

Naturalistic Assumptions and the Book of Mormon

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“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4)

In 1966 Leonard J. Arrington claimed that “the details of Mormon history and culture can be studied in human or naturalistic terms—indeed, must be so studied—and without thus rejecting . . . the Church’s origin and work.”¹ He explored neither the assumptions nor consequences of histories done in “naturalistic terms” though he noted that the topic “warrants a full essay.”² The purpose of this essay is to subject some of the assumptions and consequences of histories produced in naturalistic terms to scrutiny.³ In keeping with the theme of this issue of *BYU Studies*, I shall limit my discussion to one aspect of Mormon history, the so-called environmental explanation of the Book of Mormon.⁴

Environmental explanations of the Book of Mormon provide a good starting point for clarifying the logic and implications of “naturalistic explanations” because of the way their controlling categories and assumptions are exploited. Environmental explanations are often constructed to replace or compete with Joseph Smith’s own explanation of the origin and content of the Book of Mormon. Some quarters of the so-called New Mormon History have popularized the environmental explanation, suggesting that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon by weaving into it various aspects of his immediate social and cultural environment.⁵ As might be expected, there are major disagreements on detail among those espousing such explanations, but the basic components of the argument, including the logic and even the language or rhetoric, are not affected by such differences.

Historical explanations seem to rest on background assumptions that, within certain limits, mark the boundaries and establish

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the logic of the explanation. Frequently these background assumptions, instead of being made or understood explicitly, are built into the language and structure of the argument. Hence, in order to begin to unpack the assumptions built into an explanation and thereby begin to clarify their logical and rhetorical function, careful attention must be given to the language used to frame the argument, the structure of the argument itself, and the relationship of the language to the structure.

Some of the language used to frame naturalistic assumptions appeared in the 1930s and 1940s within the circle associated with Dale Morgan and Fawn M. Brodie. The materials exchanged by Morgan and Brodie and such associates as Bernard DeVoto, Juanita Brooks, and Madeline Reeder McQuown contain interesting clues to the assumptions at work behind their naturalistic explanations.

The ideology embedded in the use of naturalistic terms and assumptions was articulated by Dale Morgan at least as early as 1943, when he referred to Fawn Brodie as a “naturalistic biographer.” In 1945 he set forth the ideology behind that language in his comments on Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*.⁶ That ideology determined the sort of explanations the Brodie-Morgan circle fashioned to which they assigned high explanatory power. Prior to the publication of the materials assembled by B. H. Roberts,⁷ the most comprehensive and coherent, and certainly the most popular and well-known, naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon was found in *No Man Knows My History*.⁸ Morgan assisted Brodie with her work by supplying primary source materials and then by criticizing and polishing her manuscript.⁹ Morgan also reviewed the book, defended Brodie from critics, and maintained an extensive correspondence with her.¹⁰ While they differed on some points of interpretation, they shared a similar naturalistic outlook and framework of interpretation.

After the publication of Bernard DeVoto’s review of *No Man Knows My History*, “The Case of the Prophet, Joseph Smith,” Morgan wrote to DeVoto to contest several items.¹¹ In the course of that exchange, Morgan described, without apparent opposition from DeVoto, the horizon from which they understood the Book of Mormon as “naturalistic.”¹² In a letter to Juanita Brooks written only five days earlier, also addressing issues raised by *No Man Knows My History*, Morgan articulated at least some of the assumptions that constituted what he called his “naturalistic point of view,” claiming that the fundamental choices one made on the restored gospel, and especially on the foundation experiences, were rooted in an acceptance or rejection of God.¹³ He justified his rejection of divine things, including God, angels, and anything

remotely miraculous, on what might be understood as epistemological and ontological grounds: “It all boils down finally to that old philosophical conundrum, ‘What is Truth?’ There is no absolute or final definition of truth. It has emotional values for some people, intellectual values for others. Our confusions are consequent in some degree upon the fact that people try to square their emotional truths with the intellect, while their intellectual truths they try to invest with emotional meanings.”¹⁴

Building upon what may be described as a radical historicist understanding of truth, Morgan went on to describe his epistemological concerns:¹⁵ “You may hear someone—a returned missionary in the pulpit, say—pronounce a judgment like this: ‘I *know* that God lives. I *know* that Joseph was a prophet of God. I *know* that the gospel is true and will be the salvation of mankind.’ You cannot challenge that knowledge; you can’t bring any logic to bear against it. He knows what he knows, and there is nothing more that can be said.”¹⁶ Hence, from within a framework of historical objectivism, Morgan provided an argument for rejecting “emotional truths,” which he connected with what Mormons accept as divine revelations, in favor of “intellectual truths,” which have something to do with or are in some way connected to logic and reason.

Morgan then explored some of the consequences of his position:

We have my attitude (which I believe is substantially Fawn’s). I feel absolutely no necessity to postulate the existence of God as explanation of anything whatever. To me God exists only as a force in human conduct consequent upon the hypothecation of such a being by man. . . . Essentially my views are atheist, but I call myself an agnostic because I regard professing atheists as being as much deluded as professing theists. The one says, “I *know* there isn’t a God”; the other, “I *know* that there is.” And I find the proof lacking in either case. Thus when I formulate my views, I say that I have no personal belief in God and see no necessity for the existence of such a being.¹⁷

Without hiding what might be described as his positivist assumptions, Morgan articulated the basis of his “naturalistic point of view” that provided the horizon from which he and Brodie fashioned environmental explanations of the Book of Mormon: “With my point of view on God, I am incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, be they however so convincing. If God does not exist, how can Joseph Smith’s story have any possible validity? I will look everywhere for explanations except to the ONE explanation that is the position of the church.”¹⁸ In another letter, Morgan described the naturalistic approach to Mormon things as including a disbelief “in the concept of God.” He

labeled this approach “‘objective’ and ‘unbiased’” although he recognized that it appeared to be a “bias” from the point of view of the believer. “However,” he claimed, “as a practical historian, one must take the standpoint that causes and effects proceed directly out of human behavior, that men’s difficulties are occasioned by human inadequacy, not by any special favor or disfavor granted to individuals by ‘God.’” Morgan understood this to be the point of view of the “sociologist, the psychologist, the political, economic, and social historian.”¹⁹ Thus Morgan’s disposition towards naturalistic categories and assumptions was based upon a fundamental decision or dogmatic opinion about Deity against which he would allow nothing to count and which he regarded as necessary for the objective, unbiased historian.

In his 15 December letter to Juanita Brooks, Morgan described what he liked to call the “Great Divide” that necessarily separates believers and unbelievers on the issue of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon:

Fawn has clarified my thinking [on the question of whether Joseph was indeed a conscious fraud and imposter]. I was half disposed to accept a median point of view where Mormon and non-Mormon may almost meet. The Mormon may consent to the idea that the plates were only apparently real, that Joseph gained access to them through a series of visions, as a concession from the original Mormon contention that the plates could be felt and hefted. And the non-Mormon may conceive of Joseph as a victim of delusions, a dreamy mystic, so to speak. But when you get at the hard core of the situation, the Book of Mormon as an objective fact, there isn’t any middle ground; it becomes as simple a matter as the Mormons and anti-Mormons originally said it was. Either Joseph was all he claimed to be, or during the period at least of the writing of the Book of Mormon he was a “conscious fraud and imposter.”²⁰

Morgan thought that “Fawn’s theory [of the sources and origins of the Book of Mormon] the one most reasonable in light of the available facts” and also held that “there may be good reason to think that Fawn has actually hit upon the ‘truth’ of the matter.”²¹

Morgan’s own explanation of the Book of Mormon, though he left it sketchy and fragmentary, was consistent with his naturalistic point of view.²² He saw the production of the Book of Mormon as “a culmination of, rather than a break with, Joseph’s highly flavored past.” Joseph Smith, understood by Morgan as a magician, engaged in “unabashed hocus-pocus” and “sustained sleight-of-hand performance . . . through the next eighteen months” while writing the Book of Mormon. The book itself “evolved naturally from the circumstances of Joseph Smith’s growing up, the world he lived in, his interests and needs.”²³ Joseph “floated upon the seas of his time”

picking up “all sorts of ideas floating in the social vacuum of his time.”²⁴ Morgan thought that the “parallels between the book he [Joseph] eventually published and a popular historico-religious treatise of this decade [Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*] are too striking to pass without comment.” “*View of the Hebrews*,” he claimed, “reads almost like a manual of instruction for intending prophets, seers, revelators, and translators.” Although the Book of Mormon “mirror[ed] only Joseph’s milieu,” it also “quite unconsciously mirror[ed] his mind.”²⁵ Morgan’s explanation is thus not only environmental—that is, product-of-culture—it is also genuinely naturalistic, appealing to social science concepts of magic and culture and to some vague notion of the unconscious drawn from the popular understanding of the psychology of his period.

Pieced together, Morgan’s argument has something like the following form: Since there is no “final definition” of truth (that is, since the truth of statements is dependent upon individual subjective values and is hence transient), and since there is no God, or at least no (naturalistic?) way to adequately determine his existence (the “proof is lacking” for either his existence or nonexistence), Joseph could not have produced the Book of Mormon in the way he claimed; therefore, the Book of Mormon is not authentic history and must be a conscious deception. One must look to Joseph’s environment to discover how and why he produced the Book of Mormon.

Throughout the course of Morgan’s argument, his naturalistic assumptions—including assumptions provided by the horizon of historical objectivism and historicism through which he viewed the world—provide the foundations and determine the conclusions. The way in which the story of the Book of Mormon is told, through naturalistic terms or in some other way, will be first a reflection of the (conscious) assumptions of the teller and second a reflection of the categories employed to fashion the explanation. Since, according to Morgan, the Book of Mormon could not be an authentic ancient history of God’s dealings with his people, Morgan thought it necessary to fashion environmental or psychological explanations to account for the book’s origin. Those explanations in their turn, or at least the categories and assumptions used to fashion those explanations, will make judgments about Deity and the fundamental constitution of man and his relationship to divine things.

Fundamentally, Morgan’s argument begs the question of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon: his conclusion represents only a more subtle version of his premises. Since the question of the existence of God is one of the questions opened up by the very existence and content of the Book of Mormon, and since the mediation of Gods and angels in human things is an integral part of

Joseph Smith's story, Morgan begs the question of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon with his premise that God does not exist. But the question-begging goes well beyond Morgan's explicit personal expression of unbelief, extending to the categories and assumptions—the categories of the “sociologist, the psychologist, the political, economic, and social historian”—that he employed in explaining the Book of Mormon.²⁶ Morgan fashioned his story and employed the categories and assumptions of the social and behavioral sciences in such a way that Joseph Smith could be neither sincere nor the bearer of authentic messages of the Gods. For example, his appeal to the unconscious contains hidden assumptions about Deity, and his product-of-culture explanation of the Book of Mormon is expressly structured to exclude what he called “the ONE explanation that is the position of the church.”

Given the close connection between Brodie and Morgan and considering that Morgan was never able to finish his manuscript, careful attention to Brodie's naturalistic environmental explanation of the Book of Mormon and the assumptions upon which it rests seems warranted in order to discover some of the ways in which naturalistic assumptions affect both the choice of explanatory categories and the rhetorical structure of the argument. Brodie articulated her controlling assumptions at various times and in various places. In 1967, while considering changes in *No Man Knows My History* for the second edition, she told Monsignor Jerome Stoffel that she “reject[ed] the supernatural aspects of the Christian story.”²⁷ In a 1975 interview, she admitted that she was “convinced before I ever began writing the book that Joseph Smith was not a true prophet.”²⁸ Although she thought belief necessarily involved a corrupting bias that “colors . . . selections, . . . omissions, and . . . point of view,” she apparently did not think unbelief or disbelief involved similar biases.²⁹ Disbelief, from her perspective, provided the biographer the necessary “intellectual detachment” to write a “really fair biography.”³⁰

Like Morgan, Brodie's environmental explanation of the origin and content of the Book of Mormon is also entwined with a psychological account of the motivations of its author. Neither Brodie nor Morgan was content with simply identifying a list of supposed nineteenth-century sources for the Book of Mormon. Both thought a psychological account of its author necessary for an adequate explanation. Ordinary New York farm boys did not produce long and complicated religious histories; only Joseph Smith did that sort of thing. Whatever else he may have been, Joseph was an obvious exception to the rule.

Although Brodie found it “easy enough to deride its style,” she thought the sources of the Book of Mormon “absolutely American, . . . an obscure compound of folklore, moral platitude, mysticism, and millennialism.”³¹ She fashioned her naturalistic explanation so that the book’s “matter is drawn directly from the American frontier, from the impassioned revivalist sermons, the popular fallacies about Indian origin, and the current political crusades.” The book, she thought, was best explained by Joseph’s “responsiveness to the provincial opinions of his times.”³² According to Brodie, “It may . . . have been *View of the Hebrews* that gave Joseph Smith the idea of writing an Indian history in the first place.” In fact, “Ethan Smith’s theory of the origin of the Indian mounds was *exactly the same* as that which formed the heart of the Book of Mormon story.”³³ Referring directly to B. H. Roberts’s “Parallel,” to which she had access, she went on to detail “the striking parallelisms between the two books” that in her view “hardly leave a case for mere coincidence.”³⁴

Although Brodie saw *View of the Hebrews* as the “basic source” for the Book of Mormon, she claimed that Joseph also “borrowed from his own family traditions,” “vigorously attacked the Catholic Church” in response to the influx of Catholics brought by the Erie Canal, “borrowed [stories] from the Bible,” inserted “bald parallels of Masonic oaths,” attempted to settle “the religious conflicts that were splitting the churches in the 1820s,” and threw in “Calvinism and Arminianism” when it suited him.³⁵

In her 1971 “Supplement” to *No Man Knows My History*, while not repudiating her earlier theory, Brodie began to explore “the extent to which the Book of Mormon provides clues . . . to Joseph Smith’s inner conflicts.” By then she thought she could see “Joseph Smith’s own inner conflict” in the “fratricidal strife” described in the Book of Mormon: “The Book of Mormon . . . provides tantalizing clues to the conflicts raging within Joseph Smith,” including his “unconscious fantasies of guilt and fear.”³⁶ By this time, she had explicitly placed Joseph in a psychological category: he was an “imposter,” and his literary productions were a result of that imposture.³⁷

Brodie, then, makes two claims concerning the Book of Mormon, one narrowly psychological, the other broadly environmental, but both entirely naturalistic. Her psychological claim presents Joseph as an extremely complex, extremely conflicted personality and suggests that the Book of Mormon, like many first novels, can be read to a limited degree as autobiography.³⁸ Her environmental thesis holds that Joseph fabricated the Book of Mormon from the political and religious currents and the folklore of the American frontier.

The explanatory power of Brodie's theories about the Book of Mormon rests upon her fundamental assumptions, which involve a rejection of the "supernatural" and an embracing of the "natural" that in many crucial instances dogmatically excludes Deity from the account. In short, Brodie's explanations come down squarely on the unbelieving side of Morgan's "Great Divide."

The explanations of both Morgan and Brodie ignore or compete with what we might call the *internal* interpretation of the Book of Mormon—what it says about itself. The book contains categories and assumptions that form the basis for understanding those inside the story or narrative. These understandings make sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, claims upon us as readers. One of the fundamental assumptions of the Book of Mormon is that the heavens open from time to time and that God makes his will known to man. Both Brodie and Morgan personally, and through the categories and assumptions they brought to their investigations of Mormon things, denied *a priori* the possibility of what they labeled the "supernatural" and hence dogmatically excluded at least this one fundamental, even crucial, assumption of the internal understanding of the Book of Mormon. In place of the assumptions and categories found in the Book of Mormon, Morgan and Brodie substituted naturalistic ones, which are foreign to and which fundamentally contradict the internal understanding of the book itself. Brodie's argument therefore represents only a more sophisticated version of Morgan's question-begging. She accepts all of the assumptions he articulated, or at least the most important, while for the most part concealing them within the charming rhetoric and structure of her argument.

Much of the work of the so-called New Mormon History on the foundation experiences has in some ways been an effort to separate and distance itself from Brodie's explanations while at the same time recognizing *No Man Knows My History* as a major landmark. For example, Robert B. Flanders declared in 1974 that "a new era dawned with her book," claiming that "all subsequent serious studies of early Mormonism have necessarily had Brodie as a referent point."³⁹ Davis Bitton and Leonard Arrington reported that Brodie's book "quickly established itself to national readers as the standard biography."⁴⁰

The writings of Marvin S. Hill provide an interesting case study of the New Mormon History's ambivalent judgment of Brodie. He has devoted considerable attention to her work, including two review essays on *No Man Knows My History*.⁴¹ He has called *No Man Knows My History* "an immensely important book, a powerful book" and asserted that "much of her history retains its

relevance and authenticity.” He added, however, that “it falls short of greatness because of fundamental weaknesses which no amount of patching in a later edition can correct.”⁴² Hill has called into question the details of Brodie’s perspective, her “objectivity,” and her research.⁴³ The explanation of the Book of Mormon arising from Hill’s criticism of Brodie thus differs from hers in both detail and perspective. In this, Hill’s work is rather typical of recent explanations of the Book of Mormon—further reason why it provides useful example of the explanations typically offered by the New History.⁴⁴

Hill has described his approach to Brodie as an attempt to “consider Brodie’s interpretation . . . on her own secular terms,” that is, from within the horizon of “the naturalistic assumptions of the professional historian” with which she worked.⁴⁵ He differs from Brodie in at least two fundamental ways. First, he has criticized sources upon which Brodie relies and has demonstrated fundamental flaws in her treatment of the Kirtland period.⁴⁶ Second, unlike Brodie, he does not think the historian can “prove conclusively,” one way or the other, Joseph’s call “to his divine mission.”⁴⁷ Attempting to distinguish his own position from that of Brodie, who, according to Hill, assumed it was possible to prove on the basis of his limitations that Joseph Smith was a fraud, and that of Orson Pratt, who, Hill claims, assumed it was possible to prove on the basis of his accomplishments that Joseph was a prophet, Hill suggested that historians should “explore the broad, promising middle ground which neither Pratt nor Brodie fully perceived.”⁴⁸

While Hill disputes some of Brodie’s speculations “as to the initial secular nature of the Book of Mormon,” he seems close to accepting some of her views on the cultural conditioning of the book’s contents when he insists upon “the romantic disposition of [the Book of Mormon’s] plot and central characters,” its “negative, Calvinistic view of man,” and its “rationalistic arguments for the existence of God.”⁴⁹ Much like Brodie, he has also linked the Book of Mormon with what he calls Joseph Smith’s “magical world view,” claiming that “there was certainly more continuity between the money-digging religious culture and the early Mormon movement than some historians have recognized.” For Hill, “The traditional magician,” like Joseph Smith, “searched for buried treasure, healed the sick, interpreted dreams, forecast the future, and translated ancient hieroglyphics.”⁵⁰

Elaborating the connection between the Book of Mormon and nineteenth-century America, Hill writes, “Theologically the Book of Mormon was a mediating text standing between orthodox Calvinists and emerging Arminians.” Similarly, “Passages which are

strongly anti-Universalist suggest once again the Calvinistic inclinations in the text, while others speak against the doctrine of election. Mediation rather than Arminianism seems evident here." Also, "Mediation seems evident in the ambivalent position on the trinity." After examining the stance of the Book of Mormon in relation to the theological controversies of Joseph Smith's day, Hill concludes, "Its message appealed to common men with sectarian or money-digging backgrounds. It was a jeremiad addressed to the American Indians, part of the House of Israel."⁵¹

While Hill rejects what he terms Brodie's "sectarian" account of the origins of the Book of Mormon, he also sees Joseph Smith as responding to cultural forces, suggesting that Joseph's visions, including those that attended the production of the Book of Mormon, were influenced by the great stress initiated by the building of the Erie Canal and other potent social, cultural, and economic changes. Citing a discussion by Mario De Pillis, he claims, "Early Mormon visions and dreams brought surcease from emotional and intellectual stress among those confused and bewildered by ideological and emotional turmoil in western New York."⁵² Joseph and "the witnesses saw the plates as a result of their own psychological and religious needs."⁵³ Therefore, he says, Joseph's revelations "may not deserve the label of fraud, any more than the apostles' testimony of the resurrection of Christ."⁵⁴ Hill adopts a Brodie-like evolutionary view of Joseph's expanding role as prophet, suggesting that "some things [concerning Joseph's early visions] which may have been looked upon as natural in the early years took on more miraculous significance as time passed."⁵⁵ Joseph, like others of his time, could think his dreams or visions had "cosmic significance" because he did not have "the benefits of Sigmund Freud's analysis of dreams."⁵⁶

Although Hill apparently agrees with Brodie and Morgan on the necessity of professional historians writing history in naturalistic terms, he has proposed an important innovation that may avoid the question-begging that mars the work of Brodie and Morgan. According to Hill, historians cannot provide satisfactory answers to the prophet/fraud dichotomy because such questions are simply beyond the range of historical inquiry.⁵⁷ Hill seems to believe it is possible for scholars, as a methodological matter, to suspend judgments on such questions as the existence of God and the ultimate authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He writes:

The historian has no sources written with the finger of God to prove that Joseph Smith was called to his divine mission, nor does he have any human sources to prove conclusively that he was not. One's answers to this cosmic question depend entirely upon the assump-

tions he brings to it—assumptions about the nature of the world and man's place in it; these rest in the last analysis upon personal predilection, not historical evidence.⁵⁸

The problem with this methodological suspension of judgment—presumably necessary to “recover” the past “in an objective way”—is that it cannot wholly reside in the attitude adopted by the historian while fashioning an explanation. It also includes the implicit assumptions behind the categories and explicit assumptions employed by the historian. If these categories and assumptions actually suspend judgement, then they are not question-begging. Unfortunately, however, the “models from the social and behavioral sciences” from which Hill draws—social stress theories of revelation, the cultural connections of teachings in the Book of Mormon with the Calvinism of Joseph's immediate environment—all involve implicit assumptions about such questions as the existence of God.⁵⁹ For example, if visions of angels and plates are psychological responses to severe “social stress,” then they are not what Joseph Smith claimed they were. Therefore, Hill's version of the foundation experiences unfortunately suffers from the same sort of question-begging that mars the work of Brodie and Morgan. The question-begging assumptions are obscured by denying the relevance of the prophet/fraud dichotomy, claiming that the historian cannot or ought not make judgments about the authenticity of Joseph's prophetic call or charisms, and appealing to a “middle ground” that supposedly gets beyond the old sectarian controversies.

There would be little reason to designate recent Mormon history “new” if there were not something that separated or distinguished it from an “old” Mormon history. The New Mormon History is new, we are now told by one scholar, at least in part because it adopts “the tools of the social and behavioral sciences and from religious studies.”⁶⁰ Others portray the new ““professionalization of Mormon history”” as arising from a dissatisfaction with “the narrative and inspirational histories produced in previous generations.” This dissatisfaction arose because those with graduate training in history were “accustomed to more rigorous standards of documentation” and were “interested in different questions,” questions that seemingly required giving “a naturalistic interpretation to certain historical themes sacred to the memories of Latter-day Saints.”⁶¹ Thus the New History would seem to appropriate its explanatory categories and methodological assumptions from what are essentially modern and secular modes of thought. Yet, for all the history that has been done under the umbrella of modernity, there has been little effort to uncover the background modes of thought, the controlling categories and assumptions, of Joseph Smith himself or other early

Mormon chronologers and little discussion of the effects that naturalistic interpretations or assumptions might have upon the “themes sacred to the memory of Latter-day Saints” or even to the Saints’ collective memory.

An analogy and comparison with the Jewish experience of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and its aftermath may be instructive for uncovering at least some of the sources, or perhaps even some of the assumptions behind the “dissatisfaction” described by Bitton and Arrington. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi describes the “modern effort to reconstruct the Jewish past” as beginning “at a time that witnesses a sharp break in the continuity of Jewish living and hence also an ever-growing decay of Jewish group memory.”⁶² The Jewish group memory, perhaps surprisingly, continued to decay in spite of the increasing number and sophistication of Jewish historical writings—or perhaps because of them. Unlike modern historical inquiry, Yerushalmi demonstrates, “The biblical appeal to remember thus has little to do with curiosity about the past. . . . Not only is Israel under no obligation whatever to remember the entire past, but its principle of selection is unique unto itself. It is, above all, God’s acts of intervention in history, and man’s responses to them, be they positive or negative, that must be recalled.”⁶³ In an introduction to the 1989 edition of Yerushalmi’s book, Harold Bloom notes that “*zakhor*, as a word, has a much wider range than *remember* has in English, since in Hebrew to remember is also to act.” For this reason, the nature of Hebrew memory is “uniquely selective” about what is recalled, calling “for a particular kind of acting rather than for any curiosity about the past.” Therefore, “the priest and the prophet become the masters of memory and historians become unlikely figures.”⁶⁴

The irony of the striking differences between ancient and medieval Jewish memory and modern efforts at Jewish history is not lost upon Yerushalmi. He notes, “I live within the ironic awareness that the very mode in which I delve into the Jewish past represents a decisive break with that past.” Part of the irony lies in the realization that “only in the modern era do we really find, for the first time, a Jewish historiography divorced from Jewish collective memory and, in crucial respects, thoroughly at odds with it.” At the same time, “who . . . can be expected to step into the breach, if not the historian? Is it not both his chosen and appointed task to restore the past to us all?”⁶⁵ But the historian, trained with modes of thought alien to memory and even thoroughly at odds with it, is, according to Yerushalmi, at least part of the problem and therefore may be incapable of offering something approaching a cure. The parallel of Jewish and Mormon memory and Jewish and Mormon history cannot be entirely lost upon us.

The New Mormon History, with its “dissatisfaction” with earlier ways and modes of memorializing the past, not only differs from some of its own intellectual predecessors in adopting models drawn from the social and behavioral sciences, it also differs from much older and more venerable histories in fundamental ways. For example, one cannot find anything like an appeal to “facts” in any scriptural chronicle; the scriptural chronicles are written under an entirely different set of assumptions from those that govern modern histories. The appeal to “facts” by modern historians is often symptomatic of positivism or historical objectivism, serving as a vehicle to subtly transform the faith and erode memory.⁶⁶ Much of the New Mormon History is written in such a way as to exclude or bracket what scripture understands as the mighty acts of God. These mighty acts are precisely what are essential for the collective memory of the Saints—what Yerushalmi calls “God’s acts of intervention in history.”⁶⁷

But perhaps the most prominent modernist feature of the New History, and certainly one of the features it emphasizes, is its appeal to naturalistic assumptions. Such assumptions, we are told, allow historians greater sophistication in dealing with the past and are justified because they provide the Saints a more reliable and usable past. But these assumptions have also served to transform both the content and substance of the foundation experiences.⁶⁸ From within the enchantment of naturalistic assumptions, leading historians have called for a radical new understanding of the Book of Mormon, one divorced from the traditional understanding and thoroughly at odds with the Saints’ collective memory.

From the very beginning, the Book of Mormon has served as a vessel of memory and identity for the Saints. It sets them apart from the world and orients them in God’s plan. If the Book of Mormon is true, if it is authentic history brought forth in the last days for the wise purposes of God, then the Saints have good reason for faith and a genuine hope for a trust in God. If the Book of Mormon is the product of deliberate deception or the sincere psychological delusion caused by severe stress, the Saints have no reason for faith or for hope.

NOTES

¹Leonard J. Arrington, “Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (1966): 28. This essay is a modified version of his “The Secularization of Mormon History and Culture,” delivered at the Western History Association, 16 October 1965, in which the statement reads somewhat differently: “Any particular feature of Mormon life . . . is fair game for

objective, complete examination. They [those promoting the Mormon History Association and *Dialogue*] believe that Mormon history can be 'humanized' without completely throwing out the dogma of the immaculateness of the church's origin" (20). The call for "naturalistic" historical explanations of Mormon things is not uncommon. See, for example, Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 131–32; Lawrence Foster, "New Perspectives on the Mormon Past," *Sunstone* 7 (January–February 1982): 45, and *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 294–97; and Robert Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9 (Spring 1974): 34–41.

²Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," 28 n. 44. Arrington reported that at least one critic expressed concern over the possibility of naturalistic histories, asking, "Is it really possible to humanize all phases of Mormon history without destroying church doctrines regarding historical events?" Commenting on the manuscript of "Scholarly Studies," Dale Morgan observed, "More generally, I would say that what principally troubles me about your essay is that its more critical comments are offered anonymously in your footnotes. One is led to wonder whether 'one reader' is not truly your own alter ego, merely a literary device for getting over some important points 'without stirring up trouble.'" Dale Morgan to Leonard J. Arrington, 19 November 1965, 2, Dale Morgan Microfilm, MS 560, bx. 2, fld. 10, Special Collections Department, University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Morgan Microfilm).

³Other essays raising questions about the apparent assumptions of certain modern approaches to Mormon history include Neal W. Kramer, "Looking for God in History: The Modern Critique of Positivism Demands Reevaluation of the Prevailing Historiography," *Sunstone* 8 (January–April 1983): 15–17; David E. Bohn, "No Higher Ground," *Sunstone* 8 (May–June 1983): 26–32, and "The Burden of Proof," *Sunstone* 10 (June 1985): 2–3; Louis C. Midgley, "Faith and History," in *To Be Learned Is Good If . . .* ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 219–26, and "The Question of Faith and History" (Paper delivered at the Western History Association meeting, San Antonio, Texas, 15 October 1981).

⁴The term *environmental* is borrowed from Marvin S. Hill and Richard L. Bushman. See Marvin S. Hill, "Richard L. Bushman: Scholar and Apologist," *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 126. Compare Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 128.

⁵The label "New Mormon History" sometimes refers to nothing more than all the history done since approximately 1950 of Mormon things. However, it often carries a more specific, if narrowly polemic, meaning. Robert Flanders, for example, describes the New History as a "significantly different understanding of the Latter-day Saint past" because of its "shift of interest and emphasis from polemics, from attacking or defending assumptions of faith." "Additionally," he claims, "it has provided a new location where 'marginal' Latter-day Saints, who hold some faith assumptions but reject others, or who are attached to Mormon societies or social networks but not to the religion per se, can share in the dialogue" "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," 34, 40. Thomas G. Alexander describes the New History as employing "techniques derived from historical, humanistic, social-scientific, and religious perspectives." The New History is different from its predecessors, Alexander claims, because it pays "more attention to the relationship between Mormon and general U.S. historiography" and insists "upon an understanding of development, rather than just doctrinal exegesis" ("Toward the New Mormon History: An Examination of the Literature on the Latter-day Saints in the Far West," in *Historians and The American West*, ed. Michael P. Malone [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983], 344, 352, 357).

⁶In a letter to Brodie on 10 September 1943, Morgan wrote, "I think [LDS apostle] David O. [McKay] really was thinking that it would be a hell of a note to be uncle to a naturalistic biographer of the Prophet." The rather casual use of such language suggests that the rhetoric was already in place and was not new or unfamiliar (John Phillip Walker, ed., *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986], 46). Walker's volume contains a useful collection of Morgan's letters. However, it also omits important letters and letter fragments. When a letter or manuscript is available in this volume, Walker will be the source cited.

⁷B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen with a biographical essay by Sterling M. McMurrin (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

⁸Brodie had probably seen a copy of Roberts's "Parallel" and was dependent upon it when she fashioned her argument against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. See Fawn M. Brodie to Sterling M. McMurrin, 6 November 1977, Fawn M. Brodie Collection, MS 360, bx. 8, fld. 6, Special Collections Department, University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Brodie Papers); compare *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 2d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 47.

⁹See Morgan to Brodie, 14 January 1943, 46–49; 27 April 1944, 52–54; and 28 August 1944, 67–71, in *On Early Mormonism*; see Morgan to Brodie, Thanksgiving Day 1943, MS 360, bx. 7, fld. 2; 12 February 1944, 15 February 1944, 10 March 1944, 18 June 1944, 24 June 1944, MS 360, bx. 7, fld. 3, and 3 August 1944, MS 360, bx. 7, fld. 4 in Brodie Papers; see also undated, two-page criticism of an early manuscript of *No Man Knows My History*, titled "Memo from Dale Morgan" and undated, two-page letter to Fawn Brodie, in Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 7, fld. 1.

¹⁰Morgan's review appeared in *Saturday Review*, 24 November 1945, 7-8. A photocopy of this review may be found in the Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 8, fld. 9. For the Morgan to Brodie correspondence, see *On Early Mormonism*, 92-101, 106-115, 145-150, 150d-154, 160-165.

¹¹*New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review*, 16 December 1945. A photocopy of this review may be found in the Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 8, fld. 9.

¹²Dale Morgan to Bernard DeVoto, 20 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 93.

¹³"Consider again how our individual points of view upon Mormonism and all religion are rooted in our fundamental viewpoint on God" (Dale Morgan to Juanita Brooks, 15 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 86-87).

¹⁴Morgan to Brooks, 15 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 86.

¹⁵The words *historicism* and *historicismist* refer to a cluster of opinions and assumptions articulated by the so-called Historical School in nineteenth-century Germany. A good account, exploring some of the subtleties and exhibiting some of the excesses of historicism, is G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952). The word *positivism* refers to another cluster of opinions and assumptions more or less articulated in the nineteenth century. An accessible version of a portion of the positivist position is Sterling M. McMurrin, "Comments on the Meaning of Immortality," in *Religion, Reason and Truth: Historical Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982). Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), provides a short and useful introduction to modern positivist arguments. I shall for the most part borrow Gadamer's term "historical objectivism" to describe the cluster of positivist assumptions used by many historians. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. and trans. Garrett Barden (New York: Continuum, 1975), 192-214; also "Hermeneutics and Historicism," in "Supplement I" to *Truth and Method*, 460-91. The questions surrounding historicism and historical objectivism are important for understanding the current crisis in Mormon historiography. See Thomas G. Alexander, "Historiography and the New Mormon History," *Dialogue* 19 (Autumn 1986): 25-49, "An Approach to the Mormon Past," *Dialogue* 16 (Winter 1983): 146-48, and "Substantial, Important, and Brilliant," *Dialogue* 18 (Winter 1985): 185-87; Leonard J. Arrington, "Reflections on the Founding and Purpose of the Mormon History Association, 1965-1983," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 91-103; David Earl Bohn, "No Higher Ground," *Sunstone* 8 (May-June 1983): 26-32, and "The Burden of Proof," *Sunstone* 10 (June 1985): 2-3; M. Gerald Bradford, "The Case for the New Mormon History: Thomas G. Alexander and His Critics," *Dialogue* 21 (Winter 1988): 143-50; Lawrence Foster, "Bohna Fide Article," *Sunstone* 8 (November-December 1983): 4-5; Klaus Hansen, "Jan Shipps and the Mormon Tradition," *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 135-45; Marvin S. Hill, "Richard L. Bushman," 125-33, and "The 'New Mormon History' Reassessed in Light of Recent Books on Joseph Smith and Mormon Origins," *Dialogue* 21 (Autumn 1988): 115-127; Martin E. Marty, "Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 3-19; Louis C. Midgley, "Faith and History," in *To Be Learned Is Good If . . .* ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 219-26, and "The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Mormon History and the Encounter with Secular Modernity," in vol. 2 of *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990), 502-51.

¹⁶Morgan to Brooks, 15 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 86. Morgan went on to illustrate his rejection of divine things with a personal story: "When I was eight or ten or so and a regular Sunday-school goer, in our ward I saw a rather handsome boy four or five years older than I named Edwin Wells. He was then a deacon, I think. He looked to me somehow sanctified and set apart, beautiful and holy. Well, Juanita, as I contemplated him, revelation came upon me, and I knew, I knew that I was seeing there before me in the flesh a future President of the Church. It was a knowledge superior to reason; in short, it was of the very stuff of our missionary's knowledge above. Except that for some fifteen years or so I have felt a certain skepticism about the validity of that revelation." In his 20 December letter to DeVoto, Morgan related this same story and drew further consequences: "But remembering that experience, and remembering further what it is like to get struck with a Big Idea, I can conceive that Joseph's revelations were honestly arrived at (some of them, at any rate), if not precisely after the fashion his followers may have believed. With no opening of the heavens in any way involved" (Morgan to DeVoto, 20 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 98).

¹⁷Morgan to Brooks, 15 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 87.

¹⁸Morgan to Brooks, *On Early Mormonism*, 87.

¹⁹Morgan to S. A. Burgess, 26 April 1943, *On Early Mormonism*, 43. The extent of Morgan's involvement in historicism and historical objectivism is traceable through the categories he employed to explain Mormon things and through the rhetoric he employed to justify those categories. He told Burgess that "we desired to draw a picture of Mormon beliefs from an objective point of view" and concluded that letter by insisting upon the "objectivity of our interpretation" (Morgan to Burgess, 1 July 1942, *On Early Mormonism*, 35, 40). In a letter to Fawn Brodie, Morgan described the need for an "objective study" of the Danites (Morgan to Brodie, 10 September 1943, *On Early Mormonism*, 47). He portrayed the motivation for his own inquiry into Mormon things as a "challenge . . . to try to tread objectively between warring points of view, to get at the facts, uncover them for facts, and see what the facts have to say to a reasonable intelligence" (Morgan to Brooks, 23 May 1946, *On Early Mormonism*, 121). He described

“the only historically valid methodology” as “marshall[ing] the facts and see[ing] what they add up to” (Morgan to DeVoto, 20 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 95). Appeals to a historical objectivist “objectivity” and “facts” can be found on pages 100, 113, 145, 149, 151, 161, 162, 164 (“properly critical and scientifically objective”), 175, and 184. See also his “Memo from Dale Morgan,” 1, Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 7, fld. 1.

Morgan expressed something of his historicist inclinations when insisting that Joseph “in [a] major degree is best interpreted as an astonishing reflection of the Jacksonian upsurge of the common man; he was perfectly the expression of the *zeitgeist*” (Morgan to Brodie, 28 August 1944, *On Early Mormonism*, 68). He told DeVoto, “Every man is the product of total environment acting upon the biological organism . . .” and went on to elaborate his Jacksonian thesis (Morgan to DeVoto, 2 January 1946, *On Early Mormonism*, 109, 110–11). (*On Early Mormonism* omits the date of this letter and incorrectly attributes the letter as being addressed to Fawn Brodie on the page headings.) See also Morgan to DeVoto, 20 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 92.

²⁰Morgan to Brooks, 15 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 88–89.

²¹Morgan to Brooks, 15 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 89. See also Morgan to DeVoto, 20 December 1945, *On Early Mormonism*, 96: “I find it a good deal more reasonable to conjecture that [Joseph] had an opened Bible with him on the other side of his curtain. And that idea seems to me to enforce a conception that conscious deception entered into the writing of the Book of Mormon.” Compare Marvin Hill’s ideas on a “middle ground” in “Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*,” *Church History* 43 (March 1974): 96, and also in “Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal” *Dialogue* 7 (Winter 1972): 72–85. Recasting the prophet/fraud dichotomy, Louis Midgley suggests that Joseph Smith’s “prophetic claims are such that they present the believer and unbeliever alike with either a prophet or not-prophet alternative” (“The Challenge of Historical Consciousness,” 519).

²²*On Early Mormonism* contains a version of Morgan’s “rough draft” chapter on the Book of Mormon (309–19). Unfortunately, *On Early Mormonism* does not include Morgan’s important letter fragments indicating at least some of the reasons he could not finish his book *The Mormons*. Morgan thought he could produce the “definitive” history of the Church as early as April 1942. He lived almost thirty more years and worked on his project for some seventeen years before abandoning it (Morgan to Brooks, 12 April 1942, *On Early Mormonism*, 26; Morgan to Brodie, 28 January 1946, 2, Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 7, fld. 7).

²³Morgan, *On Early Mormonism*, 278, 310.

²⁴Morgan to Madeline Reeder McQuown, Madeline Reeder McQuown Collection, MS 143, bx. 2, fld. 11, Special Collections Department, University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City.

²⁵Morgan, *On Early Mormonism*, 311, 312, 313, 318.

²⁶Leo Strauss identifies a “dogmatic atheism” in “sociological or psychological theories regarding religion.” This atheism “presents itself as merely methodological or hypothetical” and is hence uncritical and unreflective (*Liberalism, Ancient and Modern* [New York: Basic Books, 1968], 218).

²⁷Fawn Brodie to Jerome Stoffel, 3 November 1967, 2, Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 9, fld. 3.

²⁸“Fawn McKay Brodie: An Oral History Interview,” *Dialogue* 14 (Summer 1981): 106. The *Dialogue* interview is condensed from a much longer oral history. See “Biography of Fawn McKay Brodie: O. H. 1523,” interviewed by Shirley E. Stephenson, 30 November 1975, typescript, 1–52, Fullerton Oral History Program, California State University, Fullerton, Calif. The *Dialogue* version of the interview is garbled in at least one place.

²⁹Fawn Brodie, “Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups: The Mormons (Comments on the manuscript),” 3, Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 68, fld. 13. This is not an entirely uncommon opinion. See, for example, Melvin T. Smith, “Faithful History: Hazards and Limitations,” *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 68, and “Faithful History/Secular Faith,” *Dialogue* 16 (Winter 1983): 69.

³⁰“Oral History,” *Dialogue*, 109. Morgan to Brodie, 7 January 1946, *On Early Mormonism*, 118.

³¹Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 67.

³²Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 69.

³³Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 46; italics added. Compare *On Early Mormonism*, 310–19.

³⁴Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 47.

³⁵Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 58, 59–60, 62, 63, 69, 70.

³⁶Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 413, 416, 417, 415.

³⁷Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 417–21.

³⁸To begin to explore the frontiers of such speculation, see Brodie’s notes of various meetings of the Los Angeles Interdisciplinary Psychoanalytic Group: “Original Notes First J. S. Meetings & Greenacre,” “Joseph Smith—(first meeting),” in Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 8, fld. 2, and a short piece, “The Impostor,” in Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx. 8, fld. 1. For instance, “In his operation as a child he was saved by amputation (castration) by his mother” and “Gods (the angel) showed Joseph Smith a sword (the phallus); a breastplate and two stones (the mother); and the golden plates (anal element).”

³⁹Robert Flanders, “Some Reflections on the New Mormon History,” 35.

⁴⁰Arrington and Bitton, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 111.

⁴¹Marvin S. Hill, “Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal,” *Dialogue* 7 (Winter 1972): 72–85, and “Secular or Sectarian History?” 78–96. Hill deals with some aspect of Brodie’s work in the following

books and essays: "The Historiography of Mormonism," *Church History* 28 (December 1959): 419, 420; "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *BYU Studies* 12 (Winter 1972): 223, 232; Review of Richard L. Anderson's *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, in *The New England Quarterly* 46 (March 1973): 157; "The 'Prophet Puzzle' Assembled; or, How to Treat Our Historical Diplopia Toward Joseph Smith," *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 101; Marvin S. Hill, C. Keith Rooker, and Larry T. Wimmer, *The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 3, 16, 24, 59, 69; "A Note on Joseph Smith's First Vision and Its Import in the Shaping of Early Mormonism," *Dialogue* 12 (Spring 1979): 90; "Cultural Crisis in the Mormon Kingdom: A Reconsideration of the Causes of Kirtland Dissent," *Church History* 49 (September 1980): 286; "The Rise of Mormonism in the Burned-over District: Another View," *New York History* 61 (October 1980): 411; "The First Vision Controversy: A Critique and Reconciliation," *Dialogue* 15 (Summer 1982): 31; "Money-Digging Folklore and the Beginnings of Mormonism: An Interpretative Suggestion," *BYU Studies* 24 (Fall 1984): 483; "The 'New Mormon History' Reassessed in Light of Recent Books on Joseph Smith and Mormon Origins," *Dialogue* 21 (Autumn 1988): 116; and *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 4, 24.

⁴²Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 74, 73.

⁴³See Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?" 88–89, 96, "Brodie Revisited," 72, 78, and "Historiography of Mormonism," 420.

⁴⁴See, for example, Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, 10–27, 248, and Jan Shipps, *Mormonism*, 1–65. On the fringe of such explanations, George D. Smith's "Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon," *Free Inquiry* 4 (Winter 1983): 21–31, represents an updating and radicalizing of Brodie's views, though without her stylistic flourish.

⁴⁵Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 73, 72.

⁴⁶See, for example, "The First Vision Controversy," 31–44, where Brodie's and Wesley Walters's views of the First Vision are criticized. Compare "A Note on Joseph Smith's First Vision," 96–97. See also "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial," 223–33; and Hill, Rooker, and Wimmer, *The Kirtland Economy Revisited*.

⁴⁷Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 72. Hill does not indicate why such questions are beyond the limits of historical inquiry.

⁴⁸Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?" 96, 80. Others have given this "middle ground" approach the label "historicism." See Hansen, "Jan Shipps," 144–45; and Alexander, "Substantial, Important, and Brilliant," 186.

⁴⁹Marvin S. Hill, review of *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, by Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *American Historical Review* 84 (December 1979): 1488, "Richard Bushman," 125–26, and "A Note on Joseph Smith's First Vision," 94. See also "Secular or Sectarian History?" 86–87, where Hill reports Brodie's views on the Ethan Smith theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon but does not dispute her claims. Hill also skirts the issue of the origin of the Book of Mormon in *Quest for Refuge*, reporting the so-called Spaulding theory and Brodie's environmental theory. He writes, "Although Brodie has had her critics, her version of the origin of the Book of Mormon has remained the most widely accepted one in non-Mormon scholarly circles during the past forty-four years." Significantly, the next paragraph begins, "Whatever the origins of the Book of Mormon," leaving the reader to decide for himself. Joseph Smith's own account is nowhere reported. *Quest for Refuge*, 24. Compare Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 128–39, where many of Brodie's assertions about the "sources" of the Book of Mormon are disputed.

⁵⁰Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 20, 21.

⁵¹Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 21, 22.

⁵²Hill, "Secular and Sectarian History," 81, "The Rise of Mormonism," 411–13, 417, 420, and "The 'Prophet Puzzle' Assembled," 102–04. For other arguments emphasizing "stress," see Thomas G. Alexander, "Wilford Woodruff and the Changing Nature of Mormon Religious Experience," *Church History* 45 (March 1976): 57, 67; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 18–19; Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61 (October 1980): 361, 379; Jan Shipps, *Mormonism*, 42ff; and Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, 1–3.

⁵³Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?" 92. See also "Brodie Revisited," 81, 84.

⁵⁴Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?" 81, 93.

⁵⁵Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?" 92. Hill cites a portion of Joseph's 1832 history as an example: "Smith said in his unpublished history that when the angel first came to him to tell him of the plates, he thought it was a dream but later changed his mind." It seems more likely from the history itself, however, that Joseph was not referring to the vision of the night before but to the three unsuccessful attempts to take the plates. Joseph's words read as follows: "He appeared unto me three times in one night and once on the next day and then I immediately went to the place and found where the plates was deposited as the angel of the Lord had commanded me and straightway made three attempts to get them and then being exceedingly frightened I supposed it had been a dreem of Vision but when I considered I knew it was not" (Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984], 7). Compare *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 83–84.

⁵⁶Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 80.

⁵⁷Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 72, and "Secular or Sectarian History?" 80. Compare Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 5; and Jan Shipps, *Mormonism*, xi–xii and 39: "This experiential process legitimized the prophet's centrality to the enterprise, which means that, *as far as history is concerned*, the question of whether Smith was a prophet or fraud is not particularly important" (italics in original). Lawrence Foster takes a somewhat different tack, suggesting that "the development of a comprehensive naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon" could "go beyond the conventional Mormon view that it is a literal history translated by Joseph Smith or the conventional anti-Mormon view that it is a conscious fraud." Foster suggests that "the Book of Mormon is probably best understood, at least in part, as a trance-related production." Joseph then becomes "an unusually gifted trance-figure, perhaps one of the most gifted figures in the history of religion." Foster insists, given the "available evidence," that the Book of Mormon "should properly be viewed . . . as a work of 'inspiration' or 'revelation' rather than as a literal translation or history in any sense." "From a Mormon perspective," he claims, "the book could then be described as 'divinely inspired'; from a non-Mormon view-point, it could be seen as an unusually sophisticated product of unconscious and little-known mental processes." The advantage of removing the question of whether the Book of Mormon is "literal translation or history" is that it shifts attention "from the unrewarding and ultimately irrelevant question of whether any golden plates . . . ever existed or whether the Book of Mormon was a literal history to the far more important and fascinating question of the content and meaning of this most extraordinary religious document" (*Religion and Sexuality*, 294, 296–97). Foster does not indicate what consequences, if any, his reinterpretation may have upon the community of faith or even if that community can survive such a shift.

⁵⁸Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 72.

⁵⁹Hill, "New Mormon History," 125.

⁶⁰Alexander, "Toward the New Mormon History," 360.

⁶¹Arrington and Bitton, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 129, 131.

⁶²Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 86.

⁶³Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 10, 11.

⁶⁴Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), xvi.

⁶⁵Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (1982 edition), 81, 93.

⁶⁶According to Martin Heidegger, "All the scientific disciplines are dominated by *positivism*, the tendency toward the *positive*, where 'positive' is understood in terms of *facts*, and facts are understood in terms of a particular interpretation of *reality*. Facts are facts only if they can be enumerated, weighed, measured, and experimentally determined. In history, facts are those movements and events which are in the first instance accessible in the sources" (*History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 15; italics in original).

⁶⁷Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (1982 edition), 11.

⁶⁸See Martin E. Marty, "Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 11–12.