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Author(s) Matthew Roper

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Abstract Review of *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (1987), by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*. 5th ed. Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987. 50-125. Hard Cover $16.95. Paperback $13.95.

Reviewed by Matthew Roper

> The point is, we're trying to be accurate. We want to be straightforward, we want to have the research we put out be reliable so that people can go look it up for themselves and see that in fact is what the case is. So we're upset when we see people stretching things on either side.[1]
>
> Sandra Tanner

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*.[2] Since that time the Tanners' *magnum opus* has been published in no less than five editions, the most recent being in 1987.[3] In 1980, in an attempt to facilitate wider distribution of their work, they published a condensed version through Moody Press.[4] 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.[5]

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

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1 Sandra Tanner, taped interview by Scott Faulring, 10 February 1982, in Faulring, "An Oral History of Modern Microfilm Company," Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University, 297.

2 Ibid., 322. Faulring provides a thorough bibliography of the Tanners' works from 1959 to 1982.

3 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987). In 1989 the Tanners published a less expensive condensation of their work entitled *Major Problems of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1989).

4 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

5 Their most current newsletter lists over a hundred books, pamphlets, and tapes.

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."[6] Even some of the more sophisticated Book of Mormon critics will often repeat methodological errors exemplified in the Tanners' work. Second, since virtually none of the criticisms raised by the Tanners is new, their work supplies us with a useful reference point in showing how far Book of Mormon scholarship has come in the last thirty years. 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). We will notice four general areas: criticisms of the Book of Mormon witnesses, nineteenth-century parallels with the Book of Mormon, alleged biblical influences, and criticisms related to archaeology.

Book of Mormon Witnesses

Pages 50-63 of the Tanners' work attempt to discredit the testimonies of the Book of Mormon witnesses. The best historical treatment of the Book of Mormon witnesses to date has been done by Professor Richard Lloyd Anderson.[7] His study first appeared in the pages of the *Improvement Era*, receiving the best article award from the Mormon History Association for its important historical information on the witnesses. An expanded version was published in book form in 1981, and in 1989 it became widely available in paperback. 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. Not surprisingly, Anderson's work has been virtually ignored by critics of the Book of Mormon. However, any critic of the

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6 Dean M. Helland, "Meeting the Book of Mormon Challenge in Chile," Ph.D. dissertation, Oral Roberts University, 1990, 58. Interestingly, in his dissertation, Helland reports that the antics of anti-Mormon J. Edward Decker may have been "partially responsible for the continual bombings of Mormon churches by political extremists in Chile," and suggests that anti-Mormon critics should instead make the Book of Mormon a more central object of attack. Ibid., 1-3.

7 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981).

witnesses who ignores it risks being insufficiently informed about the topic.

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). However, these accusations were later rebutted by the witnesses, who clearly felt that they had been misrepresented.[8] Anderson provides a thorough rebuttal to most of the character criticisms of the witnesses and has detailed numerous positive appraisals of their character by men who knew them well both within and without the Church. While the Tanners are familiar with Anderson's work, they are silent concerning such positive testimonials and have merely followed the superficial approach of previous critics: "Take all charges as presented without investigating, solidify mistakes as lifelong characteristics, and ignore all positive accomplishments or favorable judgments on their lives. Such bad methods will inevitably produce bad men on paper. The only problem with this treatment is that it cheats the customer—it appears to investigate personality without really doing so."[9] There is abundant evidence that the witnesses, although not perfect, were basically honest, well-respected, honorable men whose word could be relied upon.[10]

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:

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8 Ibid., 172-73.

9 Ibid., 166.

10 On Oliver Cowdery, see ibid., 37-65, 151-91; for David Whitmer, see ibid., 67-92, 151-91; for Martin Harris, see ibid., 95-120, 151-91. Pages 123-49 review similar information on the eight witnesses who handled the plates.

> 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 apostasy, and has continued to contend against this work. There are hundreds in a similar condition.[11]

The Tanners would mislead their readers by using this quotation as evidence against the Book of Mormon witnesses.[12] 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.[13]

Quotation and Misrepresentation

"The Tanners," noted one prominent non-Latter-day Saint historian, "seek to use every bit of historical evidence they can find, even if it would seem objectively favorable to Mormonism, to attack the Church."[14] 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

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11 *JD* 7:164.

12 This was discussed by Anderson in 1981. See Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 161-63. Since the Tanners claim to be familiar with Anderson's work, it would appear that the misrepresentation is deliberate.

13 Ibid., 162.

14 Lawrence Foster, "Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17/2 (Summer 1984): 44.

examples are listed below, taken from just one page of the Tanners' book.[15]

Tanners' Partial Quotation	Full Quotation by Anderson
He [Martin Harris] and other prominent dissenters in the Church were formally excommunicated in the last week of December 1837. . . . (p. 58)	**Disillusioned Mormons now tempted the witness to recant.** He and other prominent dissenters in the Church were formally excommunicated in the last week of December 1837. **These men who shared Martin Harris' skepticism on Church policy admired the sweep of Mormon doctrine but were talking of forming a reorganized church that would retain the great doctrinal concepts but jettison what was to them irrational. In a private meeting in early 1838, several former leaders insisted that the Book of Mormon was "nonsense." A contemporary letter from Kirtland reported: "Martin Harris then bore testimony of its truth and said all would be damned if they rejected it."**

15 While the Tanners' citations are taken from Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Certainty of the Skeptical Witness," *Improvement Era* 72/3 (March 1969): 63–64, the equivalent reference in Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 110–12, is basically the same and more readily available.

Tanners' Partial Quotation	*Full Quotation by Anderson*
Martin Harris remained at Kirtland for the next 30 years. . . (p. 58)	Martin Harris remained at Kirtland for the next 30 years **in the condition of a fossil embedded in an earlier layer of sediment. His constant and vocal testimony to scores of visitors is all the more remarkable in the light of the psychology of the man in this period. Social pressure should have worked against his bearing testimony at all. . . . As the years passed in Kirtland, Martin Harris was increasingly a solitary figure in non-Mormon society, which only ridiculed him for his persistence in declaring that he had seen the angel and the plates.**

Tanners' Quotation	**Full Quotation by Anderson**
Martin Harris also felt strong resentment against Church leaders, in large part stemming from the blow to his ego in never being given a major office. If such thinking is obviously immature, it was nevertheless real to the man who had sacrificed domestic peace, fortune, and reputation to bring about the printing of the Book of Mormon and the	Martin Harris also felt strong resentment against Church leaders, in large part stemming from the blow to his ego in never being given a major office. If such thinking is obviously immature, it was nevertheless real to the man who had sacrificed domestic peace, fortune, and reputation to bring about the printing of the Book of Mormon and the

founding of the Church. Real or supposed rejection breeds hostility and, at its worst, retaliation. . . . (p. 58)

founding of the Church. Real or supposed rejection breeds hostility and, at its worst, retaliation. **Though such feelings were clearly held, in the face of them Martin Harris insisted that the Mormon cause was founded on objective truth as he had experienced it in his vision of 1829.**

Tanners' Quotation

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. . . . (p. 58)

Full Quotation by Anderson

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. **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.

By their one-sided presentation the authors have clearly misrepresented Anderson's main points. Since they could have made their points without any reference to Anderson, one seriously wonders why they bother to quote him at all.

Nineteenth-Century Sources and the Book of Mormon

Any examination of possible nineteenth-century influences on the Book of Mormon needs to take into account the historical constraints that Joseph Smith was under during the time that the Book of Mormon was produced. Collected historical documents from both Mormon and non-Mormon sources indicate that the Book of Mormon was translated at an astronomical pace, being completed in just sixty-three days, at an average of eight printed pages in our current edition per day.[16] "Virtually no time existed for Joseph Smith to plan, to ponder about, to research around, to draft, to revise, or to correct the pages of this book during those three months. The Book of Mormon was dictated one time through, essentially in final form."[17] 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.

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16 John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1986, 38.

17 Ibid., 1-2.

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. In order to use this library, members were required to pay a membership fee. However, "none of the library's secretary books, of which there are three extant at the Ontario County Historical Society, lists any patron who affiliated himself with the new church."[18] Given the tight economic circumstances of Joseph's family during this period, that should not be surprising. Joseph's mother noted that, of all her children, Joseph "seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study."[19] By age eighteen, he still had not read the Bible all the way through.[20] If one looks for possible nineteenth-century sources during this period, local newspapers and religious tracts were probably more influential than libraries and bookstores.[21] Yet in citing such a source, one needs to show that Joseph Smith could have had access to it. The Tanners, for example, cite several newspapers published in the vicinity of Palmyra, which reflect the anti-Masonic controversy (pp. 69-72). They assume that these papers were a primary source for the Book of Mormon material on the Gadianton robbers, yet at the time when many of these were published, Joseph was not anywhere near Palmyra, but was in rural Harmony, Pennsylvania, one hundred and fifty miles away.[22] Joseph can hardly be expected to have borrowed from these.

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18 Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Manchester New York Library," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22 (1982): 340.

19 Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith*, notes and commentary by Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 82.

20 Ibid.

21 Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Manchester New York Library," 341-42. "It may be that Joseph's own educational training, both formal and informal, had not prepared him at this early age to deal with libraries and bookstores generally. . . . There is little evidence that his literary skills extended much beyond a cursory acquaintance with a few books. . . . Given his unlettered background . . . it is likely that during the 1820s he simply was not a part of the literary culture, that portion of the population for which books provided a substantial part of its intellectual experiences." Ibid.

22 Welch and Rathbone, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information," 6-23.

On pages 63-89 of the Tanners' work, they discuss a number of nineteenth-century parallels with the Book of Mormon. "We feel that a careful examination of the Book of Mormon has revealed the true setting in which it was produced. That setting was not the ancient world, as Dr. Nibley maintained, but rather the nineteenth century" (p. 88). This is a strange claim to make when no attempt is made to deal with any of the evidence Nibley has raised. While he and other scholars have "found a number of parallels, we feel that they are of little importance, especially when we consider the vast number of books and ancient records which he has had access to. If Dr. Nibley had spent half the time searching for parallels to the Nineteenth Century, we feel that he would have found an impressive list" (p. 63). They then present an array of modern parallels, without any further attempt to address the Book of Mormon's ancient claims.[23]

This is a major flaw in the Tanners' approach. The Book of Mormon makes certain claims to antiquity. As with any historical document, one cannot summarily dismiss that claim, as the Tanners attempt to do, without examining the evidence in its favor. Ancient patterns discussed by Hamblin, Nibley, Ricks, Sorenson, Tvedtnes, Welch, and others suggest that the Book of Mormon is consistent with that claim. Although some of the evidence noted by these scholars is rather persuasive, they do not claim that such parallels and consistencies *prove* the Book of Mormon true. The Tanners, however, claim that since modern parallels can be found to some Book of Mormon ideas and events, they have conclusively shown that the Book of Mormon is strictly a modern production and not an ancient book (p. 83). But such a task is impossible unless one is willing to examine and contrast modern patterns with ancient parallels to determine which model best explains the Book of Mormon text

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23 The Tanners cite Alexander Campbell, who was apparently the first critic to suggest that the Book of Mormon could be accounted for through nineteenth-century influences (pp. 63-64). However, in 1839, Campbell admitted that the Book of Mormon was still "difficult to explain" without an appeal to the Spaulding Theory. "It was difficult to imagine how a work containing *so many indications of being the production of a cultivated mind*, should be connected with a knavery so impudent and a superstition so gross," Alexander Campbell, "The Mormon Bible," *Millenial Harbinger* New Series 3/6 (June 1839): 265 (emphasis added).

as a whole.[24] Only then can a person make some determination as to whether the Book of Mormon looks more ancient or modern. While some of the Tanners' modern parallels are interesting, most do not appear to be singular to the early nineteenth century. In fact, upon closer examination, many of the Book of Mormon passages in question make better sense from an ancient perspective than they do from a modern one.

Revival or Ancient Festival?

The Tanners cite examples in nineteenth-century revivals where participants sometimes fell down upon the ground unconscious and then awoke praising God (pp. 64-65). They assert that the Book of Mormon passages which speak of the conversion of Lamoni and his father (Alma 18-22) seem peculiar to a nineteenth-century revival. But the Tanners fail to show that these events described in the Book of Mormon are unique to Joseph Smith's day. The motif of falling to the earth under the power of God during a revelation or vision is a common experience of the prophets in the Bible and apocalyptic literature in general, as is the idea of forgiveness of sins.[25] If Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, or John had such experiences, Lamoni could also.

Even less convincing are the Tanners' comparisons between nineteenth-century revivals and King Benjamin's speech in Mosiah 2-4 (pp. 64-65). While there are several general similarities between the two events, the comparisons are rather superficial. Pitching tents around the temple, Benjamin's tower, his speech, people falling to the earth and crying out for mercy—all of these have ancient precedents which the Tanners

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24 "It might be possible, I suppose, for someone to write a book dealing solely with nineteenth-century parallels to the Book of Mormon, but if no conclusions are drawn, then it becomes an exercise in methodological frivolity, on a par with taking the phone book, cutting it up, and putting it back together in a higgledy-piggledy fashion. A volume of nineteenth-century parallels to the Book of Mormon that provides no conclusion can, at the very least, be charged with methodological sloppiness, if not also some slight disingenuousness." Stephen D. Ricks, review of Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites* in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 134-35.

25 Isaiah 6:1, 5-7; Daniel 9:27; 10:8-9, 15-16; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Revelation 1:17; Moses 1:9; Joseph Smith-History 1:20, 48; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:1-4, in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:693.

have ignored.[26] The Tanners would like to portray Benjamin's tower as the common pulpit of a frontier preacher. There are, however, several reasons to take it more seriously, especially in light of Mosiah's impending coronation (Mosiah 1:10-18). In an interesting discussion of the coronation of Joash, which took place in Solomon's temple, Geo Widengren has asserted that the phrase "stood at his pillar" (2 Chronicles 23:11) would be more appropriately rendered "standing upon" and that the word "pillar" could just as well be rendered "platform," or some other kind of elevated stand. He concludes that, "at least towards the end of the pre-exilic period, but possibly from the beginning of that period, the king, when reading to his people on a solemn occasion from the book of the law and acting as the mediator of the covenant-making between Yahweh and the people, had his place on a platform or dais."[27] This, of course, puts the practice squarely in the world of Lehi, who left Jerusalem shortly before the Exile.

The prophet Ezra, in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, is said to have "stood upon a pulpit of wood" to address the people. Scholars have recently pointed out that the Hebrew word *migdāll*, which the King James Version renders as "pulpit," should in fact be translated as "tower." I find it interesting that the Book of Mormon never uses the words "pulpit" (Nehemiah 8:4), "scaffold" (2 Chronicles 6:13), or "pillar" (2 Kings 23:3;2; Chronicles 23:13)—all words available in Joseph Smith's English Bible—in describing Benjamin's stand, but in fact employs the word "tower," which is closer to the Hebrew.[28]

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26 Hugh Nibley discusses general Old World patterns in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 295-310. More recent scholars have found rewarding comparisons with Israelite New Year festivals such as Sukkot and Yom Kippur. John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1985; John Tvedtnes, "King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles," in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 2:197-37.

27 Geo Widengren, "King and Covenant," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 2/1 (January 1957): 9-10.

28 Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," 49. This also appears to have been the pattern followed by the Jews of the Diaspora in Babylon. R. Nathan the Babylonian's description of the installation of the Jewish exilarch in the tenth century

This is something that Joseph Smith simply could not have known in 1830.[29] Recent scholars who have examined Mosiah 1-6 in the light of ancient Israelite festivals, coronation, and covenant renewal are far more convincing.[30] The theory of nineteenth-century revival can only account for a small fraction of the text, while the ancient paradigm accounts for a much wider range of evidence and provides a more adequate explanation of the whole text of King Benjamin's speech.

A.D. is interesting in this regard. The exilarch would always be chosen from the royal House of David. "The ceremonial procession would set out from 'the home of one of the great men of the times in Babylon.' . . . Every step and every gesture was planned in detail for the ceremony . . . was held on the Sabbath once the [leaders] and others had reached the synagogue in Baghdad. A choir was concealed beneath a wooden tower, whose dimensions and multi-coloured cover were specified precisely. Prior to the commencement of the reading of the Torah, the exilarch entered to the festive prayer 'from the place where he was under concealment' in the middle of the tower. 'And when they see him all the people rise to their feet until he takes his seat on the tower.' . . . The blessings pronounced for him were delivered in dramatic fashion. The cantor uttered them 'in a low voice, so that they should be heard only by those who are seated round the tower and the youths who are beneath it. And . . . the youths respond in a loud voice after him: Amen.' " H. H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 422.

29 At least, the Tanners do not provide any evidence for nineteenth-century revival "towers" thus far.

30 Tvedtnes, "King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles," 197-237; Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," 1-60; Stephen D. Ricks, "The Treaty Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin's Address," *Brigham Young University Studies* 25 (1984): 151-62; Stephen D. Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant," in John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1991), 209-19; Blake T. Ostler, "The Covenant Tradition in the Book of Mormon," in Sorenson and Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 230-40; Kevin Christensen, review of Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 247-56; Allen J. Christenson, "Maya Harvest Festivals and the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 1-31; John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1992), 114-29.

Infant Baptism

The Tanners cite evidence showing that infant baptism was discussed in Joseph Smith's day. They assert that this concept is strangely out of place in the Book of Mormon. "It is true," they say, "that the practice of baptizing infants prevailed from a very early period upon the Eastern continent. But here in this Western world during olden time, the Latter-day Saints [i.e., the Nephites] had things their own way from the very beginning. The instructions upon the mode and the subjects of baptism were plain and unmistakable from Nephi down to Mormon" (pp. 65-66). But such an assertion is unfounded since the Nephites were clearly in the minority (Mosiah 25:2-3) and there were likely many other significant influences in Mesoamerican culture. The Book of Mormon gives subtle indications that much of the backsliding in Nephite history was due to the influences of other, non-Nephite cultural traditions and beliefs, which may have been well entrenched long before Nephite society even began.[31] In fact, contrary to the Tanners' notion, several forms of infant baptism were practiced by pre-Columbian Mesoamericans when the Spanish arrived in the New World. "Doubtless because of her permanent contact with the celestial spheres," notes Laurette Séjourné, Chalchiuhtlicue, the goddess of the waters, "is invested with the high faculty of purifying. It is she who in the baptismal ceremony frees the newborn child from impurity."[32] In Aztec religion, notes Burr C. Brundage, "Newborn children were commonly passed through the flames of the hearth and lightly singed as a form of baptism and an acknowledgment of their affiliation with the fire god."[33] It is not difficult to imagine that Mormon and Moroni were resisting similar cultural traditions which were making

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31 "The initial political amalgamation reported in Omni seemingly did not lead to genuine cultural integration but masked a diversity of lifeways that sometimes came forth in beliefs and behavior. . . . The periodic reemergence to public view of the 'old time religion' with strong Mulekite elements in it may have constituted a large measure of the 'falling away' so often lamented by the Book of Mormon leaders." John L. Sorenson, "The 'Mulekites,' " *Brigham Young University Studies* 30/3 (Summer 1990): 16-18.

32 Laurette Séjourné, *Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976), 136; cf. 9-11, 61.

33 Burr C. Brundage, *The Fifth Sun: Aztec Gods, Aztec World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 22; cf. 183.

dangerous inroads into the Nephite church of Christ (Moroni 8:1-30).

Ministers and Money

The Tanners are troubled by the Book of Mormon's concern over corrupt ministers, suggesting that the Book of Mormon phrase "without money and without price" (Alma 1:21) may have come from an 1827 newspaper article. A far more plausible explanation is that the Book of Mormon author got it from Isaiah 55:1. Since the Nephites had the writings of Isaiah on the brass plates, and since it was a popular passage with Nephite prophets (2 Nephi 9:50; Alma 5:34; 42:27), the use of the phrase makes perfect sense. The Tanners reluctantly admit this, but believe the newspaper may still have been the true source since both the newspaper and the Book of Mormon "use the words to attack a paid ministry" (p. 68). Yet Isaiah was just as concerned about corrupt and greedy priests as Alexander Campbell ever was. He describes wicked ministers as "greedy dogs which can never have enough" and "shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain" (Isaiah 56:11). Micah spoke of "the prophets that make my people err. . . . The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us?" (Micah 3:5, 11). "Blessed is everyone," says the Psalmist, "that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be" (Psalm 128:2). "The desire of the slothful killeth him for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous giveth and spareth not" (Proverbs 21:25). We can hardly be surprised that the Book of Mormon should mention such concepts (Mosiah 27:5; 2 Nephi 26:29-31).

Westminster Confession

Another source which the Tanners feel had direct influence on the Book of Mormon is the Westminster Confession of Faith, which outlined many creeds and teachings of the Presbyterian belief. They note that both texts discuss the state of the soul after death. But is not the very purpose of religion to deal with such questions? The Confession was clearly formed from common

biblical teachings.[34] The ideas of a "true and living God" (Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 44:6), the spirit returning to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7), the righteous going to a state of peace (Isaiah 57:1-2),[35] the wicked going into darkness (1 Samuel 2:9; Isaiah 47:5; Matthew 22:13; 2 Peter 2:4, 17), the dead being resurrected (1 Samuel 2:6; Isaiah 26:19-21; Hosea 6:2; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Daniel 12:2-3; Job 19:25-6),[36] and eschatological judgment (1 Samuel 2:10; Isaiah 24:21-2; Daniel 7:10, 27; Ecclesiastes 3:17; 11:9; 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Jude 1:6; Revelation 20:12-13) are all to be found in the Old and New Testaments. Since parallels with the Confession are so general, direct borrowing from the Confession seems unlikely.

Anti-Masonic Influences

The Tanners attempt to show that the Book of Mormon portrays the Gadianton robbers in phrases that were commonly used in the 1820s to describe Freemasonry (pp. 69-72). The authors imply that such terms as "secret combinations" and "secret society" had sole reference to Freemasonry and that since the Book of Mormon uses these terms, it is merely a modern fabrication and not an ancient work. The authors also note that Freemasonry was thought by some to be dangerous to the government and liberties of the people, etc. Daniel Peterson has

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34 "It would be hard to find a more thoroughly standardized statement of biblical teachings regarding the last judgment. The official Catholic teaching is the same. . . . Indeed, this is one of the few Christian doctrines on which nearly all churches, as well as Jewish doctors, agree, and it could hardly be otherwise, since it is all set forth so clearly in the scriptures"; Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, vol. 8 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1989), 181.

35 A similar concept can be found in Mesoamerican beliefs: "Another place where they said the souls of the dead went [was] the earthly paradise named Tlalocan, in which it was said there was much rejoicing and comfort, and no sorrow whatever." Séjourné, *Burning Water*, 66.

36 Resurrection is, after all, the reunification of the body and the spirit (Alma 40:21). As one early Jewish text describes it, "The body is connected to the soul and the soul to the body, to convict them of their common deeds. And the judgment becomes final for both body and soul, for the works they have done, whether good or evil." *Apocryphon of Ezekiel* 2:10-11, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:494. It is likely that the Tanners would consider this document a primary Book of Mormon source if it had only been available.

recently shown that such ideas and phrases were hardly restricted to Freemasonry, nor to the nineteenth century. Peterson notes that the 1828 edition of Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* defined "combination" as "intimate union, or association of two or more persons or things, by set purpose or agreement, for effecting some object, by joint operations; in a good sense, when the object is laudable; in an ill sense, when it is illegal or iniquitous. It is sometimes equivalent to league, or conspiracy. We say, a combination of men to overthrow government, or a combination to resist oppression."[37] After the heated presidential election of 1828, Andrew Jackson described attempts by Henry Clay to defame the character of Jackson and his wife in similar terms. "Even the aged and virtuous female is not free from his *secrete* [*sic*] *combinations* of base slander."[38] The use of this phrase is significant since it occurs at the time the Book of Mormon was being translated and yet has absolutely no reference to Freemasonry. Another critic in 1831 described bar associations as a "secret society" and a "combination, . . . a conspiracy against the rights and liberties of the people," likening their members to a group of "robbers" who are "taught to recognize each other by signs and grips and passwords, and swear to stand by each other through life."[39] Far from being proof of borrowing, these Book of Mormon terms would be as good as any to describe an ancient subversive society such as the Gadianton robbers.[40]

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37 Daniel C. Peterson, "Notes on Gadianton Masonry," in Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 189.

38 Paul Johnson, review of Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* in *The American Spectator* 25/2 (February 1992): 56 (emphasis added). I thank Daniel Peterson for bringing this item to my attention.

39 Ibid., 195-97. For an intriguing comparison between guerrilla warfare practices and the Gadianton robbers, see Daniel C. Peterson, "The Gadianton Robbers as Guerrilla Warriors," in Ricks and Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 146-73; Ray C. Hillam, "Gadiantons and Protracted Warfare," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Winter 1975): 215-24; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 128-31; Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 227-29.

40 John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985), 300-309; Bruce Warren, "Secret Combinations, Warfare, and Captive Sacrifice in

Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon

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. Books by James Adair, Elias Boudinot, Ethan Smith, and others are fairly representative of the early nineteenth-century literature which supported such an idea.[41] The Tanners suggest that the Book of Mormon was just one of many such books (pp. 81-84). While it is true that general similarities or parallels can be drawn between these works and the Book of Mormon, I believe that the differences are far more significant.[42] These works often provided a list of Indian names and words with their meanings, for example, but the Book of Mormon never makes use of any of these.[43] Some writers tried to show that Indians used the word "Hallelujah," yet this word is never found in the Book of Mormon.[44] Other writers asserted that Indians had cities of refuge,[45] Levitical

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Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon," in Ricks and Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 225-36. John Welch has shown that the Book of Mormon consistently makes the significant distinction between theft and robbery as men did in the ancient Near East, while nineteenth-century writers tended to blur the distinction between the two crimes. John W. Welch, "Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and Ancient Near Eastern Law," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1989.

41 James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London: James Adair, 1775); Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West: or a Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel* (Trenton, NJ: Sherman, 1816); Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 2d ed. (Poultney, VT: Smith and Shute, 1825); Josiah Priest, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed* (Albany, NY: Josiah Priest, 1825); Israel Worsley, *A View of the American Indians* (London: By the Author, 1828).

42 John W. Welch, "Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts' Questions," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1985, 23-41, lists over a hundred significant differences between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon. Does it make any sense to claim this was one of Joseph's primary sources when he contradicts it at every turn?

43 Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 40-77; Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 99-103; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 90-91.

44 Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 92.

45 Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 165-67; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 112-13.

tribes,[46] circumcision,[47] the ark of the covenant,[48] laws of uncleanliness,[49] certain ornaments for wearing,[50] peculiar rites for curing the sick,[51] and separation of women after childbirth.[52] Yet these items are not discussed in the Book of Mormon (as they likely would have been, had those books been a significant factor in its production).

Josiah Priest

Another source which the Tanners suggest that Joseph Smith used is Josiah Priest's 1825 work, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed.* They notice several scattered parallels between passages in Priest's book and the destruction in 3 Nephi 8:5-14 (pp. 84-85). However, many of Priest's ideas are merely taken from biblical events. Three days of darkness (Exodus 10:22),[53] a darkness that could be felt (Exodus 10:21), the description of the darkness as a vapor,[54] thunder, lightning, earthquakes, storm, tempest, fire (Isaiah 29:6)—all are seen by the Tanners as direct borrowing from Josiah Priest. Yet while Josiah Priest does describe some of these things, and several general parallels may be drawn between them and 3 Nephi, the Book of Mormon's claim that this was a real event remains very plausible and convincing.[55] Moreover, there are several elements of 3 Nephi 8 which, although not found in the Tanners' source, can be found in old

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46 Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 108-11.

47 Ibid., 96-98.

48 Ibid., 95-96.

49 Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 129-45.

50 Ibid., 178-80.

51 Ibid., 180-86.

52 Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 277-78.

53 Even this parallel is not an exact one. In the Exodus account the darkness was confined to the Egyptians, while the Israelites had light (Exodus 10:23), but in the Book of Mormon the darkness came upon all the inhabitants of the land (3 Nephi 8:20-23).

54 While the book of Exodus itself does not mention "vapors," other Old Testament scriptures which recount that event do use the word (Psalms 135:7-9; Jeremiah 10:13; 51:16).

55 Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, vol. 7 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 231-38; Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 128; Robert J. Trotter, "Unraveling a Mayan Mystery," *Science News* 111/5 (29 January 1977): 74-75, 78.

Mesoamerican sources, some of which were unavailable to Joseph Smith.[56] When Josiah Priest published his *American Antiquities* in 1835, he was critical of the Book of Mormon, but never suggested that Joseph Smith plagiarized from his 1825 book.[57] Wouldn't he have been one of the first to notice if it had been among the Prophet's sources? The same may be said of Ethan Smith. In 1833, the author of *View of the Hebrews* received an endorsement from 23 prominent clergymen who praised his 1823 work. Apparently, neither Reverend Smith nor any of his friends saw any relationship between that work and the Book of Mormon.[58] No critic ever suggested that Joseph Smith used the works of Josiah Priest or Ethan Smith until the twentieth century.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs

The Tanners have suggested that another source for the Book of Mormon was Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.[59] They indicate that since the term "faggots" occurs in the Book of Mormon, it must have been borrowed directly from Foxe, since it does not occur in the King James Version of the Bible. But the word was used in Joseph Smith's day and would adequately convey the

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56 The idea that these events occurred at the beginning of the year (3 Nephi 8:5), that the rocks were broken up (3 Nephi 9:18), and that these events occurred in the New World at approximately the same time as Christ's death (Helaman 14:20-28) can be found in the work of Ixtlilxochitl, which was unavailable to Joseph Smith before the publication of the Book of Mormon. "The sun and moon eclipsed, and the earth quaked, and the rocks broke, and many other things and signs occurred, although there was no calamity whatever toward men; this was in the year Ce Calli, which, adjusting this count with our own, comes to be at the same time when Christ our Lord suffered, and they say it happened during the first days of the year." Alfredo Chavero, *Obras Historicas de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 2 vols. (Mexico: Editora Nacional, 1959), 1:14. One legend in the Quetzalcoatl myth claimed "that when he died dawn did not appear for four days, because he had gone to dwell among the dead." Séjourné, *Burning Water*, 58.

57 Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities*, 5th ed. (Albany, NY: Hoffman and White, 1835), 76. Priest alleges plagiarism, not from his own book, but rather from the Old Testament.

58 Ethan Smith, *Key to the Revelation of Saint John* (New York: Harper, 1833).

59 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case against Mormonism*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968), 2:108.

idea of sticks for burning. If Joseph were really making this up, wouldn't he have used something more substantial? The Tanners also note that both the Book of Mormon and the *Book of Martyrs* describe believers who were burned to death. Foxe's work relates how several martyrs were burned at the stake. However, the Book of Mormon does not claim that Abinadi was burned at the stake, but, rather, merely that he "suffered death by fire" (Mosiah 17:20).

Finally, the Tanners refer to two quotations purporting to have been spoken by several Christian martyrs at the time of their deaths: "O Lord, receive my spirit," and "O Father of Heaven, receive my soul." These are compared with Abinadi's final words in the Book of Mormon, "O God, receive my soul" (Mosiah 17:19). Neither quote is an exact match, so the theory of plagiarism is somewhat weak. This is even more the case when one considers that language similar to Abinadi's can also be found in the Old Testament books. The vocative expression "O God" is one of the more common phrases in Old Testament prayers, although none of the Tanners' examples uses that phrase.[60] The only direct similarity between the two sources is the phrase "receive my soul." But the idea of God receiving the righteous soul at death is clearly implied in the Old Testament, as we can see below.

O God, receive my soul. (Mosiah 17:19)	But *God* will redeem *my soul* from the power of the grave: for he shall *receive* me. (Psalm 49:15; cf. 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:3; Psalm 31:5; Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Shakespeare and Lehi

The Tanners assert that Lehi's phrase "From whence no traveller can return" (2 Nephi 1:14) comes from Shakespeare's description of death as "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns" (pp. 84-85). Unlike other critics, however, they do not insist that Joseph Smith borrowed directly from Shakespeare's works, but suggest that he may have got it at second hand through the writings of Josiah Priest, who appears to quote the phrase in his *Wonders of Nature and*

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60 E.g., Psalms 4:1; 5:10; 10:12; 16:1; 17:6; 25:22; 43:1, 3; 44:1, 4; 45:6; 48:9-10.

Providence Displayed. In support of this theory, they note that Priest's paraphrase "from whence no traveler returns" is even closer to Lehi than Shakespeare. But this makes little difference since similar ideas were expressed in Lehi's day. Hugh Nibley has pointed out that such language was common in Near Eastern thought.[61] The issue has also been discussed by Sidney Sperry, B. H. Roberts, and others.[62] More recently Robert F. Smith has noted that the whole context of 2 Nephi 1:13-15 (not just this one brief phrase) fits nicely into an ancient Near Eastern context (he cites numerous examples).[63] Smith demonstrates that most of the ideas spoken of by Lehi can also be found in Jewish, Sumerian, and Egyptian texts of antiquity, many of which would likely have been a part of Lehi's intellectual milieu.[64] A few examples are listed below.

Descent of Inanna

"Why, pray, have you come to the 'Land of no return,' on the road whose traveller returns never?"[65]

Pyramid Texts

"May you go on the roads of the western ones [the dead]; They who go on them [travellers] do not return."[66]

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61 "It is commonplace in the literature of the whole Near East from the earliest times to the present"; Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 162. See Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 90-91, 236.

62 B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 3:442-43; Sidney B. Sperry, *Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 123-30; Franklin S. Harris, Jr., *The Book of Mormon: Message and Evidences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), 110; Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1966), 29-30.

63 Robert F. Smith, "Shakespeare and the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1980.

64 I am hardly suggesting that Lehi was directly dependent upon any of these sources. It would not be surprising if such ideas and phraseology were taken for granted by Lehi and his contemporaries.

65 Smith, "Shakespeare and the Book of Mormon," 5.

66 Ibid., 4.

Harris Papyrus

"There is nobody who returns from there."[67]

"Behold there is nobody who has gone, who has returned."[68]

Similar ideas can also be found in Jewish scripture (2 Samuel 12:24; Job 10:21; 16:22; Proverbs 2:19) and are clearly at home in the Near Eastern world from which Lehi came.

Miscellaneous Comparisons

The Tanners recount Lucy Mack Smith's recollection of a dream her husband had before 1820. The dream closely parallels Lehi's vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8). They therefore assert that the dream is a modern creation and that the Book of Mormon author simply borrowed it from Joseph Smith, Sr. (pp. 86-88). This theory could account for how Joseph came up with the idea, but it does little to explain the ancient parallels to this motif. The field, the path, the tree, the mists of darkness, the great and spacious building, the two rivers (one good and one evil)[69] all have parallels from the ancient world.[70] Some of these accounts were even written on metal plates.[71] If Joseph Smith made this up, he did pretty well, indeed.

The Tanners refer to a newspaper article which mentions the public hanging of a murderer named Strang, who is described as suffering an "ignominious" death (pp. 85-86).[72] They compare him with Nehor. However, this kind of grab-bag

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67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 There is no river of filthy water in Joseph Smith, Sr.'s, dream.

70 C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," in Noel B. Reynolds, *Book of Mormon Authorship* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 75-101; William J. Hamblin, "Pre-Islamic Arabian Prophets," in Spencer J. Palmer, ed., *Mormons and Muslims* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1983), 96-97; Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites*, vol. 5 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 43-46; Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 157-62.

71 Griggs, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," 79-87.

72 Would not death by hanging be considered "ignominious" in any age?

methodology clearly has its limitations. It might be fun for the Tanners, but it leaves them powerless to explain many of the more subtle complexities in the Book of Mormon. The case of the Gadianton Zemnarihah is an excellent example. After his capture, he is "hanged upon a tree, yea even on the top thereof until he was dead. And when they had hanged him until he was dead they did fell the tree to the earth" (3 Nephi 4:28). While hanging was certainly a common form of ignominious death in the nineteenth century, where in Jacksonian America do you find the practice of cutting down the "hanging tree"? Such practices seem odd to us today, but they would make good sense for an Israelite. Ancient tradition required that the tree upon which a criminal was hung be chopped down so that it would not serve as a reminder of the dead criminal. The tree was sometimes even buried with the body. In fact, the Talmud actually recommended that a dead and detached tree be used for hanging so that a live tree did not have to be felled.[73]

Another interesting example is the antagonist, Korihor. The Tanners view him as a typical Jacksonian atheist,[74] but Nibley's parallel with the Egyptian Kherihor (Herihor), the one-time high priest of Ammon, is far more convincing.

> The High Priest of Ammon . . . in a priestly plot set himself up as a rival of Pharaoh himself, while his son Paanchi actually claimed the throne. This was four hundred years before Lehi left Jerusalem, and it had historic repercussions of great importance; not only did it establish a new dynasty, but it inaugurated the rule of priestcraft in Egypt; from that time on, "the High-priest of Amon . . . could and constantly did reduce the king to a position of subservience."[75]

This is significant since Korihor, in the Book of Mormon, accuses the priests of the church of binding the people down "under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests to usurp power and authority over them" (Alma 30:23). If the Tanners' atheist in Jacksonian America had been called Korihor, perhaps their parallel would be more convincing—but, as it is, Nibley's ancient paradigm simply explains more of the text.

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73 Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 250-52.

74 Tanner and Tanner, *The Case against Mormonism*, 2:67.

75 Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 284.

Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?

In 1922 B. H. Roberts, a well-known Mormon intellectual and General Authority, prepared several informal studies dealing with Book of Mormon criticisms and alleged problems raised by critics of the Church.[76] Although Roberts could not answer some of these criticisms in 1922, most of them are not problems today.[77] 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.[78] 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.[79]

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

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76 These have been recently published in Brigham D. Madsen, ed., *B. H. Roberts: Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

77 Welch, "Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts' Questions," 1-41.

78 For a thorough treatment of the issue of Roberts's studies and the question of his faith and testimony, see Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1985.

79 Madsen, ed., *B. H. Roberts: Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 57-58 (emphasis added). 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.

October 1923 he called the Book of Mormon "the sublimest message ever delivered to the world."[80] In 1924 he stated that the Book of Mormon helped provide Latter-day Saints with a foundation "built up of living stones wherein is no darkness or doubt."[81] Roberts actively continued to use the Book of Mormon in his writing and teaching throughout the next nine years.[82] In 1928, after asking if "common knowledge and general discussion in the time and vicinity of Joseph Smith when the Book of Mormon was undergoing production" would have been enough to account for the production of the Nephite record, he responded, "Emphatically no."[83] In October 1929, desirous that no one misunderstand his own convictions, Roberts stated, "I hope that if anywhere along the line I have caused any of you to doubt my faith in this work, then let this testimony and my indicated life's work be a correction of it."[84] In November 1930 he asserted that "surer recognition of Jesus being God may not be found in sacred writ [than in the Book of Mormon]."[85] Roberts continued to be impressed by the depth and scope of Book of Mormon doctrinal teachings and thought. Concerning the sacramental prayers in the Book of Mormon, he told the San Francisco Stake in April 1932 that "this was not the work of an unlettered youth . . . but evidence of divine inspiration. When this prayer is thoughtfully considered, it gives great weight to [the] claims of the modern prophet."[86] In April 1933, he described the Book of Mormon as "one of the most valuable books that has ever been preserved."[87] Just weeks before he died, he advised Jack Christensen, "Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon. You accept Joseph Smith and all the scriptures."[88] In light of Roberts's boldness in

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80 *Conference Report*, October 1923, 92.

81 Welch and Madsen, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" 18.

82 Ibid., 16-27.

83 B. H. Roberts, "Master Stroke of Philosophy," *Deseret News*, 16 June 1928.

84 *Conference Report*, October 1929, 91.

85 *Deseret News*, 22 November 1930.

86 Minutes of the San Francisco Stake Conference, 23-24 April 1932, in Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" 25-26.

87 *Conference Report*, April 1933, 117.

88 Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" 27.

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.[89]

Biblical Influences

Although the Tanners feel that many of the Book of Mormon's ideas and concepts came from local books and newspapers, "the King James Version of the Bible," they assert, "probably had more influence on the author than any other book" (p. 72). "The Book of Genesis . . . seems to have had a real influence upon the first chapters of the Book of Mormon" (p. 73). And I would agree. But while the Tanners would declare this sure proof of plagiarism, I would suggest that the Book of Mormon's use of the biblical narrative is consistent with Nephi's culture and background and is actually a good argument for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. One would expect that biblical names like Laban, Jacob, and Joseph would be common in a family of faithful Israelites in Lehi's day (p. 73). Are the Tanners really surprised by this?

As they point out, there are clear parallels between the Israelite Exodus and wanderings and the travels of Lehi's family. But since Nephi compiled the small plates at least thirty years after his family had left Jerusalem (2 Nephi 28-31), openly stating that deliverance is a major theme of his record (1 Nephi 1:20), and since he was a diligent student of the scriptures, there is no conflict. In fact, for Nephi, the archetypal example of deliverance would have been the Israelite Exodus.[90] Nephi clearly viewed his own family's experience as a repetition of the Exodus pattern (1 Nephi 4:2-3; 17:22-44). The same may be

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89 The Tanners indiscriminately quote from Wesley Lloyd's journal recollection of a meeting with Roberts in August 1933. *Major Problems of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1989), 156-60. Inaccuracies and historical problems with Lloyd's account have been discussed by Welch and Madsen in "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" 35-40.

90 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 3-48. For ancient man "an object or act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype. Thus, reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything which lacks an exemplary model is 'meaningless,' i.e., it lacks reality. Men would have a tendency to become archetypal and paradigmatic." Ibid., 34.

said of comparisons with the Zeniffite record in the book of Mosiah and other places in the Book of Mormon.[91]

The similarities between Joseph and Nephi would also be consistent with the claims of the Book of Mormon narrative, which is concerned with "a remnant of the seed of Joseph" (3 Nephi 5:23). Nephi would naturally compare his experiences with those of his faithful ancestor. Joseph, though once rejected by his brethren (Genesis 37:20), would one day be the instrument of their salvation (Genesis 50:20), just as Nephi's teachings, though once rejected by the Lamanites and their descendants (2 Nephi 26:17; Enos 1:14), would one day be the means of leading them to Christ (2 Nephi 30:3-6; Enos 1:13, 18).

The Tanners note, as other critics have, the similarity between Judges 21:19-23 and the abduction of the Lamanite daughters in Mosiah 20:1-5. Ancient parallels from Rome and Greece could also be cited. But rather than casting doubt upon the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, these parallels are rich with complexity and meaning.[92]

The Tanners assert that Nephi quotes from Malachi. Since Malachi was not written until after Lehi's departure from the Old World, the use of several similar phrases by Nephi on the small plates is, according to the Tanners, "one of the most serious mistakes" that the author of the Book of Mormon could have made (p. 74). Close parallels to Malachi's words may, however, be found in several other Old Testament prophets, which at

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91 "The Exodus was not only a real event, but also a 'type and a shadow of things' (Mosiah 13:10), representing both escape from the wicked world and redemption from the bondage of sin." Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 146, cf. 145-56; George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in Neal A. Lambert, *Literature and Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1981), 245-62; John W. Welch and Avraham Gileadi, "Research and Perspectives: Nephi and the Exodus," *Ensign* 17 (April 1987): 64-65; Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimensions in Nephi's Small Plates," *Brigham Young University Studies* 27 (Fall 1987): 22-33; Reynolds, "Nephi's Political Testament," in Sorenson and Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 220-29; S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," *Brigham Young University Studies* 30/3 (1990): 111-26; Terrence Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in Sorenson and Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 38-51.

92 Alan Goff, "The Stealing of the Daughters of the Lamanites," in Sorenson and Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 67-74.

least suggests that some of these phrases were common prophetic language.[93] A few phrases, though, do seem unique to Malachi. Yet Nephi is clearly using the brass plates (1 Nephi 22:29-30). He never claims to be quoting Malachi, but rather an unnamed individual called "the prophet," which may in fact refer to Zenos (1 Nephi 19:11-17; 22:15, 17, 23). Whatever the source, Nephi purports to be quoting from an earlier prophet on the brass plates and not from Malachi.[94]

The Tanners assert that 3 Nephi 20:23-26 was borrowed directly from Peter's words in Acts 3:22-26. They claim that the similarity between these two passages represents "a real dilemma" for Joseph Smith, since the Nephites would have been unfamiliar with Peter's words (pp. 79-80). However, the Book of Mormon does not necessitate such an interpretation. Peter and his fellow apostles had just spent forty days of intense instruction with the resurrected Master. What the similarity in the two passages may suggest is that those words were not original to Peter, but were given to Peter during the forty-day ministry of the resurrected Savior, just as the Nephites received them in the New World.[95]

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93 "Thy wrath which consumed them as stubble" (Exodus 15:7); "The fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness" (Isaiah 5:24); "Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you. . . . As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire" (Isaiah 33:11-12); "Behold they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them" (Isaiah 47:14); "They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry" (Nahum 1:10); "Like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble" (Joel 2:5); "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining" (Obadiah 1:18).

94 The Tanners might object that this is contrary to Jesus' words to the Nephites, "Other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not" (3 Nephi 23:6), yet Christ's words also had reference to the preaching of Samuel the Lamanite (3 Nephi 23:9-12). Malachi still discussed many other things which were not yet had by the Nephites, such as the coming of the Lord's messenger (3 Nephi 24:1-5), an important treatment of tithes and offerings (3 Nephi 24:8-12), and the promise of Elijah's coming (3 Nephi 25:5-6). Clearly Jesus was referring to these teachings and not the phrases used by earlier prophets.

95 This has been suggested by others; cf. Kevin Christensen, review of Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 238-40. For extrabiblical

Proper Names

Among the more compelling evidences supporting the Book of Mormon's claim to antiquity are the proper names found within its narrative. Not only do many of these appear to be perfectly good Semitic names, but they frequently occur in a context that reflects their Old World usage. This argues convincingly for the Book of Mormon's claim to antiquity.[96] The strength of this evidence is made even more clear in the Tanners' vain attempt to explain it away (p. 95). They note, for instance, that many of the Book of Mormon names are found in the Old Testament. But if Lehi was an Israelite, wouldn't that be expected? There are, by my own count, about 180 nonbiblical names in the Book of Mormon. How do the Tanners account for these? "It would have been easy to make up hundreds of 'new names' by simply changing a few letters on names that are already known or by making different combinations with parts of names." "If he used a list of Bible names and a little imagination, it would have been very easy for Joseph Smith to have produced the new names found in the Book of Mormon" (p. 95).

The name Alma, the Tanners assert, may have been taken from the word Sh*alma*neser in the Old Testament or it may have come from a local newspaper, which mentioned a woman by the name of Miss Alma Parker (p. 95). No one, of course, would doubt that Alma was a common woman's name in Joseph Smith's day, a point which has often made the Book of Mormon an object of ridicule.[97] However, in 1961 Yigael Yadin

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parallels to the Salome episode in Ether 8:7-18, see Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 210-13.

96 Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 19-34; Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 281-94; Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 168-72; Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 97-98, 101, 246-47, 281-82, 388-89, 535; John Tvedtnes, "A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," F.A.R.M.S reprint, 1977; JoAnne Carlton and John W. Welch, "Possible Linguistic Roots to Certain Book of Mormon Proper Names," F.A.R.M.S. preliminary report, 1981, 5-6. Paul Y. Hoskisson provides important cautions in discussing Book of Mormon names in his "Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names in the Book of Mormon," in Lundquist and Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith*, 2:126-35.

97 Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1978), 327; Robert McKay, "A Mormon Name," *The Utah*

discovered a land deed with several names on it, dating to the time of the Bar Kokhba rebellion in Palestine. Yadin translated one of the names as "Alma the son of Judah."[98] So it turns out not only that Alma is an authentic Hebrew name, but that it was used anciently as the name of an Israelite man. Did Joseph borrow from Professor Yadin?

The Tanners' explanation is also implausible for another reason. Fabricating the nonbiblical names would have been guesswork at best. If Joseph was merely playing around with a few word combinations, imagination and creativity might possibly allow for getting a couple of names right. But the chance of making serious mistakes would increase with every new word combination. Languages are far more complicated than that. The Tanners misunderstand the problem. They must not only account for Joseph's creating new names, but also for his choosing so many nonbiblical names that actually existed in the world antedating Lehi. While there is still much to learn about Book of Mormon names, it is quite clear that many are used contextually in ways that make sense from their Old World background. These comparisons can sometimes add a depth to our understanding of the Book of Mormon that nineteenth-century explanations cannot provide.

Mosiah

Take, for example, the name *Mosiah*, which is prominent in the Book of Mormon. While the Tanners admit that this name is not to be found in the Bible, they believe it was derived by combining elements of the words *Mos*es and Isa*iah*. Other explanations, though, are far more plausible. In 1965, John Sawyer, a non-Mormon biblical scholar, published an article entitled, "What Was a Mošiʿa?"[99] This word, he noted, is Hebrew and is found in the Hebrew scriptures, but is never transliterated into modern English translations of the Old Testament as *môšîʿa*. After a thorough study of how this word

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Evangel 31/8 (August 1984): 4; "That Man Alma," *The Utah Evangel* 33/3 (April 1986): 2.

98 Yigael Yadin, *Bar Kokhba* (New York: Random House, 1971), 176; Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 281-82.

99 John Sawyer, "What Was a Mošiʿa?" *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 475-86.

is used in the Hebrew scriptures, Sawyer drew the following conclusions:

1. *Môšîʿa* is a word like "victor" or "savior" or "deliverer."[100]

2. The term was used in antiquity to refer to a hero appointed by God, who delivers an oppressed and afflicted people from injustice.[101]

3. The term designated a unique class or office in ancient Israel.[102]

4. The term was later applied specifically to God himself.[103]

5. Those in danger or those who are unjustly oppressed "cry out" for help and receive deliverance from a *môšîʿa*.[104]

6. This deliverance is frequently, though not always, accomplished by nonviolent means.[105]

7. The *môšîʿa* is an "advocate" or "witness for the defense."[106]

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100 Ibid., 481-83.

101 Sawyer explains, "It is a word invariably implying a champion of justice in a situation of controversy, battle or oppression" (ibid., 475-76). "It is in a situation of injustice and in particular unjust oppression of the chosen people that a *mošiʿa* is needed. This applies to situations of battle, and to situations of general lawlessness" (ibid., 478). "The subject when mentioned is always God or his appointed hero" (ibid., 478, 480).

102 Sawyer notes that, in two instances, "It appears to have been the object of the verb *lə̂hakim*. . . . This verb is found only with the following individuals: king, judge, prophet, priest, shepherd, watchman, father, son, satan and *mošiʿa*. Thus *mošiʿa* is separated from its more general synonyms and brought into a class of people who have a definite office or position in ancient Israel" (ibid., 477). He further suggests that the term "belonged originally to some special sphere of life—the palace, the battlefield, the temple, the lawcourt, the market place, the family—and was later applied to wider contexts" (ibid., 478).

103 "We are suggesting, then, a development from a definite office within a definite sphere of life, to a title of God related anthropomorphically to the same sphere of life, and from there to a title of God in any general context" (ibid., 485).

104 Ibid., 476-77.

105 "Thus we have seen that *mošiʿa* appears most often, not in contexts of violence or physical danger, but in situations of injustice" (ibid., 480). "His activity is sometimes verbal, rather than physical" (ibid., 486).

106 "The meaning of 'advocate' or 'witness for the defense' fits well" (ibid., 485). "The *mošiʿa* is one who appears on behalf of Israel in court" (ibid., 481). "There was a place in ancient Israel for an 'advocate' or a

8. He is always on the side of justice.[107] As Sawyer explains, "The main idea is intervening and contending on behalf of the right."[108]

9. The oppressed and afflicted seek refuge from their enemies at the "right hand" of a *môšîʿa*.[109]

10. "Final victory means the coming of *môšîʿîm* to rule like judges over Israel. The people will once again possess their own property and justice will be the foundation of the Kingdom of the Lord."[110]

John Welch and Stephen Ricks have noted that *môšîʿa*, when coupled with the theophoric element *iah*, would mean "the Lord is a *môšîʿa*."[111] Using Sawyer's criteria, we can see that the term *môšîʿa* opens up profound insights into the book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon.

1. The themes of physical and spiritual deliverance and salvation are strong and profound in the book of Mosiah.[112]

2. Benjamin, Zeniff, Alma, Gideon, Ammon, Mosiah II, and the sons of Mosiah are all heroes appointed by God to bring various forms of deliverance to his people. The sons of Mosiah, after having been delivered from sin (Alma 26:17-20), are instruments of God in bringing spiritual deliverance to the Lamanites (Alma 26:13-15). Sons of the Lamanite converts in turn become instruments of God in delivering the Nephites from their enemies (Alma 56-59).

3. Mosiah I, Benjamin, Zeniff, and Mosiah II are all kings. Alma the Elder is a priest, and Alma the Younger became the first chief judge over the Nephites. King Benjamin delivers his speech from the temple (Mosiah 2:7), after being victorious

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'witness for the defense,' as also for a 'witness for the prosecution.' " Sawyer asks, "If Satan was the one, was the *mošiʿa*, at some time and in some part of the Middle East, the other?" (ibid., 486).

107 "The result of the coming of a *mošiʿa* on the scene was escape from injustice, and a return to a state of justice where each man possesses his rightful property" (ibid., 480). "The *mošiʿa* is always on the side of justice" (ibid., 486).

108 Ibid., 482.

109 Ibid., 483.

110 Ibid., 482.

111 "What Was a *Mošiʿa*?" F.A.R.M.S. Update, April 1989; see Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 105-7.

112 Clyde J. Williams, "Deliverance from Bondage," in Nyman and Tate, eds., *Mosiah: Salvation Only through Christ*, 261-74.

in battle (Omni 1:24; Words of Mormon 1:13-14) and establishing peace by preaching the gospel (Words of Mormon 1:15-18; Mosiah 1:1, 3).

4. The underlying message of the whole book of Mosiah is that, although God appoints servants, it is the Lord who is the true deliverer (Mosiah 11:23; 24:21; 25:16).

5. The people of Zeniff cry unto the king in times of danger (Mosiah 9:16-18), and also "cry mightily to the Lord" (Mosiah 9:17), as do the people of Limhi (Mosiah 11:23-25; 21:14-16) and the people of Alma (Mosiah 23:27-29; 24:10-17).

6. King Zeniff opposes a needless attack upon the Lamanites (Mosiah 9:1-2). Through the counsel of Gideon, the people of Limhi are delivered by getting the Lamanites drunk, thus preventing bloodshed (Mosiah 22:1-16), and the Lord causes a deep sleep to come upon the Lamanites so that Alma's people may escape in peace (Mosiah 24:19-25).

7. Alma was an advocate for Abinadi, for which he was cast out by Noah (Mosiah 17:1-4). Abinadi clearly teaches that the wicked who reject Christ and do not repent have no redeemer or advocate to defend them from the demands of justice (Mosiah 15:27; 16:12).

8. The book of Mosiah clearly teaches important principles regarding God's justice (Mosiah 15:8-9, 26-27).

9. Zeniff's people call upon him for protection against their enemies (Mosiah 9:14-16). The righteous are promised a protected place at God's right hand at the day of judgment (Mosiah 5:9; 26:23-24). The name Benjamin, of course, means "son of the right hand."[113]

10. The whole purpose of the Zeniffite colony was to redeem their rightful land of inheritance (Mosiah 9:1, 6-7). The reign of the judges was seen by the people of Nephi as a joyous change in which "inequality should be no more" (Mosiah 29:32) and "every man should have an equal chance throughout the land" (Mosiah 29:38).

Sawyer's article came 135 years too late for Joseph Smith.

Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Chapter 6 of the Tanners' work attempts to show that no archaeological evidence supports the historicity of the Book of

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113 James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible with their Renderings in the Authorized English Version* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1890), 22.

Mormon. The authors cite several statements made by Dee F. Green in 1969 that were critical of works which attempted to *prove* or *disprove* the Book of Mormon through archaeological means (pp. 102-3).[114] Green did not claim, as some critics imply, that there was no evidence supporting the Book of Mormon's historicity. He simply recognized that archaeology has certain limits in what it can tell us about ancient civilizations. According to Green, the Book of Mormon "is a highly complex record demanding the knowledge of a wide variety of anthropological skills from archaeology through ethnology to linguistics and culture change, with perhaps a little physical anthropology thrown in for good measure."[115] Archaeological evidence is only one of numerous tools needed to evaluate properly a sophisticated historical document such as the Bible or the Book of Mormon.[116] Green pointed out that there was a need to examine the Book of Mormon against the framework of ancient New World cultures, since that is where the book, for the most part, claims to have occurred. Far from rejecting the Book of Mormon, Green suggested that an examination of the Book of Mormon from the perspective of New World anthropology would help to "tip the scales in our favor."[117]

The 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*. After a rigorous examination of the Book of Mormon against the cultural background of Mesoamerican cultures (the very thing Green suggested), 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

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114 Dee F. Green, "Book of Mormon Archaeology: The Myths and the Alternatives," *Dialogue* 4/2 (Summer 1969): 71-80.

115 Ibid., 79.

116 Even biblical archaeology is not without its own problems and difficulties. For instance, the book of Joshua describes the destruction of the walls of Jericho, however, Kathleen Kenyon demonstrated in the late 1950s that the city wall was destroyed around 2400 B.C., nearly a millennium before Joshua would have been there, and does not appear, at present, to have been occupied in Joshua's day; William E. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 46-47.

117 Green, "Book of Mormon Archaeology," 79

romance or speculative history written in the third decade of the nineteenth century."[118] Sorenson's work is only representative of numerous efforts to examine the Book of Mormon in light of its own cultural and historical claims.[119]

The Smithsonian Statement

The Tanners are highly dependent on the arguments of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics M. T. Lamb and Charles A. Shook.[120] But these critics' arguments are rather outdated, since much of what they criticized was not the Book of Mormon, but false assumptions about the book. Contrary to many assumptions, the Book of Mormon does not claim that reformed Egyptian was the universal language of the Americas, nor that only one language existed in the New World. 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 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.[121]

This weakness is evident in the Smithsonian Statement on the Book of Mormon, a brief memo drafted by the Smithsonian Institution to answer naive inquiries about whether the Institution has ever used the Book of Mormon as a guide in

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118 John Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985), 354.

119 See, for example, Ricks and Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*. See also a recent F.A.R.M.S. catalogue for a current listing of numerous other efforts.

120 M. T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible* (New York: Ward & Drummond, 1887); and Charles A. Shook, *Cumorah Revisited* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1910).

121 This was a major weakness of Michael D. Coe's article, "Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8/2 (Spring 1973): 40-48. Coe did not appear to have examined the Book of Mormon closely, since he describes the Book of Mormon as lacking ethical and moral content and being a simple story of white civilized people and dark savages. Even the most superficial reader knows that the Book of Mormon account is far more complex. See V. Garth Norman, "San Lorenzo as the Jaredite City of Lib," F.A.R.M.S. reprint, 1983, 1-9.

archaeology. The Statement makes clear that the Smithsonian has never done so and currently sees "no connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book" (p. 97). The 1987 version of the Statement lists eight points that describe what are presumably reasons for this position. While the Tanners and numerous other critics gleefully use the memo in an attempt to discredit Mormonism, there are several problems in citing it as evidence against the Book of Mormon's historicity. John Sorenson has provided a useful evaluation of some of these problems.[122] He notes that while the Smithsonian certainly has a right to respond to naive inquiries, and they are certainly competent in their own areas of specialization, they lack people competent to evaluate the Book of Mormon properly in its ancient context.

> We need persons who are highly and fully informed about southern and central Mesoamerica in the time *prior to* the most famous or Classic Cultures such as the Maya. We are talking about highly specific data which is controlled by only a handful of scholars. Unfortunately the Smithsonian, as is true of practically any other research institution in the U.S.A. or abroad, lacks such people. But even those who do control this data need also to know the Book of Mormon in terms to permit their making a relevant, informed comparison.[123]

I might add that some of the claims addressed in the Statement are never made by the Book of Mormon at all. The most recent version of the Statement (1987) says that oats,

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122 John L. Sorenson, "An Evaluation of the Smithsonian 'Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon,' " F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1982. "We aren't satisfied with the opinion of an eye surgeon about what makes our feet hurt, nor do we depend on a historian knowledgeable in medieval European events to answer our inquiries about modern China. The Smithsonian as a source of information on the Book of Mormon matters suffers on this basis. It simply lacks people able to speak with authority on the matter. . . . The most erudite archaeologist who has not also become an expert in analysis of the Book of Mormon record is in no position to make a comparison. Conversely, the scriptorian ignorant of appropriate details from the best researchers on the ancient world has nothing significant to say about how scientific findings compare with the claims of the Book of Mormon"; ibid., 1-2.

123 Ibid., 2 (emphasis added).

millet, and rice were not to be found in pre-Columbian America, but these items are not mentioned in the Book of Mormon, so the point is moot. There is nothing in the Book of Mormon that would in any way imply that camels were brought to the New World. The same may be said of glass, which is, admittedly, perhaps implied in the Book of Mormon term "windows"—however, windows are mentioned only in the context of the Old World.[124] The Book of Mormon does not claim that its peoples ever interacted with Viking Norsemen, nor does it claim any direct *archaeological* connection with Egypt as paragraphs three and seven of the Statement imply. Supposed refutations of such issues have absolutely no bearing on the Book of Mormon's historicity and in some ways misrepresent its claims as well. When the Tanners and other critics claim that these points somehow discredit the Book of Mormon, it is clear that their research into that book has been shallow indeed.

Other items in the Statement can be shown to have been premature or incorrect in light of recent research and discoveries. For instance, while there is no known evidence at this time for pre-Columbian wheat, archaeologists have discovered pre-Columbian domesticated barley at a Hohokam site in Arizona.[125] Furthermore, there is evidence that the Hohokam culture had strong ties with Central America.[126] Such discoveries are a healthy reminder that sweeping, dogmatic statements made by scholars often need to be questioned, reevaluated, and even changed in light of new research and discoveries. Most of the Book of Mormon difficulties suggested by the Smithsonian Statement can be readily explained, while other points, upon examination, suggest that archaeological evidence may simply be incomplete. We will look at a few of these.

The Chicken

The only time chickens are mentioned in the Book of Mormon is when Jesus is speaking to the Nephites and uses the metaphor of a hen gathering chickens under her wings (3 Nephi

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124 Glass was known in the Old World during Jaredite times; Dan Klein and Ward Lloyd, *The History of Glass* (London: Orbis, 1984), 9-10.

125 Daniel B. Adams, "Last Ditch Archaeology," *Science 83* (December 1983): 32; Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 130-32.

126 Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 218-20.

10:4-6). The Nephites would not have needed an acquaintance with chickens to understand the metaphor of a mother bird protecting her young. So we need not read too much into the metaphor itself. Nevertheless, George F. Carter of Texas A&M University has discussed evidence that chickens were present in pre-Columbian America, probably having been imported from East Asia.[127]

Cattle

The term *cattle* is used in the Book of Mormon (Enos 1:21; 3 Nephi 3:22). Generally we tend to think that this term refers only to cows. However, it is not clear from the Book of Mormon exactly what the term *cattle* has reference to. The Hebrew word *bəhēmāh*, sometimes translated as "cattle" in the Old Testament, can refer to "any large quadruped or animal."[128] The Hebrew word *śeh*, also translated as "cattle," usually refers to smaller domesticates such as sheep or goats.[129] The Book of Mormon term could easily refer to any small or large quadruped. There are, of course, many New World species that could fall within this description.

Swine

The term *swine* is used only twice, once in the Jaredite period (Ether 9:18) and once by Jesus during his sermon at the temple (3 Nephi 14:6). The Book of Mormon does not claim that the Nephites ate swine as did the Jaredites. (The Jaredites were not under the law of Moses.) Peccaries were well known in Mesoamerica and look very much like domesticated pigs and could easily fit the Book of Mormon designation of swine.[130]

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127 George F. Carter, "Pre-Columbian Chickens in America," in Caroll L. Riley et al., *Man across the Sea* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 178-218; George F. Carter, "Before Columbus," in Paul R. Cheesman, *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 172-76; "F.A.R.M.S.-Sponsored 'Chicken Project' Will Be Published Soon," *Insights: Ancient Window* (July 1992): 5.

128 Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible*, 19.

129 Ibid., 113.

130 Ignacio Bernal, *The Olmec World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20, 123; Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 297.

Horses

Scholars no longer doubt that horses were present in the New World during the Pleistocene period. Although many believe that horses were extinct long before the Book of Mormon era, there is still disagreement as to just how long horses survived in the New World. Some scholars believe that horses could have survived as late as 3000 B.C.[131] Ivan Sanderson states that "there is a body of evidence both from the mainland of Central America and even from rock drawings in Haiti . . . tending to show that the horse may have been known to man in the Americas before the coming of the Spaniards." Sanderson further suggests that it is conceivable that "isolated small populations of horses or horse-like animals continued to exist until much later times in outlying corners of the two continents where conditions were suitable to their requirements and where they were free from whatever animal foes or parasitic diseases caused their extermination" elsewhere.[132] Pre-Columbian horse remains that showed no signs of fossilization have actually been found in several sites on the Yucatan Peninsula.[133] In 1957, Mayapan, a Post-Classic Mayan site, yielded the remains of horses at a depth of two meters under ground. They were "considered to be pre-Columbian on the basis of depth of burial and degree of mineralization."[134] John Sorenson has suggested the possibility that other New World animals may have looked enough and functioned enough like a horse to be described by the Nephites as one. Several Mesoamerican figurines portray men riding a deer as one would ride a horse.[135] Whatever the case may be, the Book of Mormon texts which speak of horses suggest several interesting possibilities.

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131 Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 98-99.

132 Ivan T. Sanderson, *Living Treasure* (New York: Viking Press, 1941), 39-40.

133 "Once Again the Horse," F.A.R.M.S. Update, June 1984; John Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 98-100.

134 Clayton E. Ray, "Pre-Columbian Horses from Yucatan," *Journal of Mammalogy* 38 (May 1957): 278.

135 Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 295-96.

Metallurgy

Many scholars have supposed that metals were not used in Mesoamerica until almost A.D. 900. John Sorenson, however, has recently gathered and will soon publish evidence of between 50 and 100 specimens from over 40 sites which predate A.D. 900 and some which date to as early as 100 B.C. Other evidence for early metal use can be found in Mesoamerican artwork which sometimes portrays metal objects such as chains or bells. The dates on some of these artifacts go back as far as 300 B.C. Linguistic evidence also supports the idea that a knowledge of metals was had even earlier in Mesoamerica. Studies in three major language groups in Mexico and Guatemala show that words used to mean metal were known in all three groups by at least 1000 B.C. Proto-Mixe-Zoquean had a word for metal by 1500 B.C.[136] Such evidence calls for a reevaluation of our assumptions regarding the absence of metallurgy before A.D. 900.

Silk

The term *silk* is not limited to the fiber produced by the Asian moth, but can also refer generally to something silk-like. There were a number of substances in pre-Columbian Central America that would have fit this Book of Mormon description. Silk-like fiber was gathered from the pod of the Ceiba tree in Yucatan and spun. The wild pineapple plant in tropical America produced a silky fiber that was greatly prized by Mesoamericans. The Aztecs even made silk-like fabric from rabbit hair. Some of the early conquerors referred to these substances as "silk." Certainly, any number of such substances could fit the Book of Mormon designation of silk (Alma 1:29; 4:6).[137]

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136 John L. Sorenson, "Pre-Classic Metal?" *American Antiquity* 20/1 (July 1954): 64; John L. Sorenson, "A Reconsideration of Early Metal in Mesoamerica," *Katunob* 9/1 (March 1976): 1-8; Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 278-88; John L. Sorenson, "Challenging Conventional Views of Metal Use in Mesoamerica," F.A.R.M.S. Update, May 1992. See also Sorenson's forthcoming "Metals in Relation to the Book of Mormon Text," F.A.R.M.S. Study Aid, 1992.

137 Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 162-64.

Mongoloid Origin

The Book of Mormon does not claim that its peoples were the only groups present in the Americas. There are, in fact, indications in the Book of Mormon itself to the contrary, leaving room for great diversity in the racial characteristics of Native Americans. The Smithsonian Statement asserts that American Indians are "basically Mongoloid" in origin. However, as John Sorenson has shown, there are factors for which the strictly Mongoloid hypothesis cannot account.[138] Juan Comas emphatically asserts that Amerindians are not a biologically homogeneous group.[139] Other experts such as G. Albin Matson have agreed that "the American Indians are not completely Mongoloid."[140] Ernest Hooten of Harvard University believed that Near Easterners may have been a factor in Amerindian racial diversity.[141] Kirk Magelby has drawn attention to numerous Mesoamerican bearded figures that look more Near Eastern than Mongoloid.[142] Polish anthropologist Andrzej Wiercinski has analyzed numerous skulls from major Mesoamerican sites and suggested that the diversity in such specimens can be partially explained by the influence of "migrants from the Western Mediterranean area." He surmises that "ancient Mexico was inhabited by a chain of interrelated populations which cannot be regarded as typical Mongoloids."[143] Contrary to what the Smithsonian Statement implies, the Book of Mormon allows room for such diversity.

Anthon

The Tanners assert that Martin Harris's account of his visit with Charles Anthon is inaccurate. They cite Anthon's 1834

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138 Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 87-91.

139 Juan Comas, "¿Son los Amerindios un grupo biologicamente homogeneo?" *Cuadernos Americanos* 152 (May-June 1967): 117-25.

140 G. Albin Matson et al., "Distribution of Hereditary Blood Groups among Indians in South America," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 27 (1967): 188.

141 Harold Gladwin, *Men Out of Asia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), 63-65.

142 Kirk Magelby, "A Survey of Mesoamerican Bearded Figures," F.A.R.M.S. preliminary report, 1979.

143 Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 88-89.

letter to E. D. Howe denying that he ever said that the Book of Mormon characters resembled Egyptian (p. 105). The Tanners are apparently unfamiliar with the latest research done on the Anthon episode.[144] Contrary to what the Tanners claim, there are persuasive reasons for believing that Harris and not Anthon was telling the truth.

In 1841 Anthon declared that he had never made a public statement regarding the visit previously, when in fact he already had in 1834. In 1834 he claimed that he never gave Harris a written statement, while in 1841 he admitted that he had. Aside from Anthon's own contradictory claims, there are other aspects of his story that do not make sense historically. For instance, Anthon's assertion that Harris left believing that the whole affair was a fraud is unconvincing. Whatever occurred between the two men, one thing we know: Harris returned to his home convinced that he should support the cause of the Book of Mormon. In fact, Harris had everything to lose and Anthon had everything to gain by lying about the affair. In light of Anthon's known reputation for dishonesty among his scholarly colleagues,[145] it is not difficult to believe that he lied about his identification of the characters, since being associated with the Mormons might threaten his scholarly reputation.

In 1834 E. D. Howe published a letter by W. W. Phelps in which Phelps described Harris's claim that Anthon had described the Book of Mormon characters as resembling "ancient shorthand Egyptian."[146] While Anthon later denied that the characters resembled Egyptian, it now seems clear that he probably did say just that. Anthon possessed enough information both to recognize and to make such an identification. "While the first Egyptian grammars were still in preparation, Anthon had access to enough published, preliminary data in his own personal library to enable him to assess rapidly the apparent nature of the facsimile of Book of Mormon characters."[147] In December 1826 an article in the *Edinburgh Review* noted that "all hieratic manuscripts . . . exhibit merely a tachygraphy [i.e.,

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144 "Martin Harris' Visit with Charles Anthon: Collected Documents on the Anthon Transcript and 'Shorthand Egyptian,' " F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1990. An earlier version of this paper was published in 1984.

145 Ibid., 3, 10.

146 E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* [*sic*] (Painesville, OH: By the Author, 1834), 273.

147 "Martin Harris' Visit with Charles Anthon," 3-4.

shorthand] of the hieroglyphic writing."[148] The June 1827 issue of the *American Quarterly Review* published an article which described Demotic as "a species of shorthand" Egyptian.[149] Several other scholarly works also discussed "shorthand" Egyptian.[150] Today we know that Anthon owned, read, and cited from these publications and would have been familiar with them at the time of Harris's visit, while the term "shorthand Egyptian" would have been completely unknown to Harris and the Mormons prior to that fateful meeting in New York City.[151] It is likely that Anthon "imagined that he could perform the same feats of translation which European classicists were then managing to accomplish at an ever increasing pace."[152] In any case, "the mention of 'shorthand Egyptian' in the Phelps letter of 1831 innocently places a seal of doom on any meaningful defense of Anthon."[153]

New World Inscriptions in Old World Scripts

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 much of chapter 6 discrediting several alleged finds sometimes used by Mormons in the past to support the Book of Mormon, some of which have been shown to be forgeries (pp. 108-16). They also spend four pages trying to discredit the Bat Creek Hebrew inscription found by a Smithsonian expedition in Tennessee in 1889 (pp. 108-11). 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

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148 James Brown, "Hieroglyphics," *Edinburgh Review* 45/89 (December 1826): 145.

149 "Egyptian Hieroglyphics," *American Quarterly Review* 1/2 (June 1827): 450.

150 "Martin Harris's Visit with Charles Anthon," 4-5.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid., 4; 2 Nephi 27:15-16.

153 Ibid., 9.

Gordon's original hypothesis.[154] McCulloch has now carbon-14 dated wood and brass bracelets associated with the inscription to not earlier than A.D. 32 and not later than A.D. 769.[155] Cyrus Gordon explains, "The Bat Creek Inscription is important because it is the first scientifically authenticated pre-Columbian text in an Old World script or language found in America; and, at that, in a flawless archaeological context. It proves that some Old World people not only could, but actually did, cross the Atlantic to America before the Vikings and Columbus."[156] David H. Kelly has also recently supplied evidence that several pre-Columbian inscriptions are of Celtic Ogham. "We need to ask . . . where we have gone wrong as archaeologists in not recognizing such an extensive European presence in the New World."[157] In 1990 a comprehensive bibliography was published dealing with the issue of transoceanic influences upon the New World.[158] Such information, along with other recent findings, may require Book of Mormon critics to reevaluate assumptions that discount significant transoceanic influences.

In 1988, Brian Stubbs, a linguist with substantial experience in both Semitic and Uto-Aztecan languages, persuasively argued, on the basis of comparative analysis, that Hebrew was one of several ancestor languages for Uto-Aztecan.[159] Stubbs also noted significant non-Semitic influences as well, suggesting the likelihood of creolization as several

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154 J. Huston McCulloch, "The Bat Creek Inscription: Cherokee or Hebrew?" *Tennessee Anthropologist* 13 (Fall 1988): 116.

155 Ibid., 107-12, 116.

156 Cyrus Gordon, "A Hebrew Inscription Authenticated," in Lundquist and Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith*, 1:71. "The discredited pre-Columbian inscriptions in Old World scripts or languages will have to be reexamined and reevaluated, each on the merits of the evidence, case by case"; ibid., 1:80.

157 David H. Kelly, "Proto-Tifnagh and Proto-Ogham in the Americas," *Review of Archaeology* 2 (Spring 1990): 10.

158 John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2 vols. (Provo: Research Press, 1990). David H. Kelly of the University of Calgary states, "Nobody can afford to offer an opinion on this subject from now on without having considered this essential volume." "New Publication Asks: 'Was Columbus First across the Ocean?' " *Insights: An Ancient Window* (November 1990): 1.

159 Brian Stubbs, "Elements of Hebrew in Uto-Aztecan: A Summary of the Data," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1988.

diverse languages influenced one another. While comparisons were made with several Semitic tongues, "the phonological, morphological, and semantic correspondences point quite specifically to Hebrew over other Semitic languages."[160] Comparisons with Zapotecan languages and Hebrew suggest similar possibilities.[161] Allen J. Christenson has even published evidence of chiasmus in Quiché Maya, indicating at least some general similarity with poetic parallelism in Old World languages.[162]

Other issues, I suppose, could also be discussed, including alleged plagiarisms from the New Testament (pp. 72-81),[163] methods of translation (p. 89),[164] Nephite money (pp. 103-4),[165] the wheel (p. 104),[166] reformed Egyptian (pp. 104-8),[167] the Kinderhook Plates (pp. 111-15),[168] Book of Mormon

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160 Ibid., 25.

161 Pierre Agrinier, "Linguistic Evidence for the Presence of Israelites in Mexico," *Newsletter and Proceedings for the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 112 (1969): 4-5.

162 Allen J. Christenson, "The Use of Chiasmus by the Ancient Maya-Quiché," *Latin American Literatures Journal* 4/2 (Fall 1988): 125-50; "The Use of Chiasmus in Ancient Mesoamerica," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1988.

163 Ara Norwood, Matthew Roper, John Tvedtnes, reviews of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 158-230.

164 Stephen D. Ricks, "Joseph Smith's Methods and Means of Translating the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1986.

165 Pieces of metal "money" have been found in Ecuador, although they are not yet attested in Mesoamerica. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 232-33. The description in Alma 11 displays interesting signs of efficiency and complexity. Richard P. Smith, "The Nephite Money System," *Improvement Era* 57 (1954): 316-17; Paul R. Jesclard, "A Comparison of the Nephite Monetary System with the Egyptian System of Measuring Grain," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 134 (October 1973): 1-5; "Weights and Measures in the time of Mosiah II," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1983.

166 John Sorenson, "Wheeled Figurines in the Ancient World," F.A.R.M.S. preliminary report, 1981.

167 Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 74-81; "Language and Script in the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. Update, March 1992.

168 Stanley B. Kimball, "Kinderhook Plates Brought to Joseph Smith Appear to Be a Nineteenth Century Hoax," *Ensign* 11 (August 1981): 66-74.

geography in the Old World[169] and the New (pp. 118-24).[170] However, these have been adequately addressed by other scholars. Whether the Tanners and other critics will ever attempt to deal with the issue of the Book of Mormon's complexity remains to be seen.

It seems to me that, when all is considered, the Tanners' case against the Book of Mormon is far from compelling, leaving too many significant elements unexplained. The most significant of these is certainly its spiritual witness of the truth. "The Book of Mormon" wrote B. H. Roberts, "so long as the truth respecting it is unbelieved, will remain to the world an enigma, a veritable literary sphinx, challenging the inquiry and speculations of the learned. But to those who in simple faith will accept it for what it is, a revelation from God, it will minister spiritual consolation, and by its plainness and truth draw men into closer communion with God."[171] Sensitive souls have always been able to discern what is worthy of belief and devotion (Moroni 10:3-5). The Tanners provide a faithless view of the Book of Mormon for their fellow critics to feast upon but, as Isaiah pointed out (Isaiah 29:7-8), such food will always leave the eater empty when made of shadows and not reality.

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169 Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, "In Search of Lehi's Trail," *Ensign* 6 (September 1976): 32-54; (October 1976): 34-63; Warren P. and Michaela J. Aston, "And We Called the Place Bountiful," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1991. Most Old World Sites mentioned in 1 Nephi were named by Lehi and would not likely have been known by those designations outside of his family. *Nahom* would be the significant exception, since, unlike other sites, it appears to have already been called by that name (1 Nephi 16:34). The Tanners will perhaps be disappointed to learn that this Book of Mormon site can indeed by identified by name in a location consistent with the Book of Mormon description. Warren P. and Michaela J. Aston, "The Place Which Was Called Nahom: The Validation of an Ancient Reference to Southern Arabia," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1991.

170 Frederick G. Williams III, "Did Lehi Land in Chile? An Assessment of the Frederick G. Williams' Statement," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1988; Kenneth W. Godfrey, "The Zelph Story," *Brigham Young University Studies* 29/2 (Spring 1989): 31-56; Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 183-85; Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 1-48; John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990.

171 Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3:406.