

father has shown me your letter
 him and me of your success in
 me as you suppose but we are
 on that since you cannot ascertain
 unless you should not dig more
 first decide if an invaluable
 know the treasure must be guarded
 clever spirit if such is disc
 so is the treasure so do this task
 Stick one yard long being new
 leave it just in the middle and
 on the middle so that both inner
 Stick may not be right again
 one inch distant and if there is
 while you shall see them drawn
 together again of themselves let me
 is since you were here I have
 to accept your offer and if you
 it convenient to come this way
 dy to accompany you if nothing
 than I know of I am very resp

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The Artist and the Forger: Han van Meegeren and Mark Hofmann

Edward L. Kimball

In 1947 the artist Han van Meegeren stood in the criminal court in Amsterdam and admitted he was guilty of forgery in what may be the greatest known art fraud.¹ Forty years later, in 1987, Mark Hofmann confessed his guilt of forgery, fraud, and murder growing out of what may be the greatest known historical document fraud.² The two cases show some striking similarities.

Han van Meegeren, a Dutch artist of fair talent, felt he had been betrayed by those whose fairness and wisdom he had a right to expect—the art critics. At first the critics had written approving notices, but in 1923, when Han was thirty-four, they began to belittle his work. Han resented these men, who had such great power over artistic reputation, and considered them incompetent and corrupt, quick to praise the work of the established artists, who already had a reputation, and careless in rejecting the work of artists not yet certified by convention as worthy of admiration. It was the name that sold, not the artistry. At about this time, van Meegeren began to fake paintings of other artists, first Frans Hals, later Terborch, de Hoogh, and Baburen.³ By these frauds he earned money, fed his ego, and thumbed his nose at the critics, who had pronounced their negative judgment on his skill with such assurance. Ultimately van Meegeren's hatred of art critics became an obsession. About 1932 he conceived the idea of painting a "Vermeer" as good as the great master's own paintings, so good that it would be accepted as genuine.⁴ The critics would then be saying that van Meegeren painted as well as Vermeer, and if the truth ever came out they would be unmasked as frauds, incompetent as judges of art.

Mark Hofmann as a young man of fourteen became disillusioned with the Mormon religion in which he had been reared.⁵ He concluded that the world responded to scientific, not spiritual explanation and that his parents and Church leaders were deluded. In his view, there was no God,⁶ and Joseph Smith's story of visions and golden plates was false.⁷ Hofmann lived a double life, outwardly professing what he disbelieved.⁸

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Some of those close to him perceived that he was not the believer others assumed him to be, but no one considered him capable of any of the crimes he committed—not forgery, not theft, much less cold-blooded murder.⁹

Hofmann began his career early. He claims that in his teens he used an electroplating process on a coin to forge an unusual mint mark that experts accepted as genuine¹⁰ and that he counterfeited notary seals by the same process.¹¹ But within a few years he had graduated to document forgery. He studied American and Mormon history sufficiently to perpetrate numerous and persuasive frauds. He did it for money, as an expression of ego, and with the motive of “rewriting” Mormon history by casting doubt on its claims to miraculous origin in the visitation of heavenly messengers: “I don’t believe in the religion as far as that Joseph Smith had the First Vision or received the plates from the angel Moroni. . . . I wrote the documents according to how I felt the actual events took place. In other words, I believe that Joseph Smith was involved with folk magic.”¹² He sought to show that the Prophet was a fraud.

In 1932 van Meegeren began a four year period of secret experimentation, seeking to develop a foolproof method for making a recent painting pass the tests for age. With pumice he rubbed the paint off a canvas painted by a contemporary of Vermeer and reused the centuries-old canvas. He painted only with materials available to Vermeer. He hand-ground natural pigments, as in Vermeer’s time, and used real lapis lazuli to produce the famous Vermeer blue. So far it was relatively easy. The main difficulty resided in the fact that it took half a century or more for the oil paints used in Vermeer’s time to harden so completely that they were not affected by alcohol or other solvents. And if one used sufficient heat to evaporate the oils quickly, it either blistered or discolored the paint. But after studying texts on oils and after much experimenting, van Meegeren finally hit upon oil of lilac mixed with the chemical hardeners phenol and formaldehyde as the medium for his pigments. Baking the painting at high heat, in an oven he constructed himself, he produced within hours the hard finish that he believed would protect him against discovery. He then carefully rolled the canvas until the paint had a proper degree of cracking and superficially damaged the painting in other ways that suggested age and neglect.

Hofmann studied and developed methods for simulating old documents that withstood standard examination for forgery. He used old paper, cutting the end sheets from antique books in libraries.¹³ He formulated inks of the sorts used in previous centuries.¹⁴ He even added carbon black obtained from burning seventeenth-century paper to foil carbon-14 dating tests¹⁵ and shifted from quill pens to steel nibs in appropriate circumstances.¹⁶ He learned how to age the forged documents with chemicals,¹⁷ heat,¹⁸ and exposure to ozone.¹⁹ He claimed

even to have used red fungus,²⁰ bread mold,²¹ and insects²² to do damage that suggested age and neglect.

Van Meegeren chose Vermeer as the subject of his forgeries because of the painter's acknowledged greatness, because he had once made a special study of Vermeer's work, and because uncertainties about the life of this seventeenth-century painter—little appreciated in his lifetime—left room for invention. There existed only one known early picture, and it portrayed a religious scene. There were nearly forty paintings from Vermeer's later life, and they used secular subjects. That left an unknown middle period. Van Meegeren decided to create a transitional picture that would fit in the gap, so he chose a biblical theme, Christ at Emmaus, consistent with Vermeer's earliest known painting. Ironically, van Meegeren, who had rejected God and religion after his brother's death, forged almost exclusively religious paintings. His biographer says that in his self-pity over a troubled marriage, inadequate income, and unappreciated talent, he perversely identified with Christ's suffering.

Despite Hofmann's atheism, he was deeply involved with religion. That so many of the documents he forged related to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, seems to involve more than just money-making opportunity. To some extent he was consciously trying to reshape Mormon history in the image of his disbelief²³ and to embarrass the Church.²⁴ Hofmann fabricated documents known to have once existed, such as the Anthon transcript,²⁵ Mormon currency,²⁶ and a letter to General Dunham.²⁷ He also created documents which by their purported authorship and subject could well have existed, such as the Joseph Smith III blessing.²⁸ He filled gaps in early Mormon history with items of his own invention, often containing controversial information to enhance value.

Van Meegeren worked in secrecy, perhaps not letting even his wife into his studio while he worked.²⁹ He earned a fair living as a portrait painter and concealed his Vermeer experiment from others. After four years perfecting the technique, he spent six months using his utmost care and skill to paint his greatest forgery, *Christ at Emmaus*. He did not copy the early Vermeer, but he simulated its style and signed Vermeer's name. Then van Meegeren arranged to discover the lost masterpiece. Not wanting his own name associated with the newly discovered painting because of his previous history of combat with the critics, van Meegeren arranged for it to be authenticated and sold through an innocent intermediary, to whom he gave a false story about having obtained it through a proud family, fallen on hard times. When an aging but famous art expert certified the picture as a genuine Vermeer, a major Dutch museum bought it for \$174,000 (in 1937 dollars).

Aside from the artist's signature and the artificial aging, van Meegeren met stylistic tests and used a subtle "hook" for the experts. The

composition of *Christ at Emmaus* borrowed much from a Caravaggio painting on the same subject. The “experts” had already suggested that Vermeer might have been influenced by Caravaggio early in his career. The picture’s composition confirmed their speculations.

So far as is known, Hofmann worked without confederates, apparently trusting not even his wife, Dori.³⁰ He concealed his forgeries under the cover of substantial legitimate document dealing. And his forgeries were not copies, but creative variations. For example, the Anthon transcript, his first major “discovery,” had characters that ran up and down, rather than horizontally as in the extant crude copy, and it included additional material consistent with Charles Anthon’s description, as well as a forged Joseph Smith holograph. Also Hofmann created a letter from Joseph Smith to General Dunham appealing for rescue that confirmed some historians’ suppositions.³¹

Hofmann involved others in the finding³² and sale of documents,³³ keeping his role either hidden or subordinate.³⁴ For example, he took the Anthon transcript, still sealed, to an archivist at Utah State University for help in opening it.³⁵ Sometimes he had ready stories to explain where the documents came from.³⁶ On other occasions he asserted that the secretive nature of document dealing prevented his making full disclosure of provenance.³⁷ He even discussed with customers the risks of forgeries and how to detect them.³⁸

Though van Meegeren later said that he intended to reveal the forgery once the critics had committed themselves, we may be skeptical of that. But even if that had once been in his thoughts, the money to be made by forgery quickly seduced him. He had mastered the criminal skill, and the money tree stood ready for harvesting. The critics had proven themselves gullible, and the acceptance of one “lost masterpiece” would make acceptance of another easier. In 1939 van Meegeren counterfeited two paintings of de Hooch and sold them for \$204,000. The experts accepted them without difficulty. Then during the Second World War, van Meegeren painted five more “Vermeers.” Fraud proved so easy for him that some of the later pictures were of poor quality, but they too were snapped up. The Nazi occupation favored the forger because the Dutch felt that even if the painting was a poor example of a master’s skill it was still part of their artistic heritage, so they raised money to keep the canvas in the Netherlands.³⁹ Van Meegeren rationalized, saying that if the critics and owners believed a painting genuine, then it had as much value as if painted by the person whose name he had signed to it. No one had suffered.⁴⁰

While Hofmann says he was motivated primarily by money,⁴¹ he managed to mix satisfaction at fomenting religious controversy with profit making,⁴² happily achieving both objectives at once. Over a period of six years, he turned out a great number of forged documents accepted

as genuine, except by a few doubters.⁴³ He rationalized, saying that if the experts authenticated a document it was “genuine by definition.”⁴⁴ He claimed, “I was not cheating that person that I was selling it to, because the document would never be detected as being a fraud”⁴⁵ and would continue to be worth what buyers had paid for it. Who had suffered?

How had van Meegeren fooled the experts? At the beginning he coupled skillful simulation of Vermeer’s style with methods of aging that carefully took into account the tests then in use to detect forgeries. And his dealings in genuine art works provided cover and some plausibility that he might discover a lost Vermeer or be chosen as intermediary by an anonymous seller. The disruption caused by the Nazi occupation of his country aided his later, less careful forgeries. Secrecy in business dealings became the norm, and there was an eagerness to put cash into goods that might retain value in a postwar inflation. Van Meegeren shrewdly played to the experts’ predilections, giving them what they expected.⁴⁶ With so many marks in favor of genuineness, the experts perceived lack of provenance only as an annoyance, not as proof of fraud.

The Hofmann case involves similar explanations of his fooling the experts. He anticipated the usual paper, ink, and handwriting tests for forgery. Indeed, he was disappointed at the shallowness of the testing⁴⁷ because it did not warrant all the trouble he had gone to. Though Hofmann was skillful with his hands, others were not aware of that and thought forgery beyond his capacity.⁴⁸ He dealt also in legitimate documents, an occupation that provided protective coloration. And the acceptance of one document made acceptance of others easier.⁴⁹

Particularly since van Meegeren had decided to fill in an empty period in Vermeer’s career, once the first painting “proved” to be genuine the subsequent finds, supposedly from that same little-understood period, were judged more by comparison with the first forgery than with the long-accepted masterworks. One can paint convincing pictures in a style one has invented. And the appearance of the first painting suggested there might be other undiscovered great paintings. Indeed, after van Meegeren sold his own study of the head of Christ for a Last Supper, the obvious match between it and the *Last Supper* which he later produced helped authenticate the larger painting. At van Meegeren’s trial, one of the experts said candidly, “I was fooled. When I saw the *Head of Christ*, it made me think so strongly of the *Emmaus* that I was deceived.” In answer to the question, “Did you not think it strange that after this one, more Vermeers were discovered?” he said, “No. The historians agree that there should be more Vermeers, and that the *Emmaus* could not be the only one of its kind in existence.” Asked how he could have accepted the *Blessing of Jacob*, which was characterized as “the strange one,” he explained, “Yes, it’s difficult to explain. It is unbelievable that it should have fooled me. But we slid downwards—from the *Emmaus* to

the *Foot-Washing*, and from the *Foot-Washing* to the *Blessing of Jacob*; a psychologist could explain this better than I can.”⁵⁰

Hofmann filled gaps in history with plausible documents. They departed from the orthodox version enough to make them intriguing, but not so far that they could be rejected out of hand. He claimed to find what others had missed, succeeding by dint of dogged pursuit and by a willingness to spend large sums of money following up on leads.⁵¹ Each “find” proved the efficacy of his methods more than it raised suspicions.⁵²

Van Meegeren told detailed stories, a fabric of lies but persuasive. According to his biographer, he seems to have lied finally “as much from habit and a strange humor as from any planned or constructive reason. He became totally irresponsible, totally uncaring for the world and its opinions, a man who believed only in himself and who cared only for his own tattered destiny. Deception absorbed him; after all, it was his trade.”⁵³ Detection of his best forgeries would have required either the use of new scientific techniques or that provenance be demanded, but we are surprised that some of the poorer forgeries should have slipped by. The sheer number of “new finds” makes the mind boggle at the credulity of the buyers, since the total number of previously known Vermeers was only about forty. However, in the disrupted atmosphere of wartime no one showed signs of suspecting. With vast sums being paid, one might have expected there to be careful investigation of provenance, yet there was not. Van Meegeren met demands for information about origins with lies or with refusal, on grounds of protecting the privacy of the sellers.

Hofmann lied brazenly, persuasively. “I can look someone in the eye and lie,” he said.⁵⁴ Incredibly cool, he explains he was able to lie without hesitation because he had studied biofeedback mechanisms and had practiced self-hypnotism.⁵⁵ He provided a ready, convincing explanation for lack of provenance of his documents, citing customs of the business or the seller’s desire for anonymity. But sometimes he simply forged a fraudulent pedigree for the principal document.⁵⁶

Though van Meegeren received a fortune for the paintings, riches intoxicated him and he could not stop. He had to tell more lies to cover for past lies. At the time his fraud collapsed, another partially finished Vermeer stood on his easel. He thought at one point of leaving a confession to be found after his death, but he never got around to it.

Hofmann received large sums of money for his forgeries, but he got caught in a spiral and could not bring himself to stop. He even sold some documents before he had created them.⁵⁷ His frauds grew bigger and bigger, finally including nonexistent Brigham Young and William McLellan collections and “The Oath of a Free Man.” Debts outpaced income, and all the lies finally began to unravel.⁵⁸ He says he attempted suicide,⁵⁹ but many are skeptical of this claim, saying it would be out of character.

In May 1945 Allied investigators found the “Vermeer” painting of Christ with the adulteress in the collection of Hermann Goering, who had bought it for \$495,000. The investigators traced the painting back through two owners to van Meegeren. Suspecting him of selling a national treasure to the Nazi leader, the Dutch authorities arrested him for treason. He denied knowing Goering had bought the painting, but ultimately he had to declare that in any event it could not be called collaboration with the enemy to have sold a forgery to Goering. The investigators laughed at this defense. But van Meegeren finally persuaded them. When they knew what to look for, investigators using X-rays found underlying paintings on some canvases; chemists now found minute traces of the phenol that van Meegeren used in hardening the paint. By hindsight the coincidence of so many previously unknown Vermeer paintings coming to light in such a short period seemed incredible. Van Meegeren’s confession led to a sensation, with the artistic experts scrambling to explain how, despite their best efforts, they had been fooled. Reputations crashed. And as conclusive proof of his story, during two months in the fall of 1945 van Meegeren painted still another “Vermeer” while incredulous witnesses watched.

In 1985 Mark Hofmann murdered Steven Christensen in hope of concealing his numerous frauds.⁶⁰ Then he murdered Kathleen Sheets simply to put the police on the wrong track.⁶¹ And he may have planned to murder some third person, though he claims that when the third bomb exploded he was engaged in a failed suicide attempt.⁶² The search for motive to the murders led investigators back to the documents and suspicion of fraud. But forgery came into the picture belatedly, because the documents had already passed careful review. Though the police felt sure of their suspect very early, the case against Hofmann suffered serious weaknesses. He had successfully passed a careful polygraph test,⁶³ the examiner saying, “I was totally convinced he was innocent.”⁶⁴ People who thought they knew him well protested that this clean-cut young man with no criminal record simply lacked the capacity for murder. Furthermore, he, too, had been the victim of a bomb. Though the documents had all seemed genuine, ultimately all the significant Mormon documents Hofmann had “discovered” failed new, more sophisticated tests, which showed in the ink surface of the Hofmann documents microscopic cracks that were absent on unquestionably old documents.⁶⁵ The documents also showed some unidirectional spreading of ink from having been hung up to dry after chemical aging.⁶⁶ With this new evidence, former authenticators retracted their opinions. Investigation discredited supposed provenance. And finally, as part of a plea bargain, Hofmann confessed in some detail, including demonstrating for witnesses his ability to imitate the handwriting of historic Mormon figures.⁶⁷ The experts who had accepted the documents as authentic, and

Hofmann as telling the truth, scrambled to explain why Hofmann's forgeries were too subtle to be detected by the techniques that had previously been found adequate.⁶⁸

The trial of van Meegeren finally took place in 1947. No one doubted the conclusion, for van Meegeren freely admitted his crime. But even the trial provided him satisfaction. He reveled in the publicity, especially when news reporters labelled him "a genius." Despite his confession, a few diehards continued to insist that his *Christ at Emmaus* and his *Last Supper* were too good to be forgeries. He had surely made the experts out to be fools. Han van Meegeren received a short prison sentence, but he died of a heart condition before he began to serve his term.

Mark Hofmann pleaded guilty to two second degree murders and two forgeries in a plea bargain that avoided first degree murder convictions and the death penalty. He also promised as part of the bargain to detail his crimes.⁶⁹ He entered the Utah State Prison in 1987, to serve life imprisonment. In the interviews he revealed part, but not all of his criminal scheme.⁷⁰ When the transcript was made public, a number of people close to the case reacted to his statements on motivation and facts (other than the mechanics of forgery, in which he took professional pride) with strong skepticism. "With all his admitted lies," they asked, "why should we believe anything Hofmann says?"⁷¹ His statements to the Utah Parole Board, which voted never to grant parole,⁷² exposed his view that taking life was of no great moment. As he believed there is nothing beyond this life, he was left to glory in his brief moment in the sun.

These two men, the artist and the forger, turned their considerable talents to crime because of vanity, anger, and greed. They might have gone undetected, but the love of money held them captive. They risked again and again exposure and imprisonment, unable to quit while ahead. Their forgeries went undetected for years but ultimately came to light when police began investigating the men for much different crimes. As bizarre as the story of Mark Hofmann may seem, he was merely acting out a new production of an old play.

NOTES

¹Hope B. Werness calls him “certainly the most audacious and successful forger of modern times” (Hope B. Werness, “*Han van Meegeren fecit*,” in Denis Dutton, ed., *The Forger’s Art* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983], 1–57). For information about van Meegeren’s career, I have relied primarily on John Godley, *The Master Art Forger: The Story of Han van Meegeren* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1951), the first major biographical treatment, and the Werness article, which corrects some of Godley’s earlier errors.

²The first book-length treatment is Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988). I express thanks to Linda Sillitoe for reviewing a draft of this article. Other major sources are Mitchell Pacella, “The Case of the Latter-day Bomber,” *American Lawyer* 79 (June 1987): 79–87, and *Mark Hofmann Interviews: Interviews Conducted at Utah State Prison between February 11 and May 27, 1987*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Office of Salt Lake County Attorney, 1987).

³Though van Meegeren never admitted these early forgeries, it is “all but certain” that he is the artist responsible (see Werness, “Meegeren,” 17–19).

⁴His principal biographer, relying heavily on family sources, dates his first forgery from this time, but there is some evidence that he forged paintings earlier, including possibly even a Vermeer in 1932 that van Meegeren never admitted forging (see Werness, “Meegeren,” 17–20).

⁵*Hofmann Interviews* 1:112.

⁶Hofmann told the parole board that before he committed two murders he had a moment of doubt: “What if there really is a God? What happens if I’m wrong?” (see Jan Thompson, “Calm Hofmann Accepts Life-in-Prison Decision,” *Deseret News*, 30 January 1988).

⁷*Hofmann Interviews* 2:425.

⁸*Ibid.* 1:130.

⁹*Ibid.* 2:421.

¹⁰*Ibid.* 2:409.

¹¹*Ibid.* 1:177.

¹²*Ibid.* 2:425–27.

¹³*Ibid.* 1:54.

¹⁴*Ibid.* 1:21–22.

¹⁵*Ibid.* 1:236.

¹⁶*Ibid.* 1:20–21, 165, 2:414.

¹⁷*Ibid.* 1:24–25.

¹⁸*Ibid.* 1:29–32.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 2:363–67.

²⁰*Ibid.* 1:283.

²¹*Ibid.* 2:462.

²²*Ibid.* 2:305.

²³*Ibid.* 1:113.

²⁴*Ibid.* 1:148, 2:451–56, 474–84; compare 2:358–59, 426–27. Actually only a minority of Hofmann’s forgeries were Mormon documents. In his confession he asserted that he had typed in (glued in) “dozens or possibly hundreds” of false pages in books (*ibid.* 1:229), created Jim Bridger notes (*ibid.* 1:288–94), and sold a Daniel Boone letter and five hundred thousand dollars’ worth of forgeries to Eastern dealers (*ibid.* 1:SS-14). His most significant known forgery was “The Oath of a Free Man,” a supposed copy of the first printed document in the American colonies (*ibid.* 1:230–88, 2:302–9), which he proposed to sell to the Library of Congress for one-and-a-half million dollars.

²⁵*Ibid.* 1:3–132.

²⁶*Ibid.* 1:182–222.

²⁷*Ibid.* 2:387–402.

²⁸*Ibid.* 1:133–72, 2:296–302.

²⁹While Godley says the wife was unaware, Werness (in “Meegeren,” 27) indicates that she may have known what van Meegeren was doing.

³⁰Hofmann said, however, that she probably suspected many of his finds were fake (*Hofmann Interviews* 1:SS-14) and also that “she did not know the extent of my fraudulent dealings” (*ibid.* 2:421).

³¹*Ibid.* 2:389.

³²*Ibid.* 1:94–97.

³³*Ibid.* 2:469–73.

³⁴“Stalking the Wild Document: An Interview with Lyn Jacobs,” *Sunstone* 10 (August 1985): 15–16.

³⁵*Hofmann Interviews* 1:96–97.

³⁶*Ibid.* 1:165–73, 232–34.

³⁷*Ibid.* 2:418–20; compare “Stalking the Wild Document,” 16.

³⁸“The Victims: A Legacy of Bitter Hindsight,” *Deseret News*, 31 July 1987.

³⁹Werness, “Meegeren,” 50.

⁴⁰For a discussion of the aesthetics of forged art, see Alfred Lessing, “What Is Wrong with a Forgery?” in Denis Dutton, ed., *The Forger’s Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 58–76.

⁴¹*Hofmann Interviews* 1:96.

⁴²*Ibid.* 1:113, 133.

⁴³In the spring of 1985, Rhett James questioned the authenticity of the Martin Harris “salamander” letter, basing his argument on the study of syntax using fourteen grammatical points in a 1 October 1984 unpublished paper titled, “Christian Cultural Religious Superstition: The 1825, 1830 Letters and Related Documents with Suggestions for Methodological Examination and Presentation,” made public in April 1985. Compare Dean Jessee, “New Documents and Mormon Beginnings,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 24 (Fall 1984): 397–416.

⁴⁴*Hofmann Interviews* 2:410, 425.

⁴⁵*Ibid.* 2:407.

⁴⁶Werness, “Meegeren,” 20, 49–50.

⁴⁷*Hofmann Interviews* 1:125, 2:417–18.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* 2:430. Lyn Jacobs, one of Hofmann’s associates, speaking before Hofmann’s confession, said, “If you’re suggesting Mark forged it, it is not possible. Mark Hofmann is not a forger. I don’t think Mark even knows how” (“Stalking the Wild Document,” 9).

⁴⁹*Hofmann Interviews* 2:310, 455.

⁵⁰Quoted in Godley, *Master Art Forger*, 213–14.

⁵¹“Stalking the Wild Document,” 11–13.

⁵²For example, Hofmann created fake magical talismans using characters similar to those in the Anthon transcript (*Hofmann Interviews* 2:506–7). They could have been perceived as evidence of his fraud or as evidence that Joseph Smith copied the characters from the talisman.

⁵³Godley, *Master Art Forger*, 161.

⁵⁴*Hofmann Interviews* 1:99.

⁵⁵“Cash Losses Will Run at Least \$1.5 Million,” *Deseret News*, 18 August 1987; “Hypnosis Helped Hofmann Beat Test,” [Provo] *Herald*, 24 August 1987.

⁵⁶*Hofmann Interviews* 1:100–107, 116–24, 168–73.

⁵⁷*Ibid.* 2:394–95.

⁵⁸*Ibid.* 2:399–407. Though one estimate is that the Mormon document frauds accounted for only a quarter of all Hofmann’s frauds, the losses with respect to the Mormon items amounted to more than \$1,500,000 (see “Victims,” *Deseret News*, 31 July 1987).

⁵⁹*Hofmann Interviews* 1:SS–11 to SS–12, 2:424.

⁶⁰*Ibid.* 1:SS–7.

⁶¹*Ibid.* 1:SS–8.

⁶²*Ibid.* 1:SS–12, 2:424.

⁶³“Hypnosis,” *Herald*, 24 August 1987.

⁶⁴“Mark Hofmann Is in an Elite Group: He Completely Fooled the Machine,” *Deseret News*, 18 August 1987.

⁶⁵*Hofmann Interviews* 1:131–32.

⁶⁶*Ibid.* 1:163–64.

⁶⁷*Ibid.* 1:31, 2:415.

⁶⁸Pacella, “Latter-day Bomber,” 85.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 87.

⁷⁰Before the murders had been fully discussed, the interviews broke down because of disagreement about who could be present. See the three pages following page 2:537 of the interview transcript. This left unresolved whether Hofmann had fulfilled the plea bargain.

⁷¹Allen Roberts, Brent Ashworth, and George Throckmorton are quoted to that effect in “Hofmann: Believe It or Not,” and Al Rust is quoted in “Modern-day King Richard III Lived and Operated Inside a Private World of His Own Making,” both articles in *Deseret News*, 16 August 1987.

⁷²The decision does not, however, bind a future board.

The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates

Noel B. Reynolds

Every people needs to know that its laws and rulers are legitimate and authoritative. This is why stories of national origins and city foundings are so important to human societies throughout the world. Such stories provide explanations of the legitimate origins of their laws and their rulers. Not untypically, such traditions also deal with ambiguous elements of the founding, explaining away possibly competing accounts. When Nephi undertook late in his life to write a third account of the founding events of the Lehite colony, it appears that he wanted to provide his descendants with a document that would serve this function. His small plates systematically defend the Nephite tradition concerning origins and refute the competing account advanced by the Lamanites. Several factors indicate that Nephi carefully structured his writings to convince his own and later generations that the Lord had selected him over his elder brothers to be Lehi's political and spiritual successor. Thus, the writings of Nephi can be read in part as a political tract or a "lineage history," written to document the legitimacy of Nephi's rule and religious teachings.¹

THE TRADITIONS OF THE LAMANITES AND NEPHITES

Soon after Lehi's death, his colony split into two groups, the Lamanites and the Nephites. Each of these factions developed its own explanation for Nephi's acquisition of authority. As it was later reported in Nephite records, the oral traditions of the Lamanites included claims that:

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- (1) “They were driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers” (presumably Lehi and Ishmael);²
- (2) “They were wronged in the wilderness by their brethren” when Nephi “took the lead of their journey in the wilderness”;
- (3) “They were also wronged while crossing the sea”;
- (4) “They were wronged while in the land of their first inheritance” when Nephi left and “robbed” the plates of brass from them.

(Mosiah 10:12–13)

Five hundred years after Nephi wrote his record, the Lamanite charge had been simplified by the Zoramite Ammoron: “For behold, your fathers [Nephi et al.] did wrong their brethren, insomuch that they did rob them of their right to the government when it rightly belonged unto them” (Alma 54:17). And Ammoron adds one specifically Zoramite tradition, charging that his ancestor (who had originally been faithful to Nephi) had been “pressed and brought out of Jerusalem” by Nephi (Alma 54:23). In these terms, then, the Nephite record portrays Laman and Lemuel and their descendants and followers choosing to blame their own failings on things done to them by others.

In asserting and defending the Nephite position, Zeniff explains that Nephi took the lead because he was righteous and called of God: “the Lord heard his [Nephi’s] prayers and answered them, and he took the lead of their journey in the wilderness” (Mosiah 10:13). Zeniff further claims that Laman and Lemuel had hardened their hearts while on the sea and that Nephi “departed into the wilderness as the Lord had commanded him, and took . . . the plates of brass” (Mosiah 10:16).³ A fairly standardized version of the Nephite tradition seems clearly to have been codified early on and invoked ritualistically on the great occasion when they met under King Benjamin’s direction to offer sacrifices and give thanks to the Lord their God. Mormon carefully lists the central elements of the Nephite tradition as the content of their prayers of thanksgiving:

- (1) The Lord had “brought them out of the land of Jerusalem”;
- (2) The Lord had “delivered them out of the hands of their enemies”;
- (3) The Lord had “appointed just men to be their teachers”;
- (4) The Lord had given them “a just man to be their king, who had established peace in the land of Zarahemla, and who had taught them to keep the commandments of God”;
- (5) By this means, the Lord had made it possible for them to “rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all men.”

(Mosiah 2:4)

But the Lamanites did not respond to the Nephites in this same spirit. From the first, they sought to kill Nephi (1 Ne. 7:16). Hundreds of years later, Zeniff reports that they were still teaching their children to hate the children of Nephi, to murder them, to rob and plunder them, in fine, to “have an eternal hatred” towards them because of these alleged wrongs. From the records of his Nephite fathers, Zeniff knew that all

this was because Laman and Lemuel “understood not the dealings of the Lord” and that they had “hardened their hearts against the Lord” (Mosiah 10:14).

No doubt it was because of such teachings that the first generation of Lamanites had sworn in their wrath to destroy not only the Nephites, but also their records and their traditions (Enos 1:14). One might have thought that destroying the Nephites would have sufficed. But perhaps the Lamanites remembered the prophecies of Nephi and Lehi that the record itself would eventually be instrumental in converting their descendants to the Nephite beliefs (Enos 1:13). The Nephites talked easily and frequently of such a possibility (for example, Jacob 7:24). Alma repeats this conviction when he tells the people of Ammonihah that someday the Lamanites will believe the word of the Lord and “know of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers” (Alma 9:17; see also Jacob 4:3). Likewise, the central role of the Nephite record in preserving Nephite traditions is emphasized in the account of the missionary activities of the sons of Mosiah. These four young Nephites undertook their mission to the Lamanites with a prayer that they might be instrumental in bringing the Lamanites “to the knowledge of the truth, to the knowledge of the baseness of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct” (Alma 17:9; compare Alma 21:17). Ammon’s teachings to the Lamanite king Lamoni emphasized the rebellions of the Lamanite progenitors as described in the Nephite record (Alma 18:37–39), and Lamoni, after his conversion, specifically thanked God for sending these men “to preach unto us, and to convince us of the traditions of our wicked fathers” (Alma 24:7; compare Alma 23:3–5, 25:6). A later Nephi explained that the deeds of the Lamanites “have been evil continually . . . because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them through the preaching of the Nephites” (Hel. 15:4; see also Hel. 15:7).

Statements of apostates from the Nephite tradition further accentuate the political function served by these records. For example, Mosiah’s missionary sons encountered the Amalekites, who had apostatized from the Nephite beliefs and were living among the Lamanites. One Amalekite answered Aaron’s inquiry into Amalekite teaching about the coming Redeemer by rejecting Nephite traditions in general: “We do not believe that thou knowest any such thing. We do not believe in these foolish traditions. We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come, neither do we believe that thy fathers and also that our fathers did know concerning the things which they spake, of that which is to come” (Alma 21:8). This same sophistic skepticism characterizes declarations of Korihor (Alma 30:14–27), the apostate Nephites just before the coming of Christ (Hel. 16:15–23),⁴ and the Zoramites. In ritual prayer the Zoramites denied belief in the Nephite tradition “which

was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers.” Rather they believed God had “elected” them to be his “holy children.” They claimed God had revealed to them that “there shall be no Christ.” While they were chosen to be saved, the Nephites were chosen “to be cast by [God’s] wrath down to hell.” They thanked God further that they had not been “led away after the foolish traditions” of the Nephites, which “bind them down to a belief of Christ” (Alma 31:16–17). In answer to Moroni’s letter calling on him to repent, Ammoron, Amalickiah’s brother, defies the Nephite teaching, saying:

And as concerning that God whom ye say we have rejected, behold, we know not such a being; neither do ye; but if it so be that there is such a being, we know not but that he hath made us as well as you.

And if it so be that there is a devil and a hell, behold will he not send you there to dwell with my brother whom ye have murdered, whom ye have hinted that he hath gone to such a place? But behold these things matter not.

(Alma 54:21–22)

Like Amalickiah and his followers, many of “these dissenters” had “the same instruction and the same information of the Nephites,” even “having been instructed in the same knowledge of the Lord.” Yet after dissenting they adopted “the traditions of the Lamanites; giving way to indolence, and all manner of lasciviousness; yea, entirely forgetting the Lord their God” (Alma 47:36). Like Ammoron and Amalickiah, many of them even waged war on the Nephites “to avenge their wrongs, and to maintain and to obtain their rights to the government” (Alma 54:24). In fact, the Nephite apostates “became more hardened and impenitent . . . than the Lamanites” (Alma 47:36). Thus, one of the main factors determining one’s group allegiance and alignment in this society was whether one accepted or rejected the traditions of the Nephite fathers, particularly Lehi’s and Nephi’s prophecies about the coming of Christ.

Indeed, the writers of the Book of Mormon were conscious of the fact that the small plates of Nephi would play this kind of a powerful role. Enos specifically prayed that if the Nephites were to be destroyed, as had been prophesied, their records might still be preserved to bring salvation to the Lamanites. Enos received a positive response to this prayer, together with the interesting information that his fathers and perhaps other prophets had prayed for the same thing and had won the same promise from the Lord (Enos 1:16–18).

Elsewhere, the text repeatedly stresses the importance of the records for the instruction of the Nephites in their traditions (see, for example, 1 Ne. 19:3). Benjamin tells his sons that if they had not had the plates of brass and the plates of Nephi they too, like the Lamanites, would have “dwindled in unbelief,” but that in these records they have the sayings of their fathers from the time they left Jerusalem, which are true,

which they should therefore search diligently (Mosiah 1:3–7). Two generations later, Alma charges his son Helaman to preserve and add to the sacred records. For by this means the Lord “doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls” (Alma 37:7). He tells Helaman that these records “have enlarged the memory of this people” and have “convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls” (Alma 37:8). Without these records, Alma explains, “Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers.” It was the records that had brought those converts “unto repentance . . . to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer” (Alma 37:9).

The content of the Nephite tradition is much richer and more affirmative than that of the Lamanites. In fact, it centers on another subject altogether. As Nephi repeatedly states, his purpose is to persuade his children to believe in Christ, that they might be saved (1 Ne. 6:4, 19:18; 2 Ne. 25:23). Mosiah also records that the generation arising after the time of Benjamin did not believe the tradition of their fathers about either the “resurrection of the dead” or the future “coming of Christ.” From statements like these it is clear that the Nephite traditions centered on their religious teachings, as well as on the political.

The first step essential to an acceptance of those teachings was recognition of Nephi as the spokesman and leader chosen by the Lord. Thus, Nephi’s effort to persuade his descendants and us to believe in Christ must include a demonstration that he is the rightful heir to the prophetic office and political authority of his father. This amounts to proving that the Nephite traditions are correct and that the Lamanite traditions are mistaken, and this in turn amounts to proving the central plank of the Nephite tradition, namely the belief about the future that gives meaning to all the rest—that the Son of God will come down to earth and atone for the sins of all men. Nephi intertwines the argument for Christ with the argument for the legitimacy of his own authority. They stand or fall together. It is Nephi who, like Lehi, has seen and heard Christ and who testifies that he will come. Christ has spoken to Nephi, expressly appointing him to be “a ruler and a teacher” to his brothers, and has delivered him from their treacherous schemes (1 Ne. 2:19–23; see also 1 Ne. 11:1–36, 12:6; 2 Ne. 25:13–16, 19, 23–26). Without Christ, the argument for Nephi’s authority has no basis, and without Nephi’s authority the Nephite political claims collapse.⁵

Being a Nephite—politically, religiously, and socially—eventually turned on accepting the Nephite traditions and records, as Mormon summarizes: “Whosoever would not believe in the tradition of

the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God and kept them, were called the Nephites or the people of Nephi” (Alma 3:11).⁶

The final confirmation of this Nephite version of things was a physical difference between the Lamanites and the Nephites. The difference in skin color cried out for explanation. Mormon explained the dark skin of the Lamanites as a mark placed on them by God to discourage Nephites from intermarrying with Lamanites, which might lead to believing “in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction” (Alma 3:8).⁷ By so acting, God himself was seen as vindicating the Nephite position. We never hear what the Lamanite answer to this might have been. With this background in mind, we now turn to the writings of Nephi to see how they serve the important purpose of establishing Nephi as the legitimate ruler and the successor of Lehi.

THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI

Nephi received the commandment to write his small plates thirty years after the departure from Jerusalem (2 Ne. 5:28–30). At this time he had already led his followers out of the land of their first inheritance, seeking relief from their bellicose relatives. But the Lamanites soon found them and renewed the earlier wars and contentions (2 Ne. 5:34; compare 1 Ne. 19:4).⁸ At an early date, the traditions of the Nephites and the Lamanites were already firmly in place at the root of their contentions.

In these circumstances, it was inevitable and even necessary that Nephi, now an aging prophet-king, write his new account in such a way that it document fully and coherently the true Nephite tradition and explain the false Lamanite tradition. If we look at Nephi’s record closely, we find not the tedious self-assertion of an egotistical and talented younger brother, but the skillful and sensitive account of a mature and even weary prophet. Nephi was determined to convince his posterity of the truthfulness of the wonderful revelations he and his father had received about Christ, and thereby to convince them of the righteousness and legitimacy of their cause.

The testimony of Christ, which had come to them through their fathers and through their own revelations, was under constant attack from their relatives and in-laws who told a different story, a story that did have intrinsic plausibility. Because Nephi’s central purpose is to persuade his readers to believe in Christ, he takes every opportunity, both between the lines and by direct statement, to mitigate the awkward fact that this teaching was coming from him as a younger brother, who

by tradition could not easily claim the right to rule and teach the family (2 Ne. 5:3). Sobered by this formidable task, Nephi carefully employs every literary and rhetorical tool at his disposal to justify his position as the righteous and rightful leader of the group. The following pages contain a summary of Nephi's writings and highlight this perspective in its various occurrences.

1 Nephi 1–2

Nephi begins the small plates by establishing his father's credentials as a prophet and the fact that the Lord had directed the family's flight from Jerusalem. The dramatic visions and revelations received by Lehi in answer to his prayers constitute the heart of 1 Nephi 1. It is significant that Nephi then tells how he sought to know the same things Lehi had seen and how the Lord visited him so that he believed his father's words (1 Ne. 2:16). By receiving this visitation, Nephi became Lehi's witness and heir, for at this time he was promised by the Lord, "inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren" (1 Ne. 2:22).

Nephi also immediately introduces in chapter 2 the origins of the trouble with the older brothers. We learn that Laman and Lemuel took issue with their father Lehi from the outset (1 Ne. 2:12), despite his blessing and wish that they would be righteous (1 Ne. 2:9–10). Nephi's story sets out consciously to contrast the behavior of the prophet Lehi and that of his two rebellious sons, and then to compare those two with Nephi.

The first part of 1 Nephi 2 emphasizes Lehi's obedience to the Lord and his willing abandonment of his lands, gold, silver, and precious things. The second part emphasizes Laman and Lemuel's unwillingness to obey their father and their sorrow for the loss of his lands, gold, silver, and precious things. This characterization of Laman and Lemuel contrasts sharply with the depiction of Nephi given in 1 Nephi 1 and 2:16, which reveals Nephi's knowledge of God's mysteries and his focal interest in Christ and the promise of mercy and deliverance to the faithful. But chapter 2 displays Laman and Lemuel's ignorance on those same points and focuses on their concern for riches. Nephi thus suggests an explanation both for their murmuring and for the rejection of Lehi and other contemporary prophets.

This introduction of the murmuring brothers is appropriately followed by Nephi's strikingly different reaction to his father's teachings. The brothers are primarily concerned for their precious things left in Jerusalem. But because of "the things" (1 Ne. 2:17) that he had learned from the Holy Spirit, Nephi does not rebel.

1 Nephi 3–5

The second story in Nephi's account tells how he obtained the plates of brass from Laban. It appears that this memorable narrative was given such prominence by Nephi because it shows that he succeeded where his brothers failed, making him the rightful possessor of the plates of brass, and because in this episode an angel of the Lord directly informs Laman and Lemuel that Nephi had been chosen to become a ruler over them (1 Ne. 3:29). The story shows Nephi effectively already in that role. Like many other parts of Nephi's account, this story has a chiasmic structure that emphasizes some of its key points by purposeful repetition (see table 1).⁹

Some of the key elements in this account can be identified as follows: After receiving a commandment from the Lord to send his sons back to Jerusalem for the plates of brass, Lehi first relays that commandment to the older sons, who resent the difficulty of the task. Nephi, however, announces that he knows the Lord will prepare the way, and the four brothers return to Jerusalem. Laman appropriately first takes the lead in dealing with Laban but fails and barely escapes with his life. They are all sorrowful, and the older sons now want to return to the wilderness. We can hardly miss the irony with which Nephi points out this reversal. But now Nephi asserts his leadership with an oath that they will not return without fulfilling the Lord's commandment. He explains the necessity of the record, foreshadowing what will happen to Laman's and Lemuel's descendants, who will reject this record when they could have had it. The brothers accept Nephi's alternate plan—to buy the plates with their father's abandoned riches. But the plan fails to take full account of their vulnerable position, and Laban seizes their goods, threatens to kill them, and sends them flying again.

Now the demoralization is complete. As Laman and Lemuel vent their frustrations by beating their younger brothers, an angel intervenes to protect the youths and to urge a return to the task, with the promise that the Lord will deliver Laban into their hands. The angel also tells them a most unwelcome thing, that the Lord has chosen Nephi to be a ruler over them. It is important to note the central emphasis placed on the words of the angel by their position at the turning point of this episode. At this crucial point, Laman and Lemuel murmur again! Their murmuring and refusal to respond to their father, their brother, or even an angel, explain why the leadership must pass from them to their younger brother.

Nephi, on the other hand, echoes the angel's encouragement. Why should they be afraid of Laban's fifty guards, or even his tens of thousands, when the Lord was able to deliver Israel from Pharaoh's hosts under Moses' leadership? Nephi practically likens himself to Moses, as a leader chosen by God, when he says, "Let us be strong like

TABLE 1
A Chiastic Analysis of 1 Nephi 3–5

3:2	A Lehi tells Nephi of the commandment he has received in a dream.
3	B Lehi describes the contents of the plates of brass, mentioning genealogy.
4	C Lehi is commanded that his sons should seek this record.
5	D Laman and Lemuel murmur that it is a hard thing.
7	E Nephi testifies that God will “prepare a way.”
8	F Lehi is glad, because he knows Nephi has been “blessed of the Lord.”
9–10	G The brothers return to Jerusalem and consult with each other.
11–13	H Laban attempts to slay Laman.
14	I The four sorrow; Laman and Lemuel want to return to the wilderness.
15–18	J Nephi makes an oath (“as the Lord liveth and as we live”) to keep the Lord’s commandments.
19–21	K Nephi’s states his reasons for getting the plates.
22–23	L The brothers collect Lehi’s gold, silver, and precious things.
24–26	M The brothers attempt to buy the plates, but Laban steals their property and attempts to slay them.
27	N They hide in “the cavity of a rock.”
28	O Lemuel “hearkens” to Laman; they are angry, speak harsh words, and “smite” Nephi and Sam with a rod.
29	P An angel announces that Nephi has been chosen to be their ruler and promises that the Lord will deliver Laban into their hands.
31	Q Laman and Lemuel murmur again, for who can deliver them from Laban and his fifty?
4:1	Q* Nephi assures his brothers that God is mightier than Laban and his fifty.
2–3	P* Nephi speaks of Moses and reminds them of the angel’s promise to deliver Laban into their hands.
4	O* Laman and Lemuel are still angry, they continue to murmur, but they do follow Nephi.
5	N* Nephi hides his brothers outside the city walls.
6–12	M* The Spirit leads Nephi to find the plates and reminds him of Laban’s theft and attempt to kill them; Nephi kills Laban.
20–30	L* Nephi gets the metal plates with Zoram’s assistance.
12–19 ^a	K* The Spirit gives reasons for Nephi to kill Laban.
31–34	J* Nephi’s oath again (“as the Lord liveth and as I live”) used to urge Zoram to join them in following Lehi.
5:2–3	I* Sariah is sorrowful and wishes to be back in Jerusalem.
4:35–38	H* Nephi spares Zoram’s life.
5:4–6	G* Lehi comforts Sariah as their sons travel up to Jerusalem.
7	F* Sariah is gladdened by her sons’ return as the Lord has delivered them.
8	E* Sariah testifies that God has accomplished this, using Nephi’s very words.
9	D* Lehi and Sariah rejoice and offer sacrifices and thanks to God.
10	C* Lehi searches the record.
11–19	B* Lehi summarizes the prophecies and genealogies in the plates of brass.
20–21	A* Lehi and Nephi have kept all the Lord’s commandments to them.

^aThis element is advanced one position in the text because of chronology, but the structural parallel is easy to recognize.

unto Moses” (1 Ne. 4:2). Probably not too delighted with Nephi’s comparison of their new leadership with that of ancient Israel, the still angry brothers follow Nephi as far as the city wall. Here Nephi hides them while he goes on alone to try once more to obtain the plates—this time at night.

Their own plans have failed, and their riches are gone. Guided only by the Spirit of the Lord, Nephi now goes forth, toward Laban’s house. He finds the drunk and unconscious Laban in the darkened street. The Lord has indeed delivered Laban into his hands. The Spirit states this fact twice and directs Nephi to kill Laban.

For a modern reader, this account of Laban’s death might leave some taint on the reputation of Nephi. Not necessarily so for the Old Testament audience Nephi knew. When Nephi reports using Laban’s own sword to sever his head from his body, his contemporaries would hardly need reminding how David had announced to Goliath, “This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand” (see 1 Sam. 17:46). The language of the text also suggests a legal reference that further justifies Nephi’s action. Under ancient Israelite law, it would have been unlawful to ambush Laban, even after he had tried twice to kill Lehi’s sons and had stolen all their riches. But the law does provide sanctuary cities for anyone who kills a man whom he encounters accidentally, if “God deliver him into his hand” (Ex. 21:12–14).¹⁰ Nephi would know this law, and he finally accedes to the Spirit’s demands, emphasizing doubly thereby that he figures in the story as the instrument of the Lord.

A new strategy now occurs to Nephi. He dons Laban’s clothing and armor and succeeds in getting Laban’s servant Zoram to fetch the plates and carry them outside the city wall where Nephi’s brothers are waiting. Seeing what they take to be Laban and one servant (not the fifty guards they claimed to be afraid of), Laman and Lemuel are frightened and begin to run. (Whether or not the reader notices the irony, it is clear who leads effectively and who does not. The story also makes a joke of the later Lamanite complaint that they were entitled to own the plates but that Nephi had stolen the plates from them.) Nephi salvages the situation by calling in his own voice to reassure his brothers and by seizing Zoram and holding him long enough to talk things over. Zoram is reassured by Nephi’s oath and invitation to join them in filling the commandments that Lehi had received from the Lord, and Nephi spares his life. They all return to their father in the wilderness with Nephi clearly installed as the successful leader, Laman having fumbled his great chance to lead successfully.

This was undoubtedly one of the most important stories in the tradition of the Nephites. The story’s chiasmic structure shown in table 1 emphasizes the murmuring of Laman and Lemuel by reporting it at the center. The center also contrasts their ineffectual and faithless ways with

Nephi's faithfulness and reliance on the Spirit, and it focuses also on the angelic announcement to Laman and Lemuel themselves that the Lord had chosen Nephi to be their ruler.

1 Nephi 7

Given all the concern about the future welfare of their descendants, it is obvious that Lehi's unmarried children needed wives and husbands. Again the Lord commands Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem, this time to the house of Ishmael, who has five daughters (1 Ne. 7:6). As they present their case to Ishmael, we are impressed with the difference between Ishmael's response and Laban's. Ishmael, like Laban, may have been a kinsman to Lehi.¹¹ But Ishmael responds positively to Lehi's request, daring—possibly even in his old age—to take his family and follow Lehi into the wilderness.

Each day that passes takes the caravan farther from Jerusalem and Ishmael's property. In the harsh desert environment, Nephi's murmuring brothers enlist two of Ishmael's sons and two of his daughters in a rebellion against Ishmael, Nephi, and the others. That this rebellion is aimed most specifically against Nephi clearly identifies him as their leader, and he responds accordingly, sharply calling them to repentance and stressing his thesis that "the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him" (1 Ne. 7:12).

This third story emphasizes that Nephi speaks as constrained by the Spirit in defending the commandments and ways of the Lord. We are forcibly reminded of the contrasting murmuring of Nephi's brothers against the commandment of the Lord in the preceding story. The comparison vindicates the Lord's choice of Nephi as ruler and teacher.

As before, the brothers are angered by Nephi's admonitions and now determine a final solution. With intent to kill, they tie him up, leaving him to be eaten by wild animals in the wilderness. The phrasing of this account reminds us of Joseph who was cast into a pit and sold by his elder brothers (who had also received divine indications that their younger brother would rule over them). They determine to rid themselves of Nephi's threat in much the same way. And the similarity is not incidental, for in spite of Nephi's stated determination not to give precious space to genealogies, he does take time to mention one ancestor—the same Joseph (1 Ne. 5:14, 6:1–2).

The events of the story then combine to provide the rebellious brothers with a stunning proof of the Lord's power as just described by Nephi. As their victim prays to God for deliverance, the ropes fall miraculously from his hands and feet, and he speaks to them again. Though his brothers are clearly the slow learners, they think Nephi is the

dunce, and they try again to educate him and subdue him by force of numbers. At this point, three members of Ishmael's family plead effectively with Nephi's assailants and make them realize what they are doing. For the first time in Nephi's account, the brothers' hearts are softened. They actually bow before Nephi and plead for his forgiveness (1 Ne. 7:20). Bowing down would constitute an act of obeisance, most likely having political significance as well as recalling Joseph's dream in which his brothers' sheaves bowed down to him (Gen. 37:7). Nephi accepts their formal submission, forgives them, and directs them to seek the Lord's forgiveness as well. Not only do they submit themselves to Nephi, but they apparently also acknowledge his special standing with God. Nephi is now established by every standard, including consent, as the ruler and teacher over his brothers. After praying to the Lord, they continue their journey and arrive at Lehi's tent where they all give thanks to God and offer sacrifice and burnt offerings to him.

We seem to have reached a high point in the spiritual careers of Laman and Lemuel. Never before have they submitted themselves voluntarily. On each previous occasion, they have been subdued against their will, and to their chagrin. But we should not get our hopes too high, for Lehi soon has a dream that makes it appear that Laman and Lemuel never do taste fully of the love of God, and Nephi reports this next.

1 Nephi 8

In 1 Nephi 2, Lehi had exhorted Laman and Lemuel to repent of their habitual murmuring and evident lack of commitment to the Lord. In 1 Nephi 8, his reservations about his two older sons expand greatly as a result of another vision. Whereas the vision gave him "reason to rejoice in the Lord because of Nephi," it also caused Lehi to "fear exceedingly" for Laman and Lemuel (1 Ne. 8:3-4). In the vision, Lehi comes to the tree of life, the fruit of which is eternal life. Nephi comes and partakes of the fruit at his father's invitation, but Laman and Lemuel refuse altogether (1 Ne. 8:13-18). Nephi's political purpose in relating this vision is evident to the extent that comparisons between him and his faithless brothers are emphasized at the expense of a fuller discussion of its religious significance. As Nephi tells us, he does not have room here to record "all the words" of his father. But he does tell us that according to Lehi, "Laman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit." For that reason, Nephi repeats again that Lehi "exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord" (1 Ne. 8:29, 35-36). This then is a direct confirmation by the patriarch Lehi of the specific cursing that the Lord had earlier told Nephi might come on the older brothers (1 Ne. 2:21). The message again is clear: Nephi has received the imprimatur in preference to his brothers.

1 Nephi 10–15

The second section of 1 Nephi 10 seems to be set up as a parallel to the second section of 1 Nephi 2. In 1 Nephi 2:15–17, Nephi's account begins at Lehi's tent in the valley of Lemuel and by stating his "great desires to know of the mysteries of God," specifically the visions of his father. After crying unto the Lord, Nephi is visited, his heart is softened, and he believes what his father has told him. He then tells his brothers what "the Lord had manifested unto [him] by his Holy Spirit." In 1 Nephi 10:16–11:1, Nephi again starts explicitly at his father's tent in the valley of Lemuel and states that after hearing this report of his father's visions he is "desirous also that [he] might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Ne. 10:17). Here Nephi also bears testimony that "he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Ne. 10:19; see also 1 Ne. 10:17), thus affirming the same point he had presented in chapter 2.

These are the only two passages so far where Nephi articulates this lesson. In each case, Nephi receives a visitation from the Lord in which he is told, "Blessed art thou, Nephi." These two revelations then become coordinate passages. In the first account (1 Ne. 2:19–24), the Lord tells Nephi about the futures of him, his brothers, and their descendants. In the second account (1 Ne. 11:1–14:30), the Spirit of the Lord and then an angel show Nephi all the things his father had seen and explain what they mean, giving special attention to the futures of Nephi, his brothers, and their descendants.

The intended connection of this long passage to chapter 2 is further evidenced by its showing the future fulfillment of the covenant the Lord made to Nephi in chapter 2, for he sees the seed of his brothers overpowering his own descendants because of their pride and their yielding to "the temptations of the devil." He also sees the curse on his brothers' descendants as they "dwindle in unbelief" and become "a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations" (1 Ne. 12:19–23). Here we are again invited to compare Nephi with his brothers.

After receiving the same great vision his father had seen, Nephi returns to his father's tent and finds his brothers "disputing one with another" about Lehi's dream. They had not understood the revelation because they were "hard in their hearts" and did not ask the Lord for understanding (1 Ne. 15:2–3). Nephi is overcome with despair at this point because he has just seen in vision the destruction and fall of his people. And he has seen that one direct cause of this demise would be this same hardheartedness of his brothers. Nephi chastises them for not keeping the commandments of the Lord so that these things could be

made known to them directly. He then satisfies their request and explains to them the various elements of the vision. He ends by again calling them to repentance, telling them they should “hearken to the truth” and “not murmur because of the truth” (1 Ne. 16:1–4). Nephi’s prophesied role as teacher over his brethren has already begun to be fulfilled, and at their request.

As in chapter 2, Nephi here portrays his brothers as incapable of communicating with God in the manner of Lehi, and in the manner that Nephi has learned to perfection. At this point in the narrative, Nephi clearly emerges as the spiritual heir to his father, recognized and honored personally by the Lord. And again, the only reason for this is the spiritual recalcitrance of Laman and Lemuel—not anything that Nephi has done to them. On the contrary, he has shared everything with them and has vigorously encouraged them to assume their rightful place by acting properly. They acknowledge the virtue of his position and “humble themselves before the Lord” (1 Ne. 16:5). An element of irony exists in the fact that all this certification of Nephi’s preeminence arose in the valley called Lemuel (1 Ne. 2:10, 10:16, 16:6).

1 Nephi 16

The stories in 1 Nephi 16 record a significant turning point in Nephi’s account, for it is here that Nephi emerges undeniably as coleader with his father. In the group’s distress and hunger, even Lehi begins “to murmur against the Lord” (1 Ne. 16:20). At this critical moment only Nephi keeps perspective. All alone he exhorts the rest of the group, speaking “many things unto them in the energy of [his] soul” (1 Ne. 16:24). They humble themselves sufficiently that the voice of the Lord again speaks to the much chastened Lehi, and the Liahona (which had stopped working) again begins to function (1 Ne. 16:25–28). Alone, Nephi makes a new bow, asks Lehi where to go to find food, goes up the mountain, and obtains food for the families. Significantly, the bow was a symbol of political power in the ancient Near East.¹²

But the reconciliation effected by Nephi’s energetic speaking and his success in saving them from starvation does not last for long. This story is followed by the report of Ishmael’s death. The grieving family soon degenerates into another round of ominous murmuring against Lehi and particularly Nephi. The brothers now openly accuse Nephi of being politically ambitious, having “taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren” (1 Ne. 16:37). They accuse him of wanting to lead them to some strange land where he will “make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure” (1 Ne. 16:38). The brothers

again undertake to slay Nephi and their father, but the voice of the Lord stops them and speaks “many words unto them, and [chastens] them exceedingly” (1 Ne. 16:39), after which they repent yet again. Each time they repent and humble themselves, they are blessed with peaceful unity and food.

This story demonstrates the emergence of Nephi as a co-leader of the group. Nephi still asks Lehi where he should go to hunt, but Lehi himself is “truly chastened” (1 Ne. 16:25) and only Nephi holds the all-important bow. In the following story the commandment for the next major project comes from the Lord directly to Nephi alone.

1 Nephi 17

All the descendants of Lehi and Ishmael knew that their ancestors had come from Jerusalem, a land that was far away across a great sea. Thus, the story of how these people built a ship and transported themselves to this new land was an inescapable part of their traditions. The tradition of the Lamanites, as it is reported in the Book of Mormon, does not deal with these particulars. The answer would itself be fatal to that tradition. Their tradition focuses instead on charges of usurpation. Nephi's account of how he built a ship, like the account of acquiring the plates of brass, must have been a centerpiece in the Nephite tradition. As supports for Nephi's claim to be the legitimate ruler, they are unanswerable. Each of these stories deals with inescapable historical questions. The plates exist and must be accounted for. The people are in a new world, and the trip that brought them there needs to be explained.

These two stories (1 Ne. 3–5 and 1 Ne. 17) occupy parallel and central positions in the two halves of 1 Nephi and appear to be told in the same chiasmic format.¹³ Both accounts emphasize Nephi's de facto leadership and relate divine interventions witnessing that God had chosen Nephi to be the leader even before the group's journey to the promised land. Both accounts show Laman and Lemuel eventually submitting to Nephi and working under his direction, despite their initial skepticism, in an extended project under his divinely attested leadership. Both focus on the murmuring of Nephi's older brothers (compare 1 Ne. 3:31, 17:17–22), and Nephi's immediate answers to that murmuring contain, as structurally central points, Nephi's only two allusions to Moses as deliverer of the Israelites.¹⁴ The comparison between Moses and Nephi is not hard to draw and carries obvious political as well as religious implications. First Nephi 17 ends, like the account of the attempted murder in the desert, with the brothers bowing down, not only to acknowledge Nephi's preeminence, but even to worship him (1 Ne. 17:55).

1 Nephi 18

The juxtaposition of the ship-building story with the account of the ocean crossing again suggests comparisons between Nephi and his brothers. While the story of building the ship focuses on the murmuring of Laman and Lemuel and the divine intervention by which they are subdued, the story of crossing the great sea focuses on Nephi's refusal to murmur—even under the greatest of personal adversity. Again Laman and Lemuel are subdued, this time by the divine power in a storm that threatens them with destruction. This story focuses not only on Nephi's refusal to murmur, but even more precisely on the fact that Nephi praises God “all the day long” (1 Ne. 18:16). This is the climax of Nephi's comparison of himself to his older brothers, and even in some respects to his father, who became sick and very sorrowful.

1 Nephi 19–22

The book of 1 Nephi ends with Nephi firmly in place as the teacher the Lord and the angel had said he would become. The final four chapters record his teachings to his brothers, including materials he has read to them from the plates of brass, and especially from such prophets as Moses, Isaiah, and Joseph (1 Ne. 19:23–24).¹⁵ He further prophesies that “the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet,” for they “hearken not to the voice of his counsels” (1 Ne. 19:7). Nephi explains that when Christ comes to the Jews in Jerusalem, they will despise and crucify him. In 1 Nephi 20–21 Nephi records the chapters of Isaiah that he read to his brothers, chapters that correspond closely in content to the great vision he had seen and reported to them at least eight years earlier at their first camp in the wilderness.

The final chapter presents evidence that Laman and Lemuel accept Nephi as their teacher. Echoing their inability to understand their father's vision eight years before, they again come to Nephi asking the meaning of the things that he has read to them (1 Ne. 22:1). Nephi again points out to them (and to us and all Lehi's descendants) that these things are manifest to men “by the voice of the Spirit” (1 Ne. 22:2). Nephi then interprets Isaiah for them, invoking insights derived from his own great vision. He ends this book appealing to his brothers to obey the commandments and witnessing to them that the writings on the plates of brass are true and that those who keep the commandments will be saved.

The Second Book of Nephi: 2 Nephi 1–4

The narrative is continuous between the first and second books written by Nephi. The events described at the end of the first book could

easily have transpired on the same day or hour as those at the beginning of the second. Yet Nephi chose to make his largest structural break at this point. The internal structure of 1 Nephi emphasizes its separate character as a single literary unit. It would seem that 1 Nephi constitutes an elaborate introduction to the final presentation in Nephi's argument, the verbatim accounts of Lehi's blessings to his own and Ishmael's sons and to Zoram, shortly before his own death. These blessings define the subsequent tribal order of these peoples and systematically refute the traditions of the Lamanites as they have emerged by the time of Nephi's writing. In Lehi's own mouth we find the explanations for his choice of Nephi over Laman and Lemuel. These four chapters invoke the authority of the patriarch himself to support (1) the revelations from God describing this land of promise and the role of Nephi as a teacher and ruler in it, (2) the teachings about the Messiah and the redemption he brings to men, which was an essential plank in Nephi's defense of his position, and (3) the authoritative patriarchal designation of Nephi as the one to whom all the others must hearken if they are to realize their patriarchal blessings and the spiritual blessings of a loving God. All of 1 Nephi builds up to these chapters and provides the essential background for them. They constitute Nephi's strongest evidence for his claims.

In the first blessing, Lehi speaks to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and the sons of Ishmael, and tells them: "Rebel no more against your brother." He strongly endorses Nephi by summarizing Nephi's qualifications: (1) "[Nephi's] views have been glorious"; (2) he has "kept the commandments from the time that we left Jerusalem"; and (3) "were it not for him, we must have perished with hunger in the wilderness" (2 Ne. 1:24). It is little wonder that Nephi would have chosen to begin his second book with this material.

The occasion also provides the earliest codification of Nephite and Lamanite traditions about the reasons for Nephi's succession to his father. On Nephi's side are the virtues listed above; on Laman and Lemuel's side are accusations that Nephi "sought power and authority" over them, and that he has "used sharpness" and "been angry with [them]" (2 Ne. 1:25–26).

Lehi refutes or explains these Lamanite misperceptions. He explains that Nephi was only seeking "the glory of God, and [their] own eternal welfare" (1 Ne. 1:25). He further says that Nephi's "sharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities" (2 Ne. 1:26). We are to understand that it is not really Nephi who has spoken to them, but "the Spirit of the Lord which was in him" (2 Ne. 1:27).

Lehi's conclusion further strengthens Nephi's leadership position, but unfortunately not unambiguously. Lehi promises the rebellious group, "If ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing. But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him" (2 Ne. 1:28–29).

This is a curious blessing. From Laman and Lemuel's perspective it must have been very frustrating. In order to obtain the first blessing, they had to obey Nephi; on the other hand, if they did not obey Nephi, the father's blessing would go to Nephi. Either way Nephi wins, although under the first option Laman might preserve the blessing for his posterity by submitting himself during his lifetime to Nephi.¹⁶ Perhaps this alternative contingent blessing was Lehi's rather ingenious, although somewhat desperate and unlikely, final attempt to bring peace among his sons. Lehi's blessing, however, left one critical question unanswered, namely who would arbitrate a dispute between Laman and Nephi, should a dispute arise whether Laman had done enough to satisfy the requirement that he "hearken unto the voice of Nephi" or whether Nephi had required of him only that which was appropriate. Undoubtedly such a dispute soon arose, and, out of the ensuing stalemate, Nephi left the land of first inheritance, according to the Lamanites wrongfully taking with him his people and the plates of brass. It seems clear, however, that Lehi did not intend this outcome. For him, Nephi was the chosen leader. Lehi hoped that all his colony would be able to live under Nephi's teaching and rulership. Thus, Nephi's leadership role has now been announced directly to his older brothers not only by an angel and by the voice of the Lord, but also by their own father, who can choose on whom and in what way he will leave his "first blessing."

The blessings given to Zoram, Sam, Jacob, and Joseph corroborate the fact that Lehi intended Nephi to be the leader. Because Zoram has been faithful and "a true friend" to Nephi, Lehi promises that his posterity will be blessed with Nephi's (2 Ne. 1:30–31).¹⁷ Jacob, too, will be blessed and "dwell safely with . . . Nephi" (2 Ne. 2:3). Joseph is told that if he follows Nephi, he will receive similar blessings (2 Ne. 3:25). Finally, Sam is blessed to inherit land with Nephi. His descendants shall be numbered with Nephi's, and he will be blessed all his days (2 Ne. 4:11). In all the blessings, whether negative or positive, Nephi is explicitly endorsed as the authorized successor to Lehi. As a final reaffirmation of all he has said, Lehi repeats to the children of his rebellious son Laman the Lord's promise that they too will be blessed if they keep the commandments, and that if they lose out the blame will be placed on the head of their father Laman because of his disobedience (2 Ne. 4:3–4).

Just as Lehi had feared, "not many days after his death, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael were angry with [Nephi] because of the

admonitions of the Lord" (2 Ne. 4:13). The great split that had been prophesied became an immediate reality and a final tragic witness to the truth of Nephi's claims and prophecies.

TYOLOGIES OF MOSES AND JOSEPH IN NEPHI'S WRITINGS

In his final words to his youngest son, Joseph, Lehi depends heavily on the writings of two ancient prophets in Egypt—Joseph and Moses.¹⁸ The text invites us again to see Nephi as a parallel figure to these two great leaders and deliverers of Israel, who shared Nephi's problem—having to justify unexpected callings to authority. Joseph, one of Jacob's youngest sons, was born to Jacob's second wife; and Moses was a Levite and virtually unknown to the Israelites when he was called. The justifiable killings of Laban and of the Egyptian overseer are not sufficient to make a strong connection between Nephi and Moses. But there is much more. Nephi's description of the death of Laban is preceded by a passage in which Nephi exhorts his brothers to follow him without fear of Laban or his soldiers, because as in the case of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity, the Lord will bless them (1 Ne. 4:1–3). Not only does Nephi lead them successfully in that venture, but from then on he is their leader through the wilderness, over the water, and to the promised land. Like Moses, he constantly has to overcome the murmuring and faithlessness of his people. Like Moses he secures divine assistance to feed his people in the wilderness. And like Moses, he was caught up into a mountain to receive the word of God (1 Ne. 17:7ff.). Nephi explicitly invokes the Moses comparison a second time when his brothers refuse to help him build the ship. On that occasion he lists all the details of the experience of Moses and the Israelites that are similar to their own. He does not explicitly draw a comparison between himself and Moses, but one is plain for all to see.

The comparison with Joseph is less direct. Like Joseph, Nephi is resented by his older brothers, for he also was his father's favorite. As Joseph has his visions of sheaves and stars, God tells Nephi that he will teach and rule over his brothers. While bringing Ishmael's family out of Jerusalem, Nephi's brothers become possessed of the same murderous rage that caused Joseph's brothers to throw him into a pit in the wilderness to die or be eaten by wild beasts (Gen. 37:18–24). Like Joseph, Nephi ascribes his escape to the power of God (compare Gen. 45:5, 7–8 and 1 Ne. 7:17–18).

Should we have failed to make the Nephi-Joseph connection on our own, Nephi helps us out by immediately mentioning that Joseph is their ancestor, in spite of his resolve not to take precious space on these plates with genealogical information. The parallels mount as Nephi, by the *strength of his bow*, provides food and saves his father's family from

starvation (compare Gen. 49:23–24). Jacob of old accuses his older sons of bringing “down [his] gray hairs with sorrow to the grave” (Gen. 42:38). The same phrase is repeated to such an extent in Genesis that it formulaically evokes memories of Jacob.¹⁹ Nephi chooses this exact phrase to describe the effects of family rebellion on his own father (1 Ne. 18:18). And when Lehi, like Jacob, gathers his people together to receive his final blessings, he rebukes the older sons for their faithlessness and promises their birthright to the younger son, who has already become the family’s de facto leader as they reside in a strange land (compare Gen. 49, especially v. 26, and 2 Ne. 1, especially vv. 28–29).

CONCLUSION IN 2 NEPHI 5

In 2 Nephi 5, Nephi concludes his case against the Lamanite tradition that challenges his authority over the Lehite colony. In later chapters in 2 Nephi, he preaches the doctrines of Christ through the teachings of his brother Jacob, the writings of Isaiah, and his own concluding sermons. But the historical part of the argument ends here, as Nephi ties this chapter back to the historical argument in 1 Nephi 2. Here again Nephi draws a favorable comparison between himself and his father, juxtaposed to a striking contrast between himself and his brothers. In 2 Nephi 5 Laman and Lemuel seek to kill Nephi, just as the Jews in Jerusalem had tried to kill Lehi. In 1 Nephi 2, Nephi explicitly compares Laman and Lemuel to “the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of [his] father” (1 Ne. 2:13). Like Lehi in that earlier chapter, Nephi is here warned by the Lord to take his family and others and flee into the wilderness. As in that earlier chapter, they take their tents and provisions, travel for days, and then pitch their tents. Just as Lehi eventually led his people to a promised land where they could plant and harvest and find precious metals in abundance, so Nephi’s people now do the same. By doing the things Lehi had done, Nephi further emerges as the heir to his father.

Additional parallels in structure and content link these two chapters even more firmly together. Each includes four short sections that serve to contrast the people of Nephi and the people of Laman or the brothers themselves. Furthermore, in this concluding chapter, Nephi explicitly cites statements of the Lord from the earlier chapter at least three times (compare 2 Ne. 5:19, 20, 25 with 1 Ne. 2:22, 21–23, 24). Here Nephi also reports the fulfillment of prophecies first mentioned in 1 Nephi 2.

The Curse

One of the most important elements of 2 Nephi 5 is the report of the fulfillment of the prophesied curse upon the Lamanites. The physical

effects of the curse were observable empirical facts that would have required explanation. Nephi, and no one else, had an explanation. Nephi makes it clear that the curse consists of being “cut off from the presence of the Lord” and that it results from not obeying the word of the Lord. Nephi’s brothers had “hardened their hearts like flint” against the Lord. To prevent the Nephites from mixing with the Lamanites and bringing the curse upon themselves, the Lord caused the Lamanites to appear “loathsome” to the Nephites by bringing a “skin of blackness” upon them. Note that the dark skin is not the curse, but only a device to help protect the Nephites from also falling under the curse (2 Ne. 5:21–23).

The spiritual consequences of the curse are another matter still. Because of their cursing, the Lamanites became “an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and . . . seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey” (2 Ne. 5:20–24). Nephi gives us a picture of the Nephites that sets a clear contrast with the Lamanites. The Nephites are “industrious” and “labor with their hands.” They build buildings and work with wood, iron, copper, brass, steel, gold, silver, and other precious ores. They have built a temple like Solomon’s. John Lundquist tells us that possessing a temple is the archetypal legitimizing characteristic for an ancient Near Eastern political regime.²⁰

This initial description of the cursed Lamanites sets a model followed repeatedly by later writers. “The skin of blackness” and the contrasting lifestyles of the Lamanites and Nephites stand as silent but powerful, objective, and irrefutable witnesses to the veracity of Nephi’s account. The traditions of the Lamanites, as far as we know, offered no alternative theory to explain these simple facts. And so their account focused on Nephi’s wicked rebellion against ancient custom. They left the will of God and his commandments out of the account altogether.

The points raised in 2 Nephi 5 are themes of Nephi’s book as a whole, and they contain Nephi’s final statements on these issues. They show Laman and Lemuel preoccupied with their desire to kill Nephi, who in contrast is preoccupied with making a record that will help bring his people to eternal life. They show the same contrast between the descendants of the unreconciled brothers. Nephi’s people have finally realized all the blessings of abundance and prosperity and favor of the Lord that had been promised to Lehi’s righteous descendants from the first. But the descendants of Laman and Lemuel have gone backwards, abandoning the advantages of the urban Hebrew civilization that their fathers knew in Jerusalem just one generation before. Clearly they had been cursed for their iniquities, and their children exhibited the natural consequences of being cut off from the Spirit of the Lord.

In the final analysis, Nephi ties his case down with simple empirical facts of life known to his descendants and the Lamanites. There exist a

sword of Laban and a compass. There are plates of brass that also tie their people to a distant world, Jerusalem. And there are Lamanites and Nephites who are related by language and lineage, but who have different skin color and lifestyles. All these facts cry out for explanation, and Nephi has explained it simply. The God of their fathers has brought them here and has provided them with a Savior. God has visited Lehi and Nephi, giving them the knowledge and power necessary to bring this people safely to their new land. God has rejected Lehi's older sons for their iniquity, hardheartedness, stiffneckedness, and constant murmuring. In their place, God has installed Nephi, who from the beginning has been faithful, who has never murmured, whose heart has been softened by the Holy Spirit, and who has taken many risks in his determination to keep God's commandments. Though simple, it is an almost unbelievable story. Yet the empirical evidence is before the eyes of all. And there is only one coherent explanation of all the facts available—Nephi's record.

It is too easy to see in Nephi's descriptions of his brothers and their shameful conduct simple manifestations of sibling rivalry. Such a reading fails to take seriously the endless pain and risk of life that Nephi endures in trying to help his brothers and their descendants. Once we take the time to investigate Nephi's full case against his elder brothers, we must recognize that something much more important and systematic is going on. These twenty-seven chapters do serve many purposes. And indeed, their primary purpose is to convince the coming generations to come unto Christ. But one basic strategy in that great effort is to defend Nephi as the authorized spokesman of Christ to this people. The Lamanite traditions had to be refuted, not only because they undermined the political unity of the Nephites, but also because they denied Christ and his power. For Nephi this was all too clear. And his record displays the highly deliberate way in which he went about refuting those traditions.

Nephi does not pretend immunity to the emotional battle with his brothers. He candidly confesses the great anger that has seized his heart from time to time, both because of his enemies (Laman and Lemuel?) and because of the enemy of his soul (2 Ne. 4:27–29). The sturdy Nephi, who has reported his constant faithfulness, also deliberately shows his descendants and us his completely credible humanity. He is a man who sorrows; he grieves for his own iniquities. Yet he is one who still stands confident of the future because of his great trust in the Lord (2 Ne. 4:17–35).

First Nephi is not the travel diary of a youngster. Nor is it possibly a figment of young Joseph Smith's imagination. It is a highly complex and passionate account, purposefully written by a mature man of great culture and vision, to defend those things that he believes most worth

defending. Nephi's writings were composed at a time when Nephi could see the need to provide his people with an account that would explain, document, and justify his ascent to leadership. For Nephi's people, his writings long served both as an extremely sophisticated political tract—something of a founding constitution for the Nephite people—and as an elaborate and compelling witness of Jesus Christ. In all these functions, the books of Nephi call on the reader to believe, as their author does, “that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Ne. 1:20).

NOTES

¹According to John L. Sorenson, such histories were common among the Guatemala highland Indians when the first Spanish explorers arrived. They were used for many purposes including conferring “legitimacy and sanctity on the rulers” (see John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1985], 51).

²Though we might ordinarily expect “fathers” to refer to the larger body of ancestors, it seems to refer in this instance to their immediate parents, whom Laman and Lemuel criticized and rejected for not staying in Jerusalem with their countrymen whom they knew to be “a righteous people” (1 Ne. 17:20–22).

³Jeremiah 36:23 may in fact identify a legitimate Israelite view justifying the destruction of incorrect books.

⁴They are reported to have believed “that it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come” (Hel. 16:18) and that “we know that this is a wicked tradition, which has been handed down unto us by our fathers, to . . . keep us in ignorance” (Hel. 16:20). Of course, the first defender of this skeptical view among the Nephites was Sherem (Jacob 7:1–7). Compare 3 Ne. 1:11.

⁵There is a ready analogy in the way many people fight Joseph Smith and his account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. If one does not accept Christ, Joseph's account will not make sense. And if one does accept his account, one must take the divine mission and authority of Christ seriously.

⁶We should remember that it was the Nephites who kept the true records of both peoples (see Alma 3:12).

⁷Mormon draws on Nephi's explanation recorded at 2 Ne. 5:20–24.

⁸The date is approximately 560 B.C. or forty years after the flight from Jerusalem.

⁹This table presents a revision of the analysis published in Noel B. Reynolds, “Nephi's Outline,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Winter 1980): 145, reprinted in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1982), 69. Compare also John W. Welch, *A Study Relating Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon to Chiasmus in the Old Testament, Ugaritic Epics, Homer, and Selected Greek and Latin Authors* (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970), 124–25, 159–60.

¹⁰I am indebted to Richard L. Anderson and John W. Welch for calling my attention to the parallels with 1 Samuel and Exodus. Note that in Nephi's record the Spirit uses the precise language of 1 Samuel and Exodus in commanding Nephi to perform the deed. See also F. Essig and D. Fuller, “Nephi's Slaying of Laban: A Legal Perspective” (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, n.d.), 82.

¹¹See the discussion in Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 43–44, 111.

¹²Nahum M. Waldman, “The Breaking of the Bow,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 69 (October 1978): 82–88.

¹³See Reynolds, “Nephi's Outline,” esp. 142, 145–46.

¹⁴Compare 1 Ne. 4:2–3, 17:23–42. These passages are the chiasmic centers of the two stories, which are about equal in length and manifest many similar details (compare 1 Ne. 3:7 with 1 Ne. 17:3).

¹⁵We can see that Nephi is drawing on the writings of Joseph by comparing this passage with 2 Ne. 3:5.

¹⁶Compare Lehi's blessing to Laman's children, 2 Ne. 4:3–7.

¹⁷Notice how Lehi's blessing to Zoram anticipates and refutes the claim of Zoram's distant descendants to the effect that their father had been “pressed and brought out of Jerusalem” by Nephi (Alma 54:23).

¹⁸2 Ne. 3:4–25 contains extensive excerpts and references taken from the writings of Joseph and includes prophecies about Moses. Though the text is not explicit, much of the material in 2 Ne. 2 would ordinarily be attributed to Moses.

¹⁹In Gen. 44:29, Judah quotes Jacob's lament exactly. In verse 31 he repeats the lament again. These statements in Jacob's old age echo his earlier statement when, upon receiving the evidence of Joseph's death, he said, “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Gen. 37:35).

²⁰John M. Lundquist, “The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State,” in Kent Harold Richards, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Series*, no. 21 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982).

Seed

I was born in the desert
Brigham made bloom.
I was reared among the dry grass.
Measured water
came each two weeks,
and even God
could not make it reach
to the far fence corners.
The dirt there was white,
hard as chalk. Every few feet
were the niggard weedflowers,
blooms so tight
you had to stoop
to see their hard yellowing.

His cottonwoods
are now a hundred feet high,
trunks five feet thick,
bark greyer and deader
than barn shakes.
I am an old man pouring water
into dirt cracks, praying
against the disadvantage
of seed.

—Philip White

The Search for Virtus et Veritas through an Inspired Scientific Method

Genevieve DeHoyos and Arturo DeHoyos

The idea of developing academic excellence on the basis of both *virtus* and *veritas*—virtue and truth—though not entirely a new idea, would probably present a challenge to most institutions of higher learning in the modern world. Many in the scientific community of today are proud to claim that their science is free of values. The paradigms of science, they insist, must be the very essence of objectivity. Thus, academic secularism, an orientation that excludes moral considerations in the search for truth, has become a standard in modern intellectual centers.

There are those, however, for whom academic excellence is not really possible unless morality and truth become the purpose of and incentive for all intellectual achievement.¹ In recent years, for example, we have seen the establishment of (or the pressure to establish) non-LDS religious sessions in several scientific and professional association meetings around the country. Some scholars even go so far as to suggest that all scientific research, at least in the Western world, should take into consideration our Judeo-Christian tradition.

In this article we attempt to show that, because all paradigms are based on *assumptions* (which, by definition, reflect individual values and therefore some degree of subjectivity), the scientific method does not totally eliminate all subjectivity, and simply to deny this subjective component is not a proper solution. A better solution would be to acknowledge assumptions explicitly, select them carefully, and understand their complementary function in all the processes of all scientific method.

Recently, some philosophers, scientists, and professionals have challenged the idea that using the scientific method guarantees utmost objectivity. Michael Polanyi, for example, claims that “the ideal of strict objectivism is absurd,” suggesting that subjectivity comes into the scientific method through “tacit knowing,” a knowledge we are only “subsidiarily aware” of. When this tacit knowledge fuses with

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our objective knowledge, it becomes our “personal knowledge” and our “intellectual commitment.”² Similarly, Thomas S. Kuhn sees subjectivity as an integral part of the development of scientific paradigms because new theoretical models typically emerge in response to recent societal trends and new hierarchies of values.³ This is why new paradigms typically give rise to great emotional furor. This emotionalism, of course, is related to the explicit or implicit criticisms of old models by new ones. It is also related to the threat to the vested interests accumulated by the scientific community over time. But above all, theoretical controversies are heated and emotional because they are centered upon the legitimacy of the different subjective assumptions made by the theories involved. Thus because theoretical models manifest the values of their proponents, they represent a lot of emotional commitment and faith. And because their acceptance depends more on the values they imply than on their ability to explain and predict, they require extensive and persuasive arguments and counterarguments.⁴

THE DUALISM OF VIRTUS ET VERITAS

Paradigms that are created mostly by the deductive thought process are, by definition, subjective and value-laden (particularly in the social sciences).⁵ This subjectivity, however, can be largely (but never entirely) controlled by inductive (objective and rational) observation. If we associate *virtus* with deductive (subjective) thinking and *veritas* with inductive (objective) thinking, we may begin to understand the complementarity of these two principles.

A deductive paradigm or theoretical model may be arrived at by logical human effort, may claim to be the product of divine revelation, or may actually be revealed. But whatever its origin, it is typically presented by its advocates as a tentative “truth,” an explanation by deductive thinkers who, as needed, use “pure deductive logic” to “go down” periodically to the empirical reality to make selective observations so as to corroborate what they already “know” to be true.⁶ Deductive models, as products of the human mind are, by definition, intuitive and subjective. This is why the creators of deductive models often tend to focus on the implications of their models rather than on questions about their validity. This is also why many deductive models give rise to ideological thinking, and why those who prefer deductive thinking to inductive thinking often feel compelled to teach. And as teachers they are typically didactic and persuasive.

Margaret Wilson Vine offers, as an example of the deductive thinker, Plato when he developed his deductive model of the perfect republic. As Plato searched for an ideal model of the perfect state, he was more concerned with answers than with questions. He saw what *ought* to

be to satisfy the needs of the whole man. Therefore, Plato saw no need to separate the political from the ethical, wealth from honor, education from wisdom, the citizen from the moral agent.⁷ In Plato's model, truth and virtue could not be separated.

On the other hand, Aristotle preferred inductive (objective) thinking and developed his ideas by carefully generalizing from empirical observations of basic aspects of reality. In so doing, he intentionally ignored what ought to be, subordinating subjective virtue to "objective" truth.⁸ Thus, while the Platonic approach provides "answers," the Aristotelian approach encourages questions. While Plato sounds definitive, normative, final, Aristotle is (or appears) more rational, questioning, challenging.

THE RENAISSANCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC MIND

A brief (and admittedly oversimplified) overview of the Renaissance movement will be used here to identify the turning point when the prestige of deductive models started declining and inductive thought processes became identified with the development of the scientific method.

Soon after the fall of Rome, religious institutions gained primacy in Western Europe and imposed a deductive "Christian" model that included the only acceptable comprehensive system of beliefs, values, ethics, and truth during the Middle Ages. By then, however, the original Christian model had been lost and the medieval model no longer represented the truth, but rather man-made ideas created in an atmosphere of ignorance and repression. The medieval model of "virtue" and "truth" lasted only as long as it was protected by force. When it fell to the challenge of inductive inquiry, not only that model, but all deductive models lost prestige.

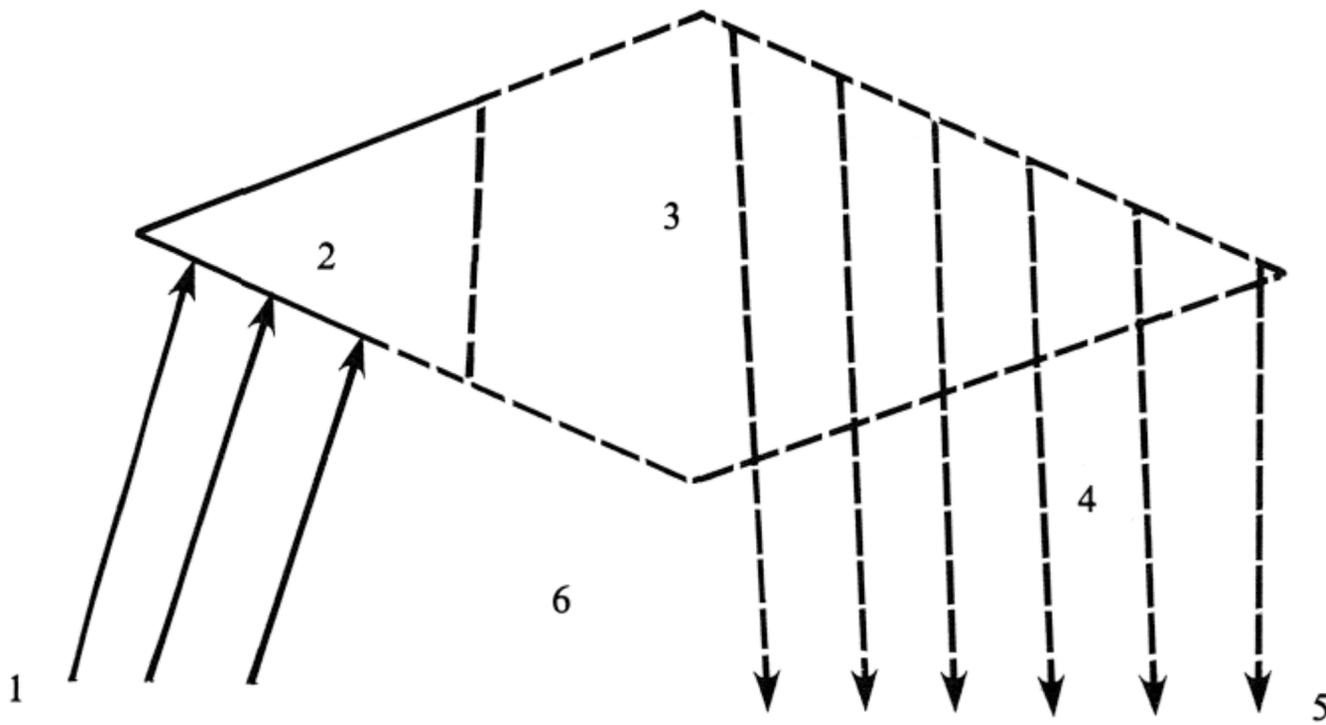
In their need to escape intellectual oppression, Renaissance thinkers introduced two distinct movements, both emphasizing inductive thinking, each challenging different aspects of the medieval "Christian" model. One movement was religious, attacking the Catholic church's practices, introducing new versions of the Bible in the vernacular of the people, and popularizing the inductive (objective) study of the scriptures that eventually gave rise to a myriad of Protestant churches.⁹ The second movement was secular. It led the artists, influenced by the inductiveness of Greek art, to humanize European painting, statuary, and architecture. And it led inductive thinkers carefully, slowly, and often at great personal risk, to challenge and question the theoretical models that had heretofore rested on deductive assumptions.

Out of both these movements emerged a renewed commitment to the inductive approach, as well as a flurry of empirical experimentation that eventually contradicted the traditional (uninspired) religious models. In due time, the scientific method was developed, combining the deductive (subjective) and the inductive (objective) thought processes. However, because the deductive approach had lost so much prestige, the empirical inductive approach (and therefore secularism, objectivity, and rationality) became central to the scientific method.

Today, the scientific method supposedly begins with random empirical observations so as to create inductive paradigms based on reality, rather than deductive models based on human ideation. Because of this, some scientists have been led to believe that they can actually be free from the subjectivity of values and let “facts speak for themselves.” This appears to be so among physical scientists who, unshackled from erroneous religious assumptions, have become free to face and solve issues previously considered untouchable or unreachable. Working with a relatively stable, manageable, and predictable subject matter, emphasizing rational inductive methodology, and—by design—avoiding obvious ethical issues, these scientists have upgraded health, production, and physical comfort faster than ever before in the history of

FIGURE 1

The Inductive/Deductive Thought Process
of the Scientific Method



1. Objective empirical observations (inductive)
2. Limited generalizations (inductive-deductive)
3. Whole theoretical model (deductive)
4. Derivation of testable hypotheses (deductive-inductive)
5. Empirical test of hypotheses (inductive)
6. Acceptance-rejection of null hypotheses—expansion of empirical observations and continuing research

the world. As a result, the objective inductive approach is now acclaimed, and with it rationality and secularism are now enthroned.

The social scientists have not fared as well. Human behavior includes, by definition, emotional and moral dimensions that are more subjective and therefore less easily quantifiable or measurable than physical phenomena, and often less observable as well. Faced with this problematic reality, some social scientists, such as the behaviorists in psychology, identified with the physical scientists and sought to be totally objective, value free. To do so, they were forced to make the arbitrary decision to ignore the importance of subjective aspects of human beings, such as motivation, cognition, and other processes of the human mind. This do-or-die attitude toward objectivity, however, could not protect them from the subjectivity of their assumption that human beings are not basically different from the lower animals (an assumption that, incidentally, is strongly rejected by many social psychologists). This assumption justified their experimenting with rats, chickens, and monkeys and generalizing their findings to humans, which gave them the reputation of being the most rigorous scientists in the social sciences. Yet their findings would mean very little if their assumption of the continuity between genera were proven to be false. The point is that the empirical, objective, inductive thought process is never free from the subjectivity of its assumptions.

Not all social scientists have chosen to deny the reality of human subjectivity. But in order to maintain an objective stance, many have purposefully and carefully created and maintained a pseudo-moral vacuum—pseudo because it explicitly bars traditional Judeo-Christian ideas and values while allowing modern social trends and fashions to dictate the assumptions on which the paradigms are based. It is this world of pseudo-objective and pseudo-value-free science that we have in mind when we invite true believers to make greater use of their knowledge of religious principles.¹⁰ Our point is that assumptions based on eternal truths can only suggest unimpeachable paradigms and hypotheses that no truly objective research could ultimately disprove.

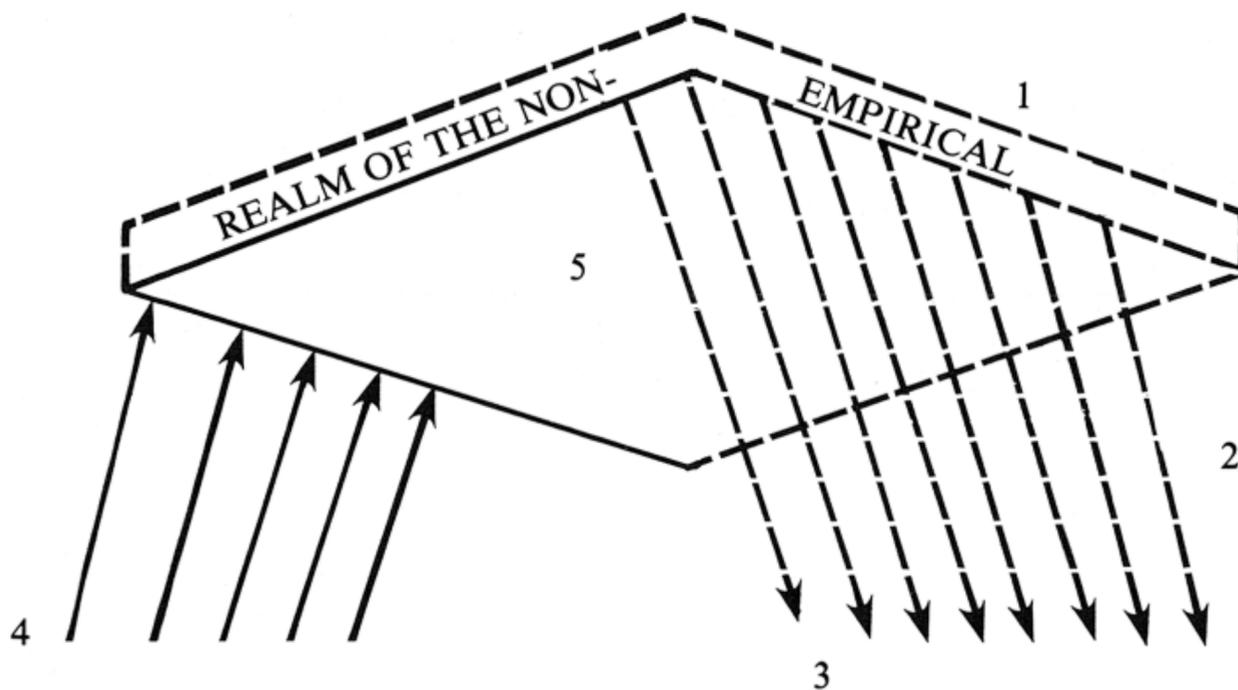
So, instead of rejecting outright the Judeo-Christian value tradition as inimical to the search for truth, we believe science should explicitly acknowledge its dependence on deductive, subjective paradigms and proceed inductively to test their predictive power. If deductive models have any merit, they would not only endure any inductive challenge; they would welcome and encourage such challenges. Any truth thus established would have its relevant virtue. And more, the realm of scientific truth would augment and expand to areas now thought to be “outside the realm of the scientific.” This boundary itself is nothing but a subjective, value-laden choice which, in being denied as such, unwittingly limits scientific inquiry to secular (though still subjective) aspects of reality.

In the past, religion objected to inductive inquiry. It should now invite it. If science once shied away from certain deductive models, it should now openly test them and show its willingness to acknowledge their validity—when those models pass the test—or show their fallacy when they do not. No religious virtue has any truth if it cannot stand the most objective inductive test that science is able to apply. Similarly, no scientific truth has any virtue if it cannot be reconciled to the time-tested values of society where that truth has meaning.

In view of the above discussion, could not Latter-day Saint scientists make a peculiar contribution to the search for truth? Could they not, explicitly or implicitly, allow gospel principles to guide their choice of assumptions about different aspects of the nature of their universe? After making this avowedly subjective selection, could they not then choose a new, a modified, or an appropriate old paradigm, and—with full rationality, objectivity, and rigor—proceed according to the tenets of the traditional scientific method? If they could do that, could not their method be called an inspired scientific method?

FIGURE 2

The Deductive-Inductive Thought Process
of an Inspired Scientific Method



1. Theoretical assumptions about the nature of reality (deductive)
2. Derivation of testable hypotheses (deductive-inductive)
3. Empirical test of hypotheses (inductive)
4. Refinement of constructed model on the basis of empirical evidence (inductive-deductive)
5. Expansion of model on the basis of theoretical assumptions and of empirical data

THE DEDUCTIVE-INDUCTIVE THOUGHT PROCESS
OF AN INSPIRED SCIENTIFIC METHOD

The basic difference between the traditional scientific method and an inspired scientific method is that the inspired method acknowledges openly the value of depending on deductive faith where human knowledge is temporally unavailable (in the area of assumptions), while at the same time encouraging the objective testing of anything susceptible to empirical measurement.

Before attempting to demonstrate how the inspired scientific method can be used, it is necessary to emphasize that pursuing truth and virtue through the inspired scientific method is totally different from *Mormonizing secular models*, a frequent practice among Mormon thinkers. We are well aware that many contemporary LDS scholars would never advocate (or use in research) secular models without first making them somewhat fit their religious beliefs. For example, when LDS physical scientists discuss Darwin's theory of evolution, it is typically presented as the process God may have used to create the living things on our planet. This casual accommodation of religious and secular knowledge is what we mean by *Mormonizing secular models*.

This effort at maintaining cognitive consonance has some merit. However, most of us, when confronted with dissonance, simply ignore or distort whatever appears to be a source of conflict. That is why the *Mormonizing of secular models* brings confusion rather than resolution. This confusion is obvious when some LDS social scientists can be heard bearing their testimony that such conflicting theories as structural functionalism, the conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, the developmental theory, or the learning theories truly represent the reality of the universe as well as their view of the gospel. This same confusion is obvious among LDS professionals when some testify of the "veracity" of Gestalt therapy, while others testify of behavior modification, psychoanalysis, the cognitive approach, or the ecological approach. But this confusion among LDS scientists simply reflects the confusion of the world itself.

To illustrate, many social scientists have become intrigued by Maslow's "self-actualization" model, which encourages us to go beyond society to attain a higher plane of living. Very typically, however, we fail to take into account the fact that this model has emerged out of a humanistic philosophy that is basically inimical to Christianity. Instead, we proceed to make this model fit into our LDS ethos. We may replace "social needs" with "false traditions," and we may rephrase "self-actualization" to become "reaching for perfection." And soon the model becomes what we believe to be a "true" representation of what living the gospel should be.

In the process, however, we have distorted the model and its intent. And if we teach this modified model to students as being valid, we have failed them in several ways. We have failed to make them aware of the important role played by assumptions. Therefore, they cannot see that Maslow's model is a product of the 1960s, when middle-class values were rejected, absolutes were negated, and the new ideal was individuality, "doing one's own thing." Moreover, we have failed to give our students an opportunity to be critically analytical. We have not helped them see how flimsy the term *self-actualization* really is in the absence of basic, absolute, and eternal laws and principles to guide our behavior. And we have failed to point out how inhuman the term *altruism* can become when used by the individualistic person, "the natural man," without reference to God's plan or to charity, the love of Christ. In addition, we have unwittingly undermined our societal values, norms, and laws by supporting the modern thesis that traditional societal values are so outdated that, even when we have nothing to replace them with, they can be rejected and deviated from with full impunity.

When we make one deductive model fit into another deductive model, ignoring the assumptions on which both are based, we become intellectually dishonest. The inspired scientific method, on the other hand, suggests a totally different, more rigorous and consistent method. It consists of, first, identifying the central aspect of the gospel that provides us with a deductive theoretical frame of reference; second, surveying holy writ for scriptural statements out of which basic assumptions can be drawn; and third, using these basic assumptions to develop ideal types, identify or create appropriate specific theories, and derive pertinent and testable hypotheses.

To use the inspired scientific method, Latter-day Saint scientists would start from the deductive gospel model commonly known in the Church as the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation, in this context, refers to the explanation of the purpose of the existence of humankind here on earth. This explanation tells us of a great council where we were offered a way to become like God, our Father. This way demanded that:

- (1) earths be organized to provide humans with whatever was necessary for their temporal needs;
- (2) a couple of spirits be given immortal, physical bodies and an opportunity to make them become mortal, in a proper setting for a fair test;
- (3) a set of expectations be made available to human beings (through the Spirit of Christ and through prophets) against which their performance would be judged;
- (4) redemption be provided so that all spirits may be enabled to regain their own body in a renewed and immortal form, and be given whatever reward they would gain here on earth.

This plan of salvation explains humans' *raison d'être*, as well as their origin and destiny, and provides them with an overall theoretical (explanatory) framework.

The plan of salvation, in addition to providing us with a theoretical framework, also serves as an umbrella for a myriad of what we will call here “scriptural statements”—statements found in the scriptures that many believers accept as statements of absolute truth.¹¹ These statements may be concerned with the nature of the world and of things in it; for example, our universe is an orderly universe, ruled by law through the light of Christ and the power of God (D&C 88:7–13; Abr. 4:18). Statements may relate to basic human needs, for example the need for control over property, protection of life, and free exercise of conscience (D&C 134:2). They may refer to the potentiality of human beings—“a little lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:6–8)—or their reality—“For the natural man is an enemy to God . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19).

In addition, some scriptural statements come in terms of what *should* be: commandments that tell us what is functional and what is dysfunctional to human beings, or events that show us what righteous and approved men and women of God do when inspired of the Lord. For example, we are told that adultery is a dysfunctional pattern (Ex. 20:14, D&C 42:24); and when we read of General Moroni gathering his people for war, we can tentatively conclude that going to war when our family, religion, freedom, and peace are threatened is acceptable to the Lord (Alma 46:11–21, 48:10).

The scriptures are full of such statements, which—because they fit within the plan of salvation—draw legitimacy from it and become part of “divinely revealed truth” and the assumptions of those who believe.

Now, having a basic deductive gospel model and explicit scriptural assumptions, we can develop general theories, middle-range theories, ideal types, and clear, testable hypotheses. Then the constant process of reconciling theory to relevant empirical reality begins. Never losing sight of the assumptions, we can empirically study specific aspects of the middle-range theory or of the ideal type, testing relevant hypotheses. Then we can interpret the findings so as to bring a sense of fit between the empirical data and the theory.

APPLICATION OF THE INSPIRED SCIENTIFIC METHOD TO THE UNDERSTANDING AND STUDY OF THE MODERN AMERICAN FAMILY

The following exercise is primarily designed to exemplify rather than to convince. Therefore we plead that the theoretical model not be summarily dismissed simply because the reader may not agree with our

conclusions. We hope that any disagreement will, on the contrary, fuel the desire to discuss, challenge, and modify what has been represented here, so that we eventually develop a workable model.

The Position of the Family within the Gospel Theoretical Framework

According to the scriptures, the family unit was established in the Garden of Eden. It functions both to provide companionship (Gen. 2:18; 23–24; Moses 3:18, 23–24; Abr. 5:14, 17–18) and to serve as a vehicle to bring forth spirit children (Gen. 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abr. 4:28; Moses 6:51) so that they may be socialized (Alma 39:12) and then tested (Abr. 3:25). Thus the family carries out a major function in the plan of salvation.

Survey of the Scriptures to Identify Scriptural Statements

Inductive (objective) searching, by definition, demands thoroughness. In this case, by using *A Topical Guide to the Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* and other concordances, we may identify as many relevant scriptural statements as possible. These are our findings: first, the extended family is part of the patriarchal order, recognized as a unit here on earth and in the hereafter. The word *family*, in ancient scriptures, generally refers to the extended family, the patriarchal family. The conjugal unit, on the other hand, is typically called a household (Mosiah 2:5; Josh. 7:14). Thus, when the Lord expresses his concern with the families of Israel (Isa. 65:23; Jer. 31:1), or with the families of the earth (Gen. 10:5, 12:3), he seems to be primarily concerned with lineage, with family relations that link people and generations together even beyond the grave (Gen. 25:8; D&C 130:2, 137:5). To be established forever, these relationships require the sealing, the welding link (Mal. 4:6; D&C 2:2, 138:47–48, 128:17–18) that can only be obtained through temple ordinances. The Lord expects members of the extended family to feel love, concern, and loyalty toward one another. Thus the scriptures remind us that we should forgive one another (1 John 2:10–11; Gen. 45:5, 50:21; 1 Ne. 7:21) and demonstrate our love (Ruth 1:16), loyalty (Gen. 14:16), and sense of unity to our siblings and other relatives (Ps. 133:1). But above all, we must be concerned for one another's salvation (1 Ne. 8:12; 2 Ne. 1:12–14, 2:30).

Second, the conjugal pair must love, support, and help save one another. Although in time past the extended family has been given prominence, the Lord has also shown great concern for the conjugal family. Our sacred books have shown us the love existing between Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Lehi and Sariah. And when King Benjamin pronounced his last sermon, he

addressed himself to the conjugal units who pitched their tents in front of the temple (Mosiah 2:6), converting them all, one by one (Mosiah 5:2). The Lord has given us a number of recommendations concerning the married state. First, he has commanded that we marry (1 Cor. 11:11; Moses 3:18; D&C 49:16) because humans should not be alone. A husband is to leave his parents and cleave to his wife, becoming one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Moses 3:24; Matt. 19:5; D&C 42:22) and having children (Ps. 127:3–5). Husbands and wives should love one another (Jacob 3:7; 1 Cor. 7:16). Husbands should give honor unto their wives (1 Pet. 3:7) and live joyfully (Eccl. 9:9), rejoicing with the wife of their youth (Prov. 5:18). Men should love their wives as Christ loves his church, willingly sacrificing themselves for her (Eph. 5:25). They certainly must not be unfaithful (D&C 42:23–26). And divorces should be few, limited to cases involving sexual infractions (Mark 10:9; Matt. 19:3–9, 5:32). Women are to love and stay with their husband and children (Titus 2:4; 1 Cor. 7:10). They are to be a comfort to their husbands (D&C 25:5), forgiving him (D&C 132:56) and submitting to his authority (1 Pet. 3:1, 5–12; Col. 3:18) as he exercises it in righteousness.

Third, the conjugal family has been structured in terms of a specific division of labor. The scriptures indicate that soon after the fall a family division of labor was established by the Lord. According to it, men are to rule (Gen. 3:16; Moses 4:22) and govern their home with all gravity and meekness (Tim. 3:4–5; D&C 31:9), mostly through persuasion (2 Ne. 25:23; D&C 121:41–44), with great respect for those governed (Matt. 18:10; Col. 3:21; Eph. 6:4; Luke 15:20, 31), praying faithfully (Jer. 10:25; 3 Ne. 18:21; Mosiah 27:14). Men are to protect their homes (Alma 43:47, 48:10, 46:12), work (Gen. 3:17–19; Moses 4:23–25), and provide for their wives (D&C 83:2) and their children (Mosiah 4:15; D&C 83:4). And they are to teach their children in both secular and religious things. Fathers must pass on to their children their language and their learning (Enos 1:1; 1 Ne. 1:2; Moses 6:5–6) and share their personal experiences (Deut. 4:9). They must bring their children up in light and truth (D&C 93:40–42) and in their testimony of the Lord (Ps. 78:5; Isa. 54:13; Deut. 6:7; 3 Ne. 22:13; Moses 5:12, 6:1, 58). They must prepare them for baptism (D&C 68:25) as well as for Christ's coming (Alma 39:16), so that they might know of our Lord, through whom they can obtain a remission of their sins (2 Ne. 25:26). This teaching must be done when the children are young (Prov. 22:6; 2 Ne. 4:5) and through personal example (Jacob 2:35, 3:10; Prov. 20:7), reinforcing all principles with firm (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 32:46; Josh. 24:15) kindness (Eph. 6:4). Otherwise, evil comes (1 Sam. 2:12, 3:13). Children are to honor their parents (Ex. 20:12; Matt. 19:19; Eph. 6:2; 1 Ne. 17:55; Mosiah 13:20; Lev. 19:32, 20:9; Mal. 1:6), accept

and live by their parents' righteous teachings and by their righteous values (Prov. 1:8, 23:22, 4:1; Col. 3:20; 1 Tim. 5:4). Women are to be mothers (Gen. 3:16; Moses 4:22). Like their husbands, they are expected to teach their children (Alma 56:47–48). And they are to be homemakers (Ps. 113:9)—but homemakers with a difference, homemakers who are good at what they do and who gain some degree of independence through industry and trust in the Lord. Thus, paraphrasing, the scriptures tell us that a virtuous woman can be trusted because she wisely administers her home; she gets up early in the morning and feeds her family and her servants; she sees to it that there is good food but no spoilage or idleness in her home; she is wise and kind; she helps the poor, she reaches out to the needy; her home is prepared to face the darkness and the cold; she excels in all things; she weaves and sells her products to the merchants; she buys a field and plants a vineyard; and above all, she fears the Lord.

As we review the above scriptural statements, the following basic assumptions emerge:

- (1) The conjugal family is a basic link to the extended family, welding the past and the future both horizontally (among the members of the extended family) and vertically (between generations), interacting with, exchanging support and good will for, and providing security to all members.
- (2) The conjugal family is to perform two major functions: tension management (providing emotional support) and procreation and socialization of children.
- (3) To provide tension management, the conjugal family requires that spouses give priority to their conjugal ties, that they share and express positive feelings, and that they respect one another and be faithful to one another.
- (4) To perform the tasks of procreation and socialization, the conjugal family must reflect a division of labor: men are to administer and protect their home, provide for their wife and children, and teach their children; women are to be mothers (and it would follow, nurturers), homemakers (creative and independent), and teachers; children are to honor, obey, and retain the functional and time-tested values of their parents.

As we draw this list, we promptly see that the scriptures do much more than provide us with basic assumptions about family structure and functioning. The scriptures tell us what the structure and functioning of the family *should* be, thereby providing us with an “ideal type” of the family.¹² It would follow, then, that at least in the social sciences, an inductive survey of scriptural statements would often provide us with assumptions that blend *virtus* and *veritas*. In addition, such a survey leads us to think of families as systems having various degrees of functionality and dysfunctionality.

The next step is to compare this ideal type of a functioning family with the family trends found in the United States today. The divinely inspired ideal family type suggests that the family functions best when:

- (1) The extended and the conjugal families are interrelated and interdependent.
- (2) The conjugal family functions to procreate and to socialize children; that is, to prepare them to function appropriately in their future roles.
- (3) The ideal conjugal family also functions to provide tension management for all its members.
- (4) The conjugal family employs the “traditional” division of labor to achieve its goals.
- (5) The extended family supports and absorbs the broken family in cases of divorce or death.

By contrast, the present-day American family is affected by the following societal trends:

- (1) Geographical mobility and increasing dependence on other institutions undermine the traditional interdependence between the extended and conjugal families.
- (2) The birthrate is down, and some conjugal families choose not to have any children; the youth culture tends to bring some degree of alienation between parents and children and to involve the young in “deviant” behaviors.
- (3) Many women and children are expressing a great deal of discontent and rebellion, and many men are responding with an increasing sense of insecurity.
- (4) Men have given up responsibilities of teaching and disciplining children to women; homemaking is depreciated and unrewarded, and women increasingly obtain jobs outside their homes, sending their young children to be cared for by others; as they work, women take over even more responsibilities.
- (5) Divorce has greatly increased, with mothers typically heading the broken conjugal family, helped by the government rather than by the extended family (female-headed families comprise the fastest growing poverty group).

This exercise leads us to the selection of a general theory of order and, within it, to a systems approach. Furthermore, an already existing and well-known theory of the middle range, Kingsley Davis’s theory of the conjugal family, appears to fit well our gospel-inspired view of the family.¹³ Both Davis’s model and the gospel model see the family as existing because it performs two major functions: replacement (reproduction and socialization) and *tension management*.

Within this theoretical model of the family, much can be done. All aspects of today’s family structure and family interaction can be studied in terms of their functions and dysfunctions. Today’s American family can be compared to the ideal gospel mode. Cross-culturally,

family structures and family functions can be differentiated, compared, and objectively evaluated. Universality and cultural relativity of patterns can be properly considered. Thus the scriptures can provide Latter-day Saint scientists with information that leads them more directly to the truth.

The most intriguing (and to some perhaps the most disturbing) finding in this exploratory analysis is that, because the scriptures are often prescriptive (telling us what we should do), the inductive search for scriptural assumptions appears to lead to the construction of ideal types and to the systems approach. Therefore, using the inspired scientific model, Latter-day Saint family sociologists would view the present-day American family as pathological. In itself, this would not set them apart from many secular family sociologists who, at this time, also view the family as being unstable, as being in a state of transition. But there would be a basic difference, and this difference resides in the fact that the scriptures give us an ideal type. On this basis, Latter-day Saint family sociologists would tend to view family dysfunctions as resulting from deviance from this ideal type, and to suggest solutions in terms of returning to some version of the original model.

Without an ideal type to refer to, secular family sociologists tend to be less critical. In fact, at a time when the American family appears to be so fragile, many among them view the new emerging patterns as useful experiments that update and improve on the traditional family. Unavailingly they hope that these new trends will lead the family unit to a more creative, more adaptive, and more functional prototype.

This basic difference in frames of reference between secular and Latter-day Saint social scientists explains the corresponding differences in orientation to problems. And it takes great courage and integrity to face the scientific community, and, on the basis of gospel truths, declare: "This truth has virtue and this virtue is true!" But it is encouraging to know that a number of LDS social scientists have been doing exactly this.

For example, Kathleen Slaugh, rejecting some claims that day-care children are cognitively superior to children brought up at home, has had the courage to claim that, at home, children learn both deductive and inductive problem solving, while day-care children are only exposed to deductive decision-making.¹⁴ Allen Bergin needed even more courage when he announced in national professional meetings—to his secular colleagues—that religious beliefs of patients can and must be taken into account by psychotherapists.¹⁵ At the same time, Latter-day Saint educators, scientists, and professionals have been establishing organizations to explore and promote the use of gospel truths to upgrade their various endeavors.

We want to emphasize again that we regard these ideas as tentative and open to critical appraisal. Latter-day Saint thinkers are a diverse and

independent group, and we do not wish to impose a methodology upon them. We hope, however, that these ideas may serve as a springboard for thought and discussion until we the scientists and professionals of the Church can develop a style of our own.

NOTES

¹See Jeffrey R. Holland, "The First 100 Days" (Address delivered at Brigham Young University, 11 November 1980); "Virtus et Veritas" (Address to faculty and staff at Brigham Young University, 1 September 1981); "The Value of Values: Shared Tasks for Business and Education in the 1980s" (Address delivered to a private group of business executives, Chicago, Ill., 5 November 1981); "Unto Whom Much Is Given . . ." (Address delivered at Brigham Young University faculty meeting, 31 August 1982).

²Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), x, xi, xiii–xiv.

³Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 43.

⁴Ibid., 162–63, 157.

⁵Ibid., 147.

⁶Margaret Wilson Vine, *An Introduction to Sociological Theory*, 2d ed. (New York: David McKay Co., 1969), 3.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Maren M. Mouritsen, "Total Commitment: The Harmony of Virtue and Truth" (Address delivered at the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi Initiation Ceremony, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 23 February 1982), 3.

⁹See Lenet H. Read, "How the Bible Came to Be," *Ensign* 12, pts. 1–8 (January to August 1982): 36–42.

¹⁰See Genevieve DeHoyos and Arturo DeHoyos, "The Mormon Psychotherapists: A Synthesis," *AMCAP: Journal of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists* (July 1982): 21–28.

¹¹See Spencer W. Kimball, "Absolute Truth," *Devotional Speeches of the Year, 1977* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 137–43.

¹²See Nicholas S. Timasheff, *Sociological Theory: Its Nature and Growth*, 3d ed. (New York: Random House, 1967), 178–81; Don Martindale, *The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 381–83.

¹³Kingsley Davis, *Human Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 394–95.

¹⁴See Kathleen Slauch, "More than Clean Windows: A New Look at the Family and Housework" (Family Living Lecture, no. 21, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 18 September 1985).

¹⁵Allen E. Bergin, "In Behalf of a Revealed Approach to Counseling," *AMCAP* 4 (Winter 1978): 3–9.

Passing the Sacrament at Eastgate Nursing Home

Every third Sunday we gave them
bread of another world.
Usually it was George and I.
We'd pull up in my dad's Monte Carlo,
brisk as bishops, solemn as high counselors.
We filled cups in the janitor's closet,
looking only once at the wrinkled
Miss July behind the door.

When it came time, we broke and passed,
sliding between wheelchairs and walkers
with the grace of nurses, never smiling,
decorous in our sneakers and clip-on ties.
Of course, we had our moments.
There was the guy who stood on his chair
and yelled for a bingo card, and the lady
who started rubbing my leg and calling me Jesus.
But we kept composure—talked them back
into the quiet of their lunacy,
unknotted their fingers from our arms.

We always took the slow road home.
If it was summer, we'd drive by the pool,
scouting the matched perfection,
the bikini splendor, of the Hunzaker twins.
And when we had money, we'd head for Winchell's.
Sometimes on the last mile home,
with the windows down
and a smile of sunlight on the road,
I'd think of Eastgate,
how I carried trays to bedridden members—
the lady in room 243,
who wore her breasts at her waist.
Craning forward, she opened her mouth,
and I with clean and careful hands
laid the bread on her tongue.

—Lance E. Larsen

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Correction: In the 1984 "Mormon Bibliography" (*BYU Studies* 25 [Spring 1985], 79), John Daniel Monnett's "The Mormon Church and Its Private School System in Utah: The Emergence of the Academies" was listed as a Ph.D. dissertation from Harvard; it was, in fact, a Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Utah.

Book Reviews

Editor's Introduction

Paul H. Peterson

Probably no Mormon history book in recent years has stirred as much controversy and elicited as many varied responses as has D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Quinn's book stirred much interest among Mormon historians even before its publication. Other scholars had uncovered documents that they claimed necessitated some reassessment of our early history, and Quinn seemed a logical choice to make such a reassessment. Author of a number of polished essays on the Mormon past, he was superbly qualified to write a cutting-edge study that would broaden and illuminate our historical horizons and possibly point to new directions to be taken.

When the book appeared, reaction was both loud and mixed. There was virtual unanimity among scholars that Quinn's research was prodigious, and most commentators agree that at least some of his implications and conclusions are significant. But while some scholars confidently pronounce Quinn's study to be a scholarly tour de force and basically accept his thesis that early Mormonism was centered around a magical world view, others have expressed alarm at Quinn's methodology. More particularly, they object to unwarranted conclusions based on what they consider to be highly tentative evidence. The debate continues.

BYU Studies is committed to bringing to the attention of its readers important published works that deal with the Mormon experience. Because of the controversy surrounding Quinn's book, we invited three reviewers to comment on the work. Each of them approaches it from a somewhat different perspective and discipline. Stephen Robinson is a New Testament scholar; William A. Wilson is a prominent folklorist; and Benson Whittle is an artist with a background in comparative literature. In addition to the perspectives provided by these reviewers, readers may wish to consult reviews by Jon Butler, Stephen Ricks, and Daniel C. Peterson (with a reply by Quinn) in *Sunstone* 12 (January 1988): 36–40; by Peter Wiley in *Utah Holiday* 17 (January 1988): 26, 27; by Mark S. Joy in *Journal of the West* 27 (April 1988): 106; by Alan Taylor in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21 (Summer 1988): 157–59; and by Sterling M. McMurrin in *Utah Historical Quarterly* 56 (Spring 1988): 199–200.

QUINN, D. MICHAEL. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987. xxii; 228 pp.; 94 figures. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Stephen E. Robinson, associate professor of ancient scripture, Brigham Young University.

In the past several years there has been a noticeably growing interest in alternative explanations for Mormon origins. Perhaps this is due to a certain lingering uneasiness that the present theories of cause are inadequate to explain the magnitude of the effects. At any rate, the most recent attempt to find a more satisfying explanation for Joseph Smith and the religion he founded is D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. The major strength of Quinn's book is the incredible breadth of its research. The bibliography appended to the main text is no less than sixty-seven pages in length and lists a multitude of arcane and often inaccessible volumes, including even rare medieval manuscripts. A second strength of the book for the non-Mormon reader is a total lack of any pro-Mormon bias. Although he is a Latter-day Saint, and despite his modest statement of faith in the introduction (xviii–xix), Quinn is clearly no LDS apologist. There is not a single page of the main text that would appear to be motivated by loyalty to the LDS church or its doctrines or to be apologetic of the Church's interests.

Despite these strengths, Quinn's book suffers from major flaws. Time and again his thesis shapes his data rather than the other way around. For example, in chapter 2 Quinn argues that Oliver Cowdery's rod was a forked divining rod, even though he himself admits (204) that the other rods we know of in the early Church were probably straight and that "use of a straight divining rod was virtually unknown in Joseph Smith's America" (34). This being the case, the natural assumption would be that Oliver's rod was like the others not a divining rod at all, but a staff on the model of the biblical rod of Aaron. Yet Quinn holds out for the forked rod—not because of any independent evidence, but because that is what supports his hypothesis.

Quinn attempts to establish that Joseph was controlled by astrological considerations, even to the point of begetting children only when Jupiter was favorable. However, Joseph was a Capricorn, whose ruling planet is *Saturn* (as Quinn admits on page 62). But since Quinn's theory needs Jupiter rather than Saturn, Quinn shows merely that "Jupiter had enormous significance for Joseph Smith" (63), and thereafter refers to Jupiter, not Saturn, as Joseph's ruling planet. To transform Saturn into Jupiter truly is magical, but it is also a distortion of the facts. If Joseph was indeed controlled by astrological considerations, why was he so totally unconcerned with his *actual* ruling planet?

What Quinn does not reveal, but what every astrologer knows, is that *any* date can be made astrologically significant, propitious or ominous, by using different guides, systems, and criteria. The beauty of astrology as a confidence game is that there are enough variables to produce any desired result for a given date or to explain any outcome in retrospect merely by manipulating the various systems and criteria according to the needs of one's client. In tying Joseph's marriage dates to astrologically propitious days, Quinn himself lists (60–62) the new moon, three days after the new moon, seven days after, thirteen after, fourteen after, twenty-eight after, twenty-nine after, the first day the moon was in Gemini, the second in Virgo, the second in Aquarius, the second in Pisces, the first in Aries, the first in Leo (plus six other "Mansions of the Moon" listed in the guides but not specified) and *every* Thursday. This gives a possible total of twenty-four different days of any month that could be considered astrologically significant marriage dates for Joseph according to Quinn's cited sources alone. Can the fact that Joseph married some of his wives on some of these days seriously be proposed as evidence of his being astrologically controlled?

Quinn also proposes that the birth dates for Joseph's children are astrologically significant since "all of Smith's children were conceived in either February or September" (and were therefore born in November or June). This statement is simply, as a matter of record, untrue. The Smith family Bible lists the birth of "The 7th son, Feb. 6th, 1842." The Prophet's cousin Almyra Mack Covey refers to this birth in a letter dated 24 February 1842 to Harriet Whittemore: "Joseph's wife has had a babe but has buried it." This is confirmed by a second letter from Jacob Scott to Mary Warnock in March of 1842. The full references are in Quinn's own sources (Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, Prophet's Wife, "Elect Lady," Polygamy's Foe* [New York: Doubleday, 1984], 103, 324 n. 29). This is a clear case of omitting the child whose birth didn't fit the theory. Quinn also dismisses the April births of Thaddeus and Louisa by telling us they must have been a month or two premature, but how does he know? There is, in fact, no historical evidence of prematurity, and Quinn offers none (beyond the requirement of his theory that it be so). Any theory that ignores or arbitrarily dismisses contrary evidence lacks credibility.

Quinn seems constitutionally unable to view the evidence apart from a prior commitment to his hypothesis. A prime illustration of this is afforded by his discussion of the dove medallion (fig. 39). On pages 73–74, Quinn's logic moves from (1) that "an inscription on the back of the medallion reads, 'Fortitude [Masonic] Lodge No. 42,' " to (2) that "ten of the fifty-one grand lodges in the United States report having adopted the dove and olive branch as a Masonic jewel," to (3) that "the dove occupies a high place among our Masonic symbols," to (4) that

“in the early nineteenth-century grand lodges of England and Pennsylvania, the dove medallion was to be suspended from the neck outside the clothing,” and then concludes that for Joseph, a Mason who had lived in Pennsylvania, “if the dove medallion had any symbolic significance to him, that meaning was probably outside of Freemasonry.” This appears to be willful obfuscation, and the objective reader is put off by the forced imposition of Quinn’s theory on evidence which clearly contradicts it. A second medallion (fig. 40) is discussed in the chapter on talismans (75–76), but Quinn offers no reasons why this piece of jewelry should be considered a “talisman” any more than my wife’s opal pendant or grandma’s brooch. Why it is pertinent to his thesis remains a mystery.

A further example will show how Quinn’s imposition of his hypothesis on incompatible data extends even to misrepresenting the physical evidence. On pages 72–73 Quinn interprets the symbols on Joseph’s cane (fig. 38) to be a Jupiter symbol, above a crown, above the initials J. S. These, he suggests, convey the message “Jupiter—reigns over—Joseph Smith.” However, a close look at the photograph (fig. 38) reveals to anyone not previously committed to the “magic” theory that the “Jupiter symbol” is not in fact the Jupiter symbol at all, but merely an x standing on a quarter circle, and that it does not stand above the crown, but rather *within* it. It is in fact “the jewel in the crown.” The physical evidence claimed for the “Jupiter connection” is simply not there. Quinn even admits that the jewel only “resembles” (72) or is “similar to” (fig. 38) the Jupiter sign, but when one’s method is to work backward from conclusion to evidence, even a chance resemblance will do.

Quinn often fails to give the full scope of his evidence or to explain its context adequately. For example, he uses a single clipped sentence from Brigham Young’s Office Journal—“an effort was made in the days of Joseph to establish astrology”—no fewer than three times (58, 63, 216), yet the reader is never given a larger context for the statement. It is never explained. But who made the attempt? Who resisted it? When was it made, and why did it fail? Does Quinn know the answers? If so, why doesn’t he give us the information? If not, why does he return again and again to this carefully sanitized and trimmed little snippet as though it were evidence for his theory? In an unguarded moment, Quinn reveals a little more (but still not all) of this sentence, just enough of a glimpse at the larger context to see that it was actually hostile to astrology, and therefore to Quinn’s thesis: “it would not do to favor astrology—an effort was made in the days of Joseph to establish astrology” (216).

Another major flaw in Quinn’s work is his overly generous sense of what constitutes evidence and proof. For example, he takes Lucy Mack Smith’s *denial* of magical practices to be proof of such

practices. Lucy's exact words were, "let not my reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac, drawing Magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of business" (54). This Quinn ingenuously interprets as an admission that they *did* practice these very things, but without stopping their labors and neglecting all kinds of business! If I suggest the reader need not suppose I spend my entire summer vacation lying on a beach in Tahiti eating bon-bons, that hardly constitutes testimony that I spend any part of my vacation so doing. The ironic character of such statements has to be obvious to anyone not desperate for evidence—any evidence.

Another example of Quinn's strange sense of what proves what is provided by chapter 4 on magic parchments and occult mentors. Quinn concludes from the fact that Hyrum Smith may once have owned a dagger and two parchments with magical symbols on them that Hyrum, Joseph, and generations of the entire Smith family must have believed in and practiced magic. Even if these items were Hyrum's—and that provenance is by no means certain—it proves only that Hyrum once owned them, nothing more. It does not tell us why he had them, how he got them, what he thought of them, whether or how he may have used them, or what his brother Joseph may have thought about them. To refer to these artifacts as the "Joseph Smith family parchments" (97) is a willful distortion, and Quinn's conclusions about the possible meaning of these artifacts are pure speculation. I happen to have among my cherished possessions a St. Christopher medallion, but that does not make me a practicing Roman Catholic any more than my menorah makes me Jewish or my Egyptian religious papyri make me a closet pagan. Moreover, my possession of these objects certainly does not prove that my brother, Reid, is a Catholic, Jew, or pagan. Such "proof" violates logic, wouldn't stand up in court, and shouldn't stand up in historical research.

In the case of the Jupiter coin, this same extrapolation error is compounded with a very uncritical acceptance of the artifact in the first place. If the coin *were* Joseph's, that fact alone would tell us nothing about what it meant to him. But in fact there is insufficient evidence to prove that the artifact ever belonged to the Prophet. The coin was completely unknown until 1930 when an aging Charles Bidamon sold it to Wilford Wood. The *only* evidence that it was Joseph's is an affidavit of Bidamon, who stood to gain financially by so representing it. Quinn uncritically accepts Bidamon's affidavit as solid proof that the coin was Joseph's. Yet the coin was not mentioned in the 1844 list of Joseph's possessions returned to Emma. Quinn negotiates this difficulty by suggesting the coin must have been worn around Joseph's neck under his shirt. But in so doing Quinn impeaches his only witness for the coin's

authenticity, for Bidamon's affidavit, the only evidence linking the coin to Joseph, specifically and solemnly swears that the coin was in Joseph's pocket at Carthage (66). The real empirical evidence here is just too weak to *prove* that the coin was really Joseph's, let alone to extrapolate a conclusion from mere possession of the artifact that Joseph must have believed in and practiced magic. The recent Hofmann affair should have taught us that an affidavit from the seller, especially a 1930 affidavit to third hand information contradicted by the 1844 evidence, just isn't enough "proof" to hang your hat on.

Another example of Quinn's idiosyncratic sense of what constitutes evidence or proof is his tortuous argument for "occult mentors" (89–96). His chain of logic runs like this: "it is possible that . . . would be consistent with . . . may have resided . . . it is possible that . . . is more likely that . . . would have been interested . . . it is reasonable to expect that . . . would have been acquainted . . . suggests that . . . could have been . . . other possible connections . . . may have been . . . would help explain . . . apparently followed . . . and possibly with . . . Although there is no information . . . It may also be significant that . . . may have had . . . apparently was . . . evidently knew . . . may also link . . . apparently was . . . may have facilitated . . . may have had . . . apparently accompanied . . . is also possible . . . is also possible . . . possibly . . . apparently . . . were probably . . . possibly . . . it is not clear . . . could have easily met . . . would therefore have been . . . would have possessed . . . is consistent with . . . could have left . . . would have lasted." All of this is followed by the conclusion, "But in view of the above evidence, the accuracy of statements by both nineteenth-century neighbors and recent Mormon historians must be reconsidered." I fail to see how any train of argument containing thirty-nine subjunctives, qualifiers, maybe's, and weasel words can be called "evidence" for anything!

Perhaps the most serious methodological abuse in Quinn's argument for Joseph's use of astrology occurs in his discussion of how Joseph's physical characteristics and the events of his life are just what astrology prescribed (63–65). In his search for occult correlations, Quinn points out that Joseph's infected leg and chipped tooth, even his height and the color of his eyes and hair all correlate to what the magic books predicted, "fulfilling traditional astrological expectations." However, in his eagerness to list another "correlation" Quinn apparently didn't notice that this correlation is significant only if one accepts the validity of astrology!

Another major weakness of Quinn's thesis is that the Book of Mormon, written at a time when Joseph was supposedly most influenced by the magical world view, contains only six references to magic in more than five hundred pages, and two of these are merely quotations from the Bible. Nevertheless, even these few references condemn magic in clearly

hostile terms. Quinn attempts to overcome this obstacle by first referring to the 1828 edition of Webster to show that in Joseph's day the words "secret" and "hidden" were synonyms for "occult." Then by substituting "occult" wherever "secret" and "hidden" occur in the Book of Mormon text, he is able to show that many passages really are concerned with the occult after all (160). But while the word "occult" might have meant "secret" or "hidden" in 1828, according to the same edition of Webster it was not a synonym at that time for "magic." Quinn wants to use nineteenth-century meanings to get from "secret" and "hidden" to "occult," and then use twentieth-century meanings to get from "occult" to "magic." In other words A equals B, B sounds like C, and C equals D; therefore A equals D. In logic this is called the error of the ambiguous middle. The same method applied to the King James Version of the Bible would make Paul the purveyor of "the *occult* [hidden] wisdom which God ordained" (1 Cor. 2:7), and Jehovah the bestower of the "*occult* [hidden] riches of *occult* [secret] places" (Isa. 45:3). The actual fact is that the Book of Mormon simply shows no interest in magic except to condemn it. And this, by the way, is the real Achilles heel of Quinn's theory. The primary sources, that huge collection of writings and ideas that actually came from the mind and pen of Joseph Smith in 1829 and after, are absolutely barren ground as far as any connection with magic or the occult is concerned. In any academic discipline I know of, a theory that does not deal with, cannot adequately explain, or is not supported by the primary sources ought rightly to be rejected.

A similar error (A=B, B is similar to C, C=D, therefore A=D) occurs when Quinn defines the apocryphal literature of the Bible and even the writings of Josephus as "the occult traditions of Judaism and Christianity" (172). If he is using "occult" here in its archaic meaning of "secret" or "esoteric," he would probably get an argument from Josephus's publisher, or from the Essenes at Qumran, or from the author of Jude and other early Christians who used 1 Enoch as commonly accepted scripture. Certainly there is no evidence that anyone tried to keep the Apocrypha a secret. If, however, Quinn means "occult" here in its modern sense to mean "magical," his contention would be hotly disputed by virtually every authority in the field of biblical literature. Roman Catholics, Greek and Coptic Orthodox, Falasha Jews and others might take offense at the suggestion that their acceptance of the Apocrypha or Pseudepigraphical books implicates them in "occult" practices. The Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, New Testament Apocrypha, and Josephus may have presented a minority view at times, but they had little or nothing to do with magic and the occult. This is another of Quinn's switches, using "occult" in one sense to create data, then using it in a completely different sense to make the data part of "the magic world view."

A final example of this distortion by definition is the equation of phrenology with the “occult.” There isn’t any reason in the world to connect the nineteenth-century belief in phrenology with magic, the supernatural, or the occult. Phrenology was an empirically based, though later discredited, scientific view. Modern herbalists or chiropractors may or may not be correct in their views as to how the human body works, but those views are based on an empirical rather than a supernatural model, and the rejection of their views by mainline medicine hardly makes them devotees of magic and the occult. The case is no different with the phrenologists. Views are not “occult” just because they are not accepted by mainline science.

The best part of Quinn’s book is the chapter on rods and seerstones, although here Quinn merely repeats information that has long been available. Clearly use of these objects was a part of early Mormonism. But the vital question is did these practices have their origin in magic? Since there are clear biblical precedents of the use of rods and seerstones, or at the very least since Joseph believed there were, and since there is an ocean of evidence that Joseph Smith was influenced by the Bible, is it not more economical to suppose the origin of these practices to be biblical? To ignore the possible biblical origins, where proven precedents exist, in favor of speculative magical origins, where they do not, violates Occam’s Razor and introduces another hypothesis that is itself not proven.

Throughout this entire book Quinn is clutching at straws and reaching too far. The arguments are a collection of random anomalies that usually lack any real cohesion. I have not always agreed with Michael Quinn’s conclusions in the past, but the method of his earlier work was at least respectable. The real mystery, then, is why this book is so fragmented, so out of proportion, so very bad? The answer, I believe, is in the timing of its publication. Quinn must have begun his research when he still had the Hofmann letters and the salamander to serve as the rock of his hypotheses. It was those solid, indisputable historical documents that would give credibility to the rest of his data and make his case come together. Quinn’s speculative notes would merely hang like decorations on the solid mass provided by the Hofmann documents, and the greater would justify the lesser. However, as Quinn approached publication, the Hofmann materials were pulled out from under him, leaving a huge salamander-shaped hole in the center of his theory. In chapter 5, on the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, one can still see remnants of the intended central argument. Even without the Hofmann material, Quinn still discusses salamanders and toads for no fewer than ten pages (124–33). But since he can’t demonstrate any *connection* between Joseph Smith and the salamander, the whole discussion is erudite irrelevance.

With the salamander letter and other Hofmann materials, Quinn had a respectable argument; without them he had a handful of fragmented and highly speculative research notes. It appears to me that when he was faced with the choice of seeing months of research go down the drain for lack of a credible context to put it in or of putting the best face on it and publishing anyway, Quinn simply made the wrong choice. This would explain why his remaining arguments are so strained and the scanty evidence so overworked. This would explain why the book is such a methodological nightmare. Having lost the turkey at the last minute, Quinn has served us the gravy and trimmings, hoping we won't notice the difference.

Moreover, I would guess that Quinn knows his work is flawed. He says that the evidence is "diverse and fragmentary" (226), "subtle" (191), and "can be demonstrated only circumstantially and inferentially" (78). The basic weakness can be illustrated by merely stating the thesis in different terms: Quinn asks us to believe that a twenty-four-year-old New York farmer spent his entire youth and early adulthood immersed in the study of magic, to the extent of marrying his wife and begetting his children out of occult considerations, and then at the peak of this occult involvement, and motivated by it, he founded a religious movement and penned an extensive literature that were both so barren of magical doctrines, terms, or practices that no one noticed the true origins for 158 years.

As I read *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* I was reminded over and over again of the style and methodology of Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* Both books are entertaining and exciting. Both books argue a sensational new theory of origins at odds with the traditional view. Like von Däniken, Quinn focuses on a handful of anomalies, shapes his data to fit his theory, and works backward from his conclusions to his evidence. Like von Däniken, Quinn rejects obvious, simpler, and more economical explanations for phenomena in favor of speculative and tortuously hypothetical possibilities. Von Däniken's logic, like Quinn's, often goes from "could have," "maybe," and "possibly" to "therefore" and QED. Neither distinguishes well between plausibility and proof. Like von Däniken, Quinn often fails to provide a complete and satisfying context for his data and misrepresents or misinterprets not only the data but the physical evidence as well. In short, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, like von Däniken's books, makes for titillating reading but as history does not fare well.

QUINN, D. MICHAEL. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987. xxii; 228 pp.; 94 figures. \$14.95.

Reviewed by William A. Wilson, professor of English at Brigham Young University.

Because I know the circumstances surrounding the establishment of Mormonism only in a general way, I shall leave to the professional historian the task of commenting on those circumstances as they are presented by D. Michael Quinn in *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. In what follows, I shall discuss the book from the point of view of the general reader for whom Quinn says he intended the work and from the point of view of my own discipline, folklore.

After listening to much heated debate generated by Quinn's book and after reading the work twice (once fast for general impressions and a second time line upon line, precept upon precept), I would like to make two points at the outset. First, Quinn genuinely tries to view the Restoration through the eyes of those who brought it about. He does not, as some have suggested, attempt to ridicule Church founders or belittle their achievements. He clearly believes that these founders could have been followers of magic and at the same time righteous men capable of establishing the kingdom of God. These were not mutually exclusive endeavors. Second, Quinn does not believe that the magic practiced by Joseph Smith and his contemporaries was something evil or sinister. Indeed, one wonders at times if Quinn has not accepted what he calls "the magic world view" himself, believing that magical practices, as followers of the occult claim, were revealed to Adam by God in the beginning and that "the restoration of all things" included reestablishing these practices. Quinn's discussion of the restoration of the temple endowment (184-90) could certainly lead one to that view, just as his treatment of magic in general led Sterling McMurrin to comment that Quinn "seems to be remarkably generous in his attitude toward such things [magical practices], almost as if, after all, they are really God's way of dealing with the masses, or even with their prophets."¹

What all this means is that those who disagree with Quinn, as I do, should base that disagreement not on the issue of Quinn's faith, but on the merits of his arguments. I believe that Quinn is often wrong, but I also believe he has the right to be wrong without having his integrity called into question.

I may never have read a book more heavily documented than is *Early Mormonism*. I am much impressed, and sometimes awed, by Quinn's command of magical sources from the 1500s to the present, but it is easy to get lost in the maze of details with which Quinn loads his pages. And I am frankly annoyed by his extensive in-text references. It may be necessary to give eighteen citations (41) to prove

that Joseph Smith used a particular seer stone in treasure digging, but I am ready to believe that Sally Chase was a notable Palmyra seer who used a greenish-colored stone by the time I get half way through the ten references Quinn cites to establish this fact (38). If such lengthy documentation is necessary, then, to help readers more easily find their way from the end of one sentence to the beginning of another, Quinn should return to the old system of footnotes or end notes.

Further, Quinn's references may sometimes mislead rather than guide the reader. It is not just extensive documentation that constitutes proof but the way one uses that documentation. As I read the first chapters of *Early Mormonism*, I am persuaded that Joseph Smith did indeed dig for treasure and that he used seer stones and divining rods to aid him in the search. I am also convinced that the detailed explanations Quinn gives for the magic parchments in the possession of Hyrum Smith are accurate—though I am equally convinced that to know and understand these complicated explanations, Smith family members would have needed a sophisticated knowledge of the occult to match Quinn's own.

As I move to other parts of the book, I find much to tease my imagination and to suggest directions for future research, but I remain unconvinced by the bulk of the argument—primarily because it rests on possible connections that are suggested but seldom proved and on parallel evidence that often lies beyond proof, and because Quinn argues from a concept of folklore that is both antiquated and misleading.

Throughout *Early Mormonism*, Quinn attempts to picture the cultural milieu that produced the Smiths and to explain them according to their culture as *typical* representatives of the way of life that nurtured them. He writes, for example: "America from the late 1700s to the early 1820s provided the cultural environment that would encourage a village family like the Smiths to have . . . magic parchments" (80). This is a perfectly legitimate approach if we are simply trying to discover what a typical or statistically average person of a given time might have been like. Following this approach, Quinn fills his book with statements such as "it may be," "it is reasonable to expect," "evidently," "it may have been," "it could be," "it is possible," "possibly," "probably."

But too much rides on Joseph Smith's actions to reduce them to what might have been or what could have been. We need to know not what was *possible* but what *was*—and sometimes silence in the absence of convincing evidence is better than speculation. Joseph Smith could have been influenced by magical practices as he established the Church and could have incorporated some of those practices into his new theological system. But was he, and did he? Quinn's answers to those questions are based partly on associational evidence, on possible connections. About 1800, people in Vermont, not far from the Smith family, began using divining rods for revelatory purposes (30–33); from this we

are to infer that the Smiths began doing the same. References to guardian angels appeared on the magic parchments in the possession of the Smiths; in a talk he gave in 1844, Joseph Smith referred to “my guardian angel” (100); from this we are to infer that the reference in the talk was based on the parchment. The Smith family had in its possession a silver dagger with which magic circles could be drawn (80); from this we are to infer that the family drew such circles. Influential books on the occult—Scot’s *Discovery of Witchcraft*, Agrippa’s *Occult Philosophy*, and Barrett’s *The Magus*—“were part of a large bookstore inventory near Palmyra”; from this we are to infer that “the availability of these European occult works near Palmyra would account for the citations from these texts in the Smith family’s magic parchments” (80).

This last technique occurs again and again in the book. Quinn will recount an occult practice or belief—that Cain headed a robber band committed to plundering, for example (165)—and then will point out that a book detailing this belief was advertised in a local paper, or was in a local bookstore or library, and thus, either directly or indirectly through his contemporaries, was available to Joseph Smith as he developed the concept of the Gadianton Robbers. But in no instance does Quinn clearly establish that an idea passed from a particular book into the head of Joseph Smith. The actual connection is never made. Thus much of the argument is built on non sequiturs. B is assumed to result from A because it follows A. These possible connections would be useful to supplement arguments built on a more solid foundation, but when they become the foundation, then the conclusions must be suspect. Unsupported by demonstrable evidence, they lead to a world in which nothing occurs by chance, free from magical intent: Joseph Smith’s conceiving children (64), invoking the spirit of Moroni (118–22), returning to the Hill Cumorah on the same day each year (133–34), choosing the appropriate number of Book of Mormon witnesses (152), or establishing offices in the priesthood (180–82).

Quinn’s parallel evidence—that is, explaining actions, practices, and beliefs in Joseph Smith’s life by reference to actions, practices, and beliefs in the occult world—is equally troubling. Using such evidence, Quinn can discuss Joseph Smith’s experience with the angel Moroni, compare it with occult practices, and then conclude: “For those who shared a magic world view, the times and seasons of Smith’s 1823 experience would have directly applied to instructions for spirit incantation by Reginald Scot, H. C. Agrippa, Erra Pater, Ebenezer Sibly, and other occult works in frequent circulation in early America” (119). Some of Quinn’s parallel evidence is convincing—relating Pearl of Great Price statements about Enoch to statements in Richard Laurence’s 1821 *The Book of Enoch the Prophet, An Apocryphal Production*, for example;

some of it pushes credulity to the limits—relating lineage in the priesthood to lineage in bearers of astrological knowledge; but none of it is provable—or, for that matter, disprovable. And that's the problem. In spite of the cautions Quinn establishes for the use of parallel evidence, his own magical reference-seeking seems at times to be something of a game in which Quinn finds occult background for everything: the names of Book of Mormon prophets (154–57), Book of Mormon brass plates (159), secret combinations (159–65), the concept of spiritual and physical creations (169–70), three degrees of glory (173–75), proxy baptism (181), and the temple endowment (184–90).

I don't mean to be glib. Quinn is deadly serious about his conclusions and deserves to be taken seriously. Once again, the problem is not that all of the parallels are implausible—some of them make good sense—but that instead of using them to bolster an argument based on some provable facts, he uses them as his primary argument. In this, he reminds me a little of the nineteenth-century nature mythologists who, through comparative philology, reduced the names of folktale and myth heroes to metaphors for natural phenomena. Just as they found a nature myth behind every culture hero, so Quinn tends to find magic or the occult behind major events in the establishment of Mormonism. Reductionist approaches are intriguing—but too easy.

From my perspective, the main problem with *Early Mormonism*, and one from which other problems grow, is that Quinn operates from a concept of folklore that few contemporary folklorists would find credible. The problem begins with definitions, or perhaps with the lack of them. In his introductory chapter, Quinn does define what he means by magic, or by “the magic world view” (x–xii), but though he uses the term “folk magic” again and again throughout the book he never tells us what it means. Are we to assume that it is the same thing as magic? If so, why the introductory word “folk”? If not, then what is the difference? Other terms also need careful definition because their meaning is much more elusive than one would think: the term “folk” itself, “folk religion,” “folk belief,” “folk believers,” and even, heaven forbid, “folk apostle.”

Despite these missing definitions, it is not difficult to infer from *Early Mormonism* a definition of “folk” that folklorists have given up long ago—a definition unfortunately shared by some other Mormon historians.² No one, of course, has a monopoly on a term, but one would expect the careful scholar Quinn usually is to pay at least some heed to what contemporary professional folklorists say about his subject. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century folklorists and ethnologists believed that the “folk” were unsophisticated, unlettered, country people, little touched by the refining influences of civilization and supposedly sharing a worldview, or psychic unity, with people like themselves—a worldview that stretched relatively unchanged across

cultural boundaries and from age to age, from the ancient Egyptians to the present. As a scientific worldview gradually replaced the older magical perspective, the people were divided into two groups: the educated, or cultivated, who abandoned old ways for more rationalistic perspectives; and the “folk,” who adhered to the old ways and kept alive the traditional learning of the centuries. What this meant, of course, was that with the spread of education and scientific rationalism, folklore would eventually disappear.

These ideas occur frequently in Quinn. In the magic worldview he finds “a timelessness unifying occult manifestations” (xx), “a certain unity of perspective” (xix) that existed in the outlook of Joseph Smith and in books “written hundreds of years before” his birth (xviii) and resulted in close parallels in certain of Joseph’s teachings, translations, and revelations to “esoteric, occult, and magic traditions extending to the ancient world” (226; also xix). And he points out that among the common folk in Joseph Smith’s America there existed an “indifference to the priorities of the educated elite” (11), an indifference that led to a preoccupation with such practices as folk medicine and folk magic “in rural areas and among people with limited education” (21; for other expressions of this view, see also 14, 18, 20, 22, 23, 27, 50, 76, 80, 81). Given this “unity of perspective” in the magic worldview, the questions of parallels becomes easy. One can discuss an action of Joseph Smith, compare it with a practice of someone else far removed from Joseph in time and space, and then explain Joseph’s action in terms of the other practice. That was what James Frazer did in *The Golden Bough*, as he cataloged similar practices from around the world and then, ignoring historical and cultural contexts, argued that similar practices had similar meanings. It was also what caused Frazer to fall out of favor with contemporary ethnologists.

In the main, this is Quinn’s approach—an approach he makes clear when he explains that his aim is to present “the events of early Mormonism from the astrological and magical perspectives that are explicit in these magic artifacts, since the previously discussed subjects of treasure digging, seer stones, and divining rods, as well as the magic artifacts themselves, all involve a certain world view,” and, again, to examine “in detail each artifact attributed to the Joseph Smith family and to discuss the textual derivation and *normative meaning* of those artifacts within the magic world view” (54, emphasis added). Following this approach, Quinn relates the silver divining cup of the Old Testament Joseph with similar divining cups from around the world (2–3), and he relates Joseph Smith’s use of a seer stone to similar practices in Elizabethan England (36–37).

Contemporary folklorists now understand that there is no monolithic, unchanging group of people called the “folk”; there are

instead many “folks”—that is, many folk groups (or clusters of people with similar interests and identities), constantly changing and constantly generating or reshaping folklore as they respond to the circumstances of their environments. From this point of view, Joseph Smith would no more have been a member of “the folk” than would a sophisticated city-dweller who tried to discredit him; both would have had their folklore generated in response to the circumstances of their own environments. (Students in my classes, for example, have collected folklore with equal success from both farmers and medical doctors.) Further, Joseph Smith’s rural New England society would not have shared a common worldview with all other rural societies; instead it would have held to a worldview resulting from its own historical development. And still further, even in Joseph’s rural New England, sharp differences between people would have occurred (and Quinn notes some of these)—that is, there would have been no all-inclusive cultural homogeneity.

If there is no monolithic “folk,” neither can there be a monolithic magic worldview. At best, there can be only a variety of worldviews. What this means is that similar practices can have different meanings and that a researcher cannot explain one practice in terms of another until he has set each one in its proper historical and cultural background and has inferred meaning from context.³ One cannot, as Quinn seems to, assume that because Joseph Smith wore an amulet he did so for the same reasons other people in other contexts have worn amulets (65ff.). Where’s the proof?

Quinn is aware of the close interplay between oral and written sources, each of which draws on the other. But, though closely related, oral and written traditions are not the same. Quinn states: “Oral tradition is fundamental to folk magic, but as Keith Thomas noted, ‘For some kinds of popular magic[,] books were essential. . . . The most obvious was the conjuring of spirits.’ ” (79). The key word in Thomas’s statement is “popular.” What Quinn again and again traces Joseph Smith’s actions back to is not a folk culture but a popular culture, a media culture, a book culture. Though material contained in this book culture can and does change as it is transferred from book to book, it still remains comparatively constant in form. The one constant about folk culture, on the other hand, is that it is ever changing; it is subtracted from, added to, and created anew in every new performance or ritual enactment, as the practitioner adapts traditional knowledge to the demands of the social and physical environment. Indeed, it is these changes, or variations, that will tell us what is going on in the cultural life of a people.

What this means is that if Joseph Smith performed actions which are tightly parallel, as Quinn suggests, to practices outlined in books printed two or three centuries before his birth, he would have had to learn these practices rather directly from written sources. In the folk tradition

they simply would not have continued in such static form. This places an added burden on Quinn to show that Joseph did indeed learn the practices from the sources cited. For example, Quinn convincingly demonstrates that the intricate symbolism and designs contained in the Smiths' magic parchments derive from Ebenezer Sibly's *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences* (1784) and from Reginald Scot's 1665 edition of *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (97ff.). He then states: "Although still leaving unanswered the question of who inscribed the lamens, a probable explanation is that due to the previously described availability of Reginald Scot's works in early America (chap. 1), someone in the Smith family or acquaintance used both the 1665 edition of Scot and the 1784 or more recent edition of Sibly to construct the . . . characters on the three magic parchments" (104). If we cannot be sure who inscribed the parchments, how then can we be sure that the Smiths fully understood all the symbolism that Quinn, in painstaking detail, spends many pages describing? More important, how can we be sure that Joseph Smith would have known and understood the myriad of symbolic and ritual details in the Scot and Sibly publications that the parchments are based on—details that supposedly explain a number of later actions and events in his life: initiating a meeting with Moroni (118–19); meeting Moroni at a particular time (119); invoking Moroni's spirit (120); associating a salamander (usually thought of as magical) with Moroni (132); determining that the hereafter is comprised of different degrees of glory (173). Again, these are highly evocative and intriguing parallels, but the proof is lacking. One thing is clear—they cannot be attributed to an enduring folk magic that has come down unchanged from Scot and Sibly to Joseph Smith.

Finally, throughout much of *Early Mormonism* Quinn stresses the difference between the magic worldview of Joseph Smith's America and the more rational, scientific view of our twentieth-century world. He points out that among Mormons some old folk practices still persist and probably always will, but he also argues that with increasing education, those who subscribe to the magic worldview will become fewer and fewer.⁴ Had Quinn paid any serious heed to contemporary folklore and to contemporary folklore scholarship, he might have had some difficulty defending that point of view. (Quinn has not entirely avoided folklore sources, but with a few exceptions the works he cites come either from scholars writing from older points of view or from badly outdated publications.)

Folklorists now understand that folklore has come into being not just in the distant past but in all ages. Just as people in earlier eras generated and transmitted folklore in response to the circumstances of their lives, so too people in the present create and pass along folklore as they react to the strains and stresses, the joys and the sorrows of their

lives. We also understand that folklore belongs not just to rural, unsophisticated, and unlettered individuals but to all people. All of us, to answer an earlier question, are the “folk.” We generate, transmit, and enjoy folklore because these acts are imperatives of our human existence—that is, we tell stories, recite proverbs, and participate in rituals because these are the ways we have as human beings of dealing with basic and recurring human problems. And one of the problems that will ever be with us is the difficulty of coming to grips with anxiety and uncertainty—forces that all our science will never completely eliminate. In their excellent *Water Witching U.S.A.* (1959), Harvard professors Evon Z. Vogt and Ray Hyman cite a researcher who thirty years earlier summed up the older view of magic as a relic of a prescientific age:

The magical mind, rather than the scientific attitude, tends to prevail in rural America. . . . Expressions of magical mindedness are seen in numerous superstitious beliefs and practices in regard to harvesting and planting. . . . With much prestige already established for this method, there is every reason to think that fairly rapid headway will be made in the immediate future. To the degree such progress is made, the magical mindedness will disappear.⁵

Vogt and Hyman then point out that, in spite of the continued growth of education and the advance of science, this prediction has not come true, that, on the contrary, “water witching has continued to flourish.”⁶ Then, after showing how water witching can give practitioners a feeling of control over an uncertain world, they cite a contemporary study that takes a functionalist rather than survivalist point of view:

Magical beliefs are more likely to be used in decision-making situations where a high degree of risk and uncertainty are involved. Farmers who relied upon agricultural magic were more resistant and less likely to adopt new technological farming practices. Many respondents, however, saw no ideological conflict between magical beliefs and science.⁷

This is precisely the point made by Wayland Hand, whom Quinn does cite, as he explains the persistence of magical folklore in Utah and elsewhere: “Folk beliefs and superstitions arise naturally out of situations of hazard and doom. . . . Physical hazard is bad enough; far worse, however, are pursuits fraught with psychological hazard such as the stage, stock market operations, gambling, and sports.”⁸

In certain desperate and trying circumstances, in both rural and urban life, many of us still turn to cultural means outside ourselves to save the day. That is particularly true of religious people. Obviously, the twentieth-century Mormon world is not the nineteenth-century world of Joseph Smith and his contemporaries, but so long as present-day Mormons continue to believe, as did their predecessors, that through prayer and ritual they can manipulate supernatural powers to their

advantage, much will remain constant. The precise forms may change and the meaning of each ritual enactment will have to be inferred from its own context, but, as rich stores of material in university folklore archives already testify, the ends remain essentially the same. Consequently, though supernatural experiences are not the sum of their religious values, many Mormons today still divine the future, seek hidden treasure, use home remedies, tell ghost stories, experience dreams and visions, invoke angels and spirits, exorcise devils, seek information from the spirits of the dead, heal the sick through ceremonial means, and use talismans to ward off evil. As Sterling McMurrin suggests, our own activities can become "so commonplace and habitual" that we forget to pay them proper heed when we compare them to practices in the past.⁹

Quinn's own statement is, perhaps, the best evidence I can marshal in support of this point of view. He states: "I believe in Gods, angels, spirits, and devils, and that they have communicated with humankind. In Mormon terms, I have a personal 'testimony' of Jesus as my Savior, of Joseph Smith, Jr., as a prophet, of the Book of Mormon as the word of God, and of the LDS church as a divinely established organization through which men and women can obtain essential priesthood ordinances of eternal consequence" (xx). So long as rational individuals like Quinn continue to hold that view, as they have held it in the past, what I would prefer to call a "Mormon worldview" will, I trust, not soon disappear.

NOTES

¹Sterling M. McMurrin, Review of *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, by D. Michael Quinn, *Utah Historical Quarterly* 56 (1988): 200.

²See, for example, Ronald W. Walker, "The Persisting Idea of American Treasure Hunting," *Brigham Young University Studies* 24 (Fall 1984): 429-59.

³See Alan Taylor, "Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith's Treasure Seeking," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Winter 1986): 18-28; particularly 20.

⁴See chap. 7; for a similar view see Walker, "The Persisting Idea of American Treasure Hunting."

⁵Cited in Evon A. Vogt and Ray Hyman, *Water Witching U.S.A.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 191.

⁶*Ibid.*, 191-92.

⁷*Ibid.*, 211.

⁸Wayland D. Hand, "Magic and the Supernatural in Utah Folklore," *Dialogue* 16 (Winter 1983): 53.

⁹McMurrin, Review of *Early Mormonism*, 199.

QUINN, D. MICHAEL. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987. xxii; 228 pp.; 94 figures. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Benson Whittle (excerpted from a longer essay).

Magic is real; it works. Readers of Michael Quinn's new book must be prepared to accept this or never understand the argument. In the absence of direct experience, or of a scientific appreciation of magic, a kind of imaginative leap is probably advisable. We would need to walk into hilly, heavily wooded country interspersed with fields and roads, with head and heart wide open, trying in a most receptive way to realize that everything seen is materially connected to things invisible, and by these latter intermediaries to each other. It would be necessary to befriend and be befriended by witches, soothsayers, and magi and to take them seriously as friends and as divines. In so doing we might get glimpses of Joseph Smith, the young treasure-seer, his face buried in a hat which he holds upside-down in his hands, a stone in the bottom of it. We accept his seership, which eventually yields a treasure. We see the Smiths take up the hearthstones in their living room, enabling Joseph to conceal his find there. We watch as one disgruntled treasure-hunting colleague, Alva Beaman, demands to see or share the trove: taking up his divining rod, the resolute rustic promptly "witches" the whereabouts of the "golden plates." Everyone present shares something that Michael Quinn calls "the magic world view." All know that magic is real.

Any approach to Quinn's book by a Mormon of any hue must be partly concerned with reconciling the vast differences of belief between now and when magic was going strong among our forebears—the more so as we have moved from bizarre folk marginality to full partnership in technocratic neo-industrialism in one tenth the time between Archimedes and Einstein. Quinn, the Church, and the demagicalized worldview will survive the furor over magic in Mormonism, but what about magic itself? Will we fall for another revisionist history just because the picture of Joseph Smith, with hat and stone, cannot fit in with word-processors and remote-control garage door openers, or with our late and refined view of what a true prophet may be? And what of our poor little salamander? Accommodated by the status quo as soon as it became necessary to deal with that forged letter of Martin Harris, is he now to be thanklessly cast off?

Magic is something very big, with many centuries behind it. Science, magic, and worship once walked hand in hand. Magic deserves defending because it belongs to a worldview that has given long service while yielding both modern science and modern religion. In confronting magic, Michael Quinn has recreated a birth of Mormonism in which

credulity, identified by Sir Richard Burton—with impeccable irony—as an important organ of the human brain, is restored to its true place. In this he seems to have the backing of Richard L. Bushman, Ronald W. Walker and Klaus J. Hansen, among others. It is possible too, according to Quinn, that the salamander may have a place in it.

Quinn's is a serious, scholarly work, aspiring to, and surprisingly often achieving, objectivity. The author, a Mormon of religious convictions, has attempted to assemble, relate, and analyze available data concerning attitudes towards, and the practice of magic (more generally, "the occult") among the founders of the faith and its early adherents. He has also made a thorough study of postmedieval magic texts, especially of those that were in print in English during the genesis of the new religion, and has taken account of important antecedents to these. Thus, by the establishment of connections, both direct and thematic, it has been possible, through scientific and extrabiblical means, to broaden our view of the cultural environment from which Mormonism sprang and to situate the religion of the Latter-day Saints, to some extent, in a nonparochial, non-Protestant tradition stretching back through Reformation Europe and the Middle Ages to late antiquity and beyond. The latter probably was not a leading aim of the author; certainly it is only one of the results. In fact it is not always easy to see what case he is making. But the book, on balance, deserves our thanks, praise, and attention.

The book lives up to its title. Quinn erects the framework of magical lore—largely literary—by which alone at this late hour Joseph Smith's activities as magus may be interpreted. He then methodically fits the known historical events of early Mormonism into this framework, with minor additions and major elaborations. However, a problem in this approach is the presence of quite a lot of undigested material. Often the author seems simply to be taking every opportunity to glue scraps of information (not always evidence) to the bones of his case whether or not they stick, and sometimes whether or not they are relevant.

The largest single difficulty is that there is virtually no conclusive proof that Joseph Smith paid inordinate attention to astrology, ever used any magic parchments, or practiced spirit conjuration. Detractors, therefore, will find much scope for attempted refutation, and the burden of proof must fall upon the author. As I see it, however, the case proceeds from suggestion to plausibility to likelihood, and finally, on the whole, convinces. I believe that in time we shall be forced to contemplate what Howe called "the juggling [conjuring] arts of Smith."¹

It is reassuring to surmise that the old story of a world steadily prepared for "the Restoration" by a relentless succession of more or less unwitting Protestants and proto-Protestants from Wycliffe to

Jonathan Edwards has been junked by serious historians. Also, it is nice not to be hearing of the “burnt-over district.” Quinn’s aim may not be to rewrite the early history of Mormonism, so much as to assemble, as it were, under one roof, all the data old and new and freshly sifted, relating to magic, money-digging, and astrology, and at least to make a case for the thorough immersion of the Smiths in magic. Quinn seems justified in having decided to publish his findings now, rather than await, possibly forever, the emergence of conclusive data to unite and fully illuminate the strange and often obscure beginnings of Mormonism. His inconclusive history should be regarded as an indispensable step in the dialectical process through which many Mormons are now gaining important self-knowledge.

Chapter 1, “Early America’s Religio-Magical Heritage,” begins with the explanation that the study of the occult in America—that is, as an academic subject—has begun only recently, partly because magic is a secret ancient tradition. Quinn discusses the occurrence of magic in the Bible, an appropriate effort in view of Mormonism’s claims to replicate the religion of both Testaments. The author alleges magic in Judaism on the basis, for example, of a zodiac built into the floor of an ancient synagogue. Throughout the work, Quinn erroneously considers astrology a branch of magic instead of a separate, archaic science, once the astronomy of its day. Nevertheless, astrology is serviceable as an ally of ceremonial or astral magic.

It is more difficult and controversial to ascertain the position of magic in the New Testament than in the Old. Many have rallied to both sides of this question, but the implication one draws from Quinn’s examination of the controversy is that it is political factors, mostly prevailing prejudices against magic, that keep Our Lord from being considered a magician. Other than noting magic in medieval Christendom, Quinn says little of it. All pre-Christian peoples of Europe practiced magic, which was eventually marginalized but not eradicated. Spellbinding was of particular importance among northwest Europeans, as were transformations—for example, shape-shifting, such as alleged in the metamorphosis from salamander to Angel Moroni. In addition, alchemy infiltrated Western Europe from North Africa beginning in the tenth century. Magicians on bad terms with the Church were often persecuted as sorcerers, but there is increasing support for the view that the countryside of Western Europe was effectively Christianized only in the wake of the Reformation. And by that time, magic, astrology, and Hermetic science were well established among even the upper classes of Italy. Certainly much scope remained for the practice of the “Old Religion” during most of recorded history. Quinn does show that the occult persisted among all classes, in America as well as in Europe, in spite of clerical opposition. Thus, until the end

of the seventeenth century learned men such as Bacon, Kepler, Locke, and Newton were often students of alchemy or astrology.

This troublesome context of early Mormonism, which from our twentieth-century vantage point seems so perplexing, had a rationale sufficiently convincing to sway English aristocrats, Protestant clergymen, and devout men of Groton, Massachusetts. Quinn notes that Vermont, when Joseph Smith was a boy residing there, was “something of a treasure-digging mecca” (22). The author here is not trying to make treasure-digging look respectable, but rather understandable. Even so, one begins very early to discern an apologetic stance in this work, but with a peculiar twist: the author is not defending the faith to the infidel; instead, he is defending the history of a heretical prophet-founder, and his associates, to his own coreligionists, so that they may not be ashamed of their origins to the point of falsifying their history.

The second chapter deals particularly with treasure-digging, divining rods, and seer stones. Quinn, who regards treasure-seeking as an acceptable aspect of “folk religion,” holds that Joseph peeped—and to a lesser extent dug—from 1819-20 to 1827. He cites a digging experience that occurred after the recovery of the golden plates. Besides establishing the extent to which some early brethren believed in the reality of supernatural treasure-enchancement, the incident tells us that the Book of Mormon was not regarded as the “only true treasure,” to which all previous divining and digging had been mere preparation. Slim but direct evidence connects Joseph Smith, Sr., and the father of Oliver Cowdery to a Christian “Fraternity of Rodsmen” in Vermont. Quinn argues for the right to quote from “hostile” sources and discriminately uses Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled*, without which we would have a less interesting history.

In chapters 3 and 4, Quinn’s case begins to emerge. Some readers will find it endearing, as well as illuminating, to be able now to imagine the Smith family in the 1820s as, among other things, a small circle of poor rural occultists living as much as possible for the things of the Spirit while dreaming of prosperity, digging for buried treasure, and trying to get a little income from some of their favorite interests.

The third chapter treats ritual magic, astrology, and talismans, especially a number of relics of the Smith family. From the standpoint of calculating his “nativity,” casting his horoscope, or “doing his chart” (natal), Joseph’s most significant planet, Quinn argues, was not Saturn, which rules Capricorn (his “sun sign”), but rather Jupiter, which governed the year of his birth and the first decan (ten degree arc) of Capricorn. Accordingly, his physical appearance was that of one ruled by Jupiter. Somewhat oddly, Quinn then argues that Joseph’s constitution conformed to Capricorn (“under Jupiter’s governing influence” [63])

right down to the bone operation with consequent limp and the slight whistling sound he made in speaking.

There are several problems here. It is at first hard to ascertain what Quinn is trying to prove, but something like the following eventually emerges. Factors in Joseph's nativity, when combined with his Jupiterian appearance, might incline him to think himself governed by Jupiter. If the Prophet demonstrably had grounds for thinking himself governed by Jupiter, then this might explain and confirm Quinn's interpretations (for example, of Joseph's talisman and cane) and strengthen a major segment of his case. Allowing the above, there persists the illogicality of attributing physical appearance to the influence of Jupiter and, in the same individual, bodily infirmities to Capricorn, ruled by Saturn.

What matters, in any event, is what Joseph Smith thought. I see no reason why he would have needed to think himself fully governed by Jupiter due to his nativity, in order that the talismans, his cane, and the births of his children be explained. He only needed to wish it. If that were the case, then Quinn's position is even more engaging, for Joseph might be thought to have chosen Jupiter as an ideal and a protector, even as kind of patron saint. The Prophet might have practiced what Frances Yates has called "astral magic," or

a way of escaping from astrological determinism by gaining power over the stars, guiding their influences in the direction which the operator desires. Or, in the religious sense, it is a way of salvation, of escape from material fortune and destiny, or of obtaining insight into the divine.²

Quinn makes a good case for the possible employment in magic of the Prophet's Jupiter talisman, which by all accounts he did wear. The case is less convincing for another silver piece formerly belonging to Joseph. This piece *could* be used as a talisman, *could* be regarded as a symbol of Venus, *could* fit into "the magic world view," as could much else. But the residual effect of the argument is an impression that the case itself is being mustered to endow the proof with meaning, rather than the other way around. Such instances, in which the author makes his case suspect by revealing the outer edges of the body of evidence essential to its establishment, cause us to reflect that, stripped of speculations and questionable connections, this book might be a rather slenderer volume.

According to Quinn, all ascertainable wedding dates of Joseph Smith, Jr. and Sr., have astrological correlations. A problem here is that three different methods of reckoning favorable days are offered. Joseph Smith, we are told, resorted to all of them. So diverse are astrological orientations that just about any choice of a wedding date might be made to seem propitious according to some system or other. Yet, ascribing astrological significance to all eighteen of the known or probable dates

of Joseph's marriages required diligent thoroughness, which is found throughout the text.

In chapter 4, "Magic Parchments and Occult Mentors," the action starts to pick up. Quinn glimpses dim outlines of what he thinks may have been a sort of proto-Mormon clan of Christian seeker families, inter-related by blood, marriage, an interest in the occult, and, in some cases, participation in the Vermont "Wood Scrape." At or near the center of this presumed inchoate movement is Joseph Smith, Sr., together with a pair of possible "occult mentors" to young Joseph—Justus Winchell and Luman Walter(s), who will not be warmly received into Mormon hagiography. Winchell, an accused counterfeiter and bigamist, is thought to have introduced rhabdomancy to the Wood group. Walter(s), a footloose polymath possessing strange books, seems also to have shared the sometimes questionable reputation of the Smiths themselves. Rather vaguely, by means of a lot of "may-also-link-him's," the author connects Winchell, Walter(s), Wood, and others through former residency in adjacent areas of Connecticut, marriages, connections to the Congregationalist church, shared migration patterns, interest in the occult, or any of several inexhaustive assortments of the above, to the Smiths and to other early Mormons, including the Rockwells, Beamans, Lawrences, Whitmers, and many families prominent in the Church at Kirtland, Ohio, in the early 1830s. This will no doubt tantalize students of the subject, but confirmation would require a great deal of work and good luck. Quinn here is working from a very interesting intuition, based on a scant handful of hard facts and a lot of potentially related information all held together by conjecture. Again, he fails to say exactly what he is trying to prove. Still it may turn out to be the most revolutionary chapter of Mormon history ever written, prior to his next two.

The work at this point seems hurried, with insufficient proof, some of the speculation therefore somewhat idle. The ideas do excite, partly because it is refreshing to see a friendly scholar even attempting to deal with this evidence. It would seem that the case Quinn is suggesting here as an explanation for the Smith family amulets has greatest bearing, potentially, on chapter 6, in which he examines Mormon scriptures and their relationship to the "magic world view." If there are discernible close parallels, as Quinn later demonstrates, between Mormon scripture and preexistent occult texts, this is ultimately more interesting and important than the manufacture of parchments.

Quinn reassures the reader that the three Smith family magic parchments have nothing to do with black magic, and are "God-centered" (97). Also, they are apparently the only documentary evidence of non-biblical literary sources for any religious practice, teaching, or artifact of Joseph Smith. Curiously, Quinn has established that an expression

found on one of the amulets must have come originally from a magical text published in America in German in 1820 and unavailable in translation before 1833. Because of the strength of Rosicrucianism among Pennsylvania Germans, a possible German connection might be worth pursuing. Comparison of source texts indicates that at least two of the parchments could not have been constructed earlier than 1784. Quinn's halfhearted attempt to attribute the manufacture of the "Holiness to the Lord" and "St. Peter Bind Them" lamens to Winchell and Walter(s) through numerology is unsuccessful.

Chapter 5 is titled, "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon." The now quaint phrase "coming forth" prepares the reader as never before for the emergence of the record from the ground—from "low out of the dust" (Isa. 29:4). But can the reader really accept that Joseph is going to the hill to get the plates by magic? Quinn has been keen to make his readers surmise, on their own if possible, that the practice of magic can truly be fitted into a not disreputable tradition. However, the oft-recurring phrase "folk magic" tends to denigrate the status of Joseph Smith's activities as magus. Did Joseph really "usher in"—nay, conjure—the last dispensation by folk magic? The golden plates, whose existence it is as pointless to question among believers as the resurrection, were buried in the earth, controlled by (a) spirit(s). The young seer, having ascertained the presence and the location of the record, must go to that place at the right time, divested of pecuniary motives and wearing black, and must be in the company of the right person. He must enter the magic circle, divine the trove, summon the spirit, break the spell.

The time was 21 September 1827, the autumnal equinox. Quinn's case at this point—resting on Joseph Smith's reasonably well established knowledge of astrology, on the amulets of parchment, on precise pinpointing of times of invocation reported in friendly histories, on the literature of magic known to have been potentially accessible to Joseph, on the Prophet's known involvement in magical treasure-seeking during that period, on at least one acceptable statement that the plates were located by means of Joseph's "wonderful stone" (123)—effectively places the recovery of the plates in the thick of the magical tradition. As we follow the narrative, disjointed though it be, we realize that the story of the "coming forth" will never be the same again. We witness the magical, autochthonous birth of a new religion, or the first and only great find of the Palmyra area treasure-seeking fraternity, or the enactment by the young prophet of a retrieval rite undertaken to convince believers of the reality of the desired event—or some blend of the above. In any event, if we have been extremely attentive in following—and at some points in industriously ascertaining—the author's case, I believe we are prepared for this major

step in the argument and must conclude that it works. The case suddenly seems very strong. If much evidence is tenuous, it must be countered that much of it is very solid. It convinces when the whole, composed of diverse strands, is woven together into a fabric suddenly greater than the sum of its parts. I have hazarded elsewhere that an imaginative act is necessary if one is to appreciate a work of the imagination. Quinn has met the one with the other and has produced a case far from imaginary.

Interestingly, Quinn has elected to add the famed Mormon salamander to his reconstruction of what occurred when Joseph went to retrieve the plates. Two accounts are known of “something like a toad” (124) or a something that “looked some like a toad” (126) seen by Joseph at the time. At first one is drawn instinctively to the author’s argument. The salamander is an engaging literary image, for one thing, while a toad is just a toad. Unhappily, there is no proof of the material existence of a salamander at the retrieval of “the record.” We are given instead much well-informed conjecture. Really, the only strong argument for the salamander is textual and occurs in chapter 6, connecting the words *Nephi* and *Moroni* to a cabalistic notion of an outer soul. This intelligence is then tied to the “Nephilim” of Genesis, offspring of elemental spirits, or in other words “salamanders, known as Moron in books available at Palmyra” (157–58 n. 2). This too must qualify as a tenuous proof.

It seems that, in terms of the inner logic of his case, Quinn, in spite of vagueness, must be alleging the objective presence of a salamander. It is one thing to suggest that there was a salamander in the “hole” or “box,” and something different if the creature beheld by the young seer was any sort of small amphibian, transformed on the internalization of whatever the Prophet may really have seen, or projected from the inside of his mind out, when whatever may actually have been in the box or hole appeared. If the salamander lore allegedly rife in the region at the time had truly made an impression on young Joseph Smith, surely he would have said “salamander” to Chase and the Saunders family. The reptilian fire-sprite fits the picture only if Quinn holds, on poor evidence, that it really was a salamander, and that there was an actual sighting, the significance of which Joseph was ignorant. Instead, the author says “it is possible” (131). Nevertheless, it is interesting and may someday lead somewhere.

The obvious alternative explanations must be addressed, of course—that it was a toad, for example, or a frog feeling suddenly out of place and diving for a crevice. Yet, a sharp-eyed young seer would know a toad, while Joseph did say, “something like a toad.” By the same token, would he have failed to recognize a frog? Perhaps some mutant or deformed batrachian perplexed him there. At least one more view of the matter presents itself: supposing Moroni the messenger were himself a highly accomplished conjuror?

There is, too, the reference to “The Golden Pot,” a tale by E. T. W. Hoffman, which received notice in *Palmyra* and seemed to presage many elements of the Book of Mormon’s creation. I fear that many will think, when presented with frequent declarations concerning the availability to the Smiths of literature relevant to their magico-religious activities, that an attempt is being made to prove direct influence on the Prophet by literary works; that he preconstructed his own history, inventing not only the *modus operandi* by which the plates were secured, but also the framework in which they were proffered, all in accordance with the prescriptions of magical texts and fictional works. I infer instead that Quinn’s intention has been to put down any and all findings that seem relevant to the mindset Joseph Smith took with him into his prophetic calling.

Quinn tries to demonstrate that the thrust and style of the new gospel had intrinsic appeal for Americans sharing Joseph’s “magic world view.” Accordingly, in introducing his discussion of occult teachings in Mormon scriptures (chapter 6), he is quick to say that he will not argue for direct influence of prior texts on the new revelations and translations. His position is that they can have been affected by “the language, concepts, and heritage of the religio-magical culture that was part of the early nineteenth-century audience to which the communication was addressed”; but that this influence, according to “early Mormon theology,” still “would have constituted divine communication,” since God reveals his truths to humans in their own language (151). A problem is that Quinn at the same time denies that the Prophet could have had access to the texts from which many parallels to the Mormon scriptures are then adduced (150).

If I understand the argument, Quinn seems to be pushing apologetics to its outermost limit. The revelations with their occult religio-magical content would still, according to his explanation, have been channeled through the mind of God. So keen is this God to enlighten his people that he inspired his leading Prophet to transmit new truths echoing well-published occult old truths, to which Joseph allegedly did not have physical access. However, when it does suit the author—in the case of amulet manufacture, for instance—the necessary books were readily available. Viewing this objectively, why limit the strange books of Luman Walter(s) to reference works and procedural manuals? The number of parallels, referred to as “subtle echoes” (151), is impressive. I fear that Quinn’s version of how they came to be, in the long run, will not do. The parallels are far more than subtle echoes, and I see no reason for ascribing them to God in the way Quinn is suggesting. Did God the All-Knowing need pre-Mormon occult lore in order to couch his new teachings in suitably intelligible language? Surely the only need for linguistic formulation was in the mind of the Prophet. And what is lost

if the Prophet Joseph did consult pre-Mormon occult texts in the creation of new scriptures? Is it unreasonable to propose that, in many cases, Joseph's mode of obtaining the Divine Will involved a preconceived text? Why is it a problem if Joseph drew on the very texts, or *verbal accounts of them*, in which parallels are discerned by Quinn, who has established a case for the awareness, by someone in the presumed pre-Mormon occult association, of works by Agrippa, Sibly, Barrett, and Scot?

All of the evidence, looked at with the author's accustomed objectivity, which now deserts him, suggests that Joseph Smith, or someone near him, did have some "strange books" (82). The reader may well feel that after allowing the author the use of "hostile sources" because he is being "scientific," Quinn at the last minute makes a show of backing off from the consequences of his discoveries, resorting to a misconstrued, untenable cliché (151; see also D&C 1:24) about the character of revelation, Mormon style. Possibly Quinn himself is uncertain of his position and is offering an escape hatch to the fainthearted. But anyone who has attentively waded this far into the study does not need help of that kind in drawing inferences. In the one instance where the very circumstantial case is made to look very solid, the author does not seem to be offering the right conclusion.

Much of chapter 6 is taken up by a discussion of magic in the Book of Mormon and, more particularly, the problem of freemasonry as the alleged contemporaneous target of attacks on secret societies in that work. Somewhat less than convincingly, Quinn considers the Book of Mormon's negative position on magic as limited to black magic (sorcery) and therefore not inconsistent with his own thesis.

There are many points of special interest in chapter 6, including an antecedent in occult literature (*Ascension of Isaiah*, translated in 1819) for the Book of Mormon's seemingly anachronistic treatment of pre-Christian Christianity; occult features of the Book of Moses reminiscent of the pre-Mormon Book of Enoch (Englished in 1821); "occult" parallels in revelation on the priesthood, angels, baptism for the dead, discernment of spirits, and the nonimmateriality of spirit; and parallels between the Mormon temple endowment and the "ancient mysteries."

I find this most enlightening. Possibly, however, Quinn underestimates some difficulties of his position in this chapter. To sum up: It is impossible to rule out the availability to Joseph Smith of texts to which some of his revelations seem indebted, from which may partly derive key instances of doctrinal deviance canonized by the Latter-day Saints. The author's definition of "revelation" in Joseph's case is inadequate. Faced with Quinn's evidence, I believe many will eventually be forced to favor the view that Joseph Smith, like the narrator of Poe's "The Raven," had spent some nights poring over "quaint and curious volumes of forgotten

lore.” In my opinion, the sooner we cope with this, the more interesting and healthy our history will be. Obviously, “oral transmission,” and a powerful synthetic faculty in the mind of the Prophet, can have been great aids to divine inspiration. It is possible that, in Quinn’s carefully stated belief that no historical documents will alter what are for him essential religious truths, he has neglected the fact that many people do not establish an antiseptic division between their faith and their profession, and even if they wanted so to dichotomize their awareness they could not.

I question, too, the advisability of publishing a study of this importance without a creative attempt to solve the problems it poses. The book in its present form is a bombshell, without sufficient devices for a defusing. Whither do the new facts lead? How, for example, is the vital golden plates retrieval scene to be summed up? Is it to remain an essential mystery?

Studies of primitive Christianity, and of the territory and ambience in which it emerged, reveal the most extraordinary borrowing from other cults. Thus, James G. Frazer proposed indirectly that there was nothing new in the Christian religion. Might not Mormonism, already programmed with the belief that there is nothing new, unrevealed in former “dispensations,” and faced with the facts, eventually content itself with a God playing a somewhat diminished role in the Restoration, guiding Joseph in the selection of true precepts from among many others less true? The presence of much occult lore in Mormonism’s extra scriptures certainly enhances its claim to be the “restoration of all things” (D&C 27:6).

Quinn’s final chapter, “The Persistence and Decline of Magic after 1830,” is not the most engaging one, having something of the character of a “denouement,” following the “catastrophe” of chapters 5 and 6. Still, it is full of good things. Indeed, part of the letdown probably results from sadness in seeing the old worldview fade away in forty or fifty years or less, as the Saints get down to the business of taming the desert and coming to terms with the Gentiles.

Quinn is careful to correct the view that seer stones were not used after 1829. The disaffection of Page and the Whitmers apparently began over the diminished role of seer stones in the Church. From the 1880s, seer stones became relics of a time more devoted to magic, which may have been a more magical time. Divining with a rod has had a less interesting history since 1830, surviving mostly in well-witching. Most other aspects of this chapter are less interesting, often revealing more about Quinn’s attitude to rounding up the evidence than about Mormonism or magic. Mormons, according to the author, were practicing predictive astrology, which in another age would have got them classified as sorcerers and burnt, but no strong proof is given.

In all, it is not a very good advertisement for the substance of the Mormon experience with magic that it faded so soon from the picture after Joseph Smith's death. It amounts almost to an official parody of the institutionalization of charisma that Joseph Smith the Prophet-magus was succeeded by that pragmatic Yankee who took over the now useless stones but not the attendant calling, while saving the outward Church. Joseph, for all his genius, may well have been over his head in magic, as in Masonry, real estate, women, ancient tongues, politics, etc. But it would seem that he had as much of magic as was needed when he needed it.

Whatever admixture of divine inspiration and revelation we ascribe to them, may not many of those marvelous features of Mormon doctrine that distinguish it from Protestantism really be viewed as the venture of the Prophet-magus out of the realm of operative magic onto a more conceptual plane without the surrender of his basic animistic intuition of the way things are? It has occurred to me since reading Quinn that I inherited from Joseph Smith this view of the nature of things, which has stayed with me, informing my own artistic vision, and for which I am most grateful. The Prophet steadfastly taught spiritual values, even while succumbing, like most people, to material ones. Some aspects of the magic worldview have not suffered an early death, and may be called back by souls in need of them. The passing out of common use of certain implements of magic, such as seer stones and divining rods, would not necessarily mean that no one is seeing or divining the unseen any more; and as long as Moses 3:5 remains in the canon, anything from magic to middle Platonism might flare up in Mormonia.

A troubling aspect is the lingering of treasure-digging, which I think has not died despite the passing of seer stones, divining rods, magic circles, and ceremonial daggers. Quinn argues that the ethos of treasure-seeking was such as to confirm the acceptability of the practice after the organization of the Church in 1830, even though Joseph Smith himself played it down. With village seers and the specific treasures of western New York out of the picture, there still remains a large contingent who harbor the major assumption that God will aid us in becoming rich when we become sufficiently purified, with resultant boon to "the lap of the church," as alleged by Ezra Booth in 1834.³ In spite of all other changes, the pursuit of material treasure, deriving from a kind of folk Calvinism, seems little affected by the decline of magic.

One of the roles of the "folk" seems to be that of preserving and conserving elements of culture forgotten or passed over by the "mainstream"—the upper classes, the creative bourgeoisie in latter times, and such other elements of the populace as may desire to emulate their ways. This ability of the folk to preserve has often resulted in

important, even astounding, cultural transfusion by which the established order is quickened and renovated through the receptivity of some of its members. Examples are the romantic movement, the Celtic Revival, the revival of lyrical poetry in Spain earlier in this century, and the folk revival in English and American music these past decades. The same quickening may be witnessed in individual careers of unique cultural innovators. Francisco de Goya inaugurated the modern revolution in European painting partly by reviving popular shapes and subjects of the Middle Ages.

Joseph Smith's folk environment of magic may be viewed partially in this light. Joseph pulled himself up most admirably by his bootstraps and still never fully came abreast of high culture. Any serious religious revival, let alone a movement claiming to restore an entire ancient religious tradition lock, stock, and barrel, must embody folk elements. New religion often has come about through the agency of marginal individuals with extravagant pretensions and, from the standpoint of prevailing prejudices, a smattering of learning.

More cultural factors than could be effectively laid aside and done away with by the successive European cultures lurked among the American (and European) people. Inevitably, some would emerge, not among the learned who were busy with other things, but from their true repository, the folk. Much of what Quinn calls occult others have sometimes described as "pagan." Western religion and art consists typically of a blend of Christian and pagan matter, as in the cases of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Coleridge. Pagan is first of all another way of saying "rustic," or of the countryside. A dire sectarian prejudice, shared by many of us, insists that there be one true orientation to life, roped off and surely classified; yet Mormonism is pagan, as well as Christian, and all the better for that. It remains to be seen whether pagan elements were restored in vain.

For the Smiths, the Whitmers, and the Knights, who were faced with the creation and maintenance of "the only true church" out of a lot of Yankee seekers and English non-Conformists, God had to be "juggled" (conjured) out of his hiding place. The churches of Joseph Smith's day did not provide a framework in which his important mission of restoration could occur, any more than his own church does today. At present many Mormons, in gaining enlightenment from the standpoint of a more secular worldview, come to feel duped. Yet Michael Quinn's new study helps us realize why our ancestors were not, or did not feel "taken" by Joseph Smith in the sphere of the sacred. Joseph Smith was one of the folk, offering access to the divine. We have found him, the greatest of men in our recent spiritual heritage, all too human. Yet for countless thousands, he has put the living God back into religion.

There is a sense in which religion in the West is folk, in which "folk religion" is a tautology. A disproportionately high percentage of theophanies happen to weird poets, shepherd boys, coopers' and carpenters' sons, housewives, shoemakers, and tailors' apprentices. It seems that this holds equally before, during, and after the institutionalization that eventually subordinates the supernatural to theology and ecclesiolatry. A startling feature of Mormonism in view of its folk origins is that of its having been institutionalized almost from its inception. (This was Yankee ingenuity.) Unique to Mormonism, it would seem, is an intricate authoritarian organization with an inchoate theology full of folk elements yielding an exaggerated literalism (partly, I propose, because of the speed with which it was canonized). As Mormons depart, economically and intellectually, from the folk, the risk of loss of belief naturally increases.

An aspect of the magic worldview may offer a solution to this difficulty, especially if Mormonism does not insist on maintaining a perpetual low-church profile involving all faithful adherents. I mean Hermetic science and related neo-Platonic doctrines which through their peculiar ways of knitting metaphor to materiality could help to mitigate the hard, extreme materialism of modern Latter-day Saints. Much of the scriptural material Quinn deals with in chapter 6 would obviously be happier in a context far less folkloric than the focus of the present study, and less orthodox than that particular framework offered by Sterling McMurrin. Quinn's work is interpretable as a sign that attempting to view Mormonism in some other world-historical context may soon be the order of the day. I hope that someone will perform this service on behalf of Mormonism's more esoteric doctrines, which are in even greater need than others of being accommodated within an appropriate historical framework and developed in accord with their potential.

Some may be unaware that Hermetic theology, while much neglected, is an important strain of Western culture. Indispensable to the rise of modern science, with major repercussions in philosophy, it appears to have bequeathed to us a number of important ideas much cherished by Mormons: for example, the preterrestrial divinity of man, the indestructibility of matter, and the denial of the immateriality of spirit (ascribed by Quinn also to neo-Platonism), all of which appear coincidentally in the restorationist system of the sixteenth-century arch-heretic Servetus, who got them from Hermetic texts. Teachings of the "old alchemists" were noted among Mormon doctrines by Sir Richard Burton, and it may be more than coincidence that the Paracelsus Institute, a school of alchemists, flourishes in Salt Lake City. Hermetic theology was once regarded by the learned as a branch of revealed religion. Hermetic writings ranked with the Torah and the New Testament, and their pseudonymous author, Hermes Trismegistus, was

considered to be an actual historical personage on a par with Moses. This view was discredited by classical philologists during the Renaissance, and the power of scholarship to undermine the foundations of religious revelation was underscored.

Among the most interesting new ideas on the role of Joseph Smith as a Prophet-magus is that offered by Klaus Hansen. Deriving partly from a controversial application of brain hemisphere theory by Julian Jaynes in *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Hansen's theory suggests that Joseph's preternatural spiritual gifts, and the capacity of his disciples to appreciate and participate in them, are made more readily explicable by the Prophet's alleged possession of a very old-fashioned psyche, a mind so archaic in organization as to involve functions we might think of as prerational. According to this view, characteristically modern mentality, because of evolving habits of communication between brain hemispheres, is no longer adapted for direct experience of the supernatural, which it nevertheless craves. This is interpretable as a view of the folk as an atavism of society in remote times, in the midst of which the Prophet is distinguished because he possess the paradoxically retrograde mental organization to a far greater and more felicitous degree than his fellows.

I mention this partly because of the need to further develop the occult aspects of Mormon teaching. As we depart from our rural origins, would the right hemisphere not still want an unmodern role in our lives? If not, do we not at least retain, for other reasons, an inordinate interest in the divine? What will satisfy the metaphysical hunger of a generation of Mormons alerted to modern professions and academic disciplines? Certainly not a watered-down, Protestantized theology.

This disparity between one tendency of mental organization and another helps prepare us for difficulties posed by *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, whose author seems driven both by strong religious convictions and belief in the inevitable vindication of objectivity in religious history. E. D. Howe, once the arch foe of Zion, was the first to note Joseph Smith's conjuring arts, of which Latter-day Saints are hearing only now. Now are we being told by insiders that the Whitmers were extremely radical, religious nonconformists, but this only confirms Howe's allegation that "they were noted in their neighborhood for credulity and a general belief in witches."⁴ Many of us Mormonites today, whether pious believers or critically objective students of history, are closer in mental outlook to the position of Howe than to that of the Prophet Joseph and his early followers. Would we rant and rave, walk penniless to Missouri, witch a trove with a hazel rod, or join a communistic society? Do we really want to know what was in and around that stone-box/hole on 22 September 1823?

A “scam” brought the salamander to our attention, but it may have been lurking in our history all along. Too much could be made of this, but evidently a decision is wanted whether to try to keep the little soft-skinned reptile. Where did he come from? Is he good? Have we the right to make him part of our history? Are there advantages to keeping him? My answers are: He came from the collective unconscious, which craves renewed enthusiasm in an aging charismatic sect threatened with blandness. Hence a fire-sprite for inspiration. Yes, he is good, especially since the salamander is replete with symbolic potential for poetry, theology, and the visual arts. What has the seagull or the ox to offer next to the salamander? There is no comparison. Use a seagull once or twice, and its imagistic potential is exhausted. But the salamander is, among other things, a god, an elemental, and sire to a race of giants. Yes, we have every right to incorporate it into our history.

Apparently a little animal did appear. The toad and frog possibilities are less than satisfactory. Possibly, the choice has been made for us already. If we must add an important, spotted amphibian to our history, let it be the elegant black fire-sprite, the pedigreed batrachian with historical connections not only to magic but also to theology and poetry. Let it be a literary incarnation of “the spirit of God like a fire.” For Augustine, it is incorruptible by fire, proof of the power of God; for Quevedo an image of emotional stamina: “The cold salamander, to which learned lore gives the lie, I dare to defend, inasmuch as my heart dwells in fires, which I drink thirstily, without feeling them.”⁶ “Salamandra” is the title poem of an important anthology by the Mexican poet Octavio Paz. What else do we have in the way of poetic images with which to launch a fight against literalism? It is as though the little creature were sent mysteriously from on high to restore and expand spirituality among a people long stricken by this troublesome infirmity, and thus deprived of poetic revelation.

For many, religion is real and it works, as I said of Alva Beaman’s magic. Quinn’s book heightens our awareness of the supernatural, reminding us that God is still alive and kicking for many modern people. Some people, myself included, gain access to the divine only through the symbolic, through acts of the imagination; and the salamander is, as precisely as possible, a visible voice from the other world. Surely Mormons, to remain faithful to their roots, must seize every chance to restore much lore cut away from Western culture long ago. The salamander, we have observed, has a life of his own, and may not soon fade away, no matter what position anyone takes concerning him. May he therefore delve into our brains and fill our awareness with divine fire. May he be carved in stone over our doorways. May he sire a race of spiritual giants to keep us from slipping irretrievably into the death-maw of Protestantism.

Go, then, little sprite, and do thy work. Go and wake up the Saints. Help them to accept their amazing history in all its rugged harshness and primitive divinity. Help me to remember that there still is much for me in my people's culture. Be fruitful and multiply, and spread thine influence. Restore to our art and our theology the ineffable mystery of the divine. Go and undermine all edifices erected without spirituality. Crawl up the skirts of puritan ladies and give them a fright. Go and help religion not to be the opiate of the people.

NOTES

¹E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painsville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 16.

²Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 60.

³Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 187.

⁴*Ibid.*, 16.

⁵Author's translation of Francisco de Quevedo, "Examples of Other Flames Which Seem Possible Compared with His," in bk. 4 of *Spanish Parnassus* (N.p., n.d.).

The Face of the Deep before Dawn

For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9)

Still, I have seen the sea oats swaying on the shore
and all the gulls and pipers in ballet,
while the surf's chant sets my thoughts adrift
on paper boats that dance
among the nets of kelp, to explore
the tide pools' scuttling secrets. But the bay,
that jealous heiress, conceals her gift
beneath the hourglass sands that shift
and undermine my balance.

Here, where cats watch owl-eyed and keep
colonies in caves cut deep by tickling tide,
I pause. The jasmine lie like fallen stars.
Whitecaps mock the sails of foundered ships;
in ebb's hiss I hear Prufrock's mermaids hushing me to sleep.
There, where Catalina shimmers, a brooch pinned to the wide
lapel of Earth, I search. Does it lie beached on sandbars,
pirate-plundered in forgotten wars,
or full-fathom-five sealed on coral lips?

At last I toss my questions to the sea.
If you could tell me what I long to know—
If you could whisper truths unfathomed; and I
in some lightning tongue
could read your testimony:
how you were formed and where your currents flow;
what makes your tempests blow; and why,
on the canvas of your twilight sky,
the colors of eternal life are flung.

—Karen Todd

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Bittersweet

I take the gift
with both hands,

the Chinese way
of being polite,

unwrap the foil
without tearing it,

after you've left,
and break

each dark square,
let it melt slow

down my fingers
and throat.

—Timothy Liu

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