to Joseph Smith:

I insert fac-similes of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook . . .

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5 page 372)

Since Clayton’s journal was apparently used as the major source for the statement attributed to Joseph Smith in the *History of the Church*, it shows that the highest leaders of the church at the time the History was compiled believed that Joseph Smith did, in fact, “translate a portion” of the plates. It is evident that President Brigham Young and other church leaders seriously believed in Joseph Smith’s work on the Kinderhook plates for at least eleven years after the plates were discovered.

In 1854, eleven years after Joseph Smith translated a portion of the plates, the account was written into the “Manuscript History of the Church,” Book D-1. It is

obvious that the Mormon leaders would never have added this material to the Manuscript History unless they thought it was true.

According to Dr. W. Wyl’s book, a “Mormon elder” told him that in “1858” the Apostle Orson Pratt said that he “was well convinced the plates were a fraud” (*Mormon Portraits*, 1886, page 211). Nevertheless, the story became an important part of Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, and is still found in that work!

On January 15, 1844, the Mormon publication, *Times and Seasons*, boasted that the Kinderhook plates helped prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon:

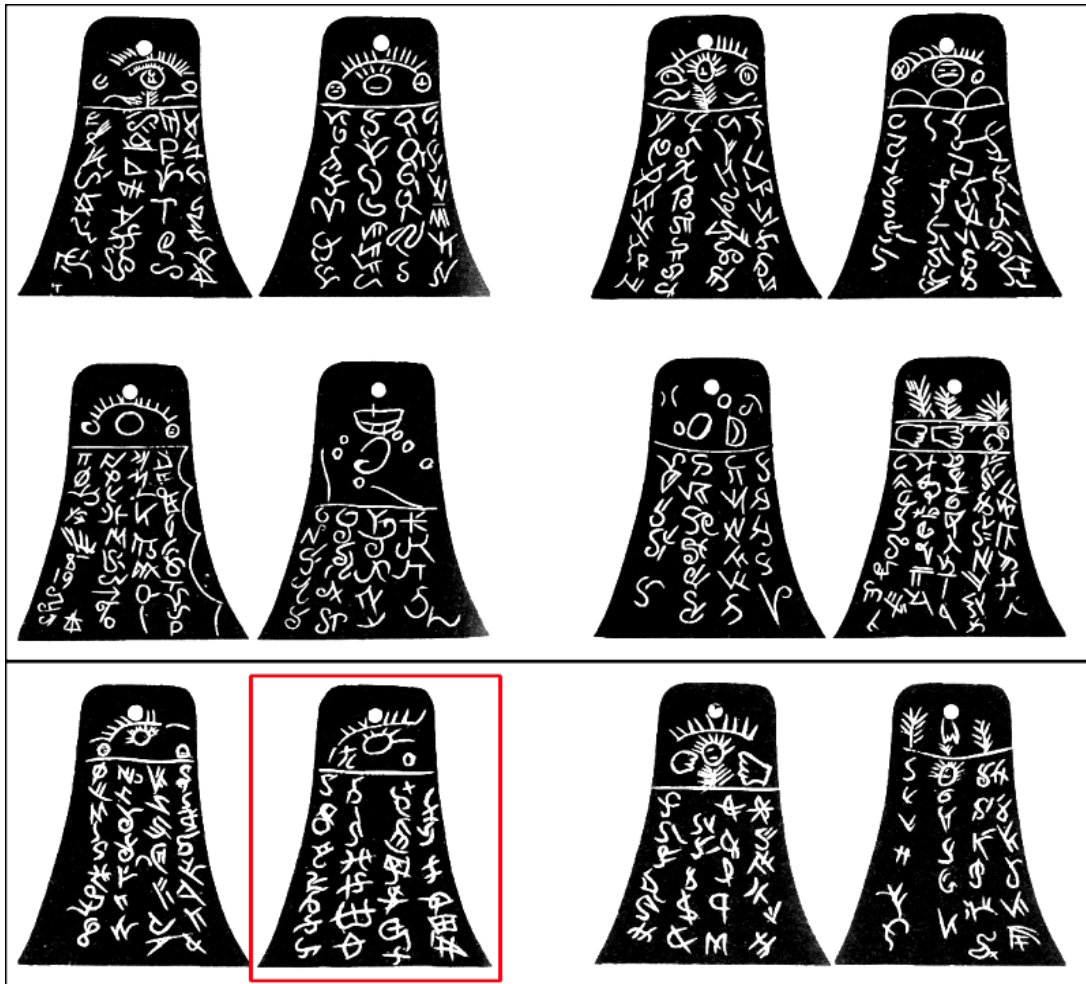
Why does the circumstance of the plates recently found in a mound in Pike county, Ill., by Mr. Wiley, together with ethnology and a thousand other things, go to prove the Book of Mormon true? —Ans. Because it is true! (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, page 406)

Significantly, over seven pages in the *History of the Church* are devoted to the Kinderhook plates. These pages not only contain the statement that Joseph Smith translated a portion of the plates but also drawings of the plates (see vol. 5, pages 372-379)

At the time of the Civil War the Kinderhook plates were lost. Some time in the 1960s, however, M. Wilford Poulson, who taught at Brigham Young University, told us that he found one of the original plates in the Chicago Historical Society Museum, but it was mislabeled as one of the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The plate that he found has been identified as no. 5 in the facsimiles found in the *History of the Church*. While Professor Poulson’s research led him to believe that the plate was a forgery, in 1962 Welby W. Ricks, who was President of the BYU Archaeological Society, hailed the discovery as a vindication of Joseph Smith’s work.

In 1965, however, George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, was given permission to examine and make “some non-destructive physical studies of the surviving plate.” In his report Lawrence wrote: “The dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants.”

Unfortunately, some Mormon scholars would not accept his work as conclusive. In 1980, however, the Mormon scholar Stanley P. Kimball was able “to secure permission” to have some experts make “some very sophisticated analytical” tests on the plate. Professor Kimball described the results of the tests in the official Mormon Church publication, *The Ensign*, August 1981, pp. 66-70:



Drawings of Kinderhook Plates from *History of the Church*, volume 5, pages 374-376. Plate in red box is only surviving plate shown below.





Close-up of photo from previous page.

A recent electronic and chemical analysis of a metal plate . . . brought in 1843 to the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . appears to solve a previously unanswered question in Church history, helping to further evidence that the plate is what its producers later said it was—a nineteenth-century attempt to lure Joseph Smith into making a translation of ancient-looking characters that had been etched into the plates. . . .

As a result of these tests, we concluded that the plate . . . is not of ancient origin. . . . the plate was etched with acid; and as Paul Cheesman and other scholars have pointed out, ancient inhabitants would probably have engraved the plates rather than etched them with acid. Secondly, we concluded that the plate was made from a true brass alloy (copper and zinc) typical of the mid-nineteenth century; whereas the “brass” of ancient times was actually bronze, an alloy of copper and tin.

In *The Mormon History Association Newsletter*, June 1981, Stanley B. Kimball was quoted as saying:

The time has come to admit that the Kinderhook Plate incident of 1843 was a light-hearted, heavy-handed, frontier-style prank, or “joke” as the perpetrators themselves called it. That from the beginning anti-Mormons seized upon the incident to discredit Joseph Smith should not deter us from consigning the episode to the limbo of faked antiquities and to place forever the Kinderhook Plates on the bosom of the Cardiff Giant.

The implications of this matter are very serious indeed. As noted above, both the Clayton journal and the *History of the Church* claim that Joseph Smith “translated a portion” of the Kinderhook plates and found that they contain the history of “a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt . . .” Besides these references, there is other contemporary evidence that Joseph Smith “translated a portion” of the plates. On May 7, 1843, Apostle Parley P. Pratt wrote a letter containing the following:

“Six plates having the appearance of Brass have lately been dug out of the mound by a gentleman in Pike Co. Illinois. They are small and filled with engravings in Egyptian language and contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites back to Ham the son of Noah.” (*The Ensign*, August 1981, page 73)

The reader will notice that Apostle Pratt’s account agrees with that published in the *History of the Church* in stating that the Kinderhook plates contain information about a descendant of “Ham.”

If Joseph Smith had not been murdered in June, 1844, it is very possible he might have published a

complete “translation” of these bogus plates. Just a month before his death, it was reported that he was “busy in translating them. The new work which Jo. is about to issue as a translation of these plates will be nothing more nor less than a sequel to the Book of Mormon . . .” (*Warsaw Signal*, May 22, 1844).

The fact that Joseph Smith was actually preparing a translation of the plates is verified by a broadside published by the Mormon newspaper, *The Nauvoo Neighbor*, in June, 1843. On this broadside, containing facsimiles of the plates, we find the following: “The contents of the plates, together with a Fac-simile of the same, will be published in the *Times and Seasons*, as soon as the translation is completed.”

One Mormon scholar has argued that the “brevity” of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Kinderhook plates “precludes the possibility” that Joseph Smith’s “abilities as a translator” might be “called into question.” We cannot agree with this conclusion. Joseph Smith’s work on these fraudulent plates casts serious doubt upon his ability as a translator of Mormon scriptures like the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham.

In order for Smith to derive as much information as he did from the Kinderhook plates it would have been necessary for him to have “translated” a significant number of words. The reader will remember that the *History of the Church* says that he translated “a portion of them.”

Since Joseph Smith made a false translation of both the Kinderhook plates and the Book of Abraham found in the *Pearl of Great Price*, it casts a serious shadow of doubt over his work on the Book of Mormon. James D. Bales made this perceptive observation regarding the importance of the Kinderhook episode:

What does it all add up to? Does it merely mean that one of the “finds” which the Latter Day Saints believed supported the Book of Mormon does not support it, and that there is no real blow dealt to the prophethood of Joseph Smith? Not at all, for as Charles A. Shook well observed—in a personal letter to the author—“Only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates.” Where we can check up on Smith as a translator of plates, he is found guilty of deception. How can we trust him with reference to his claims about the Book of Mormon? *If we cannot trust him where we can check him, we cannot trust him where we cannot check his translation. . . .* Smith tried to deceive people into thinking that he had translated some of the plates. The plates had no such message as Smith claimed that they had. Smith is thus shown to be willing to deceive people into thinking that he had the power to do something that could not be done. (*The Book of Mormon?* 1958, pages 98-99)

It is very clear from the evidence that we have presented that professor Hamblin was very far from the mark when he stated that “Joseph Smith was only mildly interested in the Kinderhook plates.” The plates were, in fact, very important to Smith, and he obviously desired to use them to help validate his own Book of Mormon.

It seems very strange that Joseph Smith did not detect that he was being set up. As we mentioned above, the church’s *Times and Seasons* reprinted an article from another paper concerning the matter. The article was taken from the *Quincy Whig* and contained information that should have tipped Joseph Smith off that he was falling into a trap. To begin with, the perpetrators had a story which was somewhat similar to the account of Smith’s discovery of the gold plates. The reader may remember that before Joseph Smith found the plates, he had three visitations from the angel in one night. According to the article cited in the Mormon publication, *Times and Seasons*, a “young man by the name of Wiley, a resident in Kinderhook, dreamed three nights in succession, that in a certain mound in the vicinity, there was treasures concealed” (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 4, page 186).

When the treasure diggers dug into the mound they “found SIX BRASS PLATES, secured and fastened together by two iron wires . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 187). In 1842, Joseph Smith said the Book of Mormon plates were “bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole” (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 537). Although the Book of Mormon plates were supposedly made of gold, the text of the book itself frequently mentions that the Nephites also had “the plates of brass” (see 1 Nephi 3:12) which contained sacred writing. The Kinderhook forgers undoubtedly did not have access to any significant amount of gold, and even if they did have some gold they probably would not have trusted Joseph Smith with it. Consequently, they used brass plates to entice Smith to make a translation.

Like the Book of Mormon, the brass plates had “characters or hieroglyphics” on them which nobody was able to read. The article suggested that bones found in the mound might have belonged to “a person, or a family of distinction, in ages long gone by, and that these plates contain the history of the times, or of a people, that existed far—far beyond the memory of the present race” (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 4, page 187).

Not surprisingly, Joseph Smith agreed with the suggestion that the bones might have belonged to a person or persons of importance and that the writing contained a history of an ancient people that had become

extinct. The reader will remember that he asserted that he translated a portion of the plates and found that “they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth” (*History of the Church*, vol. 5 page 372).

This certainly fits with Joseph Smith’s pattern of exaggerating the importance of things he encountered. For example, in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 1-2, we demonstrated that Smith claimed the hill within just a few miles of his house known to Mormons as the Hill Cumorah was no ordinary hill. On this very hill two of the greatest battles in history were fought. Both the Nephite and the Jaredite civilizations met their fate on this relatively small hill in New York.

When the Mormons went to Missouri, Joseph Smith said that the Garden of Eden was there, and he also claimed to find the very altar on which Adam offered sacrifices! While traveling toward Independence, Missouri, Joseph Smith discovered the “skeleton of a man.” As noted earlier, this was no ordinary skeleton. It was revealed to Joseph Smith by “the spirit of the Almighty” that “the person whose skeleton” was before him was “Zelph,” a “white Lamanite” and a “man of God,” who was killed during the “last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites” (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 79-80).

In 1835, a man came to Kirtland, Ohio, with some mummies and Egyptian papyri. Joseph Smith purchased both the mummies and the papyri and made some startling statements about what he had obtained. Josiah Quincy, who visited Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, reported the following:

“And now come with me,” said the prophet “and I will show you the curiosities.” . . . There were some pine presses fixed against the wall of the room. These receptacles Smith opened, and disclosed four human bodies, shrunken and black with age. “These are mummies,” said the exhibitor. “I want you to look at that little runt of a fellow over there. He was a great man in his day. Why, that was Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt!” Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us. . . . “That is the *handwriting of Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful,” said the prophet. “This is the *autograph of Moses*, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the *earliest account of the Creation*, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis.” . . . We were further assured that the prophet was the only mortal who could translate

these mysterious writings, and that his power was given by direct inspiration. (*Figures of the Past*, as cited in *Among the Mormons*, edited by William Mulder and Russell Mortensen, New York, 1958, pages 136-137)

The reader will notice that Joseph Smith made the astounding claim that he found the very “handwriting of Abraham” on one of the papyrus documents. He claimed, in fact, that this document contained the Book of Abraham and that God gave him the power to translate it. This book is now accepted by the Mormons as scripture and is one of the four standard works of the church.

After his death the papyri were lost. Consequently, Egyptologists were not able to examine Smith’s translation. In 1967, however, the church announced that the papyri had been rediscovered in Metropolitan Museum of Art. Not long after the papyri were brought to light a number of prominent Egyptologists examined them and found that they were all pagan documents which were buried with mummies.

One of the rolls of papyrus which Joseph Smith claimed was written by Joseph of Egypt was actually the Egyptian “Book of the Dead.” The Egyptologist James Henry Breasted said that the Book of the Dead is “chiefly a book of magical charms” (*Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, 1969, page 308).

Mormon writers have admitted that this is the case. On page 9 of the *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, March, 1, 1968, we find this statement: “The Book of the Dead is a collection of ancient Egyptian funerary texts consisting of spells and incantations understood to assist the soul of the departed dead during his perilous journey through the afterlife. It would presumably be pagan in spirit and have nothing to do with any scripture written by Abraham.”

The papyrus scroll Joseph Smith “translated” as the “Book of Abraham” turned out to be nothing but the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.” The Book of Breathings is just a condensed version of the Book of the Dead. According to Egyptologists, the papyrus scroll Joseph Smith obtained was not written until near the time of Jesus Christ—about 2,000 years after the time of Abraham! This, of course, completely nullifies Joseph Smith’s statement to Josiah Quincy that the papyrus contained “the handwriting of Abraham.” Interestingly, the same false claim appears in the introduction to “The Book of Abraham” which is found in the current printing of the Pearl of Great Price: “The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.”

While the names of at least fifteen Egyptian gods or goddesses are mentioned on the papyrus, Egyptologists have not found a word about either Abraham or his religion. For more information on the Book of Abraham see our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 294-369-D.

Joseph Smith published his translation of the Book of Abraham in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. Since the science of Egyptology was only in its infancy at that time, his detractors were unable to disprove Smith’s claims concerning the Book of Abraham. As early as 1860, however, the Egyptologist T. Deveria did work with the very poor facsimiles printed in the Book of Abraham and discovered significant evidence that Joseph Smith did not have the slightest idea of what the Egyptian papyrus contained. It was not until 1967, however, that Egyptologists were able to see actual photographs of the papyrus. It was not long after that that they were able to demonstrate that Joseph Smith’s purported translation was spurious.

It was about a year after the publication of the Book of Abraham that Joseph Smith began his “translation” of the Kinderhook plates. Although we do not know whether the author of the article in the *Quincy Whig* had any knowledge of the hoax to entrap Joseph Smith, it almost seems that there was a deliberate attempt to get the Mormon prophet interested in making a translation of the plates. In the *Quincy Whig* article cited in the Mormon publication, *Times and Seasons*, we find what appears to be an appeal to Joseph Smith’s ego:

Some pretend to say, that Smith the Mormon leader, has the ability to read them. If he has, he will confer a great favor on the public by removing the mystery which hangs over them. We learn there was a Mormon present when the plates were found, who it is said, leaped for joy at the discovery, and remarked that it would go to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon—which it undoubtedly will.

...

The plates above alluded to, were exhibited in this city last week, and are now, we understand, in Nauvoo, subject to the inspection of the Mormon Prophet. The public curiosity is greatly excited, and if Smith can decipher the hieroglyphics on the plates, he will do more towards throwing light on the early history of this continent, than any man now living. (*Quincy Whig*, as cited in *Times and Seasons*, vol. 4, pages 186-187)

On June 30, 1879, W. Fugate wrote a letter in which he confessed the hoax:

I received your letter in regard to those plates, and I will say in answer that they are a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton and myself. . . .

We read in Pratt's prophecy that "Truth is yet to spring out of the earth." We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke. We soon made our plans and executed them. Bridge Whitton cut them out . . . Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates. (*The Kinderhook Plates*, by Welby W. Ricks, reprinted from the *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

Whether or not the writer of the article in the *Quincy Whig* knew the plates had been forged, it is obvious that Joseph Smith fell for the bait, hook, line, and sinker. Since Joseph Smith did not know the difference between ancient and modern brass plates, as the evidence clearly shows, and was oblivious to the fact that the hieroglyphics were forged, we cannot have any confidence in his work. While the Mormon leaders are supposed to have special powers of discernment, Joseph Smith certainly did not demonstrate a capability to discern when he was being tricked. Even the present leader of the church, the prophet Gordon B. Hinckley, was taken in by Mark Hofmann's forgeries and actually bought some of these documents for the church! In one instance he paid Hofmann \$15,000 for a forged letter which was purportedly written by the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

For a complete treatment of the Kinderhook affair see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 111-115, 125G-125I.

Reformed Egyptian?

One of the biggest problems confronting believers in the Book of Mormon is the claim that it was written in reformed Egyptian. In the Book of Mormon we find the following:

And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record. (Mormon 9:32-33)

The Mormon critic M. T. Lamb argued convincingly that orthodox Jews who lived in the area of Jerusalem in

600 B.C. would be writing their scriptures in Hebrew, not Egyptian:

There are a multitude of reasons that make such a statement altogether improbable. In the first place, Lehi had lived all his lifetime . . . in the city of Jerusalem, surrounded constantly by those who spoke only the Hebrew language. Had he been an Egyptian by birth, and with loving tenderness clung to his native tongue, the above statement would have a very different look. But Lehi was a Hebrew . . . with family relationships and social surroundings all Hebraistic. In the second place, the Jews hated the Egyptians with a bitter hatred, and it is therefore inconceivable that a true-born Jew a real lover of his own people, loyal and patriotic as he professes to have been, would have been willing to insult his people . . . In the third place, the ancient Jew had an unusual veneration for his mother tongue, the sacred Hebrew, upon earth, as he believed; the loved tongue of his illustrious ancestry; the language in which . . . all their sacred books had been written . . .

This man Lehi is presented to us as a leader and a teacher among his people, a most devout and careful observer of the law of Moses, in fact, a prophet of the Lord . . . Now that such a man with such a venerated language could have accepted instead the Egyptian tongue, which was associated only with ignominy and dishonor, [is] the height of absurdity. . . . God's will had been very clearly expressed upon a multitude of occasions as to the propriety of having any intercourse with the Egyptians or longings for anything to be found there. . . . It is not therefore conceivable that so earnest a lover of the Lord would be willing thus to offend God; or, if willing, that God would choose such a man for the bestowment of the rarest favors and honors. . . .

The second statement is still more objectionable—that there were found in the possession of a man by the name of Laban . . . a resident of the city of Jerusalem, certain brass plates upon which were engraven, in the Egyptian language, the five books of Moses, containing the law, the entire history of the Jews from the first down to Laban's time . . . these brass plates contained all of the Old testament as we have it, that had been written up to that time, six hundred years before Christ. . . . All this engraven in the Egyptian language . . . This is more improbable and absurd than the first statement. All the objections urged against the first would be equally valid against this, while it also supposes a series of devout men belonging to the most honored family in Israel to have perpetuated from the beginning this insult to the Hebrew language, and this disregard of God's express will. (*The Golden Bible; or, The Book of Mormon. Is it From God?*, by M. T. Lamb, New York, 1887, pp. 89-91)

The fact that the brass plates were written in the Egyptian language is made clear in Mosiah 1:4:

For if 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 [the brass plates]; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings . . .

J. N. Washburn, a dedicated defender of the Book of Mormon, acknowledged that the claim that the Egyptian language was used presented a real problem:

The point at issue is not that Father Lehi, the Jew, could read and understand Egyptian, though that is surprising enough. . . .

No, the big question is how the scripture of the Jews (official or otherwise) came to be written in Egyptian. It is hardly enough to say that the Jews had a long and intimate association with Egypt. That was long before the days of most Hebrew scriptures. Nor does it help very much to remind ourselves that probably the Egyptian characters require less space than the Hebrew, since we have little knowledge of other Hebrew sacred writings preserved in that language. . . .

If I were to suggest what I think to be the most insistent problem for Book-of-Mormon scholarship, I should unquestionably name this one: account for the Egyptian language on the Plates of Brass, and the Brass Plates themselves! (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, page 81)

Since the Jews already spoke the Hebrew language, to have them write the Book of Mormon in the Egyptian language would be about as unparalleled as for the present prophet of the Mormon Church to order that future printings of the Book of Mormon must be in the Chinese language!

The reader will notice that in the quotation above J. N. Washburn was bewildered regarding “how the scripture of the Jews (official or otherwise) came to be written in Egyptian.” While we may never know for certain why Joseph Smith would make such a serious mistake, it may have been a combination of things he heard or read that led him into error.

In our newsletter, *The Salt Lake City Messenger*, December 1995, page 3, we discussed this issue. We noted that Joseph Smith had a real interest in the Apocrypha. The books contained in the Apocrypha were originally published in the first edition of the King James Bible in A.D. 1611. They were deemed questionable by many Bible scholars and were finally removed from most Protestant Bibles.

In any event, we found compelling evidence that Joseph Smith borrowed some material from the Apocrypha. Portions of the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees seem to have been used as structural material in the very early chapters of the book of 1 Nephi. Interestingly, the very first verse found in 2 Maccabees mentions the Jews in Egypt and the second verse in the Book of Mormon speaks “of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.”

In the text of 2 Maccabees we find this statement: “The brethren, the Jews that be at Jerusalem, and in the land of Judea, wish unto the brethren the Jews that are throughout Egypt, health and peace” (2 Maccabees 1:1). In verse 10 of the same chapter we read: “. . . the people that were at Jerusalem . . . sent greeting . . . to the Jews that were in Egypt.”

These statements concerning correspondence between the Jews in Jerusalem and the Jews in Egypt could have caused Joseph Smith to think about the Egyptian language. Smith may have reasoned that since there were Jews living in Egypt, they may have learned the Egyptian language. This, in turn, could lead him to believe that these Jews actually wrote the sacred Scriptures in that language. In any case, the statements found in the Apocrypha were not written during the time frame of Lehi, but rather hundreds of years later.

Another thing that could have lured Joseph Smith into the serious blunder of having the Nephites write in the Egyptian language could be a misunderstanding of the Septuagint Version of the Bible. This translation of the Old Testament was actually made in Egypt before the time of Christ, and was well known in Joseph Smith’s time. Although it was translated in Egypt, it was not a translation into the Egyptian language. It was, in fact, a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language because that language had become so prevalent. The work on this translation was done hundreds of years after Lehi’s group left the old world.

It is possible that since the Septuagint was translated in Egypt, Joseph Smith may have mistakenly assumed that it was a translation into the Egyptian language. It would be easy to make this error, since it was an Egyptian king who was responsible for the translation. In the introduction to our copy of the Septuagint the following appears:

The basis of truth which appears to be under this story seems to be, that it was an Egyptian king who caused the translation to be made, and that it was from the Royal Library at Alexandria that the Hellenistic Jews received the copies which they used. (*The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament*, Introduction, page ii)

Egyptologists were just beginning to understand the ancient language of the Egyptians at the time Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. Smith may have known this and used this knowledge to his own advantage. The Mormon prophet apparently felt that he needed to make a transcript of the characters to convince Martin Harris to finance his book. Joseph Smith, of course, knew that he was not competent to produce an acceptable Hebrew transcript of any part of the story found in the Book of Mormon. It seems likely, therefore, that he decided to claim the book was written in the Egyptian language so that no one could possibly contradict his “translation.” The scholars who looked at the transcript certainly would not be able to translate it. The worst thing that they could possibly say is that the characters did not resemble those found in books about Egypt. Smith, of course, could respond to this by saying that they were “reformed Egyptian” characters, not the characters one would find at the pyramids.

There is another very serious problem with regard to the use of the Egyptian language which became clear to us as we were working on this book. The reader will remember that Mormon stated: “And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; . . . and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record” (Mormon 9:32-33).

In this verse Mormon was clearly acknowledging that “imperfection” had crept into the Book of Mormon because the Nephites did not have room to write in Hebrew. This raises a very interesting question: if writing in Egyptian was the cause of “imperfection” in the record, why would Nephi begin writing the book in Egyptian in the first place and why would Mormon, who engraved most of the plates, follow that practice?

Now, it is true that toward the end of the book Moroni indicated that he had run out of ore:

Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. . . . Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have none, for I am alone. (Mormon 8:1 and 5)

As far as we can determine, there seems to have been no shortage of gold to make into plates before Moroni complained about the matter toward the end of the book. The reader will remember that after Nephi arrived in the New World, he found “all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper” (1 Nephi 18:25). In addition, Nephi taught his people to work in “all manner

of wood, and of iron . . . and of gold . . . and of precious ores, which were in great abundance” (2 Nephi 5:15).

About two hundred years later Jarom wrote that the people had become “exceedingly rich in gold . . .” (Jarom 1:8). In about 90 B.C. there was still an “abundance of gold . . .” (Alma 1:29). Around three hundred years after the coming of Christ there still seemed to be an a good supply of gold:

. . . the robbers of Gadianton did spread over all the face of the land; and there were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus. And gold and silver did they lay up in store in abundance, and did traffic in all manner of traffic. (4 Nephi 1:46)

It is obvious, therefore, that the Book of Mormon claims there was a great deal of gold in the land during the period when the Nephites were still in existence. Why, then, would they continue to write in Egyptian to save a little space when they knew that it caused “imperfection” in their sacred scriptures? This just does not make any sense. If they had written in Hebrew they would have had “no imperfection” in their record. Instead, however, they chose to have a somewhat defective record.

This also raises serious questions about the brass plates which Nephi took from Laban and brought to the New World. They seem to have contained all the Jewish scriptures that were written up until the time Lehi left Jerusalem. When Lehi examined these plates, he found “that they did contain the five books of Moses, . . . And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to Zedekiah, king of Judah; And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah” (1 Nephi 5:11-13).

Since it was known that the Egyptian language was inferior and would cause imperfections in the sacred scriptures on the brass plates, why were they not written in Hebrew? It seems that those who wrote on the plates of brass had an adequate amount of brass to finish their writing right up to the time of Jeremiah. Why, then, did they write in Egyptian? Did they prefer to have a somewhat defective record?

The fact that they chose Egyptian presents an additional problem for the Book of Mormon. This is because God directed Nephi to obtain the brass plates from Laban and they became the Bible of the Nephites. Consequently, they were frequently quoted by the Nephites in their writings. Mormon apostle Mark E. Petersen explained the importance of the brass plates:

Nephi and the other prophets of the Book of Mormon times USED THESE BRASS PLATES

in their preaching. They copied into the Book of Mormon direct quotations from the plates of Laban . . . The Book of Mormon gives many detailed quotations from the records of Laban . . .

Obviously, the brass plates provided a very complete record and must have contained much more than our present Old Testament which speaks of books, prophets and prophecies not contained in that volume, but which might very well have been a part of the brass plates. . . . Nephi says of the brass plates, as he discusses the Bible, “The book (Bible) which thou beholdest, is a record of the Jews . . . and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, SAVE THERE ARE NOT SO MANY. . . . Except for what they [the Nephites] themselves may have written of their own revelations, the scriptures were the BRASS PLATES obtained from Laban, for they were the records which contained the history and the prophecies of the Lord’s people . . . Quotations from ancient Jewish prophets appearing in the Book of Mormon are the most correct Old Testament passages in existence today. They were copied onto the gold plates directly from the plates of brass . . . The brass plates were as important to the Nephites as our Standard Works are to us today . . . When Nephi wrote his record on the gold plates which he himself had made, he inscribed a copy of some of Isaiah’s writings FROM THE BRASS PLATES, and these became a part of the Book of Mormon as translated and published by the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . the many other quotations from the brass plates, as we have them in the Book of Mormon, give a clear suggestion of what the plates of Laban really provided. They contained the Old Testament as we SHOULD have it. (*As Translated Correctly*, 1966, pages 44-46, 49, 54-55)

The Book of Mormon claims that after the “twelve apostles of the Lamb” received the Bible, “a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches” took “away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. And all this have they done that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men . . . there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 13:26-29).

Many Mormons also assert that the text of the Christian Bible is not dependable because it has been translated so many times. Actually, the Old Testament was translated directly from copies of manuscripts written in the Hebrew language (portions of Daniel and Ezra were in Aramaic and were translated from that language).

As we have shown in the first volume of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, when the Dead Sea Scrolls came to light in 1947, an entire scroll was found containing the text of the book of Isaiah. This scroll has been dated to about 100 B.C., and provides strong support for the text of Isaiah found in the Bible. On the other hand, it does not support the Book of Mormon (see *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, pages 141-144).

The New Testament was translated directly from copies of ancient Greek manuscripts. (Some have argued that the book of Matthew was originally written in Aramaic, which was probably the language of Jesus and His disciples. This theory, however, has been contested by many biblical scholars.)

In the case of the Book of Mormon we encounter some very puzzling statements regarding the transmission of the biblical text.

The Mormon Church’s *Bible Dictionary* acknowledges that the ancient Israelites spoke the “Hebrew Language . . . It was probably learned by Abraham after his settlement in Canaan and adopted by him . . . It was spoken by all Israelites until after the return from captivity. About the 4th century B.C. it began to be replaced by what is called Western Aramaic” (see the Mormon Church’s 1979 printing of the King James Version of the Bible, Appendix, *Bible Dictionary*, page 699).

To begin with, then, the Israelites were supposed to have had the Old Testament written in the Hebrew language. Instead of leaving it that way, however, for some strange reason it was translated into Egyptian! This was done in spite of the fact that it would cause “imperfection” in the text.

The noted Mormon scholar Dr. Sidney B. Sperry said that “the recording of the Hebrew scriptures on the Brass Plates [into the Egyptian language] had begun many generations before Laban’s time, how many we know not. . . . the Book of Mormon indicates the presence on the Brass Plates of more scripture than that contained in our Old and New Testaments put together” (*Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, 1976, pages 43-44).

When the Nephites arrive in the New World they proceed to engrave portions of the brass plates on the Book of Mormon plates. Nephi, in fact, quoted thirteen chapters of Isaiah from the brass plates (this takes us from chapter 12 to 24 in 2nd Nephi). Numerous other quotations from the brass plates are made throughout the Book of Mormon. In fact, all quotations from the Old Testament found in the Book of Mormon would have to come from the brass plates.

It is obvious, then, that these quotations went through the following process: (1) They were first written in

Hebrew by ancient scribes. (2) They were then translated into Egyptian and engraved on brass plates. (3) In the New World they were copied onto gold plates in the Egyptian language. (4) They were finally translated into the English language by Joseph Smith.

It should also be noted that since the Book of Mormon was written in Egyptian, even the words of Jesus would have been engraved in that language. The Book of Mormon maintains that Jesus came to the New World after his resurrection and gave a discourse similar to the Sermon on the Mount (see 3 Nephi, chapters 12-14). Although the Book of Mormon and the brass plates were written in Egyptian, the Nephite's "spoken language . . . was largely Hebrew" (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, page 180).

It would appear, then, that Jesus originally delivered the sermon to the Nephites in the Hebrew language. Since it would take a long time to engrave this message on plates, we must assume that it was originally written on something else. At some point, however, it was translated into Egyptian, and engraved on "the plates which were called the plates of Nephi" (3 Nephi 5:10).

Hundreds of years later Mormon copied the account of Jesus's sermon into the Book of Mormon. Finally, it was translated into English by Joseph Smith. Amazingly, after passing through Hebrew, Egyptian, and into English it sounds very, very, close to the King James Version. The evidence, of course, clearly points to plagiarism. In any case, it would appear that all of the other sayings of Jesus found in 3 Nephi went through this same complicated process.

The book of Ether in the Book of Mormon has a similar problem. It was originally written in the Jaredite language, translated into Egyptian, and then translated into the English language by Joseph Smith.

Mormon scholar Dr. Hugh Nibley stated that the writing found in the Book of Mormon was derived from the Egyptian script known as demotic. He acknowledged, however, that demotic is "the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man!" (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, 1952, page 16). On page 15 of the same book, Nibley wrote that "the Persian conquerors of Egypt learned Aramaic instead of Egyptian because the Egyptian script was too clumsy and hard to learn."

As noted above, the Book of Mormon's assertion that the Nephites had to use Egyptian to save space makes no sense because they seem to have had plenty of ore to make additional plates. In fact, they even had enough ore to make abridgments of their records. Moreover, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "It is reported by President

Brigham Young that there was in the Hill Cumorah a room containing many wagon loads of plates" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, page 454). For more information on this matter see the sermon of President Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 19, page 38.

Mormon writer Edward H. Ashment, former coordinator for Translation Services, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who studied the Egyptian Language at the University of Chicago, raises a question about the idea that Egyptian would require less space:

Despite Sorenson's assertion of the existence of a number of ancient Palestinian Hebrew documents written in Egyptian characters, defenders of the Book of Mormon's claims have been unable to produce an authentic parallel. Stephen D. Ricks (1992a) uses an Egyptian papyrus from the Ptolemaic period to suggest that the language of the Book of Mormon was not Egyptian per se but rather Hebrew in Egyptian characters. Papyrus Amherst 63, perhaps "The longest ancient copy of an Aramaic text ever found," is comprised of "cultic texts, mainly prayers with a story at the end." Its script is "a peculiar variety of demotic, many signs having a form met with rarely, if at all" elsewhere . . . Concluding that Book of Mormon Nephites "certainly . . . were still familiar with Hebrew," Ricks speculates that the reason they wrote in Egyptian characters was because Egyptian scripts "may take up less space than the Hebrew characters required to express the same thought." Accordingly, he finds "striking parallels between the two documents. The demotic Egyptian-Aramaic Papyrus Amherst 63 is more compact than would have been the case if the Aramaic script had been used, just as the Book of Mormon plates could be more compact using Egyptian characters rather than Hebrew." Ricks finds another parallel in Moroni's complaint that writing in Egyptian characters "led to imperfections what would not have existed if he and others could have written in Hebrew." Similarly the Aramaic papyrus in demotic script "is much more difficult to read and has much more ambiguity than if it had been written in Aramaic script." . . .

Ricks is wrong in his assertion that Papyrus Amherst 63 "is more compact than would have been the case if the Aramaic script had been used." . . . Contrary to Ricks, the text in Egyptian characters is quite a bit longer than its Aramaic equivalent would have been . . .

In addition to requiring more space than Aramaic, Nims and Steiner note that "this script fails to express many of the contrasts expressed by the traditional Aramaic script" with the result that "the renderings are highly ambiguous, some

forms having dozens of possible interpretations . . . The text is not only “partially unintelligible” . . . but also takes up more space and is more cumbersome. Consequently this papyrus is hardly a good candidate for authenticating the language claims of the Book of Mormon. It in no way resembles the evidence of Smith’s translation efforts. But because of a dearth of evidence, it must do. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 351-354)

Mormon defender John Gee says that “Papyrus Amherst 63 cannot be in the language of the Book of Mormon since the underlying tongue is Aramaic and not Hebrew, but, like the Book of Mormon, it contains a scriptural text in a Northwest Semitic tongue written in an Egyptian script” (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 98-99). While it is true that the papyrus was written in Aramaic, this should be close enough to the Hebrew language to make a good comparison.

Gee also observed:

Ashment argues that the text on the papyrus is actually more lengthy in Egyptian script than it would be in the original language. True, “the papyrus adds Egyptian determinatives to many words” (p. 353) but the most common of these, the determinative of a man with his hand to his mouth, being thin in Demotic anyway, adds little to word length. Ashment ignores the presence of biliterals which shorten the text. (*Ibid.*, 96-98)

Ashment’s Fig. 10, on page 353 of his book, has a comparison of the two texts showing that the text is shorter in Aramaic than in the Egyptian Demotic characters. On page 99 of his article, Gee protests that Ashment’s illustration is distorted to make it appear that the text is quite a bit longer in Egyptian than it is in Aramaic. Interestingly, however, Gee does not go so far as to suggest that the Egyptian text is shorter than the Aramaic.

The Anthon Transcript

Joseph Smith made a copy of some of the Egyptian characters on the gold plates and Martin Harris showed them to Professor Charles Anthon, who lived in New York. In his *History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 20, Joseph Smith reported that Harris said the following:

I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon . . . Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen

translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. . . . I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 20)

Joseph Smith’s report concerning Martin Harris’s discussion with Professor Anthon could not possibly be true. The study of Egyptology was in its infancy at the time Harris visited Professor Anthon. Consequently, it would have been impossible for Anthon to pronounce the translation correct.

Interestingly, Joseph Smith’s 1832 autobiographical sketch of his religious experiences tells a different story. It is clear from this account that neither Anthon or Mitchell could translate the characters:

/He/ [Martin Harris] immediately came to Su/s/quehannah and said the Lord had shown him that he must go to New York City /with/ some of the c/h/aracters, so we proceeded to copy some of them. He took his Journ[e]y to the Eastern Cittys and to the Learned /saying/, “Read this I pray thee” and the learned said, “I cannot,” but if he would bring the plates they would read it but the Lord had fo/r/bid it. He returned to me and gave them to /me to/ translate and I said, “I cannot for I am not learned,” but the Lord had prepared . . . spectacles for to read the Book. Therefore I commenced translating the characters. Thus the Propicy [prophecy] of Is/ia/ah was fulfilled which is writ/t/en in the 29[th] chapter concerning the Book. (*An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, page 7)

It is obvious from Joseph Smith’s statement that the story was altered when it was later published in the *History of the Church*.

Mormon scholar Dr. Sidney B. Sperry acknowledged there were some problems with the story: “In the first place, we should observe that the prophet is giving us his own recollection of what Martin Harris reported to him about ten years after the events took place” (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, 1964, page 55).

Sperry went on to state that “some minor matters relating to Martin Harris’ interview with Professor Anthon might not have been correctly reported. We must also keep in mind that Martin Harris was no linguist, and in his report to the prophet he might have unwittingly misinterpreted some of Professor Anthon’s statements concerning translation. . . . Even if Professor Anthon had mastered its contents [i.e., Champollion’s two volume

work on Egyptian language], able scholar that he was, it is not to be supposed that he could translate even simple Egyptian sentences with any facility. . . . no one, the prophet Joseph Smith excepted, has yet translated the Anthon Transcript. If modern students of Egyptians can't do it—at least they haven't—it is too much to believe that Professor Anthon could" (*Ibid.*, pages 56, 59-60).

The most important question regarding Martin Harris's visit to Charles Anthon is whether Professor Anthon said the characters were "true characters" and that the "translation was correct." In a letter dated February 17, 1834, Professor Anthon claimed that the story was incorrect:

The whole story about *my pronouncing the Mormon inscription to be reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is perfectly false*. . . . I have frequently conversed with friends on the subject since the Mormon excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained *anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics*. (Letter by Professor Charles Anthon, as quoted in *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 103)

Professor Anthon also wrote another letter in which he stated:

A very brief examination of the paper convinced me that it was a mere hoax, a very clumsy one too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters . . . (*Ibid.*, page 105)

Dr. Ross T. Christensen, of Brigham Young University, takes an unusual approach to the matter by suggesting that Professor Anthon made the incredible statements attributed to him in Joseph Smith's *History*. Nevertheless, Christensen frankly admitted that Anthon could not have translated the transcript:

Professor Anthon . . . demonstrated that he was willing to claim knowledge in the field of philology which I do not believe existed on the earth at that time. . . . I do not believe he knew what he was talking about; he could not have known whether it was a correct translation. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, BYU, December 5, 1959, page 10)

Mormon scholar Stanley B. Kimball frankly admitted that, "Whatever they [Anthon and Mitchell] said respecting the correctness of the translations cannot be taken too seriously" (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, page 335). Dr. Kimball also commented:

It is entirely possible, of course, that they said nothing at all about the translation . . . in 1828 neither Anthon, Mitchell (nor anyone else in the world for that matter) had seen much translated from the Egyptian. . . . Perhaps Harris was so intent on fulfilling a scriptural prophecy that he heard only what he wanted to hear. . . . Dr. Mitchell . . . had at least a reading ability of several languages, no other possible evidence of a competence in Egyptian studies has come to light. . . . a ten-page bibliography of his writings indicates he never published anything regarding any language. (*Ibid.*, pages 335-336)

In the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 100, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts wrote: "A fragment of the transcript of the Book of Mormon characters which Joseph Smith gave to Martin Harris to submit to the learned men of New York is given in a photogravure accompanying this chapter."

A photograph of the document is found in our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 106. Since this document contains seven lines of characters containing over 200 characters, it provides an excellent opportunity for Mormons to verify Joseph Smith's work. Many Mormon scholars believe that the writing resembles demotic. Significantly, however, to this day no Mormon scholar has been able to provide a translation of the text of the Anthon Transcript. Moreover, noted Egyptologists outside the church do not feel that it is an authentic ancient document.

Edward H. Ashment commented as follows:

Nephi clearly had to learn the same type of Egyptian as did his father . . . that type of Egyptian presumably would be recognizable as a form of ancient Egyptian.

The characters on the Anthon Transcript are not thus recognizable. The author studied them with one of the world's foremost Demoticists. They have resisted decipherment as Demotic and stand just as little chance of representing earlier forms of ancient Egyptian.

The improbability that the characters of the Anthon Transcript are related to any known form of Egyptian does not rule out comparative studies . . .

A proper interim conclusion is: Moroni's statement that "none other people knoweth our language" must still be seriously considered. (*Sunstone*, May-June, 1980, page 30)

Joseph Smith really needed to produce some type of a document to convince Martin Harris that he should provide financial support for his project. In our opinion, it seems likely that Joseph Smith developed the idea of having the Nephites write in Egyptian because he did not feel adequate to write a portion of the Book

of Mormon text in Hebrew. Just to write one sentence would have been very difficult for someone not trained in that language.

Joseph Smith certainly could have been aware that very little was known about translating the Egyptian language in the late 1820's. Furthermore, he would have known that no one could challenge his translation of the characters at that early period. He had a very simple way of explaining the matter to his followers. In his Book of Mormon he had Moroni explain: "But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof." This statement, of course, totally contradicts Joseph Smith's later claim that Professor Anthon told Harris, "the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian" (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 20).

In our book *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, page 17, we noted that the Mormon forger Mark Hofmann created a modified version of the Anthon transcript. It was patterned after statements about the transcript which Professor Anthon mentioned in a letter. The Mormon Church gave Hofmann "roughly \$20,000" worth of trade items in exchange for his bogus transcript.

The president of the Mormon Church, Spencer W. Kimball, examined the transcript with a magnifying glass and thanked Hofmann for the discovery. Neither the church's prophet nor church scholars could detect the forgery. In two newspaper articles in *The Daily Herald* the great defender of Mormonism, Dr. Hugh Nibley, made incredible statements regarding the transcript. He boasted: "Of course it's translatable," and claimed that "Nobody could have faked those characters."

Dr. Nibley and other Mormon scholars, of course, were unable to produce a translation of the document. The failure by these scholars to provide a definitive statement regarding Hofmann's forged transcript left the door open for Dr. Barry Fell, an opportunist who claimed he could read the transcript. Many Mormons were impressed with Barry Fell's book, *America B.C.: Ancient Settlers in the New World*, which was published about four years before the transcript was found. They felt that it provided support for the Book of Mormon. In a review of the book in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1977, pages 373-375, Professor John L. Sorenson acknowledged that Fell "plays fast and loose" with some of his material. He also stated: "Altogether the book is paradoxical. The sloppy methods cast considerable

doubt on the significance of what is offered, yet every now and then the work strikes a vein of pure gold." Notwithstanding the problems in Fell's writings, Dr. Sorenson advised Mormons to buy the book:

America B.C. will be welcomed by thousands of Latter-day Saint readers. In it Fell gives a vigorous blow to anthropological and linguistic orthodoxy by claiming, and to some degree demonstrating, that a wide variety of European peoples crossed the Atlantic repeatedly to North America over a period of thousands of years. . . . his study of Latin and Greek in secondary school in New Zealand and Gaelic at the University of Edinburgh led to an expanding interest in inscriptions throughout the Mediterranean . . . He definitely has a knack with ancient languages, having deciphered, for example, the hitherto-baffling Mohenjodaro script of western India. . . . He definitely has the scholarly power to deal with the inscriptions he has confronted . . . He now claims to have identified in the American inscriptions no fewer than eleven scripts from across the Atlantic . . . in one of the most impressive analyses, he clearly relates the previously-known writing system of the Micmac Indians of Maine . . . to Egyptian hieratic glyphs which seem to have been in use in Maine before Christianizing began. I am assured by colleagues competent in the material that there is indeed solid substance at this point. . . . The easy way out would be for critical people to pick at the weaknesses and dismiss the whole. I am afraid that is precisely what most professionals will do . . . But someday, in a more sophisticated form, these impressive finds will no doubt be presented with the power they deserve. . . .

The Book of Mormon is nowhere mentioned in this volume, but if, as a expert, a good deal of Fell's evidence holds up under closer scrutiny, the effect will be felt by Latter-day Saints. . . .

Fell will no doubt be smitten vigorously by hostile critics. He and his handful of collaborators are in a vulnerable position professionally. Their limited resources could be augmented significantly by sales of this book. Mormons who wish to assist one who shares some of their position in the face of opposition from the professional establishment could strike a blow by buying this book.

Brigham Young University Studies expressed interest in Barry Fell's work on the transcript Hofmann had forged:

. . . BYU Studies has been very interested in the Hofmann Document find and at first hoped to

print a photographic copy and a translation of it . . . friends of Herm Olsen told us you could translate the document . . . Our reaction was an immediate yes, we are interested. We even held space in the Summer 1980 issue anticipating your article. (Letter to Barry Fell, June 16, 1980)

In his manuscript Dr. Fell wrote almost exactly what the Mormons wanted to hear. Fell declared that the first line should be translated: “. . . I, Nephi, a son born of sagacious parents . . .” This, of course, sounds suspiciously like the first eight words of the Book of Mormon: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents . . .” (1 Nephi 1:1).

In line three Fell claimed to find these words: “My father, Lehi, was of Salem . . .” This is similar to 1 Nephi 1:4: “. . . my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem . . .” Moreover, Fell claimed that line two contained the words “Zedekiah” and “Judah.” These two names are also found in 1 Nephi 1:4.”

While at first glance a person would be led to believe that Barry Fell had vindicated the Book of Mormon, a closer examination reveals just the opposite. For example, Fell did not read the text as “reformed Egyptian,” but rather as “an ancient Arabic text” (Letter from Barry Fell, dated May 27, 1980).

Fell made the matter even more difficult for the Mormons to accept when he claimed that the circular drawing in the Mark Hofmann document was “what purports to be a gold dirhem issued by the Al-Muwahid, or ‘Almohad’. . . Dynasty in Andalusia . . . in Libyan (Numidian) script.” This would tend to date Joseph Smith’s characters to the 12th or 13th century A.D.! This would be about 1,800 years after the time of Nephi! Moreover, Fell claimed that the old Arabic manuscript was known as the “apocryphal book of Nephi”—i.e., a book of doubtful authorship or authenticity.

Not surprisingly, when the editors for *Brigham Young University Studies* examined Dr. Fell’s bizarre translation of the Hofmann document, they were no longer excited about his work. In the letter of June 16, 1980, which is cited above, Fell was told that BYU Studies could not publish his translation:

Following is a summary of the refereeing: There are some sections of your translation in which we have no expertise; we must, therefore, accept those as authentic because you are the expert. But the sections we can understand were found to have significant problems. . . .

With this linguistic concern about the accuracy of the copying, the faulty equivalencies with modern Arabic, and the fact that Figure 6 is not the title page of the identified text but is the first page of the first

section of a text on alphabets (not ancient for the time period of the original book), my referees have voted that we give everyone more time to study out a translation . . .

As is the case with all the refereed journals, when the referees are unanimous in their decision not to publish, we cannot publish; therefore I have returned your article to Prof. Paul Cheesman. . . . the present effort appears too preliminary for us to use.

In 1984, Dr. Fell turned to another problem related to Mormonism: the Kinderhook plates. This time Fell did not give any support to Joseph Smith’s work. He reported:

The facts are consistent with the claim by W. Fugate that he engraved these markings, aided by others named. . . . When the Latin signs are isolated, they prove to include letters that are diagnostic of the English language . . . I conclude that the only language likely to be concealed in the jumbled Latin signs has to be English. (*The Epigraphic Society*, June 1984, page 136)

On the same page Fell claimed that there was indeed a message on the plates:

I therefore examined the sets of Latin letters on the several illustrated plates, and found that they yield letter sequences that, if in correct sequence, spell out the message[:]

W. Fugate’s Fakes (Side 1:)
April Fool’s Day (Side 3A)
1843 For (Side 2A)
Joseph Smith (Sides 6B and 1B)

Dr. Barry Fell has included five pages of drawings showing how he derived this information. While the drawings are well done, Fell’s work with the letters is far from convincing. The “letters” he selects are taken from various places on the plates. We suspect that if we spent some time with the plates, we could make many different messages from the same letters he uses. The article appearing in the publication of *The Epigraphic Society* gives the impression that Dr. Fell is serious about the matter. Nevertheless, we cannot help but wonder whether he was trying to get back at the Mormons for not publishing his work on the Hofmann transcript. In any case, it is obvious that Fell discredited himself with his work on the transcript, and it seems doubtful that Mormon scholars will continue to put much stock in his opinions.

Joseph Smith’s creation of the Anthon transcript, in an attempt to get funding for the publication of the

Book of Mormon, has certainly brought forth an unusual series of events.

Sometime between 1952 and 1956 some small gold plates were purportedly found in Guerrero, Mexico. Dr. Ray T. Matheny, who looked into the authenticity of the plates, asked this question:

How do we account for the fact that so large a number of the Anthon transcript symbols appear on the Padilla plates? in almost identical style? (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Fall 1978, page 38)

Matheny also noted:

The Padilla gold “plates” are well known in LDS Church archaeological-anthropological circles, where they have been the subject of publications, papers, discussion, and firsthand examination. They have become an exciting topic and have often been used in missionary endeavors as an example of empirical evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. If authentic, these twelve postage stamp-size cards represent the most significant archaeological evidence of the Book of Mormon yet to appear. If not authentic, they are an embarrassing fraud. (*Ibid.*, page 21)

After a thorough examination of these gold plates, Dr. Matheny concluded they were fraudulent:

It should be clear that our sophisticated measurements show we are dealing with gold sheet that has been manufactured by the most precise means known. The plates were cut out of a gold sheet stock that gives every indication of having been manufactured on a metal roller press and not by any known hand method. (The sheet metal roller press was invented by Leonardo da Vinci in the sixteenth century and was not generally used in Europe until the nineteenth century.) . . . The engraving technique was analyzed by Don J. Christensen . . . a professional jeweler and engraver, who asserts that modern methods were used in engraving the metal plates and in attaching the hinge onto the sheet metal. . . . the attached hinges have been made with modern tubing dies. . . . The production of gold alloy sheet with the close tolerances of thickness of the Padilla Plates is most certainly a modern achievement. The method of engraving is also a modern one, requiring finely-made, hardened steel tools. The making of cylindrical hinges in such perfect symmetry is also astonishing as is the fact that they were soldered by a technique known only in recent times. . . .

The script used for the plates clearly was in part copied from the [Mormon] Mexican missionary tract which supplied a large percentage of the total number of symbols used. . . .

It is my opinion that the Padilla Plates are not authentic because of any one of the major technological anachronisms given above. But given all of the factors considered, the case against the authenticity of the Padilla Plates should be closed once and for all. (*Ibid.*, pages 26, 29-30, 40)

It is clear that someone used Joseph Smith’s forgery to create another forgery which could have sold for a great deal of money. After all, as Dr. Matheny indicated, if it were authentic it would have been “the most significant archaeological evidence of the Book of Mormon yet to appear.”

Less than two years after Matheny’s article appeared, the discovery of the Hofmann transcript was announced. This was an extremely good forgery which seemed to contain not only the characters but also the very handwriting of Joseph Smith himself. Nevertheless, it was eventually discovered that it was just another forged copy that borrowed characters from the Anthon Transcript.

It was not long after this that Barry Fell came forth with his own translation of the Hofmann forgery. It seems apparent, then, that Dr. Fell set forth a false translation of a forged document that was taken from a fake document created by Joseph Smith in 1828!

Although the Hofmann transcript has been completely discredited, we must make it clear that the original Anthon transcript is, in fact, a document which has been preserved since the early days of Mormonism. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts said that “the seven-line transcript” was “preserved with the copy of the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon, by David Whitmer” (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 101). As mentioned earlier, Whitmer was one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

The Missing Characters

The Anthon transcript actually provides a great deal of evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. M. T. Lamb addressed this issue:

. . . Joseph Smith has preserved for us and for the inspection of the world, a specimen of the characters found upon the plates . . . He transcribed a few of the characters from the plates as specimens. . . .

Well, now, unfortunately for the claims of the Book of Mormon, we are able to learn precisely what kind of characters were used in Central America by its ancient inhabitants. They have been preserved in imperishable marble. Engraven upon stone in such a way as to remain to the end of time a silent though solemn rebuke to the false and foolish pretensions of the author of this book.

In the ruins of the two oldest cities in Central America, Copan and Palenque, are found in abundance the strange hieroglyphics, the written language of the people who once inhabited those old cities. Thousands of these mysterious characters are scattered about, engraven over ruined doorways and arches, upon the sides and backs of hideous-looking idols carved in stone, upon marble slabs, on the sides of immense pillars, here and there through the ruins of magnificent palaces and monster heathen temples. . . .

These same hieroglyphics have been preserved in other forms—for the ancient Mayas had books, real books . . . An examination of the three that are now known to be preserved, shows the same characters that are found upon the stone tablets, idols, etc., as seen in the cuts—and represent the actual written language of the ancient Mayas—a people who are known to have occupied Central America, and been the sole occupants of a portion of that country at the very time . . . when, according to the Book of Mormon, the Nephites lived and flourished there. . . .

We ask the candid reader carefully to examine these characters, and then look back again to page 261 [page 106 of Lamb’s book]. Those are the characters Joseph Smith tells us were universally used in Central America 1,500 and 2,000 years ago—while the ruins, the engraved stones, and chiselled marble, tell us that these were characters actually used in that locality, and at that time. . . . A woeful fatality, is it not? that there should not happen to be even one of Mr. Smith’s characters that bears a family likeness, or the least particle of resemblance to the characters actually used by the ancient inhabitants of Central America! . . .

We should . . . certainly expect to find, in every portion of both continents, the same evidences of an ancient civilization as are found in Central America. We ought to find not only the remains of great cities, filled with the ruins of magnificent temples and palaces all through these “valleys of the mountains,” through the various states and territories and all over South America as well—but especially among these ruined temples and over the doorways of palatial residences we should find, in thousands of places, these reformed Egyptian characters engraved upon marble blocks and granite pillars, brass plates by the thousand, inscribed tablets of gold and silver, remnants of old parchment leaves with passages of scripture . . .

But need we say that just the contrary of all this is found to be true. . . .

It would therefore be sheer nonsense to imagine that the assertions of the Book of Mormon may after all have been true, but that through the lapse of time all traces of such a written language may have disappeared. Stone and marble, and gold and silver,

and copper and brass are not liable to disappear in the brief period of 1500 years. (*The Golden Bible*, pages 259-272)

Actually, if the Book of Mormon were true, one would expect to find an abundance of both reformed Egyptian and Hebrew writing in the New World. Mormon archeologist Ross T. Christensen frankly admitted that reformed Egyptian had never been found:

It was “reformed” Egyptian . . . a form of writing which we have not yet identified in the archaeological material available to us. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, BYU, 1964 edition, page 10)

Professor John L. Sorenson wrote:

I do not believe that any neutral-but-interested jury would be convinced today . . . that any Egyptian writing has been found in the New World . . . or any other of these specific kinds of proof. (*Ibid.*, pages 26-27)

In his book published in 1985, Dr. Sorenson stated:

. . . we have no reason to expect scholars to find traces of Egyptian speech in the New World. Certainly no trace of it has been brought to light by linguists working in Mesoamerica. . . . However, Hebrew speech must have been used, at least by the earliest Nephites, so we might find indications of at least some words preserved in other languages of the area. (*An Ancient American Setting*, page 78)

The Bat Creek Stone

The Bat Creek stone was found in Tennessee in 1889. In a report completed in 1894, it was stated that an inscription on the stone was written in the Cherokee alphabet. On October 19, 1970, however, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon believed the inscription was really written by Jews fleeing from the Romans. The inscription was short, but Gordon felt that he could read the words “for the land of Judah.” Actually, the literal reading would be “for Judah.” The words the land of were added to make the translation more understandable.

In a rebuttal to the archeological material found in our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, Matthew Roper wrote the following:

A main argument of the Tanners seems to be that no evidence exists for Semitic languages and scripts in pre-Columbian America. Since the Book of Mormon asserts that some New World peoples had a knowledge of Semitic languages, the apparent lack

of evidence for these is considered by the Tanners to be an anachronism for the Book of Mormon. They spend . . . four pages trying to discredit the Bat Creek Hebrew inscription found by a Smithsonian expedition in Tennessee in 1889 . . . Unfortunately for the Tanners, though, J. Huston McCulloch has now demonstrated that the Bat Creek inscription, once thought to be Cherokee, “fits significantly better as Paleo-Hebrew,” confirming Cyrus Gordon’s original hypothesis. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, pages 212-213)

Roper’s statement that we spent “four pages trying to discredit the Bat Creek Hebrew inscription” is somewhat exaggerated. We actually spent two and a half pages dealing with the matter (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 108-110). At any rate, we reported that the Smithsonian Institution issued a statement with regard to the artifacts found in the burial mound:

Recent tests . . . on the brass bracelets found in the same grave definitely established that they are 18-19th century trade goods and . . . [do] not have the chemical composition of brass of the Roman or early Semitic periods. (Statement by the Smithsonian Institution, mailed November 24, 1971)

Mr. Roper pointed out that in 1988, J. H. McCulloch published an article in the *Tennessee Anthropologist* which questions the age attributed to the brass bracelets and the dating of the burial mound. We read McCulloch’s article a number of years ago and found it very interesting.

We also did a good deal of research on the Bat Creek stone which was published in the 1972 printing of *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* (see pages 84-91). We even wrote to William F. Albright, of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at John Hopkins University. Albright was considered to be one of the world’s greatest archeologists and an expert on Near Eastern texts. Dr. Albright responded:

I am afraid that the script on this little stone object found at Bat Creek, Tennessee, is quite unintelligible. Thanks for the beautiful photograph which you enclosed. The letter in question could be a *yodh* but it is impossible to make any intelligible context out of it. Like Cyrus Gordon’s acceptance of the Paraiba “inscription” from the interior of Brazil and the Kensington Stone from southern Minnesota and like Dr. Strong’s attempts to read all sorts of tracks and scratches on pieces of slate scattered all the way from Chesapeake Bay to near Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania, there is nothing a more sober student of ancient script can accept as a genuine inscription. . . . In order to validate any newly found inscription, not solidly attested by

trained archaeologists, one cannot seize on some special letter and say, “now this is authentic so the rest has to be too.” I cannot make anything out of it at all and I am at home in all varieties of Semitic writing from the earliest times on down. I know of no stage of script in Hebrew or Aramaic to which these letters can belong as far as they are preserved. (Letter from William F. Albright to Jerald Tanner, dated January 4, 1971)

While it may come as a surprise to some Mormons, we were not convinced that Dr. Albright was right about the matter. In our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, page 85, we stated: “Our research shows that the characters are Semitic, although this does not necessarily mean that the inscription is genuine.” Naturally, we felt a little uneasy about differing with such a respected authority on the subject.

When we consulted Joseph A. Fitzmyer of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, he replied:

However, though I admit that the line of letters looks like very ancient Hebrew forms, it must be admitted that the stance of most of them is off. It looks to me like some unskilled person’s attempt to write something that he did not understand. This makes me very skeptical about the genuinity of the inscription. (Letter dated January 19, 1971)

We also wrote to Frank Moore Cross, Jr., of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. He made his opinion very plain: “I have examined this. Add it to the list of pseudo-Canaanite.” In 1990 the following appeared in a newspaper article:

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Two professors say carbon dating of wood fragments found a century ago at an ancient tomb in Tennessee prove Hebrews sailed to America centuries before Columbus. . . . Gordon an expert on epigraphy . . . figures they were inscribed around AD 100.

Frank Cross, a professor of Semitic languages at Harvard University, is skeptical. The inscriptions, he says, “don’t fit any paleo-Hebrew script that I know.” . . . in 1979, with the advent of better carbon-dating methods, J. Huston McCulloch of Ohio State University began pestering the Smithsonian Institution, which had the artifacts, to have the wood tested.

Finally, in 1988, McCulloch got the testing done. It dated the wood to between AD 32 and 769. (*The Toronto Sun*, September 24, 1990)

J. H. McCulloch also argued that the Smithsonian Institution’s statement that the brass bracelets were

“18-19th century trade goods and . . . [do] not have the chemical composition of brass of the Roman or early Semitic periods” was questionable. He stated that brass similar to that found in the Bat Creek mound was used “in antiquity, but only during a rather brief time period. Prior to the first century B.C. . . .” (*Tennessee Anthropologist*, Fall 1988, as reprinted in 1989 by FARMS, page 105).

In 1993, McCulloch wrote the following:

Although on purely metallurgical grounds the Bat Creek bracelets could be modern, they therefore could equally well be ancient; and if ancient, they are most likely of the same approximate period that Gordon chose for the inscription on paleographical grounds, without knowledge of the precise composition of the bracelets or its significance. (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1993, page 51)

In the same issue P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. took issue with McCulloch:

It seems clear . . . that we have an object which is not an authentic paleo-Hebrew inscription, but which clearly imitates one in certain features. How is this to be explained?

It is probably not a case of the coincidental similarity of random scratches to ancient letters, since, as noted above, the similarity extends to an intelligible sequence of five letters—too much for coincidence. It seems probable that we are dealing here not with a coincidental similarity but with a fraud.

Having said this, however, I am obliged to say something about the radiocarbon determination of 427 A.D. (with a 95 percent confidence interval of 32 to 769 A.D.) obtained by McCulloch for wood fragments found in the tomb in association with the inscribed stone. . . . The results of the test on the wood do not, however, establish the antiquity of the stone. There has never been any question that much of the material in the Bat Creek mounds derives from an early period, so the wood may well have been contaminated with other materials in the wet environment of the mound. . . .

In any case, the Bat Creek stone has no place in the inventory of Hebrew inscriptions from the time of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome. Its history belongs to the melodrama of American archaeology in the late 19th century, rather than to the mystery of trans-Atlantic crossings in remote antiquity. (*Ibid.*, page 55)

McCarter names two men whom he feels could have forged the Bat Creek stone but produces no hard evidence to support his allegations.

As noted above, when a sample from the earpools was tested in 1988, the wood yielded a dating of “427 A.D. (with a 95 percent confidence interval of 32 to 769 A.D.)” It is obvious, then, that there is a long period of time in which the burial could have occurred. Since the extinction of the Nephites is placed at “About A.D. 421,” the burial at Bat Creek could have taken place well after the time that the Nephites were wiped out.

Cyrus Gordon obviously did not feel that the Bat Creek stone had anything to do with the Nephites coming to America. In a letter dated October 18, 1970, Dr. Gordon stated that the inscription “attests a migration of Jews from the Near East, probably to escape the long hand of Rome after the disastrous defeats in 70 and 135 A.D.” Gordon also claimed that the person who had possession of the stone “was in the midst of strange peoples, far from home. And his own country had come to a terrible end, crushed by the ruthless legions of Rome” (*Argosy*, January, 1971, page 26).

In support of his ideas regarding the Bat Creek stone Dr. Gordon appeals to the fact that Roman and Hebrew coins have been found in America. The presence of Hebrew coins, however, provides very little evidence that the Jews were in America in ancient times. Since people save ancient coins, they certainly could have come to America in recent times. The Jewish coins were struck in the Old World by the Jews, but when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem the “soldiers ran through the streets plundering burning and killing” (*The Coins of the Jewish War of 66-73 C.E.*, page 38). On page 43 of the same book, we find that “Specimens of Shekels were also brought from Palestine by Christian pilgrims of the Middle Ages and given to the treasuries of churches and monasteries . . .” It is apparent, then that ancient Hebrew coins might be found in almost any part of the world.

Dr. Gordon’s conclusions with regard to the Bat Creek inscription and the Hebrew coins found in America cannot be used to support the claims of the Book of Mormon. It states that the Nephites and Mulekites came over to the New World around 600 B.C., and it never mentions anyone coming after that time. Gordon, however, believes that the Bat Creek inscription is related to script found on Jewish coins dated “between 70 A.D. and 135 A.D.” He also states that “coins of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, 132-135 A.D., have been found” in America. Since these coins were originally made in Palestine during the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, this would plainly show that they could not have been brought to the New World prior to 132-135 A.D. Therefore, if a person accepts Gordon’s ideas concerning the coins, he or she is forced to the conclusion that the “Near Eastern visitors

in Tennessee” were not Nephites. Mormon scholar John L. Sorenson makes it very clear that the Nephites could not have had coins:

Coins were not in use in Palestine for generations after Lehi departed . . . No authentic “coin” has ever been found in America under convincing circumstances, and some reported finds can be shown to be either fakes or otherwise unbelievable. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, 1964 edition, page 26)

If the Mormons were to accept Cyrus Gordon’s claim that there were “Near Eastern visitors in Tennessee almost 2,000 years ago” it could actually weaken their case for the Nephites. For instance, if there is any relationship between the language or customs of the Hebrews and the Indians (as many Mormons claim), Gordon’s theory could explain this, and there would be no need for the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Mormons claim that a “White and Bearded God”—i.e., Quetzalcoatl—appeared to the Nephites, and that this was in reality “the appearance of the resurrected Lord to the ancient Americans” (*Christ in Ancient America*, page 48). If Gordon’s theories were to be accepted, Quetzalcoatl might be nothing more than a Jew who fled from the Romans after the death of Christ.

It is interesting to note that Professor William J. Hamblin commented as follows regarding the Bat Creek stone:

Although this is a stunning discovery, it does not “prove” the Book of Mormon is true. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 271)

J. H. McCulloch, whose work on the Bat Creek stone has been reprinted by FARMS, also made this statement in a footnote on page 83:

Other, indisputably Hebrew inscriptions have been found in North America, but they have either been surface finds, notably the Los Lunas, N.M. decalogue (Fell 1985) and the three coins of Bar Kakhba from various places in Kentucky discussed below, or else have been found by non-archaeologists, notably the five Newark, Ohio inscriptions (Alrutz 1980), and the Bent artifacts from Tucson, Ariz. . . .

The “Los Lunas, N.M. decalogue” mentioned by McCulloch is clearly a forgery. Welby W. Ricks, who was president of the University Archaeology Society at Brigham Young University, related that a man by the name of William McCart had been corresponding with him about the inscription and finally an investigation was made:

Many requests have come to me from time to time for information about a certain inscription on stone found near Los Lunas, New Mexico, which contains extracts from the Ten Commandments in a Phoenician script, which type of writing was in existence in Palestine during Lehi’s day around 600 B.C. To find such a script on stone in the New World is indeed interesting, but upon translation for it to contain the Ten Commandments seems almost incredible.

To Latter-day Saints such a discovery would appear to agree with the Book of Mormon. But to accept such evidence at face value, i.e., without investigation, could be embarrassing to this Society as well as to the Latter-day Saint Church, especially if it were later shown to be fraudulent. . . .

It was in October, 1953, that a group of us—Dr. Milton R. Hunter, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, Dr. Hugh Nibley, Mr. (now Dr.) John L. Sorenson, and myself—got together and made a trip to New Mexico to investigate the inscription. . . . we found a large stone . . . the face of which was carved with a Hebrew-like inscription. We were quite thrilled at first sight and fascinated by its contents. . . . I took some shots of surrounding petroglyphs and was surprised to find they were heavily patinated, whereas none of the carvings on the Phoenician stone were thus darkened. (Patination is the discoloration due to oxidation which develops on exposed surfaces of stone over very long periods of time.) As far as we could discover no patination was present on the surfaces exposed by the grooves of the inscription on the stone. . . . We had come a long way to find something we hoped was genuine . . . We were, I believe, as objective and scientific a group as one could get together. . . . Mike Castillor was introduced to us, who claimed to have seen another inscription in the area where we had been which had been translated by Dr. Pfeifer as reading “Temple of Toni.” I didn’t like that word “Toni” because it is too good Spanish but not very good Hebrew. . . . we were ready to go home and we soon departed.

I was pretty stubborn, I suppose. I was the last one out of the house. Mrs. McCart and Mr. Castillor were still inside. . . . I stood outside the closed door and tried to listen to the conversation inside. Mike said to her, “How do you think my story went?” She answered, “They lapped it up.” When I heard that, I had enough. . . .

To conclude, I should like to list the evidences which make me believe the inscription is fraudulent: . . . [Welby W. Ricks listed six significant reasons for rejecting the inscription.]

For these reasons and others I am fully convinced that the Ten Commandments stone found near Los Lunas, New Mexico, is a fraud. Its age does not

go back to ancient times. It is probably from thirty to fifty years old, perhaps even dating to as late as March 13, 1930. (*Fifteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, Brigham Young University, 1964, pages 94-100)

J. H. McCulloch also mentioned “the five Newark, Ohio inscriptions.” Professor William Hamblin commented concerning these inscriptions:

The Tanners discuss two discourses given by Orson Pratt in 1870 in which he claimed that the Newark Stones were “external proof” of the Book of Mormon . . . The Tanners then indicate that nearly forty years later [*sic*], in 1908, it was determined that the Newark Stones were non-Latter-day Saint forgeries. Although some Latter-day Saints continued to mention the Newark Stones in the early twentieth century, today no one takes them seriously. Indeed, so irrelevant are the Newark Stones to the current study of Book of Mormon antiquities that I have to admit that I had never heard of them before reading the Tanners. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 270)

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt was absolutely convinced the Newark stones, found in one of the mounds near Newark, Ohio, were genuine and provided evidence for the Book of Mormon:

On the stone . . . was carved the figure of a man . . . over the head of this man were the Hebrew characters for Moshe, the ancient name of Moses; while on each side of this likeness, and on different sides of the stone, above, beneath, and around were the Ten Commandments . . . written in the ancient Hebrew characters. Now recollect that the Book of Mormon had been in print thirty years before this discovery. And what does this discovery prove? It proves that the builders of these mounds . . . must have understood the Hebrew characters; and not only that, but they must have understood the law of Moses. . . .

I have seen the sacred stone. It is not a hatched up story. . . . This, then is external proof . . . of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. . . .

Five years after the discovery of this remarkable memento of the ancient Israelites on the American continent . . . several other mounds in the same vicinity of Newark were opened, in several of which Hebrew characters were found. Among them was this beautiful expression, buried with one of their ancient dead, “May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.” It was translated a little different—“Nephel.” . . . The Nephites were a righteous people . . . and when they were burying one of their brethren . . . they introduced the Hebrew characters signifying

“May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.” This is another direct evidence of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, which was brought forth and translated by inspiration some thirty-five years before this inscription was found. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, pages 130-131)

While many Mormons and other people, accepted these finds as authentic, the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, vol. XVII, no. 2, April 1908, pages 213-215, was convinced that the items were forgeries:

“The controversy over the Hebrew inscriptions, claimed to have been found by David Wyrick . . . is now generally regarded as closed. They were found when evidence was eagerly sought to connect the aboriginal races with the house of Israel. Now that the idea of such a connection is abandoned by all, the discovery of Hebrew inscribed stones would be an anachronism, for such forgeries will always in some way represent the ideas of the time of the forgery. . . . It is significant that Mr. Wyrick’s published accounts of the ‘finds’ were largely devoted to an attempt to prove that they could not be forged, and that upon his death there was found in his working-room a Hebrew Bible which doubtless aided him much in finding Hebrew inscriptions.”

The idea that the Newark stones contained ancient inscriptions was still promoted in 1937 by Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., in their book, *Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon*. The importance of these stones has now diminished until they are not used by reputable Mormon scholars. As noted above, William Hamblin, who has apparently spent a good deal of time studying Book of Mormon archeology, admitted that he “had never heard of them before reading the Tanners.”

The reader will remember that Apostle Orson Pratt, who claimed he could read Hebrew, went so far as to assert that one inscription read: “May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.” This turned out to be nothing but wishful thinking. Actually, the Hebrew word *nephel*, which Pratt felt should be translated “Nephite,” is defined as “something fallen, i.e. an abortion:—*untimely birth*” (see word No. 5309 in the “Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary,” found in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*).

This word is used in the Bible, Job 3:16: “Or as an hidden *untimely birth* I had been; as infants which never saw light.” It is apparent that the inscription found near Newark, Ohio, should be translated, “May the Lord have

mercy on me, an *untimely birth*.” There is absolutely nothing to support Apostle Pratt’s false translation, “May the Lord have mercy on me a Nephite.” In 1866, M. R. Miller wrote: “The whole inscription appears to be this: . . . ‘May the Lord have mercy on him, an untimely birth,’ or an abortion” (*The Occident*, vol. XXXIV, no. 2, May, 1866, page 65, as quoted in *The Romance of the Book of Mormon*, pages 167-168).

Unrecognizable Scripts?

Dr. Hamblin made these comments concerning the questions surrounding Hebrew and Egyptian writing in the New World:

The issue of Hebrew and Egyptian inscriptions and other forms of writing in the New World . . . is complicated . . .

1. Have any authentic Hebrew or Egyptian inscriptions been discovered in the New World? Yes; as will be noted below, at least the Bat Creek inscription is now widely accepted as a Hebrew text.

2. Should we expect Nephite or Lamanite inscriptions to be in recognizable Hebrew or Egyptian scripts? The answer is not necessarily. The Book of Mormon clearly states that “the reformed Egyptian [was] handed down and altered by us . . . the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; . . . [so that] none other people knoweth our language . . . therefore he [the Lord] hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.” (Mormon 9:32-34) If a Nephite inscription were to be found we should not necessarily expect it to be in recognizable Hebrew or Egyptian scripts. . . .

4. Does lack of recognizable Nephite inscriptional evidence constitute proof of the absence of Nephite colonists in the New World? Throughout the world, early monumental inscriptions were essentially used as propaganda devices to demonstrate the authority and prestige of a monarchy or priesthood. Many societies were literate, but for various social, political, or religious reasons never or seldom wrote inscriptions. (*Ibid.*, pages 260-262)

The reader will notice that Professor Hamblin feels that if a Nephite inscription were found “we should not necessarily expect it to be in recognizable Hebrew or Egyptian scripts. . . .” While it is true that languages change through time, it certainly seems hard to believe that they would become completely unrecognizable.

Hamblin believes that “there are some very remarkable conceptual similarities” between the Mayan writing and Egyptian, and cites “Joyce Marcus, one of the leading specialists in this field” to prove his point.

Nevertheless, he had to admit that there are problems in equating the two systems:

What is the relationship, if any, between Mesoamerican and Egyptian hieroglyphic writing systems? The distinction needs to be drawn between a conceptual and a direct causal relationship. There appears to be *no direct causal relationship between Mesoamerican writing systems and Egyptian hieroglyphics*—the language, grammar, and characters are all different. (*Ibid.*, page 260)

Dr. Deanne Matheny commented regarding the writing systems in Mesoamerica:

I have not ventured into other important areas such as biological anthropology, linguistics, and ancient writing systems. There are significant challenges in those areas which remain to be addressed. For example, at least five writing systems were developed in ancient Mesoamerica, but no one has convincingly demonstrated a link between any of them and any Near Eastern derived system or to anything resembling the Anthon transcript. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 320-321)

In footnote 32, on page 261 of *Review of Books*, vol. 5, Professor Hamblin commented:

I am focusing only on stone inscriptions in this section because the only writing which has thus far been discovered from pre-Classic Mesoamerica is on stone: stelae, celts, monuments, or walls. This being the case, the only possible examples of surviving Nephite writing from archaeological sources would also be on stone.

Although Hamblin would like to focus only on writings in stone, the Book of Mormon states that the Nephites were taught to engrave their writings on metal plates. One would expect, then, to find many examples of these plates. As noted above, Lamb felt that archeologists should find “brass plates by the thousand” as well as “inscribed tablets of gold and silver . . .” Why is it that plates containing Nephite writing have not turned up?

If the Book of Mormon were a true history, we would expect to find hundreds, if not thousands, of inscriptions written in Hebrew or “reformed Egyptian.” In 1958, Thomas Stuart Ferguson, a Mormon scholar who founded the New World Archaeological Foundation, stated that digging should continue at an “accelerated pace” and that “Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions in modified (reformed) Egyptian, in a modified or pure Hebrew or in cuneiform, referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of

Mormon” (*One Fold and One Shepherd*, page 263). On December 2, 1970, we had the opportunity to ask Mr. Ferguson if any such inscription had been found. He indicated that nothing had been discovered. Although he believed the Bat Creek inscription was written in Hebrew, he felt that it had nothing to do with the people mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

In an attempt to bolster Joseph Smith’s work Dr. Hugh Nibley has tried to prove that the Book of Mormon contains Egyptian names. Edward H. Ashment objected to Nibley’s claims:

Nibley proposes that Nephites “are quite aware” of historical events in ancient Egypt. When involved in the “same institutions” and the “same intrigues” as ancient Egyptian historical figures, they even take the same names . . . He singles out Koriher and Paanchi as examples . . . His proposition has several problems. . . . Did Paanchi’s parents, having a prescience that their son would challenge Pahoran and Pacumeni for the chief judgeship, name him Paanchi in accordance with the long-previous event in Egypt that they had learned about from history? Or did Helaman (or even Mormon?), knowing that millennium-old history, give him the name Paanchi in order to evoke the original, millennium-old event in the mind of readers? . . . Nibley declares that the “Egyptian Paanchi . . . was the son of one Kherihor [Hry-Hr; Nibley here misrepresents *H* as *K*]. . . the High Priest of Ammon, who in a priestly plot set himself up as a rival of Pharaoh himself, while his son Paanchi actually claimed the throne. . . . This, according to Nibley, ‘inaugurated the rule of priestcraft in Egypt’. . . If that were so the Nephites would have remembered ancient Egyptian history inaccurately. Contrary to Nibley’s description, the ancient Egyptian Paankh (Nibley’s Paanchi) was not a son of Herihor (Nibley’s Kherihor). . . On the contrary, Herihor may have been Pa-ankh’s son-in-law . . . Moreover evidence indicates that Herihor was appointed High Priest of Amon by the king, Ramses XI . . . He did not inaugurate the rule of priestcraft in Egypt. Finally, the Book of Mormon Koriher was merely an ancient secular humanist—not a pretender to the Nephite throne.

The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon indicates that the name Nibley identifies as Egyptianesque, Pahoran, Paanchi’s father, is incorrect. It should have been Parhoron . . . In any event Nibley’s parallel for Pahoran with ancient Egyptian is tenuous. . . .

Elsewhere Nibley’s ear “decides for itself” that the Egyptian *H* in *Hy-shri* represents a soft “c” to become parallel to Cezoram . . . the same *H* he already misrepresented as “Kh” in his transliteration of the Egyptian *Hry-Hr*.

In another instance Nibley proposes that Mormon is a transliteration of the Egyptian *Mry-Imn* . . . He appeals to evidence from a fifth-century B.C.E. Jewish mercenary military garrison at Elephantine, which he wrongly characterizes as a colony of exiles fleeing Babylonian persecution . . . However, he fails to explain how *Mry-Imn* and similar theophoric names that represent Egyptian pagan gods were so popular among the pre-Christian Christian Nephites . . . who lived an even higher law . . . than their religious counterparts in Judah . . .

Nibley finds authentication for “deseret” as “honey bee” (Ether 2:3) in the red crown of Lower Egypt . . . He sees the Egyptian name of the red crown, *dshrt*, to be cognate with the Book of Mormon “deseret,” because occasionally Egyptians used the red crown as a substitute word for the king of Lower Egypt, *bity*, “He of the bee.” But “deseret” is not cognate with *dshrt*. The Egyptian word for both “bee” and “honey” was *bit*, and the name for the red crown comes from the Egyptian word for red, *dshr*, and has nothing to do with honey or bees. Undaunted Nibley speculates that *dshrt* was so sacred a word that Egyptians never used it in connection with bees, just as Jews never pronounced the tetragrammaton. Indeed he is “personally persuaded that the archaic and ritual designation of the bee was *deseret*, a ‘word of power’ too sacred to be entrusted to the vulgar, being one of the keys to ‘the king’s secret.’” That is why there would be no evidence for Nibley’s speculation. His proof that the red crown “is the ‘bee-crown’ is . . . the long antenna that protrudes from the base of it.” However, the red crown more likely represented part of the eye of Horus . . . (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 343-345)

John Gee bitterly opposes Edward Ashment’s work, belittling him at every turn. Gee claims that “E. H. Ashment, much like E.A.W. Budge before him, is in many cases seriously out-of-date even as he comes off the press.” Nevertheless, Gee has to admit that some of Nibley’s speculations regarding Egyptian names in the Book of Mormon are incorrect:

When Nibley made his arguments connecting Paankh and Herihor with Paanchi and Corihor, he was relying on the scholarship available in 1952 and 1964. During the 1960s K. A. Kitchen began seriously reexamining the evidence of the Third Intermediate Period, and his careful gathering and analyzing the sources has rewritten the history of this period. But as this review is being written, other Egyptologists are rewriting portions of the history of the Third Intermediate Period. Thus many of Nibley’s observations are out-of-date three and four

decades later . . . Nibley's inaccuracies about the relationship between Herihor and Paanchi do not negate his suggestion that Paanchi is an authentic Egyptian name. (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 110-111)

John Gee is extremely hard on some of the Mormon scholars who have come to doubt that the Book of Mormon is an historical book. Speaking of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, Gee made this condescending statement:

The authors, in betraying their scriptural text, are not true to the faith, true to the facts, nor even necessarily true to the methods to which they give lip-service. If this assortment of logical errors, contradictory hypotheses, shaky methodology, and distorted history were more honest, it would carry the standard disclaimer often attached to fictional works: Any resemblance to actual persons or events is purely coincidental. (*Ibid.*, pages 119-120)

Those who carefully examine the Book of Mormon will find that a large number of the names are taken from the Bible. As we demonstrated almost three decades ago, the name "Nephi," which Dr. Nibley tried to link to the Egyptian language, seems to have been taken from the Apocrypha which was printed in some editions of the King James Bible (see 2 Maccabees 1:36). Dr. Reed Durham has shown that when Joseph Smith bought a Bible in the late 1820's he purchased one containing the Apocrypha (for more information on this subject see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 72).

Edward Ashment presents an interesting theory regarding how Joseph Smith came up with the other names which are found in the Book of Mormon:

Clearly Nibley's "minimum claims" that "would be very hard for anyone to dispute" have little foundation. . . . His attempts demonstrate that efforts to parallel Book of Mormon names with ancient Near Eastern names should be approached with skepticism.

In fact Book of Mormon names can be accounted for in a much simpler way. If those names which parallel or are derived from biblical names are set aside, Book of Mormon names are built out of relatively few stems, some used extensively, to which one or more affixes from eight classes have been added to create a new name. The process has been aptly labeled "affixation," defined as "the creation of new words by the addition of suffixes, prefixes, or infixes" (Forsberg 1990, 72). The Book of Mormon may be the only known source of a stem,

or it may be a variation of a biblical name. The table below shows 70 possible stems with various affixes. These combinations generate 136 Book of Mormon names for which it is difficult to justify an ancient origin. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 346-347)

A person really needs to examine Ashment's Table 1 (pages 347-350) to understand the importance of his work. Mormon scholar Anthony A. Hutchinson also addresses the issue of names found in the Book of Mormon:

The first is Hugh Nibley's *Since Cumorah* (1988), probably the classic modern defense of Book of Mormon antiquity . . . But the book uses a comparative methodology that at best can prove nothing and at worst can be used by others to give crackpot ideas a semblance of credibility. A typical example of this is found in Nibley's claims about proper names in the Book of Mormon (168-72). In the space of four pages Nibley gives a laundry list of Book of Mormon names that, for him at least, are clear examples of preserved Egyptian, Hebrew, West Semitic, Hittite, and even proto-Indo-European. Typical of his philological zeal is his "just for fun" (172) explanation that the word "Irreantum" is in fact Egyptian proto-Indo-European "Iaru-InvT-anjt" and/or Hittite "arunash." Nibley's explanation is a mishmash of Egyptian, proto-Indo-European, and Hittite that is as philologically unlikely as Joseph Smith's explanation that the name "Mormon" was "More Good," a combination of English "More" plus an otherwise unknown Egyptian "Mon 'good'" (*Times and Seasons* 4 [15 May 1843]: 194).

Nibley's method of taking any language in any dialect at any time and trying thereby to claim some kind of meaningful parallel is one with that used by early Dead Sea Scrolls researcher John Allegro in his *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity within the Fertility Cults of the Ancient Near East* (1970). If you cannot immediately see what is wrong with Nibley's method, you should read Allegro. He 'proves' through complicated historical and philological parallels that the story of Jesus dying on the cross and being raised on the third day is merely a coded and disguised version of a fertility myth where a phallic hallucinatory mushroom, having sprouted from the earth and broadcast its spores and euphoria, "dies," and after a short refractory period is able to "live again."

A scholar friend told me that years ago he asked his wife, who has no knowledge of any Semitic language, to take a half an hour and make up for him

a list of “biblical-sounding” names. After spending a day of Nibleyesque labor with dictionaries, concordances, and lexica, he was able to state that fully 85 percent of the made-up names could be identified as having the same types of parallels that Nibley claims as evidence to Joseph Smith’s insight into things ancient.

In the last few years, I have been a student of Chinese. I have been struck on occasion that using the type of methods and reasoning found in *Since Cumorah*, I could make a strong case that the ancient Chinese themselves were Israelites. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 8-9)

Questionable Discoveries

In our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, we gave a good deal of space to the so-called Paraíba inscription (see pages 22-25, 65, 80-84). Cyrus H. Gordon, the scholar who promoted the Bat Creek stone, gave his support to the Paraíba text:

The latest people to be championed as the discoverers of the New World are the Phoenicians . . . According to a report last week by Cyrus H. Gordon . . . at least one crew of Phoenician sailors landed in South America at Parahyba, Brazil, 2,000 years before Columbus set sail. . . .

Gordon’s case rest[s] on the Parahyba text, a copy of an inscription engraved on a stone found by plantation slaves at Parahyba in 1872. . . . no one today knows where the stone is. But Netto did visit the plantation and copied the inscription. . . . The text, chiseled in the long-extinct Phoenician characters, describes how the crew sailed with ten other ships . . . and rounded Africa. Then their vessel was separated from the flotilla by a storm. Arriving at Parahyba, the crew of twelve men and three women sacrificed one of their number to propitiate their gods. . . .

Not all scholars, by any means, are convinced by Gordon’s interpretations. Gordon F. Ekholm . . . a specialist in pre-Columbian archeology, believes the text is too pat. “It says just what someone who wants to believe the Phoenicians crossed the Atlantic would want it to say,” he comments. And Frank M. Cross Jr., professor of Hebrew at Harvard, calls the Netto copy “a mishmash of Phoenician letters from various periods.” (*Newsweek*, May 27, 1968, page 62)

We certainly have serious reservations regarding the authenticity of the Paraíba text. Professor William Hamblin seems to agree that it would be difficult to prove that the text is genuine:

The Parahyba text is a transcription of a purported sixth century B.C. Phoenician inscription supposedly found in Brazil in 1872. The Tanners seem noncommittal in their denunciation of this text . . . The jury is still out on this particular inscription, although most authorities reject it. Since the original (if there ever was one) is lost, the issue will probably never be conclusively decided. If the text is authentic, it would demonstrate that trans-Atlantic crossings at approximately the time of the Mulekites were feasible. This *would not prove that Book of Mormon peoples are historical*. . . . If the Parahyba text is a forgery the Book of Mormon remains unaffected. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 269)

William Hamblin also wrote about forgeries:

The Tanners present a number of examples of supposedly forged antiquities which some Latter-day Saints have at various times used in an attempt to bolster the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. . . . the forgery of antiquities is an ancient and “venerable” occupation; it is not particularly linked to the Book of Mormon. . . . these forgeries are usually accepted only by zealous but uninformed Latter-day Saints. . . .

Finally, as I have emphasized before, even if all of the items discussed by the Tanners should in fact be forgeries, it would not disprove the historicity of the Book of Mormon. (*Ibid.*, pages 268-269)

Tree of Life Stone

William Hamblin touched on our work with regard to the “Tree of Life stone”:

The Tanners go to great length in discussing the so-called “Tree of Life” stela, more accurately known as Izapa Stela 5 (pp. 34-52). This is perhaps the best known pre-Columbian monument that has been associated with the Book of Mormon by Latter-day Saints. (*Ibid.*, page 267)

In 1965, the Mormon-owned *Deseret News* made the startling announcement that the *El Paso Times* published an article which seemed to show that the Book of Mormon had been proven true by archeologists. We obtained the article from the *El Paso Times* and found that it contained the following:

The Book of Mormon . . . is purported to be an ecclesiastical and historical record of the American continent translated from gold plates. . . .

A large carving unearthed in Chiapas, Mexico, has been interpreted and offers the first sound

evidence of the near-eastern origin of its carvers—an origin set in the Book of Mormon. . . .

The carving is a portrayal of an ancient event concerning the Tree of Life. Six persons are seated by and discussing the tree. The near-east clothing style is clear, as well as are other evidences of Old World origin.

Three name glyphs on the carving have been translated as “Lehi,” “Sariah,” and “Nephi,” prominent names in the Book of Mormon, and the study shows a detailed symbolization of a crucial scene in the book termed “Lehi’s Vision of the Tree of Life.” It may be one of the most important finds in the history of archeology, some think. (*El Paso Times*, July 4, 1965)

This article must have seemed to be very impressive to those who read the *El Paso Times*. Careful research, however, demonstrated that this article could not be used as evidence for the Book of Mormon. The article, in fact, was nothing but old Mormon propaganda rewritten to impress unwary readers.

When we wrote to the *El Paso Times* for information regarding this article, we were informed that it was submitted to the newspaper by Mormon missionaries:

The material, in somewhat elongated form, was submitted to our religion desk by Robert Elder and Vaughn Byington, missionaries of the Church of [Jesus] Christ of Latter Day Saints assigned to El Paso wards.

The information was written by Mr. Byington, who said his sources were articles obtained at the Department of Archaeology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. (Letter from Joseph Rice, Religion Editor, *The El Paso Times*, dated November 3, 1965; a photograph of this letter is found in our book, *Archeology and the Book of Mormon*, page 36)

While some Mormon scholars believed that this stone could be used as evidence to prove the Book of Mormon, non-Mormon archeologists saw no connection. In a letter to Marvin Cowan, George Crossette, of *National Geographic Magazine*, commented:

The National Geographic Society along with the Smithsonian Institution sponsored archeological work in Mexico where “Stela 5, Izapa,” was found. . . . *No one associated with our expedition connected this stela in any way with the Book of Mormon.* (Letter from George Crossette, Chief, Geographical Research, *National Geographic Magazine*, dated April 27, 1965)

M. Wells Jakeman, of the Department of Archaeology at BYU was the one chiefly responsible for the idea that the carving is connected with the Book of Mormon. The idea that Book of Mormon names have been translated from the carving probably stems from some of Jakeman’s statements regarding this carving.

On December 5, 1959, Dr. Jakeman made this incredible statement:

Incidentally we have here in the Izapa carving . . . the first actual portrayal of a Book of Mormon event, and the first actual recording of Book of Mormon names, yet discovered on an ancient monument of the New World. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, page 53)

Those who carefully examine Dr. Jakeman’s work will find that he has not actually translated any Book of Mormon name from “Stela 5,” but has only symbolically interpreted some elements on the stone.

Although “Stela 5” has been widely used by those who wish to prove the Book of Mormon, a number of prominent Mormon scholars do not accept Jakeman’s work. For example, Dr. John L. Sorenson, who served as professor of anthropology and was chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Brigham Young University, took issue with Jakeman:

Jakeman’s paper carries trait-list comparison to its logical conclusion . . . Obviously comparison remains a key methodological device in the conduct of research in history and the sciences, but the uncontrolled use of trait comparison leads to absurd conclusions. Particularly, it leads to overambitious interpretations of shared meaning and historical relationship, as in Jakeman’s previous pseudo-identifications of “Lehi” (and other characters from the Book of Mormon) on an Izapan monument. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, page 148)

Another statement by Dr. Sorenson made it abundantly clear that he rejected Jakeman’s work on the “Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone”:

We have wanted to find Nephi’s name or some Egyptian writer or something of this very specific kind. We have wanted to find when Zarahemla burned; we have wanted to find the ashes; we have wanted to find the very roads that Nephi walked over. The point that I would like to make is that it is extremely unlikely that we will find any of this so that we can convincingly lead others to believe that it is what we think it is. (*Book of Mormon Institute*, December 5, 1959, page 25)

Dr. Jakeman once stated that a “prominent member of the faculty of Brigham Young University” had privately distributed a leaflet in which “he ridicules my interpretation” of “Stela 5.” In 1969, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, contained an article which made it clear that Hugh Nibley, the great defender of the Mormon faith, was the unnamed person who attacked Jakeman’s work. Dee F. Green quoted Nibley as saying:

Science does not arrive at its conclusions by syllogisms, and no people on earth deplore proof demonstration by syllogism more loudly than real archaeologists do. Yet Mr. Jakeman’s study is nothing but an elaborate syllogistic stew. The only clear and positive thing about the whole study is the objective the author is determined to reach. With naive exuberance, he repeatedly announces that he has found “exactly what we would expect to find.” Inevitably there emerges from this dim and jumbled relief exactly what Mr. Jakeman is looking for. (Nibley’s review of Jakeman’s publication on Stela 5, as quoted in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, page 75)

Dee F. Green, who was deeply involved with the BYU Archaeological Society, also came out against Dr. Jakeman’s work:

A final warning should be issued against Jakeman’s Lehi Tree of Life Stone, which has received wide publicity in the Church and an over-enthusiastic response from the layman due to the publication’s pseudo-scholarship. The question which should really be asked about Izapa Stela 5 is “Did the artist or artists have Lehi’s vision in their minds when the stone was sculptured?”, a question which, I submit, cannot be answered short of talking with the artist. The next question, then, is what are the probabilities that the artist had Lehi’s vision in mind when he carved the stone. I don’t know the answer to that one either, but then, neither does Jakeman, and his publication is more of a testimony as to what is not known than to what is known about Stela 5. As Nibley pointed out in his own inimitable style, Jakeman errs at every turn in the publication. The basis of Jakeman’s evidence is his own hand-drawn publication. The basis of Jakeman’s evidence is his own hand-drawn version from a photograph of the stone. He makes unsupported assumptions about the canons of ancient art; he fumbles over elements of the dream which are not included and items on the stone which have no place in the dream; he displays ignorance of his linguistic data and

most unfortunately reverses the scholarly method by presenting his data with a rash of “evidently,” “probablys,” “appears,” and “apparentlys”—but offers his conclusions as unarguable facts. (*Ibid.*, pages 74-75)

It is evident, then, that although many Mormons use Izapa Stela 5 as evidence for the Book of Mormon, some of the most prominent Mormon scholars reject Jakeman’s work.

Interestingly, Professor Hamblin feels that the relationship between Izapa Stela 5 and the Book of Mormon is “tenuous”:

In dealing with this stela it must be emphasized that the interpretation of iconography is extremely difficult and complex. The same symbols or combinations of symbols can have radically different meanings in different times, places, societies, or to different groups within a single society. We will never know for certain what Izapa Stela 5 meant to its creators. To me the connection with the Book of Mormon is possible, but tenuous. But even if Izapa Stela 5 has absolutely nothing to do with the Book of Mormon, the fact that some Latter-day Saint[s] have misinterpreted it provides no evidence against the Book of Mormon. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 267-68)

For a great deal of additional information which proves that “Stela 5” is nothing but a pagan object which could not possibly have any relationship to the Book of Mormon see our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, pages 34-52).

Is Quetzalcoatl Jesus?

William Hamblin commented regarding our statements concerning Quetzalcoatl:

Since the early twentieth century, many Latter-day Saints have posited some type of relationship between the Mesoamerican god Quetzalcoatl (“feathered serpent,” Kukulcan in Maya) and the resurrected Savior in the Americas. The Tanners briefly deal with this issue (pp. 8-9, 69-70). (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 266)

The reader may remember that Mormon historian B. H. Roberts believed that the book, *View of the Hebrews*, may have provided structural material for the Book of Mormon. It is interesting to note that Ethan Smith’s book spoke of Quetzalcoatl:

On the pyramid of Cholula was an altar dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, or *the serpent of green feathers*; as the name imports. Of their tradition relative to this Quetzalcoatl, the writer says; “*this is the most mysterious being of the whole Mexican mythology.*” . . .

The character to whom their most noted altar was dedicated, whose name imported a serpent of green feathers; was at the same time (in their own description) “a white and bearded man.” (*View of the Hebrews*, 1825, pages 204-205)

After quoting the material about Quetzalcoatl from *View of the Hebrews*, B. H. Roberts wrote:

The legitimate query: did this character spoken of in the “View of the Hebrews,” published five years before the Book of Mormon, furnish the suggestion of the Christ on the Western Continent? (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 344)

Quetzalcoatl was actually only one of a number of pagan gods worshipped by the ancient inhabitants of Mesoamerica. We find the following in an article published by *National Geographic Magazine*:

The Maya pantheon included innumerable gods, in varied manifestations. Possibly the greatest was Itzamni, the Lord of Life, generally portrayed as an elderly sage. Ah Kin, the Sun God, presided over the day, and Ah Puch reigned in the Land of the Dead. Chac, God of Rain, rose to pre-eminence each springtime; if the rains came late, crops failed and famine stalked the land. Later, Kukulcan—the Maya manifestation of the central Mexican deity, Quetzalcóatl—gained a kind of primacy in the form of a feathered serpent.

To function benevolently, the gods required human blood. (*National Geographic Magazine*, December 1975, page 738)

Both good and evil things are said about the god Quetzalcoatl. For example, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie cited the following from the book, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*:

“Quetzalcoatl was a favorably disposed man, of grave aspect, *white* and bearded. His dress was a long tunic.” He was “just, saintly and good.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 614)

On the same page McConkie also stated: “President John Taylor, for instance, has written: ‘The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcoatl, closely resembles that of the Savior; so closely, indeed, that we can come to no other conclusion than that Quetzalcoatl and Christ are the same being.’ ”

In *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*, by Eric S. Thompson, 1966, we find an entirely different picture:

The Mexican invaders introduced new religious cults, the most important of which was the worship of Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan, the feathered-serpent god. Everywhere on these new buildings is displayed the feathered snake, its plumed body terminating at one extremity in [an] exaggerated head with open jaws ready to strike, at the other end the warning rattles of the rattlesnake . . . Plumed serpents writhe on low-relief sculpture, the focus of lines of warriors who pay their god homage; they descend on balustrades which flank steep staircases; they rise behind warriors or priests performing human sacrifice . . .

In sculpture and mural one finds line upon line of proud warriors, who face toward an altar where sacrifice is made to the feathered serpent or who receive the surrender of defeated Maya . . . (pages 121, 123)

It is certainly strange that Mormons would try to make a pagan god like Quetzalcoatl, who is depicted with an “exaggerated head with open jaws ready to strike,” into Jesus Christ. Milton R. Hunter, who was a member of the First Council of the Seventy, claimed that when he saw the “grotesque, ugly” serpent heads he thought they were “pagan representations or idols.” Later, however, he became convinced that the serpent was used as a symbol of Jesus Christ:

My first impression of the serpent heads on the Temple of Quetzalcoatl was that they were grotesque, ugly creatures and certainly would not be symbols of Quetzalcoatl. Since I was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, I was quite familiar with the Book of Mormon account of the appearance of Jesus Christ to the inhabitants of ancient America following his resurrection; and I had also heard that he had been identified with Quetzalcoatl. As I looked at those hideous serpent heads, I thought: “I see nothing here that reminds me of the beautiful account in the Book of Mormon of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. These snake heads are pagan representations or idols.”

The idea that these venomous serpents were supposed to be symbols of the Savior was repulsive to me. . . . I was confronted with the problem of trying to ascertain why the inhabitants of ancient America employed such a noxious creature as the serpent, along with the resplendent quetzal bird, to symbolize the glorious and radiant resurrected Savior—the “White Bearded God” . . .

Members of the Church . . . are informed that in the very beginning of human history the serpent became identified with Satan . . . however, peculiar as

it may seem and also in spite of the fact that the devil in the form of a serpent had played such a prominent role in the Garden of Eden story, history affirms that coatl or serpent in very early times became identified also with the crucifixion and atonement of Jesus of Nazareth and hence it became a symbol of the Son of Man.

The fact that ancient peoples adopted the serpent as a symbol of the Messiah does not necessarily classify them as devil worshipers. . . .

Jesus Christ while in mortality clearly identified the serpent symbol with his own crucifixion. We read the following in the New Testament: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

It was natural for the descendants of the Nephites and the Lamanites as the years passed to continue with such a symbol, adding adulterated religious practices . . . Thus the Indian descendants of Book of Mormon peoples distorted the serpent symbol into the various pagan forms . . . Although the quetzal-serpent symbols are degenerated pagan reminders of the "White Bearded God," they also serve as reminders of the true Savior . . .

Bearing all of the foregoing discussion in mind, what did I see on my last trip to Teotihuacán? Instead of repulsive, ugly, grotesque serpents, I saw on the front of one part of the temple six beautiful serpent heads . . . and six comparable ones on the other side, making twelve. I also observed that there had been twelve serpent heads up the edges of the staircase—six on each side. Each serpent head contained twelve teeth. . . .

The Temple of Quetzalcoatl now appeared to me to be a beautiful building which had been erected in honor of Jesus Christ . . .

As I visited the various archaeological sites and museums, everywhere I looked I saw temples, pyramids, pottery, representations of men and numerous other things, decorated with feathers of the "sacred quetzal, or bird of paradise," and serpents, as well as serpent heads, all symbolizing Quetzalcoatl or Jesus Christ. (*Christ in Ancient America*, by Milton R. Hunter, 1959, pages 109-110, 121, 123-125)

Anthony W. Ivins, who was a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, saw nothing beautiful about the serpent. In fact, he felt that it was a symbol of the devil:

Since the temptation of Mother Eve the serpent has been the symbol of the evil one, the tempter, the devil. . . .

When Fernando Cortez entered the city of Mexico . . . the first thing to attract his attention was the great temple erected to the idolatrous god Huitzilopochtli. There upon the summit of a pyramid . . . was the sacrificial stone upon which thousands of human beings were offered annually as sacrifices to this idolatrous god. The victim was placed upon this stone on his back, his limbs pinioned by strong men, while the priest, with an obsidian knife cut out and held up to the view of the populace his palpitating heart.

It is said that at the coronation of Moctazuma III . . . three thousand victims were offered to appease this god which the people worshiped. Could it have been any other than the father of lies, the Devil, who had led these people to believe that such worship was necessary . . .

It has been the privilege of the writer to look upon ruins, found throughout Mexico . . . Wherever he has come in contact with the vestiges of the lost civilization of which these ruins bear silent witness he has been confronted by the serpent, cut in imperishable stone. Sometimes in monolithic form as shown in the engravings here reproduced, perhaps coiled ready to strike, or again coiled about a human form, always with forked tongue protruding and dripping fangs. (*The Relationship of 'Mormonism' and Freemasonry*, 1934, pages 135, 138-139)

In his book, *The Phoenix of the Western World: Quetzalcoatl*, Dr. Burr Cartwright Brundage wrote:

One of the reports about the god picked up by the Spanish friars and passed on by them was the statement that he had stood out against human sacrifice, adjuring his Toltec peers to sacrifice only birds, snakes, and butterflies. This claim will be discussed later. Here it can be stated that, insofar as it concerns the Quetzalcoatl who was a divinity and not the high priest, *the claim is the very opposite of the truth*. In point of fact Quetzalcoatl was the only one among the gods all of whose designs were sacrificial and who alone *taught the correct way in which to tear out a heart for the offering*. It is indeed this very intimate association of Quetzalcoatl with blood sacrifice that puts him in the very center of the sky religion. The act of sacrifice is seen as a priestly skill and prerogative. (*The Phoenix of the Western World: Quetzalcoatl*, 1982, page 125)

In a letter to James S. Lindberg, dated May 27, 1982, Dr. John L. Sorenson, who was at the time Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Brigham Young University, commented about the traditions regarding Quetzalcoatl:

A substantial body of varied evidence has been published supporting the identification of the traditional Mesoamerican god Quetzalcoatl with Jesus Christ. A good deal of nonsense has also been said about this subject. Part of the problem is that there were a number of persons named Quetzalcoatl, some much later than others. The traditions, largely as recorded by the Spaniards, are often less than [than?] clear.

In his book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, Sorenson wrote:

Many Latter-day Saints know a little about the ancient Mesoamerica figure known by the name Quetzalcoatl . . . A number of books and articles addressed to Mormon readers have discussed this being, citing evidences from traditional native accounts written down by the Spaniards . . .

The native belief has misled some Latter-day Saints into trying to connect all references to “Quetzalcoatl” to the visit of Christ as related in the Book of Mormon. After nearly 2,000 years of legend making, things are much more complex than that. A number of beings bore the title Quetzalcoatl; certain traditions and symbols refer to some bearers of the name and some to others. Distinguishing when a given statement points to the god Quetzalcoatl and when to subsequent humans who bore his title is a complex, uncompleted task. Furthermore, a great deal of mythology with perhaps no basis in history also came to be attached to the various Quetzalcoatl. Confusion attending this subject has gone so far that one historian claims that no ancient sacred being is referred to at all in the Mesoamerican sources, but only Post-Classic priest figures around whom deifying legends grew up. However, that extreme position ignores a large body of evidence that demonstrates that a divine being was known and worshipped as the god Quetzalcoatl for many centuries, perhaps from before the time of Christ’s birth. This deity was identified with certain sacred symbols whose use is testified to by archaeological material going back thousands of years. The being to whom the symbols refer is often distinguished from any of the later priests who took his name. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 326-328)

Interestingly, although Dr. Hamblin is very critical of our work, he calls the relationship between Christ and Quetzalcoatl “speculative”:

If there is any relationship between Quetzalcoatl and Christ, it is clearly overlaid with numerous

historical, mythical and legendary strata, which are essentially impossible to unravel. Any proposed relationship must therefore remain tentative and speculative, but potentially interesting.

A few points should be emphasized. First, the Book of Mormon makes no reference to this deity. The possible relation between Christ and Quetzalcoatl is a speculative interpretation by modern readers. It may or may not be correct. Second, there were at least two major Quetzalcoatl, one being an ancient god, and another a Toltec priest named Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. There is confusion between the god and the mortal in Aztec, Spanish, and modern sources. Third, the idea and iconography of a “feathered serpent” god can be traced back to Olmec times (c. 1200–400 B.C.), and was widespread in Teotihuacan in the third century A.D. Thus at least some elements of the Quetzalcoatl mythology date back to Book of Mormon times. Fourth, the differences between the Quetzalcoatl myths and the depiction of Christ in the Book of Mormon are unfortunately often ignored by some Latter-day Saint writers. I personally find the Quetzalcoatl parallels interesting but not convincing; but whether they are accurate or not, it has little to do with the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The only question at issue is the validity of some modern Latter-day Saint interpretations. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 266-267)

Brant Gardner has written a very interesting article entitled, “The Christianization of Quetzalcoatl.” Gardner maintains that long before the time of Joseph Smith, both Spaniards and Indians attempted to put a good face upon Quetzalcoatl:

Aztec religion on the eve of the Conquest was a vibrant mosaic of interwoven deities and practices, yet of the whole pantheon only one native god is well known to the world: Quetzalcoatl. . . .

The identification of Quetzalcoatl with Christ or any other non-Indian figure depends upon a series of traits which appear in native sources. Quetzalcoatl is said to have been . . . a white, bearded man wearing a long white robe, and he left with a promise to return and rule again. While all of these traits have roots in the native legend, each one has been altered by the pressures of the Conquest. The most striking aspects of these traits—those which suggest that the legends referred to an appearance of Christ—are all Spanish elaborations on native legends. The original tales, as far as I can reconstruct them, do not support the identification with any foreign visitor. . . . the original observations of native beliefs were only slightly distorted, but each subsequent writer has, in

his own way, altered the legend to suit his particular interests. . . . a single piece of native information about Quetzalcoatl was successively shaped until the native deity appeared as only a shadow behind a more Christian definition. The Christianizing process evident in the progression of these passages was no accident. Very subtle influences were at work which predisposed certain Spaniards to see biblical influences in the customs of natives. . . .

The most vocal advocates of the Indian cause were the priests, and parallels to biblical religion in native custom were a hall mark of their writing. They speculated in print that these survivals indicated that the Indians had once been true believers, but had fallen from grace. . . . The anti-Indian writers limit themselves to the physical idol and the sacrifices made in his [Quetzalcoatl's] honor. Except for Cervantes de Salazar, none of them mention the culture hero whose legends become so famous. Those legends are found only in the pro-Indian authors, who had a vested interest in a Christianized native. . . .

The subconscious drive to Christianize Quetzalcoatl is evident in the alterations in his clothing. . . . The climax in the Christianizing process came when Torquemada in 1615 reports that Quetzalcoatl was dressed in a friar's habit . . .

If it was politically expedient for the Spanish to relate native practice to Christianity, it was even more pragmatic for the natives to play the same game. The Christianizing process soon became a two-way street, where the Spanish not only shaped native legend into Christian molds, but the natives adapted those Christian molds to their own legends and fed them back to the Spanish. . . . The same forces which led Spaniards to select Christianlike aspects from native customs also led the Indians to reshape their own lore in a more Christian cast.

The benevolent nature of Quetzalcoatl's religion is one facet of the myth which was transformed as much by the Indians as by the Spaniards. Sahagun's native informants were men knowledgeable in their own culture, but schooled by the Spanish and well-versed in Catholicism. . . .

Of even greater importance [than the false claim that the people of Quetzalcoatl worshipped just one god] is the claim that Quetzalcoatl never participated in human sacrifice. Andres de Olmos was one of the original twelve priests sent to Mexico . . . A passage ascribed to him contains this description of Quetzalcoatl's religion: "He never admitted sacrifices of the blood of humans nor of animals, but rather only of bread and roses, flowers and perfumes, and of odors. . . ."

Such a Christian man could never permit human sacrifice . . . In spite of these early and important sources, it appears that this part of the legend also underwent a cosmetic shift which eliminated the association with human sacrifice.

Two very early and important sources are the *Histoyre du Mechique* and the *Leyend de los Soles*. In the *Histoyre's* account Quetzalcoatl's brothers . . . "returned to look for Quetzalcoatl . . . he did not wish to obey them, they wanted to kill him, but he escaped . . . and shot arrows at them and killed them all. Having done this, others came seeking him with honors and they took the heads of his brothers and emptied the skulls to make drinking cups. . . ."

This is a far cry from the Quetzalcoatl of the friars who covered his eyes and ears so as not to be reminded of death. Even more important is the account of the *Leyends*: ". . . Ce Acatl [another name for Quetzalcoatl] rose and split open [Apanecatl's] head with a smooth and deep cut. . . . Immediately [Quetzalcoatl] caught hold of Solton and Cuiltron. The beasts blew on the fire and he killed them quickly. They gathered them together, cut a little of their flesh, and . . . they cut open their chests. . . ."

While human sacrifice is not explicitly stated, the indications are overwhelming. Not only were the chests opened, presumably to remove the hearts, but the fire is also reminiscent of a form of Aztec human sacrifice. Against the backdrop of these tales, it is not surprising to find that the . . . city of Quetzalcoatl among the Maya, Chichen Itza, is permeated with the iconography of human sacrifice.

The best hypothesis to explain the early accounts of Quetzalcoatl's abhorrence of human sacrifice is that the native legends were consciously shaped by the Indians to improve their standing with the Spanish overlords. In Central Mexico this influence took the form of Christianizing the religion of Quetzalcoatl. . . . The earlier people knew of the Christian religion and were exactly the kind of people the priests were looking for. . . . It is clear that this is a tale told under the painful dictates of the Conquest . . .

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of the myth is the reference to a white Quetzalcoatl. The idol of the god was always painted black, and I know of no native or even early Spanish text which specifically mentions a white skin. . . . it is clearly not a part of the important information which described Quetzalcoatl at the time of the Conquest. . . .

It could be argued that the elevation of Cortez to the status of the returning Quetzalcoatl was based on the color of Cortez's skin, but the earliest evidence

does not support this conclusion. The Spaniards were revered as gods, but according to Sahagun the black slaves which shipped with them were also specifically called gods. . . . The Spanish were gods by virtue of their miraculous ships which appeared to be floating temples and their sticks which spit thunder and fire and caused trees to fall down. . . .

Stripping away the influence of the Spanish, Quetzalcoatl becomes once again a very Aztec god, complete with the duality of good and bad which characterizes the Aztec pantheon. The moral and political climate of the Conquest generated pressures which selected certain facets of the native tradition and so presented them as to appear Christian. The early Spanish fathers found such evidence behind every tree, but no bough was more fruitful than Quetzalcoatl. (*Sunstone*, 1986, vol. 10, no. 11, pages 7-10)

While we are only able to give a portion of Brant Gardner's thesis here, those who are interested in the subject should take the time to carefully read his entire article.

Mormon scholar John L. Sorenson agrees that there was a tendency by native Mesoamericans to rewrite their history to please those who subjugated them:

Some ambitious noble lineages moved from place to place seeking local people to subjugate. That was true of groups of Teotihuacanos, "Toltecs," Cuicatecs, Mixtecs, and others. If fortune favored them and power came within their grasp, then the subject people often found it expedient to "get on the bandwagon" by doctoring their own genealogies, subordinating their original traditions, and rewriting their history to make it conform where possible to the official version of the rulers. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 146-147)

It should be of no surprise, then, that at the time of the Conquest, some of the natives tried to conform their views to those of the Spaniards.

In the book, *The Ancient Maya*, by Sylvanus G. Morley and George W. Brainerd, we find the following:

Later Maya writings, in addition to the Spanish accounts, often refer to Postclassic-era religious changes that were introduced by outsiders, either Mexican peoples or Mayan-speaking groups influenced by Mexican customs. The principal changes seem to be greater emphasis on the worship of the images of deities ("idolatry") and increased human sacrifice.

The old men of these provinces [Yucatan] say that anciently, near to eight hundred years ago,

idolatry was not practiced, and afterwards when the Mexicans entered it and took possession of it, a captain, who was called Quetzalquat [Quetzalcoatl] in the Mexican language, which is to say in ours, plumage of the serpent. . . . introduced idolatry into this land and the use of idols for gods, which he had made of wood, of clay and of stone. And he made them [the Maya] worship these idols and they offered many things of the hunt, of merchandise and above all the blood of their nostrils and ears, and the hearts of those whom they sacrificed in his services. . . . They say that the first inhabitants of Chichenyza [Chichen Itza] were not idolaters, until a Mexican captain Ku Kalcan [Kukulcan] entered into these parts, who taught idolatry, and the necessity, so they say, to teach and practice it.

Herrera, the official historian of the Indies for the Crown of Spain, leaves no doubt about this point, stating bluntly, that "the number of people sacrificed was great. And this custom was introduced into Yucatan by the Mexicans."

But it should be borne in mind that both of these practices were known to the Maya long before they were 'introduced' by foreigners. . . . Representations of human sacrifice are found on Classic monuments, polychrome pottery, and the graffiti inscribed on building walls. . . . Raiding and the taking of "trophy heads" appear to have had ritualistic associations during the Preclassic and Classic periods; one such trophy is depicted on the Bonampak murals. A spectacular example of early mass human sacrifice has been excavated from beneath a Late Preclassic platform at Chalchuapa, in the southern Maya area. In this case, a total of 33 individuals, mostly young males (probably captives), were buried together, many with unmistakable signs of sacrifice and mutilation (decapitation, and severing of limbs). A late Preclassic monument from Izapa (Stela 21) depicts a decapitated individual.

Maya ideology underwent its greatest transformation at the hands of the Spaniards, when Christianity was imposed, sometimes forcibly, upon the native population. . . .

The less public elements of the Maya belief system often escaped detection and have been perpetuated within Maya family and village life down to the present. In areas where the Spanish pressure for conversion was most intense. . . . Maya beliefs and rituals were often kept secret and apart from Christianity. Although baptized and thus officially "converted," many Maya people learned to accept the new religion in its public setting, the church, while continuing the old family rituals in the house and the agricultural rituals in the fields.

Of course when elements of Christianity happened to correspond to aspects of native ideology, the Maya could “accommodate” their conquerors by seeming to accept Christian concepts, all the while maintaining their old beliefs under a new guise. For instance, the cross existed as a Maya symbol for the “tree of life,” the sacred ceiba supporting the heavens, so that the Christian cross was readily accepted, although often worshiped for its ancient Maya connotation. (*The Ancient Maya*, fourth edition revised 1983 by Robert J. Sharer, pages 461-462)

Mormon writers often quote from the writings of the early Spaniards or the original inhabitants of Mesoamerica to support the claims made for the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately, as Brant Gardner has pointed out, the Christianizing process which occurred after the Conquest has tended to distort the truth about the history of Mesoamerica. Miguel León-Portilla noted that some of the early writings are not free from Christian interpolations:

Among the Mayas of Yucatán and the Quichés and Cakchiques of Guatemala there were also wise men . . . who after the Conquest began to transcribe the traditions taught in pre-Hispanic schools . . .

This work of the elders preserved various chronicles . . . and a whole series of texts known under the general title of *Chilam Balam*, written in the Maya language of Yucatán in Latin script. . . .

The books of *Chilam Balam* are without doubt the most significant part of what remains of early Maya literature. . . .

Actually the content of all these Maya texts is similar, including chronicles, prophecies of different *katúns* or twenty-year periods, and some poems and songs. In spite of the elements obviously added from Christianity and the Bible, this material gives a good picture of the historical and literary tradition of the Mayas. . . . The most important manuscripts in the Quiché tongue are the famous *Popal Vuh* or “Book of the people,” the *Titulos de los Señores de Totonicapán*, and the *Rabinal Achi*, a pre-Hispanic play.

The *Popol Vuh* is probably the most widely known native American text. Although written after the Conquest and containing obvious interpolations of Christian origin, it preserves pre-Columbian tradition and history. . . . There have been various opinions about the probable author or authors of the *Popol Vuh* or rather who wrote down all these texts during the second half of the sixteenth century. . . . according to Adrián Recinos, “so long as no new evidence is discovered . . . the famous manuscript must be considered as an anonymous account written by one or more descendants of the Quiché race

according to the tradition of their forefathers.” . . . In order not to forget the contents of this book, the author has set himself the task of writing down, “now in the days of the law of God and Christianity,” this new *Popol Vuh*. . . .

The *Titulos de los Señores de Totonicapán*, was also written in the Quiché language, apparently around 1554. Although the author was influenced by Christian ideas and by those who imagined that the natives were descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel, he also recorded genuine ancient chronicles and indigenous genealogy. (*Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico*, by Miguel León-Portilla, 1969, pages 18-22)

It is interesting to note that the Mormon book, *The Messiah in Ancient America*, quotes a portion of *Titulos de los Señores de Totonicapán*. Dr. Bruce W. Warren wrote:

It gave, in Carmack’s words, “an account which is similar to that of the Old Testament, from the Creation to the Babylonia[n] captivity. While it is true that this part of the narration follows the Bible much more closely than does the *Popol Vuh*, it nevertheless diverges in subtle and interesting ways. I recommend it highly as one of the first attempts by native Guatemalans to synchronize their historical traditions with the Christian one” (87).

The sixteen authors of the *Titulo* used biblical names and references (derived from the manuscript of the Dominican Friar Domingo de Vico titled *Theological Indorum* written in 1553) to describe their peoples’ origins (Carmack and Mondlach 1983:13):

The three wise men, the Nahuales, the chiefs and leaders of three great peoples and of others who joined them. . . . extending their sight over the four parts of the world . . . came from the other part of the ocean, from where the sun rises . . . These, then, were the three nations of Quiches, and they came from where the sun rises, descendants of Israel, of the same language and same customs. . . . When they arrived at the edge of the sea, Balam-Quitze touched it [the sacred director] with his staff and at once a passage opened, which then closed up again, for thus the great God wished it to be done, because they were the sons of Abraham and Jacob. (Recinos and Goetz 169-70)

Significantly, the same group of sixteen nobles who wrote *Titulo Totonicapán* produced a second document, the famous *Popol Vuh*, about two to four years later. This work, the single most extensive

account of Quiche history, does not use any biblical names, but it begins with the creation of heaven, earth, human beings, and animals; contains long sections of myths and legends; reports migrations, wars, settlements, and councils; and also gives the genealogies of the leaders. (*The Messiah in Ancient America*, 1987, pages 115-117)

The fact that the *Titulos de los Señores de Totonicapán* mentions that the Quiché people were “descendants of Israel,” and that they were “the sons of Abraham and Jacob” tends to confirm Brant Gardner’s ideas regarding the “Christianizing process” which occurred after the Conquest. That the *Popol Vuh*, which was written in the same area “two to four years later,” does “not use any biblical names” tends to make us very suspicious that the first manuscript was written to pacify the Spaniards.

While the writings about the existence of Christianity in the New World, which appeared after the Conquest, may satisfy some Mormons who are not familiar with the facts, experts in the field are very skeptical of these tales. If Mormon defenders could find some important evidence relating to the Nephites in the ancient Mayan writings, back before the time of Columbus, we would be very impressed.

As early as 1957, Dr. M. Wells Jakeman declared that “nearly half of the known” Mayan glyphs have been deciphered, and that most of those “deciphered are symbols for numbers, planets, the four directions, months, years, etc.” He also stated:

It is possible that some of the presently undeciphered glyphs have to do with historical matters. Therefore, information on ancient names and events in the Mesoamerican or Book of Mormon area may be learned when they are deciphered. . . .

The decipherment of the non-calendrical Maya hieroglyphs may be of extreme importance for identifying Book of Mormon place-names. (*University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, BYU, September 27, 1957, page 3)

On September 21, 1962, the same newsletter published a translation. As one might expect, it had nothing to do with Jesus or the Nephites. It did, however, mention Mayan gods: “The young maize-god fires pottery from white clay.” And again: “The god of death, the destroyer, fires a pot.”

In a book published in 1992, Michael D. Coe noted: “By the mid-1980s, the trickle of decipherments that had started in the 1960s had increased to a mighty flood” (*Breaking the Maya Code*, page 243). On page 262 of the same book, Dr. Coe wrote the following:

Is the Maya script really deciphered? How much of it can we now *read* (as opposed to simply knowing the meaning)? The answer to these questions pretty much depends on whether you are talking about the texts—on the monuments, codices, and ceramics—or only about the signary *per se*. I have seen modern estimates that about 85 percent of all *texts* can be read in one or another Mayan language, and certainly there are some monumental texts that can almost be read *in toto*; some of these are of respectable length, like the 96 Hieroglyphs tablet at Palenque. But if one is dealing only with the signary as it appears in Thompson’s catalog, that is another matter.

As we have shown above, Mormon scholar M. Wells Jakeman declared that the “decipherment of the non-calendrical Maya hieroglyphs may be of extreme importance for identifying Book of Mormon place-names.” Unfortunately for Mormon defenders, the hieroglyphs have not yielded the material Dr. Jakeman was hoping to find. It is obvious that the hieroglyphs come from a pagan setting and do not deal with Christianity or the people mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

Michael D. Coe referred to an exhibit of pre-Columbian art which brought to light the violent nature of the ancient Mayan people:

Basically, the picture of the Classic Maya that these two presented to the world was a series of kingly societies whose principal obsessions were royal blood (and descent) and bloody conquest. Through a host of the most beautiful Maya objects ever assembled under one roof, they spoke of penitential bloodletting of the most hair-raising sort, torture, and human sacrifice, all firmly based in what the Classic Maya actually said about themselves. There were certainly not the peaceful Maya about whom Morley and Thompson had rhapsodized. (*Breaking the Maya Code*, page 270)

A century before Coe wrote his book, M. T. Lamb made these interesting observations:

We shall find a great many other representations of the Book of Mormon equally at fault, squarely and flatly contradicted by the facts of ancient American history.

For instance, what can be more clearly stated than the religious condition of this country, especially Central America, for a period of over two hundred years after Christ? A Christian civilization prevailed

all over both continents. . . . nothing could be wider from the truth, unless all ancient American history is a lie, and its ten thousand relics tell false tales.

It may be stated in a general way that there never has been a time upon this western hemisphere within the historic period, or within three thousand years past, when a uniform civilization of ANY KIND prevailed over both continents. . . . We are to learn now—

1st. That a Christian has never existed in Central America, not even for a day.

2d. The people of Central America, as far back as their record has been traced (and that is centuries earlier than the alleged beginning of Nephite history), have always been an *idolatrous people*, as thoroughly *heathen* as any which the history of the world has described, worshipping idols the most hideous in form and feature that have ever been found upon earth, and accompanying that worship by *human sacrifices* as barbarous as the annals of history have recorded. . . . A sad fatality, is it not, dear reader, that in the very region of country where the Book of Mormon fixes magnificent temples and sanctuaries erected by a Christian people for the worship of true God, there should be dug up out of the ruins of old temples and palaces such relics of the real religion of these ancient peoples? All the records that have come down to us make it certain that these horrid *idols* instead of the Lord Jesus were worshipped throughout Central America 2000 years ago. It would indeed be a bright page in Central American history if the assertions of the Book of Mormon were true. But no such bright spot can be discovered either in the Nahuatl or the Mayan records. For more than three thousand years it was one unbroken record of superstition and human slaughter. . . . But why longer delay the reader before making the sweeping charge that he has already anticipated? The entire civilization of the Book of Mormon, its whole record from beginning to end is flatly contradicted by the civilization and the history of Central America. (*The Golden Bible*, pages 284-285, 287, 289)

Increasing Far Too Fast?

The reader will remember that it was Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became president of the church, who called the restricted view of Book of Mormon geography a “theory of necessity.” Mormon scholars have, in fact, been forced to the limited view for at least two reasons.

One, the people who were found in the New World do not appear to be descendants of the ancient Israelites. This is made clear in a paper prepared by the Smithsonian Institution:

The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia. (“Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon,” prepared by the Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, 1986)

Mormon anthropologist Dr. John Sorenson frankly admits that Mongoloid characteristics are found among all Indian groups studied:

What about the “Mongoloid” racial characteristics that physical anthropologists see in the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the western hemisphere? Some facts are clear enough. Such Asiatic features as the characteristic eye-fold, the pigmented spot at the base of the spine of infants, and a special shape of incisor are found in varying proportions among every Amerindian group studied. On the basis of these traits some biological linkage to Asia is safely assumed by every researcher who knows the materials. . . . Significant variation is found in the distribution of various bodily traits; that is, some groups are much less Mongoloid than others. That raises the question whether at some time in the past, certain peoples in America might have been totally non-Mongoloid. Some art representations clearly show persons of several non-Indian racial groups—“Semitic,” Chinese, black—although certain Mesoamerican people anciently indeed looked like recent natives inhabiting the same areas. . . .

So could the Nephites have fitted biologically into the picture we now have of Mesoamerican populations? The answer is yes, when we understand the physical makeup that characterized them and when we see them as a relatively small group living among surrounding peoples who ultimately mixed with and absorbed their descendants. . . . But Latter-day Saints who insist that millions of Nephites looked like Northern Europeans cannot justify that position. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 87, 89)

Two, there are far too many people in the New World to have come from the small group of Israelites mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The Mormon writer John C. Kunich has addressed this serious issue in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*. In his article he made these observations:

Arriving at a reasonable estimate of Nephite-Lamanite numbers is more than science. The Book of Mormon favors hyperbolic generalities in this

area. Terms such as “multitude,” “numerous,” “exceedingly great,” “innumerable,” and “as the sands of the sea” impress more than inform . . .

Lehi’s group apparently consisted of at least seventeen and as many as nineteen adults. . . . Lehi, Sariah, and Ishmael’s wife were elderly or spouseless or both and therefore probably not capable of reproduction. Thus we are told of only fourteen emigrants capable of reproduction when they arrived in the New World: Laman, Lemuel, Sam, Nephi, Zoram, the two sons of Ishmael, and the wives of each. . . .

We have little information on Mulek’s colonists. They left Jerusalem a few years after Lehi’s group, when Zedekiah was taken captive, and eventually became “very numerous” before joining the Nephites . . . If we assume a roughly equal reproductive rate for the Mulek and Lehi populations, the size of Mulek’s original reproductive capable group must have been less than half that of Lehi’s emigrants given the information about the comparative size of the two populations in 120 B.C.E. . . .

Nowhere in the Book of Mormon is a complete census reported. . . . In order to approximate such data, we need to use a conversion factor to relate known but partial numbers to the population of the entire group. John L. Sorenson, professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University, performed such analysis and concluded: “Our first data come at about 90 B.C. from the battle in which Amlicite dissenters suffered 12,532 slain and the loyal Nephites 6,562 . . . All these people were ‘Nephites’ politically speaking; the account does not talk about Lamanites at all. It is reasonable that not over half the combatants were slain, which means that at least 40,000 warriors were involved, and perhaps somewhat more. Various studies of ancient warfare suggest how to translate that figure to total population. The ratio usually believed to apply is one soldier to about five total inhabitants. Using that figure, we may conclude that the total population of those ‘who were called Nephites’ was 20[0],000 or more” . . .

Coupling this information with the contemporary report that the total number of Nephites was less than half the size of the Lamanite population, Sorenson estimated the Lamanite population at over 40[0],000 as of 90 B.C.E. . . .

LDS church president Spencer W. Kimball seemed to recognize the principle that noncombatants outnumber warriors when he wrote, “The Lamanite population of the Americas, at the greatest number, must have run into many millions, for in certain periods of Book of Mormon history, wars continued almost unabated and the soil was covered with the bodies of the slain” . . .

Sorenson’s formula may actually underestimate the number of civilians necessary to support an ancient army. Even in modern times the ratio of noncombatants has usually been much higher than four or five to one. . . .

The results contained in Table 3 call for a reevaluation of our approach to the Book of Mormon. When these data are compared with the population information from Table 1 and our knowledge of historical demography, it is apparent that large numbers of Book of Mormon peoples could not have been produced from the tiny Lehi-Mulek colonizing groups. No growth rate even close to the rate of increase prevalent from 590 B.C.E. to C.E. 390 would have produced the population sizes described in the scriptures, even if there had been no wars, famine, earthquakes, or disease.

Consider the battle in 187 B.C.E. in which 3,043 Lamanites and 279 of Zeniff’s people were slain in a single day and night (Mosiah 9:18-19). Obviously the total Book of Mormon population at that time was much larger . . . numerous warriors were left alive after the battle as were women and male noncombatants. But even to produce a total population as large as the fatality figures for this one day would have required an average annual growth rate of 1.2 percent during the preceding four centuries. To put this in perspective, a growth rate of 1.2 percent was never achieved on a global basis or in the industrialized regions of the world as a whole until C.E. 1950-60 and was not reached in the developing regions as a whole until the 1930s (Bogue 1969, 48-49). The Nephite-Lehite rate is thirty times the rate that existed in the world as a whole during the same era. Moreover if, as is far more likely, the total population in 187 B.C.E. was in excess of 35,000, it would have taken an average annual growth rate of 1.8 percent to multiply the original thirty pioneers to that level at that time. This is a rate that has never been reached in the industrialized world and has only been achieved in the world overall since 1950 (see Table 2).

A second example only confirms the problems associated with Book of Mormon population figures. For the Amlicite-Nephite war of 87 B.E.C., Alma 2:17-19 reports a total of 19,094 fatalities. On the basis of these figures John Sorenson estimated the total Nephite-Lamanite population to be over 600,000 at that time (about 200,000 Nephites-Amlicites and over 400,000 Lamanites). For an original band of thirty reproductive individuals in 590 B.E.C. to proliferate even to 19,094 by 87 B.E.C. would require an average annual growth rate of 1.3 percent sustained over the span of five centuries. To reach the 600,000 level Sorenson determined to have existed at that point, the growth rate would have had to be 2 percent, again maintained for five centuries.

This is a level never reached on a global scale until C.E. 1960 and fifty times the world rate of the pre-industrial epoch. It is a rate that, even when attained, can only persist briefly (Hauser 1979, 5; Smith 1972, 68; Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1970, 18-21). . . .

Another way of viewing the same principle is to note what would have happened had the thirty people of Lehi-Mulek multiplied at 2 percent annually. Those thirty individuals would have exploded into 9,756,500,000 people by the time of the Nephites' destruction in C.E. 390—double the total population of the planet earth today. Such a rate of growth has only existed very recently and only for very short spans of time. It cannot continue for long. . . .

Given the evidence presented in this essay, it is reasonable to conclude that *some of the details of events in the Book of Mormon are not literally historical*. Whether this is due to modern scribal errors, misinterpretation, the nature of revelation, the mode of transmission of the Book of Mormon text, or the nature of the text itself is left to individual interpretation. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, pages 231-233, 237-238, 247, 250-251, 265)

While we do not have room to present John Kunich's arguments in any detail in this book, he has set forth a very thought-provoking argument which raises serious questions about the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

James E. Smith, who has been involved in demographic research, responded to Kunich in an article published by FARMS. Dr. Smith wrote:

In the next section I suggest that Kunich's study fails to accomplish its purpose both as an exercise in critical scriptural interpretation and as an exercise in historical demography. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, no. 1, page 1994)

In his article James Smith criticizes John Kunich for clinging to the "traditional interpretation" of the Book of Mormon—i.e., that only the Nephites, Lamanites and Mulekites were in the New World when the Book of Mormon was written:

Kunich's essay begins by citing the popular idea that "the multitudes of Nephites and Lamanites reported in Mormon scripture sprang from two small bands of Palestinian emigrants" led by Lehi and Mulek . . . Kunich identifies this as a "traditional interpretation," a "current LDS" interpretation, and an "LDS tradition," indicating that it is a view popularly held by Latter-day Saints. . . .

Clearly, according to Kunich's analysis, there is a major discrepancy between Lamanite-Nephite population sizes predicted by the traditional

interpretation and what the text of the Book of Mormon actually says.

What conclusion is to be drawn from these findings? The most obvious conclusion is to reject the traditional interpretation as a hypothesis that is not sustained by the text of the Book of Mormon. Or we might question the way in which the hypothesis has been operationalized. . . . Kunich does not reject the traditional interpretation. Instead, he assumes that the traditional interpretation of the Book of Mormon must be a representation of what the Book of Mormon says. Therefore, by discrediting this interpretation he believes that his findings "argue against the population sizes reported in the Book of Mormon" (p. 259).

Should we accept Kunich's position that the traditional interpretation of the Book of Mormon accurately represents what the book says? . . . Kunich himself holds this popular and traditional interpretation to be a correct view of what the Book of Mormon says. Under this assumption, to disprove the traditional interpretation is to call into question the Book of Mormon as a reliable historical record. But Kunich's argument with the Book of Mormon is not really with the book itself, or a critical interpretation of the book, but rather with his own uncritical adherence to the traditional interpretation. (*Ibid.*, pages 259-261)

On page 284 of his article, Dr. Smith seems to be hinting at the possibility of other people besides the Nephites, Lamanites and Mulekites being present in the New World:

. . . Nephi's followers began to prosper . . . and to prepare to defend themselves against "the people who were now called Lamanites" (2 Nephi 5:14). One reading of the latter phrase is that 'Lamanites' is a new name for the family and followers of Laman, the brother-enemy from whom Nephi fled. Another possible reading is that some people not previously called Lamanites were now so called, presumably because of Laman's affiliation with them.

James Smith noted that Hugh Nibley "allowed for other populations in the ancient Americas that were not known" to the writers of the Book of Mormon. He then went on to state:

. . . John Sorenson has opened the gates even wider. He asks, "when Lehi's party arrived in the land, did they find others there?" and answers "yes," arguing that it is "inescapable that there were substantial [non-Book of Mormon] populations in the 'promised land' throughout the period of the Nephite record, and probably in the Jaredite era also."

Furthermore, Sorenson finds nothing in the Book of Mormon precluding Nephites and Lamanites from interacting with and assimilating other populations, perhaps from among surviving Jaredites or perhaps from indigenous people. He suggests that the term *Nephite* was a sociopolitical one not restricted to literal descendants of Lehi, that there could have been ‘lingering’ Jaredite populations after the great Jaredite destruction, and that “the early Lamanites had to have included, or to have dominated, other people.”

Sorenson’s work gets to the crux of the topic of population definitions in the Book of Mormon. Proper pursuit of this subject requires a comprehensive textual analysis of the references to various peoples in the book and their possible meanings. (*Ibid.*, pages 267-268)

Notwithstanding the fact that the Book of Mormon is absolutely silent regarding other people being present in the New World, John L. Sorenson frankly proclaimed his belief that the Nephites, Lamanites and Mulekites were not alone:

Within the very territory first occupied by Nephites and Lamanites, other people may have been living when Lehi’s party arrived. . . . But wouldn’t the Nephite historians have said so explicitly? Consider for a moment those historians’ position as they tell us about the early Lamanites. They wrote from the narrow perspective of their besieged little colony. . . . Their understandable frame of mind would have seen all people with whom they came in contact “out there” as “Lamanites,” for in the Nephite scheme of thought at that time, who else could those dark-skinned lurkers in the forest have been? We can be assured that they did not chat with them about their ancestry. Whoever they saw were in any case enemies, no doubt soon to be dominated by aggressive descendants of Nephi’s elder brothers. . . . Whatever peoples, if any, were occupying the region where Lehi’s party landed, they seem not to have amounted to much in population or power at that precise time. It is reasonable that immigrants could find a niche among them and even dominate them. . . .

Strong evidence in our text for the presence of indigenous peoples is the constant reference by the early Nephite historians to the large numbers of Lamanites they faced. People living under the conditions the Nephites attribute to the early Lamanites—nomadic, hunting, savage—do not develop populations to compare with people such as the ambitious Nephite cultivators portrayed in Enos 1:21. Then how did “the Lamanites” become

so overwhelmingly numerous? About the only believable answer is that the immigrant Lamanites incorporated under their rule native peoples already living in the region.

The picture is further complicated by the “people of Zarahemla.” Mosiah quickly found out when he located them [i.e., the Mulekites] that their chief claimed to be descended from the Jews . . . They could well have been a mixed bunch, including many descendants of Jaredite-period ancestors. . . . Yet “Mulekites” and “Jaredites” as we Latter-day Saints usually think of them cannot account for all who were present. It is impossible to explain the presence of 200 Mesoamerican languages on the basis of Book of Mormon groups alone. . . .

The findings of science provide evidence that pre-Nephite peoples were culturally, linguistically and biologically continuous with those found in Mesoamerica after the date for the Nephite arrival. . . . In south-central Mexico and isthmus area, localized cultures are shown by archaeology to have persisted across the Jaredite-Nephite time boundary despite the spectacular collapse of the main “Olmec” civilization. The people of Zarahemla must have been involved in one of those bridging groups . . . They would have combined genetic and cultural elements of the earlier civilization with whatever the Mulek group of voyagers from the Mediterranean had introduced. The scientific information is unmistakable; there was definite continuity of population from earlier times into the days of the Nephites. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 84-87)

The Nephites picture themselves as thoroughly civilized (Jarom 1:8) and so would logically outnumber the Lamanites. Almost invariably, settled cultivators—the Nephites—would reach a far higher population level than a people characterized as hunters. Then where did all those Lamanites come from?

The answer may be that the Lamanites in the original immigrant group became dominant over a native population of folk already scattered on the land when Lehi arrived. . . .

Latter-day Saints are not used to the idea that other people than Lehi’s immediate descendants were on the Book of Mormon scene. Abundant evidence from archaeological and linguistic studies assures us that such people were indeed present, so we need to understand how the Book of Mormon account accommodates that fact. . . .

Laman’s and Lemuel’s ambition (we might compare them to Cortez) could well have thrust the immigrants into dominance and led the locals to

recast their views to agree with the story told by the immigrant rulers, effectively making the newcomers into a replacement for the former Olmec chiefs they had been serving. The rapid expansion in numbers of Lamanites, suggested in the Nephite record, had to owe more to a scenario like this than to an unlikely dramatic biological expansion and ecological florescence by Laman, Lemuel and company. (*Ibid.*, pages 146, 148)

As Dr. James Smith indicated, John L. Sorenson estimated that “about 90 B.C.” the total population “of those ‘who were called Nephites’ was 200,000 or more.” Dr. Sorenson also referred to Mosiah 25:3, which reveals that “there were not so many of the people of Nephi and of the people of Zarahemla as there were of the Lamanites; yea, they were not half so numerous.” Sorenson went on to state: “If the estimate arrived at above for the Nephites is sound, that would put Lamanite population over 400,000.”

The reader will remember that we quoted Sorenson above as saying: “Then how did ‘the Lamanites’ become so overwhelmingly numerous? About the only believable answer is that the immigrant Lamanites incorporated under their rule native peoples already living in the region.”

While Sorenson would like his readers to believe that “native peoples” joined with the Lamanites (an idea which is not supported by the Book of Mormon), there seems to be every reason to believe that Joseph Smith made a very serious mistake when he wrote this portion of the Book of Mormon. Smith was apparently completely oblivious to the fact that the Lamanites could not possibly multiply fast enough to have “over 400,000” people in the time frame given in the Book of Mormon. When one considers the fact that the Lamanites were constantly fighting with the Nephites, this number of Lamanites seems even more incredible. We feel that the true answer to this problem lies in Joseph Smith’s active imagination. As we noted earlier, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts addressed this question many years ago when he closely examined the text of the Book of Mormon:

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

John Kunich noticed that M. T. Lamb had written concerning the mysterious increase in Lamanite population many years ago. Lamb made these interesting observations:

One of the clearest illustrations of our author’s vivid imagination, as well as his great anxiety to make his pet Nephites remarkable people, wonderful warriors, and receiving innumerable answers to prayer—is the way he multiplies the Lamanites. When his Nephites become very wicked and he wants to punish them they are as numerous as the Lamanites, and have as large an army, which is, of course, ignominiously defeated in battle. But usually the Nephites are the little army, who, strong in the faith, meet and gloriously conquer an innumerable host of the Lamanites.

The history of all civilizations clearly shows that a savage or barbarous state is least of all adapted to a rapid increase of population. The Indian races of our country have been gradually dim[in]ishing ever since they were first discovered. There is nothing in the habits and surroundings of untutored wild races to encourage development [*sic*] and growth. Civilized and Christian nations only have shown a rapid increase of population. But the Book of Mormon directly reverses this lesson of the ages. The statement . . . that the Lamanites had become wild and ferocious and filthy, wandering about in the wilderness, naked, and feeding upon uncooked beasts of prey, is immediately followed . . . by the statement that they had “become exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites.”—and on page 194 [195 of the current edition] they are more than double the combined population of the Nephites and the people of Zarahemla! . . .

And such like exaggerated accounts frequently occur. It matters not how many times they are defeated in battle, with the loss of tens of thousands in each engagement . . . they suddenly reappear with increasing numbers. At one time a large portion of them are converted . . . and join the Nephites. Yet those who are left exhibit the same “*enormity*” of numbers. (*The Golden Bible*, pages 130-131)

It is significant to note that Dr. James Smith seems to feel that there were too many Nephites when the last great battle was fought at Cumorah:

From a demographic perspective it is not hard to imagine a significant population of Nephites in Mormon’s day even under the narrow assumptions that all of Mormon’s Nephites were literal descendants of the population of Zarahemla. With a moderately positive population growth rate of .1 percent per year, a population of 300,000 in

Zarahemla in 87 B. C. would produce 450,000 in Mormon's day. This is a highly schematic estimate. But proceeding forward with this line of reasoning, the stable population model reveals that about 28 percent of this population would be 15 to 30 years old. This, in turn, implies about 63,000 males of these ages . . . presumably being the male population from which the armies were drawn. Mormon reports armies of 40,000 (Mormon 2:9) and 30,000 (Mormon 2:25) troops in the years A. D. 331 and 364, numbers easily attainable according to our demographic speculations.

It may be, as Hugh Nibley has suggested, that Mormon's armies represented only a part of the Nephite population for which Mormon was the military commander. This may account for the fact that a much larger army of 230,000 is reported at the final battle of Cumorah in the later fourth century. If this large army included all of the 15-to-30-year-old males in the Nephite population, the total population size would have been about 1.6 million people. Since we have favored the 300,000 number for Zarahemla in 87 B. C., and these 300,000 could not realistically have grown to 1.6 million by Mormon's day, where could all the additional people come from? Again, there is a lot of Nephite history involving changing population definitions and possible population assimilation and mixture during three centuries before Mormon. One view would be that these processes resulted in large numbers of people besides literal descendants of the Zarahemla population being incorporated under the political, social, or geographical rubric *Nephite*. . . .

The account of the gathering of all the Nephite people in the lands around Cumorah, and the way Mormon refers to his women and children, men, and people, somewhat interchangeably, introduces some ambiguity into his account. Could it have been that in their last-ditch effort at survival, preparing as they were for a prearranged great battle, Mormon and the 22 other leaders divided the whole Nephite people, rather than just the armies, into contingents of ten thousand each? If so, the victims of the slaughter at Cumorah were 230,000 men, women, and children, all of the Nephites who had gathered around Cumorah. If 230,000 were the size of the total Nephite population at this time, what would have been the army size at the battle of Cumorah? Our stable population model, which places 28 percent of the population in the ages 15 to 30, shows 32,200 men in these age groups from a total population of 230,000 . . . Perhaps, then, a total Nephite population of 230,000 with an available army of 32,000, is a consistent estimate of the Nephite demographic

situation at the last great battle, with perhaps higher numbers in the decades of wars preceding Cumorah during which the Nephites may have begun slipping into demographic decline. This interpretation does not sit entirely well with the report of warfare at Cumorah: cohorts of ten thousand certainly sound like army cohorts. But a total Nephite populations of about a quarter million people, with armies in the tens of thousands, also sounds reasonable in light of our growing realization that demographic analysis seems often to suggest that descendants of Nephi's founding group may have been a relatively small population in a sea of other peoples. (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 292-294)

The attempt to shrink the number of Nephite warriors at Cumorah from 230,000 to only 32,000 men by claiming that all the women, children, and men who could not fight became part of the "cohorts of ten thousand" does not find support in the Book of Mormon. In fact, the Book of Mormon clearly states that the members of Mormon's ten thousand were "men": "And it came to pass that my men were hewn down, even my ten thousand who were with me . . ." (Mormon 6:10).

As we have shown above, James Smith acknowledges that there is a problem with the theory he has set forth: "This interpretation does not sit entirely well with the report of warfare at Cumorah: cohorts of ten thousand certainly sound like army cohorts."

It is also interesting to note that John L. Sorenson felt that the cohorts of ten thousand were made up of men: "Twenty-three 10,000-man armies made up the Nephite force. All were wiped out on that one grim day. . . . Upwards of 600,000 must have lain dead there (counting the women and children of the Nephites, plus Lamanite casualties)" (*An Ancient American Setting*, page 350).

The noted Mormon scholar Dr. Sidney B. Sperry felt that the carnage at Cumorah was even greater than either James Smith or John L. Sorenson supposed:

The ten thousand men led by Mormon and the ten thousand led by Moroni had all been cut down in addition to like numbers led by twenty-one other commanders. If each of these army units were composed exclusively of men—and this seems likely in view of [Mormon] 6:10—at least two hundred and thirty thousand fighting men lost their lives. If we estimate that each man had a wife and two children who were also slain, then a total of about nine hundred and twenty thousand Nephites were slain in the last battle. To these totals should be added, at a conservative estimate, about four hundred thousand

Lamanite dead. The grand total would be roughly one million three hundred and twenty thousand slain! (*The Book of Mormon Testifies*, 1952, pages 336-337)

Although scholars may differ on just how many Nephites, Lamanites, and Mulekites there were, it certainly appears that there were far too many for the amount of time they were supposed to be in the New World.

As we have shown, John L. Sorenson and other Mormon scholars have suggested that the Nephites and Lamanites intermarried with people who were already in the New World. Unfortunately for this apologetic position, except for one sole survivor of the war that destroyed the Jaredite civilization—Coriantumr (see *Omni 1:21*)—there is absolutely no evidence in the Book of Mormon that the people who came over from Jerusalem encountered any other people.

Mormon historian B. H. Roberts wrestled with the possibility that the Nephites or Lamanites could have come into contact with other people in the New World, but he had to acknowledge that from the standpoint of the Book of Mormon itself this position was very difficult to maintain:

The facts, then, developed up to this point seem to be—

1. That there are a large number of separate language stocks in America that show very little relationship to each other—not more than that between English and German.

2. That it would take a long time—much longer than that recognized as “historic times”—to develop these dialects and stocks where the development is conceived of as arising from a common source of origin—some primitive language.

3. That there is no connection between the American languages and the language of any people of the Old World. New World languages appear to be indigenous to the New World.

4. That the time limits named in the Book of Mormon—which represents the people of America as speaking and writing one language down to as late a period as 400 A.D.—is not sufficient to allow of these divergencies into the American language stocks and their dialects.

5. That if there have been migrations from Asiatic, African, or European countries in the period from the destruction of the Nephites—400 A.D.—to the discovery of America by Columbus—a period of a thousand years—then such immigrations were sufficient in volume or frequency, as to affect the language or culture of American peoples.

And now the question: What is the answer to be to all this?

Can we in the face of the authorities here presented say that the independent language stocks and their inclusive dialects do not exist?

Can we say that it does not require long periods of time—much longer than that which may be derived from the Book of Mormon Nephite period of occupation of the New World—the only period that can be considered in connection with this subject—to develop the dialects and the language stocks of the American race?

Can we successfully affirm that the time limits represented in the Book of Mormon—a thousand years from the close of the Nephite period to the discovery of America and the advent of the Europeans—are sufficient in which to produce from one common source, viz., the Hebrew, the noted development of stocks and dialects?

Can we assert from any well grounded facts known to us or established by any authority that there is a connection between the American and some of the Old World languages, and especially with the Hebrew, as would seem to be required by the Book of Mormon facts?

In the present status of the case it seems to me that only one of four possible courses are open to us to follow; and each of them has its special and formidable difficulties, and for that reason I present them in the form of questions.

1. Can we answer that the Nephites and the people of Mulek—really constituting one people—occupied a very much more restricted area of the American continents than has hereto been supposed, and that this fact (assumed here for argument) would leave the rest of the continents—by far the greater part of them say—to be inhabited by other races, speaking other tongues, developing other cultures, and making, though absolutely unknown to Book of Mormon people, other histories? This might account for the diversity of tongues found in the New World, and give a reason for the lack of linguistic unity among them.

To this answer there would be the objection that if such other races or tribes existed then the Book of Mormon is silent about them. Neither the people of Mulek nor the people of Lehi or after they were combined, nor any of their descendants ever came in contact with any such people, so far as any Book of Mormon account of it is concerned. As for the Jaredites they are out of the reckoning in this matter . . . since their language and their culture, as active factors, perished with their extinction. Any beyond them, so far as a more ancient possession of

the American continents is concerned, by previous inhabitants, we are barred probably by the Book of Ether statement that the people of Jared were to go ‘into that quarter where there had never man been,’ and nowhere is there any statement or intimation in the Book of Mormon that the people of Jared ever came in contact with any other people upon the land of America, save for the contact of the last survivor of the race with the people of Mulek, which does not affect at all the matters here under discussion.

Then could the people of Mulek and of Lehi, being such a people as they are represented to be in the Book of Mormon—part of the time numbering millions and occupying the land at least from Yucatan to Cumorah, and this during a period of at least a thousand years—could such a people, I repeat, live and move and have their being in the land of America and not come in contact with other races and tribes of men, if such existed in the New World within Book of Mormon times? To make this seem possible the area occupied by the Nephites and Lamanites would have to be extremely limited, much more limited, I fear, than the Book of Mormon would admit of our assuming.

2. Can we answer that the period of a thousand years . . . is a sufficient length of time to allow of many—say enough—infusions of immigrants from other lands, from Europe, Asia, Africa, or Polynesia, to account for the diversity of language stocks and dialects in all the New World? If this is the answer where is the clear-cut, indubitable evidence of such infusion of other races with their languages and their culture within such time limits? All authorities could be quoted against such an assumption. For while nearly all authorities upon American Archaeology concede the possibility of such immigrations . . . they all insist that such infusions must have been so few in number, and so slight in their influence as to leave no trace of their presence upon American languages or culture.

3. Can we answer our questioner, Mr. Couch, and all others who question us upon the same lines—can we say to them, despite the seeming facts as set forth by those who are accepted as authorities upon American Antiquities, Ethnology, and philology—notwithstanding their testimony and their conclusions that there are many distinct language stocks among the American Indians to produce which, together with the many dialects in each would require thousands of years—more time than is allowed for such development in the Book of Mormon—since the time when all the people spoke one tongue, and that the highly developed Hebrew language—despite all this, we say that the

time limits of the Book of Mormon are sufficient to produce all these results as to American language stocks and their dialects. And further we say, despite what these same authorities record with reference to the absence of all trace of Old World tongues in American languages—nevertheless all the American stocks of language and their numerous dialects, had their origin in one common source and that the Hebrew language, the use of which prevailed up to 400 A.D., whether traces of it can be found or not in the present American languages. And we place our revealed truths in the Book of Mormon against the alleged facts resulting from the investigations of Ethnologists and Philologists and the deductions of their science, and calmly await the vindication we feel sure that time will bring to the Book of Mormon.

Much could be said for the boldness and perhaps for the honesty of such an answer, but is the reasonableness or wisdom of such an answer equally apparent? It certainly would have no effect upon the educated class throughout the world. It would only excite ridicule and contempt in them. It would be the answer of fanatics prompted by, and only possible because of ignorance, they would say.

What would be the effect of such an answer upon the minds of our youth? Our youth, already so willing to follow in so many other branches of learning the deductions of the sciences in their high school and college courses.

4. Is silence the best answer? Is silence possible in such a questioning age as ours—such an age of free inquiry? May the questions propounded to us be ignored? Would not silence be looked upon as a confession of inability to make an effective answer? Would not silence be a confession of defeat?

Is there any other answer to the questions propounded to us than some one of the four here proposed and briefly discussed? If so I shall hail it with very great satisfaction, especially if it is free from the serious difficulties that seem to attach to each of the answers above presented. (*Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 1985, pages 91-94)

The reader can see from the comments above that B. H. Roberts toyed with the thought of “a very much more restricted area of the American continents” to solve some of the problems but rejected that idea because it could not be squared with the text of the Book of Mormon.

John W. Welch would like to believe that B. H. Roberts would have accepted the limited view if he had the evidence available today. (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts’ Questions and An Unparallel*, 1985, page 5) John L. Sorenson, however, acknowledges that Roberts was around when that idea was set forth but

could not accept it: “In fact, there is no reason to believe that Roberts ever adopted a limited geography model, something others were putting forward vigorously in his lifetime. (As of 1922 he still wrote as though Latter-day Saints must deal with an [sic] entire-hemisphere map.)” (*The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, page 25)

On pages 116-117 of *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, Roberts mentioned again that when the Jaredites arrived in the New World, they were all alone:

Previous to the departure of Jared’s colony . . . to a promised land—“a land choice above all other lands”—*the Book of Mormon postulates those lands as uninhabited*. It may be questioned if the command of the Lord to Jared’s colony to go into an uninhabited land—“yea, into that quarter where there never had man been”—had reference to their ultimate destination in the land of promise, the American continents, or to some land en route, into which they immediately passed. But let that be as it may, when the Jaredites came to America the Book of Mormon account of them assumes throughout that there *were no other inhabitants in all that land*. Throughout their long occupancy of the land . . . *there is no mention or assumption of their coming in contact with any other people, or of their being any other people in all the land*. They are sole possessors of it. Here they lived and developed their peculiar culture uninfluenced by contact with other people, either by reason of finding primitive inhabitants in the land, or by reason of infusion of other people among them. . . . That they became very numerous may be assumed from the record of Ether, since in their last great battles, which exterminated the race, “two millions of mighty men” were slain, “and also their wives and children.” If even a conservative estimate of the population be made from this basis, it would bring their numbers to from ten to fifteen millions.

The statement which B. H. Roberts cites regarding two million men being slain is found in Ether 15:2: “. . . there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children.” Mormon scholar John W. Welch, who is on the Board of Directors of FARMS, realizes that this puts a serious dent in his theory of a small population in the lands in which Book of Mormon people lived. Consequently, Welch feels that the statement in the Book of Mormon is exaggerated:

It is quite apparent from the texts of the Book of Mormon itself that the Nephites occupied a very small corner of some part of the Western Hemisphere . . . Except for the possibly hyperbolic battle statistics in

the Book of Ether (Eth. 15:2), the Book of Mormon always talks in terms of quite small populations. . . . Roberts wonders how millions of people could have lived and wandered from Yucatan to Cumorah [New York] and not have encountered other people. . . . As mentioned above, the Jaredite “millions” is not necessarily an absolutely reliable statistic. (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts’ Questions*, pages 3, 5)

On page 119 of *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, B. H. Roberts again stressed that the Book of Mormon does not allow for other people in the New World:

The Nephite occupancy of the continents in succession to the Jaredites also assumes the presence of no other people upon the land except the Jaredites, and the second colony—Mulek’s—which left Jerusalem shortly after Lehi’s departure. It was Mulek’s colony which met the last and the only survivor of the Jaredites.

These are the only peoples that occupied the American continents, up to 420 A. D., according to the Book of Mormon; they speak of no other with whom they came in contact, or who immigrated into the land during their occupancy of it.

John Kunich pointed out that the Book of Mormon even declares that God was keeping the knowledge of this land from other nations. Lehi prophesied the following:

And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance.

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land for themselves. . . . (2 Nephi 8-9)

Kunich also demonstrated that the Book of Mormon makes it absolutely clear that the Jaredites could not have joined with the Jewish people who came to the New World. Ether 11:12 states that unless the Jaredites repented they would be completely destroyed:

And it came to pass that in the days of Ethem there came many prophets, and prophesied again unto the people; yea, they did prophesy that the Lord would utterly destroy them from off the face of the land except they repented of their iniquities.

In Ether 13:20-21 we find that every soul would be destroyed except Coriantumr:

And in the second year the word of the Lord came to Ether that he should go and prophesy unto Coriantumr that if he would repent . . . the Lord would give unto him his kingdom and spare the people—

Otherwise they should be destroyed, and all his household save it were himself. And he should only live to see the fulfilling of the prophecies which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance; and Coriantumr should receive a burial by them; and every soul should be destroyed save it were Coriantumr.

It should be noted, however, that the Book of Mormon says that one man, the prophet Ether, witnessed the final annihilation of the Jaredites and recorded the matter on plates. An abridged version of this record is found in the book of Ether, near the end of the Book of Mormon. After the conflict ended Ether was left alone. His last statement was: “Whether the Lord will that I be translated, or that I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God. Amen.”

Dr. Sidney B. Sperry commented:

We know that Coriantumr survived as had been predicted, and if Ether’s prophecy was completely fulfilled, he was the only survivor (Ether excepted) of the Jaredite nation. . . . How long he [Coriantumr] wandered upon the face of the land before meeting and living with the Mulekites . . . and finally being buried by them, we know not. Neither do we know how many Jaredites were slain in that last, great eight-day battle. The number must have been in the millions. (*The Book of Mormon Testifies*, page 370)

It is apparent, then, that defenders of the Book of Mormon cannot maintain that any Jaredites were left to increase the populations of either the Lamanites, Nephites or Mulekites.

In spite of the statements found in the Book of Mormon, John Welch tried to counter the argument that the Book of Mormon people were the only ones in the New World:

First, the argument from *silence*: If there were other peoples on the Western Hemisphere known to the Nephites, why then does the Book of Mormon not mention them? As Sorenson argues, mentioning outsiders may simply have been irrelevant to this particular record, which is an internal history of the lineage of Nephi. The histories of other groups . . .

are relatively unimportant to this record, except to the extent they impinge directly on internal Nephite affairs. As for the Jaredites, Ether’s condensed account provides too little information about Jaredite history to tell us with whom they may or may not have had contact. (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts’ Questions*, page 4)

This seems like a very poor explanation. According to the theory held by Sorenson and his colleagues, the Jaredites, Nephites, Lamanites, and Mulekites were in the very area which was occupied by the ancient Olmecs and Mayans. Are we to believe that the Lord’s chosen people would never have any wars or dealings with these people which were worthy of recording?

In *The Mysterious Maya*, page 25, we find this information:

“One of the many Olmec-Maya links,” Mike Coe explains, “is their mutual emphasis on the personality and power of political leaders. They both practiced a kind of warfare in which the humbling of captives counted a great deal.”

It seems incredible that the Book of Mormon people could live among such an idolatrous people and never have any wars or problems with them.

The Bible, on the other hand, contains a wealth of information regarding those who were not Israelites. While we do not have the space to mention all of the people the Israelites referred to or had contact with, the following are some examples: Amalekites, Ammonites, Amorites, Assyrians, Canaanites, Edomites, Egyptians, Greeks, Gergashites, Hittites, Hivites, Horites, Jebusites, Kadomites, Kenites, Kenizzites, Ninevites, Persians, Perizzites, Philistines, Phoenicians, Syrians and Zidonians.

While the Bible talks of wars, trading and other contacts with many groups of people, the Book of Mormon is completely silent about outsiders. If Sorenson and Welch were correct in stating that there were other people in the New World, one would think that the Book of Mormon would be filled with stories concerning how the Nephites either fought with the Olmecs and Mayas or tried to convert them from their idolatrous practices.

Instead, however, absolutely nothing is said about any other inhabitants of the New World. It is obvious, then, that the author of the Book of Mormon wanted to give the impression that no one else was present. The writer apparently wanted his readers to believe that the Mayan people and other Indians were the very Jewish people mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

In the Mormon publication, *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1842, there appeared an extract from

Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, which mentioned the ancient ruins in that area. Following the description of these remarkable ruins, the Mormon editor added:

Let us turn our subject, however, to the Book of Mormon, where these wonderful ruins of *Palenque* are among the mighty works of the Nephites:—and the mystery is solved. . . . Who could have dreamed that twelve years would have developed such incontrovertible testimony to the Book of Mormon? surely the Lord worketh and none hinder. (*Times and Seasons*, pages 914-915)

Now, the truth of the matter is that Palenque was a Mayan center. Just a cursory investigation of the matter reveals that the ancient Mayas were pagans who knew absolutely nothing about either Christianity or the Jewish religion. Joseph Smith got things completely backwards in the Book of Mormon. In that book we find Jewish people occupying the New World after the Jaredites were destroyed and no other people are mentioned. Archeology, however, has revealed that during that period the land was filled with people who were totally unaware of the religion Lehi supposedly brought to the Americas.

In his review of our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Matthew Roper tries to make it appear that there is really no problem with regard to other people in the Americas:

The Book of Mormon is a lineage history of a particular group, not a chronicle of the entire New World. It does not claim that all American Indians are descended from Book of Mormon peoples. The Book of Mormon allows for numerous other races and other cultures in the New World, among which Book of Mormon peoples were clearly a minority. Critics need to address what the Book of Mormon claims for itself and not what other individuals claim for it. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, page 204)

Actually, the Book of Mormon does not give the slightest hint that there were other people here. It, in fact, plainly affirms that it was God's will that "this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations . . ." (2 Nephi 1:8) It is nothing but wishful thinking on Mr. Roper's part to assume otherwise. Deanne G. Matheny made these comments regarding the Book of Mormon's failure to mention any other people:

It is clear from the archaeological record that trade and other forms of contact between various parts of the Maya area began early and continued throughout the Book of Mormon period. It is

difficult to explain why this large and important area containing some of the largest cities ever built in Mesoamerica would escape even the barest mention in the Book of Mormon. This is a significant weakness in both the Hauck and Sorenson models. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 280)

John W. Welch made these astonishing comments in an attempt to prove the Book of Mormon people were not alone:

Furthermore, there may be greater evidence in the Book of Mormon of contacts with other peoples than has been previously noticed. For example, the rapid acquisition by the Lamanites of native traits and ways of life (Jarom 1:20) as well as their increase in numbers is circumstantial evidence of their intermarriage with and possible dominance over indigenous peoples. Perhaps this is where darker skin came from and why skin color was important to the Nephites who, like their Israelite ancestors, preferred to keep tribal purity by avoiding marriage outside the nation. (*Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts' Questions*, page 4)

The reader will notice that at the first of this quotation John Welch says, "there may be greater evidence in the Book of Mormon of contacts with other peoples than has been previously noticed." This is certainly a strange statement. So far Mormon scholars have not produced any evidence of contacts with other people from the Book of Mormon itself. How, then, can Welch speak of finding "greater evidence" in that book? All that we have so far is just a matter of speculation on the part of some Mormon scholars.

Welch speaks of "the rapid acquisition by the Lamanites of native traits and ways of life (Jarom 1:20) . . ." as providing some evidence. Since the Book of Jarom actually has only 15 verses, we presume that Welch must have been referring to the Book of Enos, verse 20, which says that the "Lamanites" were "led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us."

As far as we can tell, there is nothing in the Book of Enos that indicates the Lamanites intermarried with an evil people. It simply says they "were led by their own evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious . . ." One would certainly think that if some other group of

people had influenced their behavior, this would have been recorded in the Book of Mormon.

Welch speaks of “circumstantial evidence of their intermarriage with and possible dominance over indigenous peoples. Perhaps this is where darker skin came from and why skin color was important to the Nephites . . .” This certainly does not fit the teachings of the Book of Mormon. It claims that God himself made the Lamanites dark:

And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. . . . wherefore, as they were white and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people [the Nephites] the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. And thus saith the Lord God: I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities. (2 Nephi 5:21-22)

It is interesting to note that Dr. John Sorenson feels that the Book of Mormon exaggerates how dark the Lamanites became:

The skin shades of surviving peoples in Book of Mormon lands include a substantial range, from dark brown to virtual white. . . . The scripture is clear that the Nephites were prejudiced against the Lamanites . . . That must have influenced how they perceived their enemies. . . . The question is how great the difference was; we may doubt that it was as dramatic as the Nephite recordkeepers made out. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 90-91)

Interestingly, the man who supposedly recorded the information which Sorenson feels was exaggerated was the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi.

Those who do not believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, of course, would see the statement regarding the Lamanites being cursed with “a skin of blackness” as just another example of how Joseph Smith added his own biased views into the scriptures he created. In his Book of Moses, we find this:

For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat . . . and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people. . . .

And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people . . . and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it were the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Moses, 7:8, 22)

John Kunich makes a very good observation concerning the question of whether the Book of Mormon allows for other people in the New World:

As we have seen, the population figures in the Book of Mormon require that many thousands of natives were incorporated into the original, tiny Nephite and Lamanite groups. Winning total domination over a host of people far superior in both numerical strength and familiarity with the land would have been an extraordinary accomplishment. Surely a triumph of this magnitude would deserve at least a passing reference in the records of Nephi or Jacob.

It is difficult to imagine a people so ethnocentric that their historians would miss mentioning the large indigenous population found and assimilated upon arrival in a new land. Old Testament people were certainly ethnocentric to an extreme degree, and yet their scriptural writings are replete with references to their dealings with Egyptians, Babylonians, and other “non-chosen” people. There is no reason to believe that the Lehi-Mulek groups who emigrated from ancient Israel were more ethnocentric than the people from whom they escaped. . . . an abridged, largely religious history would presumably address the Nephites’ dealings with native masses. The “religious” abridgment contains secular details about wars and politics. The discovery and absorption of the natives—solving such problems as language differences—would surely have dwarfed other secular events included in the Nephite history. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 262)

Smithsonian’s Statement

Some overzealous members of the Mormon Church have made fantastic claims about archeologists using the Book of Mormon in their work. For instance, a letter written to Ernest L. English in 1936 was duplicated and “distributed to LDS church members by leaders (local) in Cleveland, Ohio in 1959.” We quote the following from that letter:

The inquiry you made regarding the Book of Mormon is a commendable one and I will be pleased to mention the part which it has played in helping the government to unravel the problem of the aborigines.

The Book of Mormon was first brought to the attention of the Smithsonian Institute by James H. Fairchilds . . . but apparently was not regarded as

having any historical value until about 1884. . . . it was 1920 before the Smithsonian Institute officially recognized the Book of Mormon as a record of any value. All discoveries up to this time were found to fit the Book of Mormon accounts and so the heads of the Archaeological Department decided to make an effort to discover some of the larger cities described in the Book of Mormon records.

All members of the department were required to study the account and make rough-maps of the various population centers. . . . During the past fifteen years the Institute has made [a] remarkable study of its investigations of the Mexican Indians and it is true that the Book of Mormon has been the guide to almost all of the major discoveries.

When Col. Lindberg flew to South America five years ago, he was able to sight heretofore undisclosed cities which the archaeologists at the Institute had mapped out according to the locations described in the Book of Mormon. This record is now quoted by the members of the Institute as an authority and is recognized by all advanced students in the field.

In a letter dated, February 16, 1951, Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., of the Smithsonian Institution responded:

In reply to your letter . . . permit me to say that the mistaken idea that the Book of Mormon has been used by scientific organizations in conducting archeological explorations has become quite current in recent years. *It can be stated definitely that there is no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book of Mormon.*

There is no correspondence whatever between archeological sites and cultures as revealed by scientific investigations and as recorded in the Book of Mormon, hence *the book cannot be regarded as having any historical value* from the standpoint of the aboriginal peoples of the New World.

The Smithsonian Institution has *never officially recognized the Book of Mormon as a record of value on scientific matters, and the Book has never been used as a guide or source of information for discovering ruined cities.* (Letter dated February 16, 1951, photographically reproduced in *The Book of Mormon Examined*, by Arthur Budvarson, 1959, page 37)

Because of many exaggerated statements made by sincere defenders of the Book of Mormon, the Smithsonian Institution was finally forced to publish a form letter concerning the Book of Mormon. It is entitled, "STATEMENT REGARDING THE BOOK

OF MORMON." The Spring 1986 printing of this letter contains nine paragraphs that make it very clear that the Smithsonian Institution does not accept the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The first paragraph reads:

1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no direct connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book.

We will not take the time to present the entire statement, but the reader can obtain a copy by writing to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, or by contacting Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

In his attack on our work William J. Hamblin wrote:

The Tanners seem to enjoy pointing out the falsity of the Latter-day Saint urban legend that the Smithsonian has used the Book of Mormon as a guide to archaeological study . . . Informed Latter-day Saints have always known this. It is unfortunate, but somehow inevitable, that such rumors exist. The existence of false rumors, however, does not disprove the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, as John Sorenson has explained, the Smithsonian statement does not ultimately undermine the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It tells us that at least some of the people in the Smithsonian Institution do not accept the Book of Mormon as authentic history, but it does not provide significant evidence or analysis on the issue, nor does it engage informed Latter-day Saint thought on the matter. (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, pages 257-258)

Professor Hamblin's comment that "the Smithsonian statement . . . tells us that at least some of the people in the Smithsonian Institution do not accept the Book of Mormon as authentic history" is indeed an unusual statement. While it is certainly possible that there are Mormons who work at the Institution who believe in the Book of Mormon, it seems evident that the vast majority of those who deal with archeology reject that book.

The reader will notice that Hamblin also stated: "The Tanners seem to enjoy pointing out the falsity of the Latter-day Saint urban legend that the Smithsonian has used the Book of Mormon as a guide to archaeological study . . ." Actually, it is very important that this "urban legend" be exposed for what it is. While a number of Mormon scholars have tried to suppress the perpetuation of this rumor, it continues to spread throughout the LDS community. John L. Sorenson commented as follows regarding this matter in a statement published by FARMS in 1982:

For many years the Smithsonian Institution in Washington has received inquiries concerning the Book of Mormon . . . At least twenty years ago the Institution began responding to such inquiries with a form letter . . . Statements in this letter . . . are used by some opponents of the Mormon Church to support the idea that the Book of Mormon account is contradicted by scientific findings; some Latter-day Saints have been daunted in their faith in the book by these statements. . . .

A fascinating study in folklore could and should be done tracing how the Smithsonian has been put in the middle of this Book of Mormon matter. It is clear that for decades at least LDS missionaries and other proselyters for the church have represented the Institution as having used the Book of Mormon to guide archaeological research it has conducted. I remember being told some version of this story as I was growing up many years ago. The tale is passed from missionary to missionary and Sunday School teacher to student in the classic process of all folklore. A new crop of discoverers of this “hidden truth” comes up every year, and no known means can staunch the process.

The frustration and irritation of Smithsonian officials is understandable as they had to deal with such naive inquiries year after year. . . . These remarks are with reference to the Summer 1979 version of the “Statement.” . . .

I suggest first that Mormons and non-Mormons alike leave the Smithsonian folks alone. The myth should be smothered that they are closet Mormons, on the one hand, or highly-informed specialists on archaeology relevant to the Book of Mormon issue, on the other. But inquiries are likely to continue, therefore I suggest that a new handout be prepared which is more carefully phrased. It ought to take account of the fact that the Book of Mormon claims only to report events in a restricted area of the western hemisphere. (*An Evaluation of the Smithsonian Institution “Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon,”* pages 1, 3, 7)

The National Geographic Society’s position on the Book of Mormon was affirmed in a letter dated May 29, 1978:

With regard to the cities mentioned in the Book of Mormon, neither representatives of the National Geographic Society nor archeologists connected with any other institution of equal prestige have ever used the Book of Mormon in locating historic ruins in middle America or elsewhere.

Christianity was not practiced on this continent prior to the Spanish conquest. The major civilizations of North and South America were practicing their own forms of religion.

Dr. Michael Coe, who is one of the most well-known authorities on Mesoamerica, admonished Mormons to give up their fantastic claims about the Book of Mormon being supported by archaeology:

Mormon archaeologists over the years have almost unanimously accepted the Book of Mormon as an accurate, historical account of the New World peoples between about 2,000 B. C. and A. D. 421. They believe that Smith could translate hieroglyphs, whether “Reformed Egyptian” or ancient American, and that his translation of the Book of Abraham is authentic. . . . Let me now state unconditionally that as far as I know there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing the foregoing to be true, and I would like to state that there are quite a few Mormon archaeologists who join this group. . . . The picture of this hemisphere between 2,000 B. C. and A. D. 421 presented in the book has little to do with the early Indian cultures as we know them, in spite of much wishful thinking . . .

The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, absolutely nothing, has ever shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1973, pages 41-42, 46)

Bill McKeever’s newsletter, *Mormonism Researched*, Winter 1993, page 6, revealed that twenty years after making his comments regarding the Book of Mormon, Michael Coe had not changed his opinion about the matter:

Despite the fact that many experts in the field of anthropology concur with Dr. Coe’s 1973 opinion, some Mormons have tried to set it aside by claiming his comments are outdated. The question is, has new evidence caused Dr. Coe to change his position since 1973? To find out, I wrote to Dr. Coe and asked if he still stood by his 1973 statement. On August 20, 1993, I received the following reply:

Dear Mr. McKeever,

I haven't changed my views about the Book of Mormon since my 1973 article. I have seen no archaeological evidence before or since that date which would convince me that it is anything but a fanciful creation by an unusually gifted individual living in upstate New York in the early 19th century.

Sincerely yours,
Michael Coe

Mr. McKeever has included a photographic reproduction of Michael Coe's letter in his newsletter.

Luke P. Wilson wrote an article regarding Book of Mormon archeology in the publication *Heart and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries*, Fall 1992. Professor William Hamblin took issue with Wilson's comments:

Finally, Wilson raises the argument from authority. He claims that since eminent Mesoamerican archaeologists such as Michael Coe . . . and important institutions such as the Smithsonian . . . do not accept the historicity of the Book of Mormon, Latter-day Saints must bow to the authority of outsiders and abandon their own beliefs. This argument leaves much to be desired.

In fact, both Coe's statement and the Smithsonian statement represent mere brief summaries of scholarly consensus, which are obvious to anyone familiar with the field. . . . When Michael Coe states, "there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing [in the historicity of the Book of Mormon]," he is belaboring the obvious, not stating an important truth. . . .

When Coe says that there is "absolutely nothing" in the archaeological record which supports the historicity of the Book of Mormon, what he is more accurately saying is that all of the archaeological evidence known to him can be adequately interpreted and accounted for based on the assumption that there were no Nephites. (*Journal of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1993, pages 195-196)

Eliminating the Myth

As noted above, Dr. Deanne Matheny has expressed some serious reservations about Book of Mormon archeology. Many other scholars have become disappointed because of the lack of convincing evidence. Professor Dee F. Green was one of the first to openly criticize "Book of Mormon archaeology." His criticism was very significant because he was deeply involved in

archeological work at the Mormon Church's Brigham Young University. In 1958-61 he served as editor of the *University Archaeological Society Newsletter*. In an article published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Green made it clear that archeological evidence did not prove the Book of Mormon:

Having spent a considerable portion of the past ten years functioning as a scientist dealing with New World archaeology, I find that nothing in so-called Book of Mormon archaeology materially affects my religious commitment one way or the other, and I do not see that the archaeological myths so common in our proselytizing program enhance the process of true conversion. . . .

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. Titles on books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettante on the peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists.

If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one can have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for that matter) were or are. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has left us empty-handed. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, pages 76-78)

As noted earlier, Professor William Hamblin said that our discussion of "Book of Mormon geography and the location of the Hill Cumorah" is "so outdated as to be fundamentally worthless." A reexamination of the geography problem as well as the archeological evidence, however, reveals that our research was basically sound and that little has changed since we did our original work on the subject.

While rumors persist that Mormon scholars have found the location of important sites, John L. Sorenson threw some cold water on the subject by stating:

It is premature to assert precise identification of all the Book of Mormon lands and cities. . . . the closer we get to exact spots, the more numerous the questions. . . . Evidence against placing the Book of Mormon events at the locations shown on our maps is not persuasive. Some specific identifications even seem highly probable. Still, we are not absolutely certain about any of them.

One point needs to be emphasized: the Book of Mormon account actually did take place somewhere. We who believe the book is authentically ancient are confident that there were indeed real places where real Nephis and Almas did the things the volume says they did. Someday we expect to identify those locations, to make the Book of Mormon setting concrete. (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, pages 31-32)

In the book FARMS published for Dr. Sorenson in 1990, he included drawings of many maps made by scholars who felt they had found answers to the geographical problems of the Book of Mormon. Sorenson acknowledged that the divergent views were discouraging to him:

Parts 1 and 2 have shown that 160 years of ad hoc modeling or interpretation of the geography of Book of Mormon events have failed to settle much about the question, where were the lands in which Book of Mormon events took place? My reading of the models leaves me discouraged in detail even while granting that some things of enduring value have been distilled through this haphazard process.

Everything done so far in studying the geography of Book of Mormon events has been inadequate by reason of incompleteness, if not of real errors. All of the models reviewed in Part 2 have been naive, some obviously more so than others. On the textual side, examination will reveal to us that every single model has failed to deal successfully with certain geographical data in the scripture. . . . We have all simply not been careful enough, by far. So at this time there is no way convincingly to argue where the equal sign in the equation should be placed. . . . I admit that my own (1955) model was tainted by preconceptions. So has everybody else's been. . . .

6. So far as a single model emerges from this effort, then one-half—the prerequisite half—of the equation has been prepared. Only after this has happened can a definitive search for external correlations be carried out. Until then anything said about the external geography, archaeology, linguistics or the like for any location in America can only be suggestive. . . . We first have to get straight about the textual geography. That is my entire

concern here. Someday, those who live long enough may engage in the test of external correlations, but now that is premature. (*The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, pages 224-228)

In 1988, three years after John L. Sorenson's book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, was published, F. Richard Hauck's work, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, was printed by Deseret Book. Deanne Matheny says:

Both Sorenson and Hauck are anthropologists with experience in Mesoamerican Archaeology. They propose limited geographical settings for the Book of Mormon in slightly different but overlapping areas of Mexico and Central America. (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 269)

In a review of Hauck's book, John Clark points out that there are important differences with Sorenson's work:

The Sorenson geography is based upon a narrow neck = Tehuantepec Isthmus and river Sidon = Grijalva River correlation. In counterpoint to Sorenson's geography, Hauck rejects any narrow neck = isthmus theory and also advocates a river Sidon = Usamacinta River correlation. In further contrast to Sorenson, Hauck rejects the idea that the directions given in the Book of Mormon could be anything other than the cardinal points of our own modern compass. . . . The net result of these varying assumptions is a geography which differs significantly from that proposed by Sorenson, or from previous Usamacinta geographies proposed by others . . . two of which are slated for future publication. In several years we may well have four or more geographies to pick from, leaving us to choose among a cacophony of plausible alternatives. . . . The major consequence of Hauck's critical reading of the narrow neck passages is that he must have two lands of Bountiful, rather than one, to reconcile the Bountiful passages in the absence of an isthmus; he also ends up with two lands of desolation. This is too much. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, 1989, pages 20, 22)

Professor Hamblin did not like Hauck's book on Book of Mormon geography: "In summary, the most generous review I can give is that Hauck has shown that much of the geographical material contained in the Book of Mormon is somewhat ambiguous. This, however, should be obvious to anyone who has seriously studied the text" (*Ibid.*, pages 76-77). In his review Mark V. Withers commented: "Another premise that he

established besides the two already mentioned is that the geographic information in the Book of Mormon is far from all inclusive and that the results are based on likelihoods and probabilities rather than concrete facts” (*Ibid.*, page 78).

It would appear that there are still serious disagreements between Mormon scholars and that no Book of Mormon site has been located through the study of Book of Mormon geography. Interestingly, one of the latest theories is that the Book of Mormon story took place in Delaware. The following appeared in the Brigham Young University student newspaper, *The Daily Universe*, in March 1993:

The location of events described in The Book of Mormon . . . have popularly been placed in Central America, but a BYU nursing student says Delaware and the area around the state of New York better fit the descriptions in the book.

After reading The Book of Mormon and studying it several times, Luiz H. Meneguim . . . wondered where it was all taking place. . . .

Meneguim said he believed the popular idea that The Book of Mormon took place in South and Central America and started to look there, but when descriptions in The Book of Mormon didn't match up, he started to look elsewhere and found Delaware fit the geographic description. . . .

Meneguim said the basis of his research is found in the description of “the land southward” found in Alma 22:27-32, especially verse 32 which says the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla “were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.”

“The difference in my discovery is the land southward is nearly surrounded by water except the narrow neck of land,” Meneguim said.

This isn't so in South America, he said. Delaware has the narrow neck of land and the land southward which is surrounded by water. Also, the narrow neck of land in Delaware is the correct size, about 20 miles across, Meneguim said. . . .

Meneguim said he measured the dimensions of the land by examining the journeys of the people of Alma. . . . Meneguim was able to estimate in miles the dimensions of the land and compare them with Delaware.

Based on this, Meneguim said he found the dimensions of Delaware being 190 miles north-south and 75 miles east-west to fit with the studied references [Meneguim is apparently speaking of the land on the east side of Chesapeake Bay, including part of Maryland].

Meneguim said the land of many waters described in The Book of Mormon is found in the many lakes that are found in New York, the great body of water “Ripliancum” to the North of Hill Cumorah described in Ether 15:8-11 is Lake Ontario.

... In addition to the geographical dimensions of the land, Meneguim said The Book of Mormon doesn't talk about making anything in stone. He said there is only one reference about building with stone, and that is a wall which couldn't have been very big because they built it during a time of war. He said this is why there are no Nephite and Lamanite ruins in the New York and Delaware areas.

Mr. Meneguim's model has some definite advantages over Sorenson's theory. It places the Book of Mormon story fairly close to (not thousands of miles away from) the traditional site of the Hill Cumorah, and the land southward would be “nearly surrounded by water” as the text of the Book of Mormon suggests. Moreover, Sorenson admits that in his model, “Mesoamerica seems skewed from those standard compass directions,” whereas in Meneguim's model north would really be north and south would be south.

While we doubt that many Mormon scholars will accept Mr. Meneguim's ideas, if one is looking for a limited view of Book of Mormon geography, it seems about as plausible as any previously set forth.

Ferguson Gives Up

The reader will remember that in the archeological material presented above we mentioned Thomas Stuart Ferguson a number of times. Mr. Ferguson played a very important role in getting Mormons interested in proving the truth of the Book of Mormon through archeological research. As noted above, in 1958, Ferguson founded the New World Archaeological Foundation. He was absolutely convinced that evidence would be found which would vindicate the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Michael Coe, who criticized the Book of Mormon, seemed to be impressed with the archeological work that Ferguson set up through the New World Archaeological Foundation:

Field excavations by Mormon archaeologists, sponsored in one way or another by the Church or Brigham Young University, got under way in the 1940s and 1950s . . .

Of far greater import were the events that culminated in the program of the New World Archaeological Foundation. While the guiding

light of this endeavor, Ferguson, was also an Iron Rod [i.e., a very dedicated believer in the authenticity of Mormonism], from the beginning everything was put on what non-Mormons would consider a scholarly underpinning. . . . Unlike Jakeman, however, with his rival Zarahemla on the Usumacinta, Ferguson set up his program as an undertaking in modern anthropological archaeology, and created a committee that included not only Mormons like Milton Hunter and himself, but also non-Mormon experts in New World archaeology, such as A. V. Kidder, Gordon R. Willey, and Gordon F. Ekholm. The first field directors of the New World Archaeological Foundation were non-Mormons. By 1952, funds were made available by the Church, and the largest and most ambitious archaeological project ever funded by a religious institution (including the Vatican) got under way. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1973, page 45)

Thomas Stuart Ferguson devoted a great deal of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon through archeological research and was considered by the Mormon people as a great defender of the faith. He wrote at least three books on the subject. His book, *One Fold and One Shepherd*, was recommended to one of the authors (Jerald) as containing the ultimate case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. At one time the Mormon Church itself granted \$250,000 to help Thomas Stuart Ferguson with his plan to prove the Book of Mormon.

After many years of research, Ferguson finally became disillusioned with the work he had begun. The first indication we had that he was losing his faith in Mormonism was just after Joseph Smith's Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered. In 1968, he wrote us a letter saying that we were "doing a great thing—getting out some truth on the Book of Abraham." Since we were presenting evidence that the Book of Abraham, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church, was not a correct translation of the papyri, this was a very significant statement.

Later we heard a rumor that he had given up Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham, but this hardly prepared us for what eventually occurred. On December 2, 1970, Thomas Stuart Ferguson came to our house and made some startling disclosures to us. At that time, Ferguson told us frankly that he had not only given up belief in the Book of Abraham, but that he had also come to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that Mormonism was not true. He told us that he had spent twenty-five years trying to prove Mormonism, but had finally come to the conclusion that all his work in this

regard had been in vain. He said that his training in law (he had been an F.B.I. agent and was an attorney) had taught him how to weigh evidence and that the case against Joseph Smith was absolutely devastating and could not be explained away.

Mr. Ferguson found himself faced with a real dilemma, for the Mormon Church had just given him another large grant (\$100,000 or more) to carry on the archeological research of the New World Archaeological Foundation. He felt, however, that this foundation was doing legitimate archeological work, and therefore he intended to continue the work.

A few months after Thomas Stuart Ferguson revealed to us that he had come to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon was a spurious production, he wrote us a letter in which he said: "I think I will be in SLC in June—and if so, I'll call on you again. I enjoyed my visit with you. . . . I certainly admire you for the battle you are waging—virtually single handed.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ferguson had a very difficult time communicating his loss of faith to those he was close to. He told us that he did not dare tell one of his sons the truth about the Book of Mormon because the shock would cause him too much trauma. While Ferguson no longer believed in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he still attended the Mormon Church. In a letter to James Still, dated December 3, 1979, Ferguson frankly stated:

I lost faith in Joseph Smith as one having a pipeline to deity . . . I attend, sing in the choir and enjoy my friendships in the Church. In my opinion it is the best fraternity that has come to my attention . . .

Nevertheless, in 1975 Thomas Stuart Ferguson prepared a 29-page paper in response to papers written by Mormon scholars John Sorenson and Garth Norman. It was entitled, *Written Symposium on Book-of-Mormon Geography: Response of Thomas S. Ferguson to the Norman & Sorenson Papers*. In this response, page 4, Mr. Ferguson wrote: "With all of these great efforts, it cannot be established factually that anyone, from Joseph Smith to the present day, has put his finger on a single point of terrain that was a Book-of-Mormon geographic place. And the hemisphere has been pretty well checked out by competent people. Thousands of sites have been excavated."

Ferguson pointed out in his paper that the text of the Book of Mormon makes it very clear that certain items should be found in archaeological excavations and that these items are not present in the sites proposed. He noted, for instance, that "Thousands of archeological holes in the area proposed have given us not a fragment

THOMAS STUART FERGUSON
ROBERT T. BAER
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
23 ORINDA WAY
ORINDA, CALIFORNIA 94563
254-3930

11-12-68

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Salt Lake City, Utah ~~84108~~ 84110

Gentlemen:

Kindly send me a copy of THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI -- thank you.

You are doing a great thing--getting out some truth on the Book of Abraham.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Thomas Stuart Ferguson

THOMAS STUART FERGUSON
ROBERT R. HALL
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
23 ORINDA WAY
ORINDA, CALIFORNIA 94563
254-3930

3-13-71

Dear Jerald and Sandra:

I think I will be in SLC in June -- and if so, I'll call on you again. I enjoyed my visit with you. Send your list of publications and prices to :

JAMES BOYACK
77 Follen Road
Lexington, Mass. 02173

I have just written and recommended to him that he purchase some of your pubs. I certainly admire you for the battle you are waging -- virtually single handed.

In writing to Boyack, I want to send him a photo copy of the newspaper article (1830 -- I think) which was published in the Palmyra area, giving a detailed report on the Josiah Stool charges and trial of JS in connection with those charges. You provided me with a copy of that news article -- which is one of the most damning things turned up yet. I can't find it -- someone probably ran off with it. Please send me another. Thank you greatly.

Sincerely,


Tom Ferguson

Two letters written by Thomas Stuart Ferguson to Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Notice that Mr. Ferguson encourages the Tanners in "the battle you are waging—virtually single handed."

of evidence of the presence of the plants mentioned in the Book of Mormon . . .” (page 7). On page 29, he concluded by saying:

I'm afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is no Book-of-Mormon geography. I, for one, would be happy if Dee were wrong.

In a letter to Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Lawrence, dated February 20, 1976, Thomas Stuart Ferguson plainly stated that the Book of Mormon “is fictional” and this is the reason there is “no Book-of-Mormon geography”:

Herewith is a copy of my recent (1975) paper on Book of Mormon matters. . . . It was one of several presented in a written symposium . . . (My thesis is that Book of Mormon geography involves a lot more than playing with topography and terrain.) The real implication of the paper is that you can't set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere—because it is fictional and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology. I should say—what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book.

In our book, *Ferguson's Manuscript Unveiled*, we not only reproduced his “response to the Norman & Sorenson Papers,” but we also included photographs from Ferguson's own letters to us and to other people showing that he had lost faith in Joseph Smith's work.

In 1990, the Mormon scholar Stan Larson published an article entitled, “The Odyssey of Thomas Stuart Ferguson.” Dr. Larson gave a very interesting account of Ferguson's attempt to prove the Book of Mormon and how he eventually came to reject Joseph Smith's work. Larson's information confirms many of the things we have written about Ferguson. In addition, Larson found a great deal of important information that we were not aware of at the time we published *Ferguson's Manuscript Unveiled*.

Dr. Larson wrote the following about Ferguson's loss of faith:

In the middle years of his career, he organized archaeological reconnaissance and fieldwork in the area of Mesoamerica. But in the last years of his career, he concluded that the archaeological evidence did not substantiate the Book of Mormon . . . In the end, he was theologically shipwrecked less by his failure to find persuasive archaeological support for the Book of Mormon than by his encounter with the translations of the newly discovered Joseph Smith Egyptian papyri. . . .

Ferguson's excitement about authenticating the Book of Abraham turned into a nightmare. His

former belief system could not withstand the shock of this disillusionment. Not only did Ferguson's views of the Book of Abraham radically change, but also, domino-like, his belief in the prophetic status of Joseph Smith and the historicity of the Book of Mormon. . . .

Early in December 1970 . . . Ferguson bared his soul to people at the opposing ends of the theological spectrum—on the one hand, the liberal apostle, Hugh B. Brown, and on the other hand, the anti-Mormons, Jerald and Sandra Tanner. . . .

Ferguson's skepticism became public a year and eight months later when the Tanners published an account of his visit with them in the revised edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*. . . .

Ferguson never issued any kind of retraction or revision to this account. He frankly discussed his new views in answer both to letters sent to him and to direct questions. . . . Tom Ferguson, in a sense, identified himself as a closet doubter—though one who was willing to write letters from his closet. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1990, pages 57, 71-73)

Thomas Stuart Ferguson's son, Larry S. Ferguson, was apparently unable to accept the fact that his father repudiated the Book of Mormon. After his father's death, Larry Ferguson talked Dr. Bruce W. Warren, of Brigham Young University, into making a revision of *One Fold and One Shepherd*. The finished product is entitled, *The Messiah in Ancient America*. In a letter published in *Dialogue*, Fall, 1990, page 9, Larry Ferguson made this claim: “A few years before my father passed away, he, my mother, and I met with a publisher about revising, updating, and publishing *One Fold and One Shepherd*. The year or so before his death, my father cut back on his law practice and began that revision.”

One would think that in a “year or so” of working on the project, Thomas Stuart Ferguson would have completed a fairly good sized manuscript. When Larson asked Larry Ferguson for permission to examine the manuscript, he was surprised to learn that there was no such manuscript. Larson revealed:

At the time of his death Ferguson had not written a single word in a manuscript of revision. His only work on the contemplated revision was about twenty ideas for updating, jotted on small 3M “Post-it” notes. One of these notes suggested including the influence of Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* on the text of the Book of Mormon, but this controversial subject is never mentioned in Warren's revision, *The Messiah in Ancient America*,

even though Ferguson's radical view on this point was independently supported by Ron Barney. So while the new book contains thousands of Thomas Stuart Ferguson's words, they represent his position when *One Fold and One Shepherd* was published in 1958 or 1962, not his ideas in 1983. (*Dialogue*, Spring 1990, page 85, footnote 6)

In the same footnote, pages 84-85, Stan Larson makes it clear that *The Messiah in Ancient America* is a "gross misrepresentation" of Ferguson's true feelings:

This is not the place to review *The Messiah in Ancient America*, but since the title page presents Thomas Stuart Ferguson as a coauthor with Bruce W. Warren one must examine this posthumous attribution of authorship . . . Since the clear evidence in his letters indicates that Ferguson denied the historicity of the Book of Mormon and the divinity of Jesus, it is deceptive for Warren to speak of his "abiding" testimony. . . . Warren's total association with Ferguson during the last fifteen years of his life consisted of a five-minute conversation in 1979. . . .

If the book were intended to be a tribute to Ferguson, it should have been dedicated to his memory, rather than have his name printed on the title page as a coauthor. Wishful thinking and fond memories do not change the way things had changed in Ferguson's thinking. *The Messiah in Ancient America* attributes fresh authorship to Ferguson, and this kind of an attempted reinstatement of the pre-Book-of-Abraham-papyri Ferguson is a gross misrepresentation of his real views.

Stan Larson brought to light some extremely important material from the journal of Ronald O. Barney, Senior Archivist at the Mormon Church Historical Department. While Thomas Stuart Ferguson's son would have us believe that his father was gathering evidence to prove the Book of Mormon toward the end of his life, Barney's journal clearly shows that his father was actually trying to disprove the Book of Mormon just before his death. Barney, in fact, had a very revealing interview with Thomas Stuart Ferguson about two and a half months before his death. The interview with Ferguson took place on January 4, 1983, and Barney recorded the matter in his journal on February 15, 1983. Ferguson died the following month (March 16, 1983). On April 19, 1984, Ronald Barney made a typed copy of the information he had recorded in his journal and added some additional recollections regarding the visit he had with Mr. Ferguson on January 4. According to Barney, Thomas Stuart Ferguson confided in him that

he was working on a project which he felt would show that the Book of Mormon was in reality a 19th century production.

Stan Larson gives this information concerning the interview:

On 4 January 1983, a little more than two months before his death, Ferguson met Ronald Barney at the LDS Historical Department. Barney told Ferguson he knew of his various publications and asked if he knew how Jerald and Sandra [Tanner] were using his 13 March 1971 letter to James Boyack. This letter contains Ferguson's earliest known denial of the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Barney recorded in his journal that Ferguson "began to shift in his chair, got pale and acted as if I was a General Authority that had caught him committing adultery. He apologized all over the place, said the Tanners were creeps, etc." After Barney expressed his concern for open discussion, Ferguson disclosed his current beliefs: "After having once been once [sic] a defender of the faith he now totally rejects the divine intervention of God in the workings of the affairs of men" (Barney 1983).

A few days later on 10 January 1983, Ferguson wrote to Barney, providing the details of his historical investigations into possible connections between Oliver Cowdery and Ethan Smith, author of *View of the Hebrews*, a suggested possible source of influence on Joseph Smith . . . (*Ibid.*, page 83)

On pages 79-80 of the same article, Stan Larson noted that Ronald Barney said that Ferguson confronted those involved in the New World Archaeological Foundation after he lost faith in the Book of Mormon:

Ferguson felt that he really made a point in telling me about his experience with the New World Archaeological Foundation after rejecting the Book of Mormon. He said that at one of their professional meetings he presented a list of some claims that the Book of Mormon made concerning the material culture that ought to have remained if there really was a Book of Mormon people in Central or South America. . . . He said that the leading men there could offer no explanation as to why these things did not exist in archaeological digs. The lack of these artifacts was a very important evidence to him that the Book of Mormon was a fanciful attempt at creating the divine here on the earth. (Barney 1984)

Ronald Barney also claimed that Ferguson was trying to link Joseph Smith with Sidney Rigdon prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon.

It is clear, then that as Mr. Ferguson entered the last months of his life he was still engaged in a project which he felt would prove that the Book of Mormon was not an ancient document. Stan Larson revealed that as late as February 1, 1983, about six weeks before his death, Ferguson wrote Barney a letter in which he indicated that he was still pursuing his critical research into the true origin of the Mormon Church:

“I am continuing my research. It is fun and stimulating. I will look forward to meeting with you on my next trip to Salt Lake City (Ferguson 1983b).” (*Ibid.*, page 84)

Writing concerning the material Ronald Barney brought to light, Stan Larson made this observation:

These final two letters, together with Barney’s journal and reminiscence, confirm Ferguson’s critical views just two months before his death. This crucial testimony functions like a kingpin to tie the last fifteen years together and is comparable to the Wesley P. Lloyd diary, which reports the non-historical view of the Book of Mormon held by B. H. Roberts just two months before he died (Roberts 1985, 22-24). (*Ibid.*, page 84)

It is interesting to note that at one time Mr. Ferguson told us that he was thinking of writing a book about Mormonism and that he believed it would be a “bombshell.” Unfortunately, if Ferguson was working on such a book at the time of his death, it seems unlikely that it will ever see the light of day.

It is sad to note that some of those who were once considered important scholars are now ridiculed by writers from FARMS because they lost faith in Mormonism. For example, Daniel C. Peterson, editor of the FARMS publication, *Review of Books*, said that “Thomas Stuart Ferguson was neither an archaeologist nor a scholar” (*Review of Books*, vol. 5, page 56).

Back in 1966, when Ferguson still believed in the Book of Mormon, John L. Sorenson wrote an article in which he criticized the work of a number of Mormon scholars. When Dr. Sorenson spoke of Thomas Stuart Ferguson, however, he seemed to be positive in his comments:

While the UAS [University Archaeological Society] was aborning at the Y [Brigham Young University], Ferguson produced a sort of landmark book, with Hunter’s collaboration, and then went on to organize the New World Archaeological Foundation. His rationale, unlike that of Jakeman, was that work in archaeology necessary to clarify the place of the Book of Mormon account would

have to be done in collaboration with non-Mormon experts, not in isolation from them. Thirteen years of changes in the NWAFA have seen it become converted into an element in the BYU structure and gain a respected position as a research agency in Mesoamerican archaeology, but in concept and operation the Foundation and the Department remain far apart. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, page 145)

In his book, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*, Charles M. Larson called attention to the fact that Thomas Stuart Ferguson had lost faith in the divine authenticity of Mormonism. John L. Sorenson prepared a short response to Larson’s comments. Significantly, Sorenson did not try to fight off the statement that Ferguson rejected “Joseph Smith’s claim to divine revelation,” but he did try to down play the importance of Ferguson’s work:

Larson implies that Ferguson was one of the “scholars and intellectuals in the Church” and that “his study” was conducted along the lines of reliable scholarship in the “field of archaeology.” Those of us with personal experience with Ferguson and his thinking knew differently. He held an undergraduate law degree but never studied archaeology or related disciplines at a professional level, although he was self-educated in some of the literature of American archaeology. He held a naive view of “proof”. . . His role in “Mormon scholarship” was largely that of enthusiast and publicist, for which we can be grateful, but he was neither scholar nor analyst.

Ferguson was never an expert on archaeology and the Book of Mormon (let alone on the book of Abraham, about which his knowledge was superficial). . . he was just a layman, initially enthusiastic and hopeful but eventually trapped by his unjustified expectations, flawed logic, limited information, perhaps offended pride, and lack of faith in the tedious research that real scholarship requires. The negative arguments he used against the Latter-day Saint scriptures in his last years display all these weaknesses.

Larson, like others who now wave Ferguson’s example before us as a case of emancipation from benighted Mormon thinking, never faces the question of which Tom Ferguson was the real one. Ought we to respect the hard-driving younger man whose faith-filled efforts led to a valuable major research program, or should we admire the double-acting cynic of later years, embittered because he never hit the jackpot on, as he seems to have considered it, the slot-machine of archaeological research? I personally prefer to recall my bright-eyed, believing

friend, not the aging figure Larson recommends as somehow wiser. (*Review of Books*, vol. 4, pages 118-119)

It is surprising that John L. Sorenson would make this attack on Thomas Stuart Ferguson after his death. The reader will remember, however, that Ferguson had criticized a paper prepared by Sorenson. In addition, Sorenson was undoubtedly deeply disturbed by Ferguson's loss of faith.

While Sorenson seems to want to belittle Ferguson, it is interesting to note that the book, *The Messiah in Ancient America*, page 282, maintained that Ferguson was influential in directing Dr. Sorenson in his early path:

When John Sorenson was a student at Brigham Young University, Ferguson had a great influence in directing him to pursue the study of archaeology and the Book of Mormon. While Sorenson was a graduate student at BYU, Tom Ferguson took him on his first archaeology trip to Mexico in 1953. This was a very successful trip and increased Sorenson's interests in further study of the Book of Mormon. Sorenson went on to become a great scholar of Mesoamerican archaeology and the Book of Mormon.

While John L. Sorenson asserted that Thomas Stuart Ferguson "was neither scholar nor analyst," The Society For Early Historic Archaeology at Brigham Young University did not hesitate to call him a scholar. In the *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, March, 1983, the following appeared in bold type: "**BOOK OF MORMON SCHOLAR DIES.**" Although the article did not mention Ferguson's rejection of the Book of Mormon, it went on to state:

Word has just been received of the death of a pioneer in Book of Mormon archaeology. Thomas Stuart Ferguson . . . passed away on March 16 at the age of 67.

Mr. Ferguson became keenly interested in the archaeology of the Book of Mormon at the age of 20, an interest which he shared as a student at the University of California, Berkeley, with a fellow student M. Wells Jakeman (who later became the principle figure in setting up the archaeology program at Brigham Young University). Both were involved in founding the Itzan Society, an early organization of Book of Mormon archaeology enthusiasts . . .

Mr. Ferguson was instrumental in establishing the Department of Archaeology at BYU in 1946. Later he was listed as an Associate in research and publication and appeared on Society records as a Departmental Affiliate. He accompanied Dr.

Jakeman in 1948 as a member of the Second BYU Archaeological Expedition to Middle America . . . in 1952, Mr. Ferguson incorporated the New World Archaeological Foundation, of which he served as president until it was officially attached to BYU in 1961. He thereafter served as secretary.

Mr. Ferguson also served the SEHA as a general officer (trustee), 1952-57. . . .

The *Newsletter and Proceedings* takes this opportunity to honor the memory of one of the few serious students of archaeology who have taken a genuine interest in the applications of that science to a study of the Book of Mormon. Thomas Stuart Ferguson was a great pioneer of the mid-twentieth century, who by his diligent efforts aroused widespread interest in the field and helped make possible the archaeology program at BYU. RTC.

Ray Matheny's Comments

In the book, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis refer to archeological expeditions into Central America which were sponsored by Brigham Young University. They note that, "At one point, [Brigham Young University] President Wilkinson even claimed, 'Our archaeology is taught clearly from a Book of Mormon standpoint.'" Bergera and Priddis go on to give the following information:

Because of the ignorance of many Mormons regarding archaeology and the resulting overzealousness on the part of some, a 1959 proposal for "a large excavation program in Central America to verify the Book of Mormon" failed to receive administrative approval when church and school officials became convinced that materials written by some Book of Mormon enthusiasts were "so biased that they will not stand the test of objective archaeological conclusions." Thus, "if we are to do further excavating," administrators decided, "it should be done largely by non-Mormons who will merely give a description of what they find, leaving the world to make conclusions." As a result, the New World Archaeological Foundation (NWAFF), the creation of California attorney Thomas Stuart Ferguson in 1952 and church-funded since 1955, was instructed to "concern itself only with the culture history interpretations normally within the scope of archaeology, and any attempt at correlation or interpretation involving the Book of Mormon should be eschewed" (Wilkinson Journal, 22 Aug. 1959). "I welcomed the instruction as refreshing after my earlier days at BYU," wrote former

NWAF archaeologist Dee F. Green in 1969, “when everything the archaeology department did had to be ‘scripturally’ related.” Ray Matheny, director of the NWAF since 1971, explained, “Our work has been precise [and] objective. . . . We’re not looking for a Nephite under every rock.” . . . Following persistent insinuations that NWAF’s ties to the church prevented its employees from reaching “scientific” conclusions, it was reorganized in mid-1976 as a “separately identified but subsidiary entity” of BYU. (*Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, pages 84-85)

Since Ray T. Matheny became director of the New World Archaeological Foundation in 1971, he became well-known for his archeological excavations in Central America. For example, in 1987 he wrote an article for *National Geographic* (see issue for September 1987, pages 317-338). In this magazine he described his work at the great Maya city, El Mirador. On page 321 Matheny stated that the archeological excavations were “Funded by the Brigham Young University New World Archaeological Foundation.”

Professor Ray Matheny is a professor in the Department of Anthropology at Brigham Young University who seems to be concerned that there is a lack of evidence for a number of items mentioned in the Book of Mormon. As we have already shown, Ray Matheny’s wife, Deanne Matheny, wrote an article published in the book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, in which she spoke of the many problems with Book of Mormon archeology in Mesoamerica. Dr. John L. Sorenson was very disturbed by her work. He commented: “I find her piece weak in scholarship and faulty in logic” (*Review of Books*, vol. 6, no. 1, page 297).

To our knowledge, Ray Matheny has never published an attack on the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, he seems troubled by many of the things which caused Thomas Stuart Ferguson to lose his testimony. He also seems to concur with many of his wife’s statements about Book of Mormon archeology.

In a letter to Jerry Bodine, Ray Matheny made these surprising comments:

I would not dare make a claim for anything about ancient cultures unless there was ample evidence to back it up. To do otherwise would be to deceive and be intellectually dishonest, misusing my position as an investigative scientist. While some people choose to make claims for the Book of Mormon through archaeological evidences, to me they are made prematurely, and without sufficient knowledge.

I do not support the books written on this subject including *The Messiah in Ancient America*, or any other. I believe the authors are making cases out of too little evidence and do not adequately address the

problems that archaeology and the Book of Mormon present. I would feel terribly embarrassed if anyone sent a copy of any book written on this subject to the National Museum of Natural History—Smithsonian Institution, or other authority, making claims that cannot as yet be substantiated.

This may sound very negative to you but my intent is [to] let you know that there are very severe problems in this field in trying to make correlations with scriptures. Simply put, there is not yet enough of a science base to make a case. Speculation, such as practiced so far by Mormon authors has not given church members credibility. Much more research, both in the field and in laboratories, must be carried out before such correlations can ever be attempted. (Letter by Ray T. Matheny, dated December 17, 1987)

As mentioned above, Luke P. Wilson wrote an article regarding Book of Mormon archeology in the publication *Heart and Mind: The Newsletter of Gospel Truths Ministries*, Fall 1992. In that article Wilson quoted from a talk given by Ray Matheny at the Sunstone Symposium, August 25, 1984. We also quoted from this same speech in our book, *Major Problems of Mormonism*, 1989, page 166.

Professor William Hamblin was disturbed when he learned that Wilson had printed portions of Matheny’s speech:

In his discussion of metals, plants, and animals in the Book of Mormon, Wilson relies entirely on an unpublished talk given by Ray T. Matheny. Unfortunately, Wilson was unaware that Matheny’s presentation was given to demonstrate the kinds of arguments which *might* be used against the Book of Mormon by non-LDS archaeologists, and does not necessarily reflect Matheny’s position. (*Journal of Mormon Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1993, pages 189-190)

William Hamblin cites from a letter written on November 18, 1992, in which Matheny tried to defend himself by saying:

My answer to the question was an *ad hoc* response where I tried to put myself in a non-Mormon’s professional shoes and talked about the nature of the problems that the Book of Mormon poses for the archaeologist. . . . I forbade any publication of my response by Sunstone or any one else, and did not authorize any tape recordings at the time.

Significantly, Ray Matheny did not question the accuracy of the transcription taken from the tape-recording. Stan Larson states that a copy of the speech is in the library at BYU: “Typescript located in Special

Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1990, page 91).

On page 190 of his article in the *Journal of Mormon Studies*, William Hamblin made this accusation: “This is thus another unfortunate, but typical example of anti-Mormons misrepresenting the Latter-day Saint position and taking Latter-day Saint writings out of context.” Actually, the text of Matheny’s talk clearly refutes Professor Hamblin’s argument. In his speech Ray Matheny admitted that what archeologists have found so far is disappointing:

I’ve been working with Mesoamerican archeology since 1961, [and] have primarily depended upon field experiences for my understanding of Mesoamerican archeology. . . .

Now, Mormons . . . have said that the Book of Mormon is an historical document . . . It is more like a genealogical or lineage account of peoples as we interpret it today. But to say that that document relates to the physical remains that we find in the New World is a very difficult statement to make. . . . No evidence has been found in the New World for a ferrous metallurgical industry dating to pre-Columbian times. And so this is a king-size kind of problem, it seems to me, for so-called Book of Mormon archeology. This evidence is absent. . . .

There is talk of use of bow and arrow with spear points that may have been associated with metal too. Ship-building and sailing, use of magnetic compass, overseas navigation, wheeled vehicles drawn by horses . . . many agricultural products from the Old World, wheat and barley, vineyards and wine presses, domestic animals from the Old World, glass manufacture, and so forth. All these paint a scene that seems to be quite foreign to what I am familiar with in the archeological record of the New World. . . . Now some of the LDS scholars have tried to explain away the agricultural products and the animals. They have said, well, the Spaniards didn’t know what to call a peccary in the New World, they didn’t know what name to give to a tape deer [tapir?]. They called it a cow, and what have you. . . . This is a weak way to try to explain the presence of these names in the Book of Mormon. . . .

I really have difficulty in finding issue or quarrel with those opening chapters of the Book of Mormon [i.e., the first seven chapters which only relate to Lehi and his family around the area of Jerusalem]. But thereafter *it doesn’t seem like a translation to me*. It seems more like a transliteration. And the terminologies and the language used and the methods of explaining and putting things down are *19th*

century literary concepts and cultural experiences one would expect Joseph Smith and his colleagues would experience. And for that reason I call it a transliteration, and I’d rather not call it a translation after that 7th chapter. And I have real difficulty in trying to relate these cultural concepts as I’ve briefly discussed here with archeological findings that I’m aware of. . . .

If I were doing this cold like John Carlson is here, I would say in evaluating the Book of Mormon that it had no place in the New World whatsoever. I would have to look for the place of the Book of Mormon events to have taken place in the Old World. It just doesn’t seem to fit anything that he has been taught in his discipline, nor I in my discipline in anthropology, history; there seems to be no place for it. It seems misplaced. It seems like *there are anachronisms*. It seems like the *items are out of time and place*, and trying to put them into the New World. And I think there’s a great difficulty here for we Mormons in understanding what this book is all about. . . . I have felt that Mormons, in particular, have been grasping at straws for a very long time trying to thread together all of these little esoteric finds, out of context, and really don’t have much meaning when they’re isolated. . . . the science base in Mesoamerican archeology simply has not been adequately laid to make many of the interpretations that people, Mormons in particular, have tried to make about it. (“Book of Mormon Archeology,” Response by Professor Ray T. Matheny, Sunstone Symposium, August 25, 1984, typed copy transcribed from a tape-recording, pages 19-20, 23, 25-26, 29-31, 33-34)

Interestingly, at the same symposium Bruce Warren, Professor of Anthropology at BYU, said that he hoped that the situation would change in the next 25 years, but he admitted that “today there really is no Book of Mormon Archeology” (*Ibid.*, page 42).

On page 269 of her article in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, Deanne Matheny wrote:

Travel companies boldly offer tours of ‘Book of Mormon Lands,’ and books abound purporting evidence for Book of Mormon peoples or for the appearance of the resurrected Jesus in the New World. Such are only the latest manifestations of the legitimate interest in and speculation about the location of the Book of Mormon civilizations. Like their predecessors, most of the recent volumes represent sincere but flawed attempts to weave together unrelated bits and pieces of information from the New World and the Old, unusually unconnected to each other in space and time.

Toward the end of her article, Dr. Deanne Matheny commented:

Sorenson suggests that his model is plausible, that “the setting described could reasonably have been” as he represents it. He states that he does not insist that “specific Book of Mormon people must be identified with particular sites, structures or artifacts”; however, “at some points the fit between scriptural specification and external fact” seem to Sorenson to “have passed beyond mere plausibility to the level of probability.” He comments, “As the saying goes, if the shoe fits, wear it” (1985, xx, 188).

At this point, it is time to ask whether either the Hauck or Sorenson model has achieved this degree of probability. This is a question that each must answer in her or his own way. For me these models require too many changes and arbitrary interpretations, too many deviations from the plain meaning of the words in the text of the Book of Mormon, for either of them to achieve even a partial fit with the geographical and archaeological evidence. There are too many areas where one must either assume that evidence exists but has not yet been found or that something other than the words actually used were intended. . . . Too much side-stepping of this sort can lead to the absurd. . . .

Does the shoe fit for the current Limited Tehuantepec theory models? Rather than a comfortable “Cinderella” fit, it is more like a “stepsister” mismatch, requiring considerable remodeling of shoe and foot. (*Ibid.*, pages 321-322)

As mentioned above, Mormon scholar Dee F. Green has written: “The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists,” and Bruce Warren, Professor of Anthropology at BYU, has also confirmed that “today there really is no Book of Mormon Archeology.” The same applies to Book of Mormon geography. As Thomas Stuart Ferguson noted, “you can’t set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere—because it is fictional.”

Professor William Hamblin argued: “Thus, while Wilson’s point that biblical geography is better documented than Book of Mormon geography is readily conceded, that point by no means proves that the Book of Mormon is ahistorical, as Wilson concludes” (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, page 170).

Instead of saying that “biblical geography is better documented than Book of Mormon geography,” Hamblin should have frankly admitted that Book of Mormon geography is not documented at all. In 1967, the noted defender of the faith, Dr. Hugh Nibley, wrote the following:

Of course, almost any object could conceivably have some connection with the Book of Mormon, but nothing short of an inscription which could be read and roughly dated could bridge the gap between what might be called a pre-actualistic archaeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization.

The possibility that a great nation or empire that once dominated vast areas of land and flourished for centuries could actually get lost and stay lost in spite of every effort of men to discover its traces, has been demonstrated many times . . .

So it is with the Nephites. All that we have to go on to date is a written history. That does not mean that our Nephites are necessarily mythical . . . as things stand we are still in the pre-archaeological and pre-anthropological stages of Book of Mormon study. . . . Nephite civilization . . . could just as easily and completely vanish from sight as did the worlds of Ugarit, Ur, or Cnossos; and until some physical remnant of it, no matter how trivial, has been identified beyond question, what can any student of physical remains possibly have to say about it? Everything written so far by anthropologists or archaeologists—even real archaeologists—about the Book of Mormon must be discounted, for the same reason that we must discount studies of the lost Atlantis: not because it did not exist, but because it has not yet been found.” (*Since Cumorah*, 1967, pages 243-244)

Since almost three decades have passed since Nibley made these comments and nothing significant has “as yet been found,” it seems obvious that Mormon scholars are “still in the pre-archaeological and pre-anthropological stages of Book of Mormon study.”

Book of Mormon and Bible Archeology Compared

As we pointed out in our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once boasted: “This generation have more than one thousand times the amount of evidence to demonstrate and forever establish the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon than they have in favor of the Bible!” (*Orson Pratt’s Works*, “Evidences of the Book of Mormon and Bible Compared,” page 64)

This statement is certainly far from the truth. The only support for the existence of the gold plates is the testimony of eleven witnesses, and as we have shown in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 50-63, this testimony cannot be relied upon.

A comparison of the archeological and geographical evidence for the Book of Mormon with the evidence for the Bible clearly shows the weakness of the Mormon position. This, of course, is not to imply that there are no problems connected with biblical archeology or geography, or that this type of evidence alone can prove the Bible to be divinely inspired. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., of the Smithsonian Institution, commented as follows in a letter written to Marvin Cowan on January 24, 1963:

Archaeological discoveries in the Near East have verified some statements in the Bible referring to certain tribes, places, etc. On the other hand there is no way in which they could verify the narrative parts of the Bible such as the actions, words, deeds, etc. of particular individuals.

In the same letter Roberts wrote: “There is no evidence whatever of any migration from Israel to America, and likewise no evidence that pre-Columbian Indians had any knowledge of Christianity or the Bible.”

We have already shown that Dr. Hugh Nibley acknowledged that “nothing short of an inscription” could “bridge the gap between what might be called a pre-actualistic archeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization.”

Dr. William J. Hamblin tried to divert attention from problems in Book of Mormon archeology and geography by pointing out what he feels are weaknesses in biblical archeology. He cited the following from Giovanni Garbini’s *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* which was printed in 1988:

“The empire of David and Solomon, the powerful northern kingdom, the long-lived southern kingdom with its Davidic dynasty have left not even a single document relating to their existence; not one of the forty kings, from Saul to Zedekiah, has left a direct trace of his name; we do not have any votive inscription from the famous temple of Solomon, as we do for many other temples of antiquity.” (*Review of Books*, Vol. 5, page 262)

In footnote 33, on the same page, Hamblin stated: “Garbini is apparently unaware of the Uzziah inscription in the Israel Museum . . .” Since some scholars feel that this inscription may not be referring to the Jewish king Uzziah, Garbini may have rejected it.

In any case, Professor Hamblin also noted:

Garbini is speaking only of monumental inscriptions, not graffiti, seals, or fifth. Nonetheless, when compared with other royal and religious monumental inscriptional evidence from the Near East, Israelite inscriptions are remarkable for their

scarcity. Garbini believes that the reason for the absence of Hebrew royal or religious inscriptions is that “all the royal inscriptions . . . were systematically destroyed”. . . (*Ibid.*)

Ironically, in the summer of 1993, the same year that Hamblin cited from the article which indicated there was a lack of early Jewish inscriptions, an amazing discovery was made at Tel Dan. The *Biblical Archaeology Review* reported the following:

It’s not often that an archaeological find makes the front page of the *New York Times* . . . But that is what happened last summer to a discovery at Tel Dan, a beautiful mound in northern Galilee . . .

There Avraham Biran and his team of archaeologists found a remarkable inscription from the ninth century B.C.E. that refers both to the “House of David” and to the “King of Israel.” This is the first time that the name David has been found in any ancient inscription outside the Bible. That the inscription refers not simply to a “David” but to the House of David, the dynasty of the great Israelite king, is even more remarkable.

Archeologists began the excavation of Tel Dan in 1966. Ten years later they discovered an inscription on a stone which mentioned “the ‘God who is in Dan.’ This inscription conclusively established that the site was Biblical Dan . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 28)

According to the article published in the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, the inscription found in 1993 that mentions the “House of David” appears

to be a victory stela erected in Dan by an Aramean . . . who is boasting of his military victory over Israel and perhaps also Judah. That this is an Aramean victory stela is confirmed by the fact that the language is early Aramaic, related to, but slightly different from, Hebrew. . . . How was the stela dated to the ninth century B.C.E.? One way to date the inscription is paleographically—by the shape and stance of the letters. On this basis, Joseph Naveh dated the inscription to the ninth century. . . . An archaeological analysis . . . suggests a date in the first half of the ninth century. The stela fragment that bears the inscription was used in a wall that was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III in 733/732 B.C.E., so the stela must have been erected before this date. . . . While the amount of pottery found there was small, none of it was later than the first half of the ninth century! This suggests that the stela was

broken up around that time, so that it would have been erected sometime during the first half of the ninth century B.C.E. It must have stood at least some time before being destroyed and used secondarily in the wall. . . . The Tel Dan inscription is therefore the oldest appearance in Semitic script of the name Israel—at least for now. Who knows when a new inscription that challenges this claim will be found. (*Ibid.*, pages 35, 36, 39)

David Noel Freedman and Jeffrey C. Geoghegan wrote the following concerning the importance of the discovery:

In a book entitled *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* written prior to the discovery of the Tel Dan inscription, Davies argues that most of Israel's history prior to the Babylonian Exile, as related in the Bible, is fictional, having been created during the Persian period (sixth-fourth centuries B.C.E.).

In one fell swoop of the shovel at Tel Dan, a major presupposition of Davies's book has been severely damaged. Davies was faced with a decision—either he could admit that King David wasn't invented by Persian-period scribes, or he could attempt to explain away the reference to 'the House of David' as unrelated to the King David of the Bible. He chose the latter. . . . Assyrian and Babylonian records confirm the existence of the following kings of Israel and Judah: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Hosea, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh and most probably Uzziah. These records are more than just king lists; often they describe specific historical events, such as the siege of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign and the tribute he paid. The Moabite Stone mentions Omri, Israel and Gad. The Lachish ostraca give details about Babylonian troops in Palestine. The Samaria ostraca make reference to the territory of Manasseh. The inscription from Hezekiah's Tunnel, while not mentioning his name, is further evidence for the Biblical narratives.

The Tel Dan inscription also underscores the general historicity of the Biblical narratives and represent another "fact" that Davies says he is waiting for, but seems determined to dismiss. (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1995, pages 78-79)

Baruch Halpern is a scholar who feels that there are exaggerated claims in the biblical record. Nevertheless, Halpern believes that the stela regarding the "House of David" is very important and should not be set aside because of preconceived ideas:

The recent discovery at Tel Dan of a ninth-century B.E.C. inscription—the first extra-biblical

reference to the House of David—is causing extraordinary contortions among scholars who have maintained that the Bible's history of the early Israelite monarchy is simply fiction. According to these scholars, the history of the Israelite monarchy was made up after the Jews went into exile following the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.E.C.

What, then, is this embarrassing reference to the *dynasty* of David doing in a ninth-century B.C.E. Aramaic stela? . . .

Fortunately, we can test the validity of the "minimalist" contention by looking at the period of the Divided Monarchy recounted in the books of Kings, for which there happens to be abundant extra-biblical evidence. If the books of Kings were wholly, or even largely, a product of the Persian era and written without access to pre-exilic sources (as the "minimalists" claim with regard to the United Monarchy of David and Solomon), we should expect multiple errors both in chronology and in the names of major public figures, such as kings. . . . the books of Kings do in fact preserve a very large assortment of accurate information on international affairs. . . .

There is not much doubt that the archaeological record of the eighth-sixth centuries comports in almost every particular with the general political picture we derive from the biblical record, critically regarded. . . .

Moreover, the fact that Kings is so accurate about the history of the eighth-seventh centuries, *when the Temple still stood*, suggests that our authors had both continuity and records on their side in naming the Temple's builder. (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, December 1995, pages 26, 31, 33)

Other important discoveries were made at Tel Dan. For example, the following appeared in the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April, 1994, page 28:

In the first season at Tel Dan . . . Biran and his team uncovered on the slope of the mound a small potsherd inscribed with four letters in ancient Hebrew script. . . . The four-letter Hebrew inscription on the potsherd was dated to the eighth century B.C.E. . . . The first letter is the common preposition meaning "belonging to"; the last three letters are a name: Amotz. This is the name of the father of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1; 2 Kings 19:2; 2 Chronicles 26:22, etc.), who prophesied in the eighth century B.C.E. The jar did not belong to Isaiah's father—the name was fairly common—but the discovery of an eighth-century B.C.E. inscription with a well-known name naturally caused considerable excitement for the members of the expedition and raised hopes of finding more.

While the Book of Mormon's Nephites, Lamanites and Jaredites have never been mentioned in any ancient inscription, the existence of the Israelites in ancient times is verified by inscriptions dating back hundreds of years before the time of Christ. The "earliest archaeological reference to the people of Israel" is a stele of the Egyptian ruler Merneptah, dated about 1220 B.C., which is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. In *The Biblical World* we find this information concerning this stele:

Merneptah, son and successor of Ramesses II, ruled Egypt from ca. 1224 to ca. 1214 B.C. . . . His campaign in Palestine, waged during the fifth year of his reign (ca. 1220 B.C.) is commemorated on a large black granite stele which was found in Merneptah's mortuary temple in Thebes. At the top is a representation of Merneptah and the god Amun . . . Merneptah states:

Israel is laid waste, his seed is not; Hurru (i.e. Syria) is become a widow for Egypt.

The stele provides the first mention of Israel on ancient monuments, and provides proof that Israel was in western Palestine by 1220 B.C. (*The Biblical World*, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, 1966, pages 380-381)

The late John A. Wilson, a noted Egyptologist from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, commented:

This is the customary magniloquent claim that the god-king was victorious over all opponents, whether he had met them in battle or not. The appearance of Israel in an Asiatic context is interesting, but has no meaning in terms of armed conflict against Egypt. It merely shows that an Egyptian scribe was conscious of a people known as Israel somewhere in Palestine or Transjordan. (*The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, 1965, University of Chicago Press, page 255)

Many ancient inscriptions mentioning the Israelites have been found, and some inscriptions even give the names of kings mentioned in the Bible. For instance, in 2 Kings 10:36 we read that "Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria" for twenty-eight years. Although King Jehu lived more than 800 years before the time of Christ, his name has been located on an Assyrian obelisk known as the "Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser." In *The Biblical World*, page 150, we find this information:

In his campaign at Calah (Nimrud) in 1846, A.H. Layard discovered a four-sided black limestone pillar 6 1/2 feet high, with five rows of roughly executed bas reliefs extending around the pillar. . . . The inscription reads, "Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri. I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a

golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king. . . ."

Shalmaneser doubtless used the expression "son of Omri" in the sense of successor, for in fact the Jehu dynasty was bitterly opposed to the earlier Omri dynasty which had sought to introduce Baalism as the religion of Israel in the days of Ahab and Jezebel.

This obelisk not only contains the name of the king but a picture of him as well. J. A. Thompson gives the following in his book, *The Bible and Archaeology*, page 128:

Jehu is best known to us as the one king in either Israel or Judah whose picture we have today. The great Shalmaneser III was still reigning at the time of Jehu's accession. He evidently has some dealings with Jehu in the year 842 B.C., for the large black obelisk found by the early excavator Sir Henry Layard at Nimrud in 1840 has a picture of Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser . . .

In 2 Kings 18:13-16 we read an account of how Sennacherib "king of Assyria" came up against "Hezekiah" king of Judah." Some remarkable parallels to the account in the Bible are found in the annals of Sennacherib. From a "hexagonal clay prism found at Ninevah, and dating from 686 B.C.," J. B. Pritchard translated the following:

. . . Hezekiah did send me later to Nineveh . . . thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver . . . (*The Bible and Archaeology*, page 144)

It is very interesting to compare this with the Bible, 2 Kings 18:14: ". . . the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." For other parallels see our book, *A Look at Christianity*, pages 86-87.

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

In *The Biblical World* we find the following:

An Italian expedition . . . excavated the theater at Caesarea from 1959 to 1961. During the latter year the archaeologists discovered a stone inscription from the theater bearing the name of Pontius Pilate. The left side of the stone has been destroyed. The top line of the right side reads "Tiberium," which is understood to be a dedication to Tiberius, the Roman

emperor of the period. The second line reads, "...tius Pilatus," with the letters "Pon" missing, as well as the governor's first name. The third line is badly damaged, but the letters visible may represent the title, "Military Procurator." Pilate is known from references to him in the New Testament, Josephus, and Pliny. This is the first mention of him on inscriptions. (*The Biblical World*, page 156)

The fact that the Jews were in Palestine at the time the Bible indicates is proven by hundreds of ancient Hebrew inscriptions that have been found on rocks, pieces of pottery and coins. Portions of every book of the Old Testament, except for the book of Esther, have also been found. These manuscripts are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls and date back to the time of Christ (see *A Look at Christianity*, pages 89-91). In addition many inscriptions from other countries verify the fact that the Jews were present in Palestine.

When we turn to the Book of Mormon, however, we are unable to find any evidence at all that the Nephites ever existed. For more information on the subject of archeology and the Bible see our book, *A Look at Christianity*.

The reader will remember that BYU Professor William Hamblin sneered at our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*: "In many ways this booklet provides a perfect picture of the Tanners at the height of their ineptitude." Hamblin also commented: "Book of Mormon geography and the location of the Hill Cumorah are extensively discussed by the Tanners . . . Their treatment of the topic is so outdated as to be fundamentally worthless."

This is certainly a very misleading statement. Anyone who closely examines our work will find that although it was written over two decades ago, it is still relevant today. While Dr. Hamblin mocks our work on archeology and the Book of Mormon, the problems confronting Mormon archeologists at the present time are even worse than they were when we originally wrote the book. The more time that elapses without the discovery of evidence verifying the claims of the Book of Mormon, the more discouraged Mormon scholars will become.

If we were to produce an updated edition of our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, it would be even more effective than our first edition has been.

6. Back to the Old World

Although Mormon scholars have been unable to come up with satisfactory evidence that Nephites were ever in the New World, they have tried another approach—i.e., they have tried to identify places in the Old World where Lehi’s people may have visited. On page 26 of his Longer Review of our work, John A. Tvedtnes made the following claim:

While it is true that Lehi and his family undertook a lengthy voyage to the New World, their overland travels seem to have been mostly in deserted territory (perhaps the Arabian peninsula) where, interestingly, two names site names [*sic*] are given, one of which, Nahom, has been confirmed as an authentic site in the southwestern part of the Arabian peninsula.

The “place which was called Nahom” is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi, 16:33 as the site where Ishmael was buried. Like Tvedtnes, Matthew Roper also felt that this was a significant discovery:

Nephi states that his family travelled in a south-easterly direction along the borders of the Red Sea . . . this site “was called” Nahom, suggesting that it was already known by that name at the time Lehi’s family passed through. While no such site is mentioned in the Biblical record, there is a site by that name, which fits the Book of Mormon description at the approximate place that one would expect it to be, based upon the information provided in the Book of Mormon narrative. . . .

After stopping at Nahom, Nephi tells us that the party turned eastward . . . until they arrived at a seaside location which “we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and wild honey” (1 Nephi 17:5). Warren and Michaela Aston . . . have recently shown that there is only one site which would appear to meet the criteria required by the Book of Mormon text—the Wadi Sayq . . . this little coastal valley lies almost due east from the Nehem site mentioned above. (Roper, Longer Review, page 70)

In the church’s official publication, *The Ensign*, Professor Ross T. Christensen suggested that Nahom may have been found at a site in southern Arabia. The place that Dr. Christensen wants to equate with Nahom is known as “Nehhm” (*The Ensign*, August 1978, page 73). According to the FARMS publication, *The Place Which Was Called Nahom: The Validation of an Ancient Reference to Southern Arabia*, by Warren P. And Michaela J. Aston, Nehhm has been spelled a number

of different ways on maps and in other references. For example, in footnote 11, on pages 4-5 of their study, we find a number of variant spellings: Nehem, Nehm, Nihm, Nahm and Naham.

In his article in *The Ensign*, Dr. Christensen commented: “Perhaps the next step would be to invite semiticists to give their opinions as to whether Nahom and Nehhm are probable phonetic equivalents.”

Christensen gave this information in his article in *The Ensign*:

In 1763 Carsten Niebuhr prepared a map of Yemen (South Arabia or “Arabia Felix”). . . The name “Nehhm” appears on that map. It was a small administrative district located among the mountain valleys . . . about 25 miles north of the capital, Sana.

Warren and Michaela Aston acknowledge that the “earliest map located to date showing the name is the French cartographer Jean Bourguignon D’Anville’s 1751 map of Asia which shows Nehem in the same position relative to San’a as later maps do” (*The Place Which Was Called Nahom*, page 3).

This, of course, does not take us back to the time when Lehi’s group passed through Arabia—i.e., almost 2,600 years ago! There is no way short of an inscription or some other remarkable discovery to validate the claims that are being made by Mormon scholars.

Actually, there are two different locations which Mormon scholars have set forth as the “place which was called Nahom.” In 1976, the church’s magazine, *The Ensign*, reported on Lynn and Hope Hilton’s attempt to trace Lehi’s route across Arabia. The Hiltons proposed that Nahom was at a site known as Al Qunfudhah. As mentioned above, Dr. Christensen believed it was at Nehhm. It is significant to note that Nehhm is over 350 miles from Al Qunfudhah!

Those who take the time to carefully read the first part of the Book of Mormon will understand how it can be possible that there is such a difference between the two suggested sites for Nahom. The details found in the Book of Mormon are actually very meager. Nephi informs his readers that, “we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.” (1 Nephi 17:4) The story seems to indicate that the travelers journeyed close to the Red Sea: “And we did go forth again in the wilderness . . . keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea” (1 Nephi 16:14).

In one place we read that the group traveled in, “nearly a south-southeast direction . . .” (1 Nephi 16:13), and in the next chapter we find they, “did travel nearly eastward from that time forth” (1 Nephi 17:1). There is absolutely no way to know where the group was at any given time during the eight years of their sojourn. Consequently, it is impossible to say that any site has been identified; one can only speculate regarding this matter.

The article published in *The Ensign* contained a statement that seemed to be somewhat tentative about the matter: “Nehhm . . . may be the Book of Mormon location, Nahom. If it is, then Lynn and Hope Hilton’s 1976 tracing of Lehi’s route across Arabia is confirmed—with a minor correction.” The minor correction seems to be that they have located Nahom more than 350 miles from its proper place.

While *The Ensign* article was cautious about making a strong assertion that Nahom had been located, in the article published by FARMS Warren and Michaela Aston dogmatically declared: “The Book of Mormon reference to Nahom as an ancient place-name in southern Arabia can now truly be considered validated” (page 15).

The Astons seek to buttress their discovery by stating that, “it is significant that an ancient burial ground has recently been located in Nehem itself, in addition to a more extensive region of tombs farther to the east” (page 10).

It is interesting to note, however, that the Hiltons also encountered a burial site near Al Qunfudhah—the place they felt was Nahom: “Perhaps it was similar to the cemetery . . . photographed near Al Qunfudhah” (*The Ensign*, August 1978, page 73).

As we indicated above, without some compelling evidence it is preposterous to proclaim that Nahom has been found.

The Book of Mormon mentions the names of two other places Lehi’s people passed through in their journey through Arabia: *Shazer* and *Bountiful*. The article by Ross Christensen acknowledged that one can only speculate as to where these places might be:

The Hiltons have supposed that the eastward journey ended at Salalah, an oasis settlement on the shore of the Indian Ocean—speculated to be the place the Book of Mormon calls “Bountiful.” . . .

It is unlikely that modern scholars will ever locate with confidence the rest stop to which travelers of a lonely caravan gave the name *Shazer*—simply because they may never have spoken that name to anyone outside their group. (*Ibid.*, page 73)

With regard to the word *Nahom*, we feel that it is likely that this is just a slightly altered name which

Joseph Smith derived from the King James Bible. While the spelling “Nahom” does not appear in the King James Bible, we do find the prophet “Nahum” mentioned in Nahum 1:1. Nahum, of course, is also the name of the short book written by the prophet which is found in the latter part of the Old Testament. The reader will notice that only the fourth letter differs in the two names—the fourth letter is an *o* in the Book of Mormon, whereas it appears as a *u* in the Bible. It is possible that Joseph Smith intended to use the biblical word “Nahum,” but that his scribe spelled it wrong.

On the other hand, Smith seems to have had no qualms about appropriating and altering words from the Bible and using them for his own purposes. For example, the word “Antipas” is only found once in the entire Bible—Book of Revelation 2:13. Nevertheless, Joseph Smith incorporated it into the Book of Mormon. The disturbing thing about this is that Revelation was written over 600 years after Lehi and his people came to the New World.

In the Book of Mormon the name “Antipas” is not the name of a man. Instead it is the name of a mount: “. . . they gathered themselves together upon the top of the mount which was called Antipas . . .” (Alma 47:7). It is also interesting to note that in the same book of Alma there is a man who is a commander of some of the Nephite army whose name is Antipus (Alma 56:9). Less than ten chapters separate these two names. This appears to be more than just a coincidence, and seems to show something about Joseph Smith’s method of operation.

We have already explained how Joseph Smith took the name “Nephi” from the Apocrypha which was printed between the Old and New Testaments in the original 1611 edition of the King James Bible. We have also noted that as the years passed there was a good deal of controversy over the Apocrypha. Many biblical students did not consider these writings to be inspired Scripture. This argument was still going on during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, and the Apocrypha was finally removed from most Protestant Bibles. Significantly, however, when Joseph Smith purchased a Bible in 1829, it contained the Apocrypha. In 2 Maccabees 1:36 the following appeared: “And Neemias called this thing Naphthar, which is as much as to say, a cleansing: but many men call it Nephi.”

Joseph Smith obviously borrowed Nephi from the Apocrypha and used it repeatedly throughout his book. Nephi was the name of the most important character in the book, and there were three other men who had the same name. It is also the name of several books in the Book of Mormon, a city, a land, and a people. The word

Nephi appears more than five hundred times in Smith's book. For more information regarding Joseph Smith's plagiarism from the Apocrypha see our newsletter, *Salt Lake City Messenger*, December 1995, pages 1-14.

Returning to the question of whether the place Nahom can be equated with Nehhm, the reader will notice that only three of the five letters in Nehhm agree with the spelling Nahom. The second letter in Nehhm is *e* rather than *a*, and the fourth letter is *h* instead of *o*. The variant spellings Nehem, Nehm, Nihm, Nahm and Naham do not really help to solve the problem.

Professor Christensen believes that, "The name [Nahom] in Hebrew seems to mean 'mourning,' or perhaps 'comfort' or 'consolation'" (*The Ensign*, August 1978, page 73). Dr. Sidney B. Sperry claimed that the word Nahom means "growl" or "groan" (*The Book of Mormon Testifies*, page 60). Interestingly, an 1812 printing of the King James Bible noted that the word Nahum, the word we believe Joseph Smith borrowed from the Bible, means "comforter, penitent."

Dr. Hugh Nibley and other Mormon defenders have asserted that Joseph Smith did not have enough knowledge about Arabia to write the story found in the Book of Mormon (see Nibley's *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites*). We certainly cannot agree with this assessment. The Book of Mormon gives scarcely any information about Arabia. Although a great deal of spiritual material is presented in the chapters relating to the eight-year trip through Arabia, the book is surprisingly vague when it comes to details. For example, Nephi never mentions the words city or cities; he only mentions places. Furthermore, he never speaks of any contact with any other people during the sojourn in Arabia. Even Hugh Nibley had to admit that, "The Book of Mormon makes no mention of Lehi's people meeting any other party in their eight years of wandering. Casual meetings with stray families of Bedouins then as now would merit no special attention, but how were they able to avoid any important contacts for eight years and some 2500 miles of wandering?" (*Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites*, page 72).

Dr. Nibley believes that Lehi's people were avoiding contact with the people in Arabia because, "Lehi was moving through a dangerous world" (*Ibid.*, pages 73-74).

Another explanation for the dearth of information about places and people is that Joseph Smith was somewhat uncertain about Arabia. Significantly, the part of the Book of Mormon that tells of the trip through Arabia is in a portion of the book that we believe contains a "black hole."

As we explained in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith had already

written a manuscript about Lehi and the trip to the New World. Unfortunately for Smith, this 116-page document was stolen from him. The Mormon prophet believed that the manuscript was still in existence and feared that his enemies would bring it forth and discredit his second attempt to tell the story. Consequently, he had to be very careful not to write anything that would be contrary to what he discussed in the first manuscript. This problem forced Smith to be as vague as possible about historical information, names of people, geographical material, and dates when important things occurred.

It would have been very easy for Joseph Smith to write a story about a trip through Arabia. A map of Arabia would have shown Smith that if Lehi's people traveled in the "parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 16:14), it would be necessary to travel in a "south-southeast direction" (1 Nephi 16:13). Otherwise, the travelers would end up in the Red Sea.

The only other important thing Joseph Smith would have to know is that although Arabia contains a great deal of barren land, there was a more fertile land in the southern portion of the country. At the end of the eight-year journey through the "wilderness," Nephi reported: "And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey . . . And we beheld the sea . . ." (1 Nephi 17:5).

One geography book Joseph Smith certainly could have had access to was *Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgement of the American Universal Geography*, by Jedidiah Morse. It was published in Boston and was widely distributed for use in "Schools and Academies in the United States of America." The edition we have is the fourteenth edition which was published in 1813. In this book we find everything Joseph Smith would need to make up a story of a trip through Arabia. In this book we are told of a fertile land (Arabia Felix) in the southern part of the country:

Arabia is bounded [o]n the west by the Red Sea . . . It is divided into three parts, Arabia Petraea, Arabia Deserta, and Arabia Felix. Arabia Petraea is the smallest of the three, and towards the north is full of mountains, with few inhabitants, on account of its barrenness. . . . It differs little from Arabia Deserta, so called from the nature of the soil, which is generally a barren sand . . . Arabia Felix is so called on account of its fertility with regard to the rest . . . Arabia Felix produces frankincense, myrrh, balm of Gilead, gum Arabic, and coffee, of which they export prodigious quantities. (*Geography Made Easy*, pages 335-336)

The information concerning Arabia Felix was well known in Joseph Smith's time because of the story concerning the Queen of Sheba coming to King Solomon. For example, in *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* he wrote:

Those who contend that she was queen of the Sabæans, a people of Arabia Felix, towards the southern extremity of the Red Sea, find several proofs of their opinion: 1. That the Sabæans abounded in riches and spices. . . . All ancient authors speak, not only of their odoriferous woods, but of their rich gold and silver mines, and of their precious stones. (*Clarke's Commentary*, note on 1 Kings 10:2)

After traveling through Arabia, Lehi's people sailed to the New World. Interestingly, the book, *Geography Made Easy*, pages 59-60, reported that Columbus had an experience with his compass that resembles an event in the Book of Mormon:

On the 14th of September he [Columbus] was astonished to find that their compass did not point exactly to the polar star, but varied toward the west; and as they proceeded, this variation increased. This new phenomenon filled the companions of Columbus with terror. Nature itself seemed to have sustained a change; and the only guide they had left, to point them to a safe retreat from an unbounded and trackless ocean, was about to fail them. Columbus . . . assigned a reason for this appearance, which though it did not satisfy himself, seemed so plausible to them, that it dispelled their fears, or silenced their murmurs.

In the Book of Mormon Nephi wrote the following:

And after we had been driven forth before the wind for the space of many days, behold my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and also their wives . . . were lifted up unto exceeding rudeness. . . . And it came to pass that Laman and Lemuel did take me and bind me with cords . . . And it came to pass that after they had bound me insomuch that I could not move, the compass, which had been prepared of the Lord, did cease to work.

Wherefore, they knew not whither they should steer the ship, insomuch that there arose a great storm . . . and they began to be frightened exceedingly . . . they came unto me, and loosed the bands . . . And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the compass, and it did work whither I desired it . . . the storm did cease, and there was a great calm. (1 Nephi 18:9, 11-13, 15, 21)

Although the Book of Mormon never uses the name Columbus, it is obvious that Joseph Smith referred to him in 1 Nephi 13:12. Nephi supposedly had a vision in which he, "beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land."

Mormon writers George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl stated: "This man, who was separated from the Lamanites by many waters and who was prompted to cross those waters, was Columbus" (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, page 118).

It should be noted that this prophecy of Columbus appears just five chapters before Lehi's people sail to the New World. This reference to Columbus in the Book of Mormon raises an interesting question: did an ancient prophet named Nephi actually see Columbus in a vision or did Joseph Smith make up a fictional story based partly on what he knew about Columbus? There is a parallel between Nephi and Columbus in that both were in charge of bringing their people to the New World. It is also significant that the Book of Mormon claims that both were directed by God to make the voyage.

In any case, the Book of Mormon gives very little information regarding the trip to the New World. While Nephi tells us about the persecution he received and the "great storm" they encountered, there is no information regarding the route they took, nor does he speak of any islands they passed along the way.

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). 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 have been 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 nothing 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. Mormon scholar John L. Sorenson frankly stated: "Nephi left us no information in the Book of Mormon about the route, nor did he tell us in modern terms where they landed" (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, page 138).

The reader will remember that earlier in this book we cited an article entitled, “Of the Fiery Simoom of Arabia,” and noted some parallels between the Book of Mormon story and the account given by the explorer Bruce. The reader may want to have another look at that material. In any case, the Book of Mormon story about the trip through Arabia provides no evidence that it was written by an ancient author. In fact, it seems to have been written by someone who knew very little about the subject.

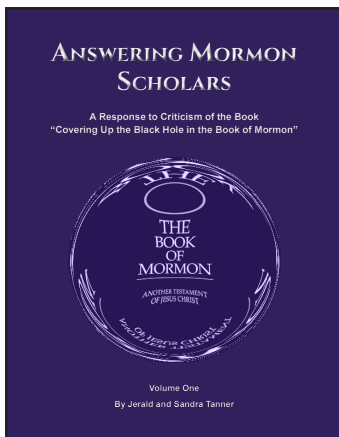
In Conclusion

Although those associated with FARMS continue to put forth information they feel supports the Book of Mormon, the material is not convincing. There is absolutely no reason to believe that Lehi or his people ever existed. The search for them in the Old World reveals nothing, and evidence for them in the New World is also lacking. It seems clear that they are the product of Joseph Smith’s own fertile imagination. It is obvious, then, that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document, but rather a product of the nineteenth century.

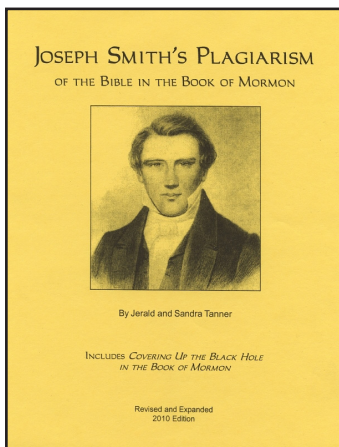


Sandra and Jerald Tanner

Utah Lighthouse Ministry
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Answering Mormon Scholars
 Volume One



Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon
 (Includes *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*)