A More Responsible Critique

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In 1997, InterVarsity Press, a Christian publishing house, published the truly groundbreaking *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*[1] by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson. This was a stunning achievement in religious publishing: a respectful, honest, probing dialogue on matters of ultimate religious significance between a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an evangelical Christian, both committed and knowledgeable. This remarkable conversation spawned others, some in the same spirit, others unfortunately not. A *BYU Studies* roundtable[2]

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1. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

2. Matthew R. Connelly, Craig L. Blomberg, Stephen E. Robinson, and BYU Studies Staff, "Sizing Up the Divide: Reviews and Replies," *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 163–90. The

Review of Thomas J. Finley. "Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?" and David J. Shepherd. "Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon." In *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement,* ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, 337–95. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002. 535 pp., with glossary and indexes. $21.99.

surveyed reactions to the book and provided postmortem commentary (including contributions by both Blomberg and Robinson themselves), and an entire issue of the *FARMS Review of Books*[3] was given over to a lengthy consideration of the book and its arguments, including an article of over one hundred pages written by Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser. Mosser and Owen had previously come to the attention of Latter-day Saint scholars with their insightful and penetrating essay, "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?"[4] This article was a clarion call to the need (as they perceived it) for a greatly improved evangelical response to Latter-day Saint scholarship. *The New Mormon Challenge,* two chapters from which are the subject of this review, is among the resulting firstfruits of that call. Mosser and Owen are joined by Francis J. Beckwith[5] as general editors of this volume.

In keeping with the particular historical focus of the *FARMS Review of Books* on material relating to the Book of Mormon, I will limit this review to the two chapters that directly address that volume of scripture. Before I address those particular chapters specifi-

notes to this roundtable identify numerous other reviews, mostly from evangelical sources. See also a review by Eugene England, "The Good News—and the Bad," *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 191–201.

3. *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999). The contributions to this volume included reviews by Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser, 1–102; Blake T. Ostler, 103–77; and William J. Hamblin and Daniel C. Peterson, 178–209, as well as the following substantive articles: Daniel W. Graham and James L. Siebach, "Philosophy and Early Christianity," 210–20; David L. Paulsen and R. Dennis Potter, "How Deep the Chasm? A Reply to Owen and Mosser's Review," 221–64; and Roger D. Cook, "How Deep the Platonism? A Review of Owen and Mosser's Appendix: Hellenism, Greek Philosophy, and the Creedal 'Straightjacket' of Christian Orthodoxy," 265–99, with an afterword by the editor, Daniel C. Peterson, 300–328.

4. Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser, "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?" *Trinity Journal,* n.s., 19/2 (1998): 179–205.

5. Francis J. Beckwith has coauthored with Stephen E. Parrish two previous books dealing with Mormonism: *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1991), reviewed by Blake T. Ostler in *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 99–146, and *See the Gods Fall: Four Rivals to Christianity* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1997), reviewed by James McLachlan, "Knocking Over Straw Gods," *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): 119–57.

cally, however, I would like to offer a couple of general comments on the book as a whole. In particular, I wish to congratulate the book's editors, authors, and publisher. The overall tone of the book was, I thought, very good. It was not perfect, and the editors have work to do if they intend to produce follow-up volumes, but given the vast transformation from traditional anti-Mormon treatments and the undoubted stiff resistance in certain circles to any such change, this was an excellent first effort.

Is Mormonism Christian?

The only thing I found really annoying about the book was the continued insistence that Latter-day Saints are in *no sense* Christian. This is most disappointing since the idea that the Saints are generically Christian should not be that difficult a concept to grasp. Although the wording varies a little from dictionary to dictionary, a Christian is one who is a follower of Jesus Christ, "one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ."[6] This meaning is suggested by the Greek form from which the English derives: Χριστιανός *Christianos,* the *-ianos* ending conveying the sense of "partisan" of Christ (analogous forms being Ἡρῳδιανός *Hērōdianos* "Herodian" and Καισαριανός *Kaisarianos* "Caesarian"). This is the *public* meaning of the word—the way it is used in public discourse and the way it is defined in dictionaries. Elsewhere Blomberg disparages this meaning of the word, calling it "some very broad and relatively meaningless sense by which every Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox church member, however nominal or sectarian, would also be included."[7] Exactly! Blomberg or any other evangelical is more than welcome to devise a *private* definition of the word that will exclude Latter-day Saints, but when they do this they must immediately articulate

6. This particular formulation derives from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1987 ed.), s.v. "Christian," which just happens to be the dictionary on my office shelf.

7. Blomberg, "Sizing Up the Divide: Reviews and Replies: III. Reply by Craig L. Blomberg," *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 176–83 at 180.

what that private definition is[8] and acknowledge that they are not using the word in its commonly understood sense. When they simply say Mormons are not Christian (using an unarticulated private definition), their hearers and readers understand them to say that Mormons do not believe in Jesus Christ (using the public definition, since words are understood to be used in their commonly defined senses unless another sense is indicated). Such evangelicals therefore regularly misrepresent and even defame LDS belief. This is truly offensive to Latter-day Saints such as myself, and I am puzzled as to why they cannot see that.[9]

Blomberg attempts to exclude Mormons from even the "relatively meaningless" public definition of Christian in his chapter entitled "Is Mormonism Christian?" He correctly states that the Bible only uses the term three times and nowhere offers a formal definition (p. 317). He then strives to exclude Mormons from the normative definition by limiting who can be called a Christian, not by articulating a proper lexical definition of the term, but by quoting the *World Book Encyclopedia* article on "Christianity": "Christianity is the religion

8. I suspect the reason that evangelicals are generally unwilling to articulate with precision their private definitions of the word is that at least some of such definitions likely would have the effect, whether intended or not, of excluding Catholics and the Orthodox, which neutral observers would rightly see as patently absurd. Indeed, some evangelicals expressly deny that Catholics are Christian. See Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 183–84.

9. Carl Mosser, in his chapter "And the Saints Go Marching On: The New Mormon Challenge for World Missions, Apologetics and Theology," in *The New Mormon Challenge,* 413 n. 26, and 66, acknowledges that Latter-day Saints are offended when described as non-Christians, and he claims to "understand why Latter-day Saints feel offense." Nevertheless, he does "not believe that at this time Mormonism can be categorized as Christian in any very useful or theologically significant sense." This sentence illustrates my very point. Mosser appears to have in mind some sort of unarticulated doctrinal test. To use the word Christian in this fashion without clearly putting the reader on notice that a nonstandard usage of the word is meant (i.e., one subject to undisclosed evangelical theological limitation) is to perpetrate a linguistic "bait and switch." Mosser may not find the public definition of the word "useful" or "theologically significant," but it is by that definition that speakers and writers of English the world over communicate, which is very useful indeed.

based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. *Most* followers of Christianity, called Christians, are members of one of three major groups—Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Eastern Orthodox" (emphasis added). Blomberg then concludes, "Based on this definition, Mormonism is clearly not Christian, nor has it ever claimed to be so" (p. 317). While it is true that the Latter-day Saints do not claim to be Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, it is manifestly *not* the case that they do not claim to be Christian. In the broad and commonly understood sense of the word, the Saints have always considered themselves to be Christians. I am mystified how a scholar of Blomberg's evident intelligence, talent, and sensitivity could so misread this encyclopedia text (which certainly does not make the exclusionist claim Blomberg ascribes to it), or for that matter why he would appeal to an encyclopedia rather than proper lexical materials to deal with this question in the first place. This methodology is more in line with sectarian propaganda than sound scholarship.[10]

I recently shared the following example with Blomberg in an e-mail correspondence following the appearance of *The New Mormon Challenge;* I think it illustrates well why simply calling Latter-day Saints non-Christian is inherently misleading. A family with several young daughters used to live in my ward. This family was friendly with a neighbor woman, who would often babysit the girls. As Christmas was approaching, the woman gave each of the girls a Christmas gift, which turned out to be a coloring book featuring

10. Contrast with this what I believe to be a proper approach to the issue, as reflected in a 1998 document of the United Methodist Church, entitled *Sacramental Faithfulness: Guidelines for Receiving People from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day* [sic] *Saints*, available online at www.gbod.org/worship/articles/sacramental/intro.html as recently as 17 March 2003. Rather than claiming that Latter-day Saints are not Christian, this document explains that they are not within the historic, apostolic Christian tradition, which is a both true and unobjectionable statement (the word *apostolic* being used here in its tertiary sense of referring to a tradition of succession of spiritual authority held, as by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglicans, to be perpetuated by successive ordinations from the apostolic age). See Benjamin I. Huff, "Of Course Mormonism Is Christian," and Kent P. Jackson, "Am I a Christian?" reviews of Craig L. Blomberg, "Is Mormonism Christian?" in *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 113–30, 131–37.

Jesus Christ. The girls enjoyed the gift and colored the pictures. Some time later this woman came to the family's home, ashen, and apologized profusely for having given their daughters such a gift. It turns out that the woman had just learned at her church that Mormons are not Christian, and therefore she of course assumed that she had committed a grievous *faux pas* in giving the girls coloring books featuring a deity their family did not believe in. Now in this story the woman understood the claim that Latter-day Saints are not Christian the same way the vast majority of people would, as meaning that they do not believe in Christ. This is because she naturally applied the public definition to her pastor's words.

We can see by this story the mischief that results from the semantic legerdemain of calling Latter-day Saints non-Christian. The fact is, they are Christians in the generic sense of the word, even if, from an evangelical point of view, they are theologically in error and unsaved (i.e., being a Christian is not necessarily tantamount to being right). I personally would have no difficulty with certain shorthand distinctions that would make clear that Mormons neither are nor claim to be historic, traditional, creedal, or orthodox Christians. But to say they are not Christians at all without such a modifier is to fundamentally misrepresent the nature of their beliefs. Since one of the goals of *The New Mormon Challenge* was to avoid such misrepresentations, I was sorely disappointed that it took the position that Latter-day Saints are not Christian in any sense at all. I view this as an intellectually indefensible position, and in my view it severely undermines the credibility of the book.

Finley on the Ancient Near East

So much for my pique over being told I am not a Christian. Let us turn now to Thomas Finley's chapter, entitled "Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?" This chapter is divided into five parts: an introduction, which articulates a number of limitations on the drawing of parallels, followed by sections deal-

ing with writing on metal plates, Hebraisms, names in the Book of Mormon, and the geography of 1 Nephi.

Finley suggests five limitations on the drawing of parallels to establish an ancient Near Eastern background for the Book of Mormon: (1) a parallel should be specific enough that it cannot be explained by general human experience, (2) a parallel should be something beyond what Joseph Smith could have derived from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, including the Apocrypha, (3) parallels must be thoroughly examined to see how they function in both contexts, (4) parallels should not be explicable as merely accidental, and (5) anachronisms are more important than parallels. In general I had no difficulty with these statements, although I will address (2) and (5) further below. An extensive literature in Latter-day Saint scholarship deals with the use and abuse of parallels.[11] Methodological controls such as these cut both ways and limit not only the drawing of ancient but also nineteenth-century parallels to the text, so it is in everyone's interest to be both fair and rigorous in setting forth such methodological limitations on the use of parallels.[12]

I do have two general comments on Finley's introduction. First, he is setting up parameters for what it would take to *prove* that the Book of Mormon is an ancient text. But Latter-day Saint scholars readily acknowledge that we cannot prove the Book of Mormon to be true. I doubt that it will ever be possible to prove that the Book of Mormon is of ancient origin.[13] I suspect that God fully intended for this to be a matter in which we must walk by faith. Proof and evidence are not equivalent, however, and while we may be unable to prove the antiquity of the Book of Mormon to a skeptic, substantial evidence is consistent with the antiquity of that book. The issue then

11. For a recent example, see William J. Hamblin, "Joseph or Jung? A Response to Douglas Salmon," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/2 (2001): 87–107, and the further material cited at 92 n. 13.

12. This is rather like the fairness inherent in having one child cut and the other choose.

13. For that matter, I also doubt that it would be possible to prove the Bible to be true or that God exists.

becomes how to evaluate the significance of such evidence. I address this matter further in the context of Book of Mormon Hebraisms.

Second, Finley asserts that anachronisms are necessarily more significant than parallels. Here we see a subtle indication of his a priori assumptions. If he were genuinely open to the possibility that the Book of Mormon is a translation from an ancient source rather than a nineteenth-century composition, he would have considered the possibility of translator anachronisms; as it is, he is so convinced the book is a modern composition that this option never enters his mind. Now I fully anticipated that Finley would approach the text with such an a priori assumption. I just wish to make it clear to the reader that there should be no pretense here of some sort of scholarly objectivity. Finley has a predetermined point of view, and he intends to argue his case for that conclusion, like a lawyer writing a brief. I freely acknowledge that I, too, approach the text with certain a priori assumptions, so neither of us is being purely objective in this discussion.

Writing on Metal

Finley's section on writing on metal plates is, together with his introduction, to some extent developed from a paper he originally delivered to the Society for the Study of Alternative Religions in 1998.[14] In my view, the treatment of this theme in *The New Mormon Challenge* is a significant improvement over the original paper. For one thing, I think it is preferable to broach the issue directly rather than in the context of commentary on a single, somewhat dated Nibley article. Also, I previously made note of a number of weaknesses in the original paper,[15] and I see that these items have now all been diligently addressed. This is encouraging and reflects the way a

14. Thomas J. Finley, "A Review of Hugh Nibley's Comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the Lachish Letters," available online at www.irr.org/mit/nibley.html as recently as 17 March 2003.

15. Kevin L. Barney, "A Seemingly Strange Story Illuminated," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/1 (2001): 5–10.

legitimate scholar responds to criticism, by improving and honing his work. I commend Finley for his improvements.

In the original paper, Finley argued that writing on metal in antiquity was practically unknown. He now acknowledges that such practices did exist, which is progress. He continues, however, to maintain that the extant examples are not lengthy scriptural texts comparable to the Book of Mormon. So while he now grants a parallel for the writing material, "the dissimilarities in usage with the Book of Mormon outweigh the similarity of material" (p. 342).

I would like to respond in three areas: (1) what claims are made in the Book of Mormon account itself, (2) internal evidence for writing materials in the Old Testament, and (3) external (or archaeological) evidence for writing materials in Old Testament times. Finley observes that many Book of Mormon records are written on metal plates, and he sees this as a kind of theme running through the book. I would concur. I do not, however, interpret this to mean that metal plates were the dominant or even a common medium for writing in Lehi's Jerusalem. The large plates of Nephi, the small plates of Nephi, and (whether directly or indirectly) the plates of Mormon were all fashioned after the pattern of the brass plates. Therefore, it is only the brass plates that must be viewed as being plausible in preexilic Judea. If the brass plates were not *sui generis,* or at least relatively uncommon, then the narrative of 1 Nephi would make little sense: why would Nephi and his brothers repeatedly risk their lives to take the brass plates from Laban if comparable collections of scripture on metal plates were available elsewhere?

When Finley says that papyrus and leather were the most common media for the scriptures in preexilic Israel, he is guessing; in the absence of actual evidence from that period, we cannot know for sure. His proposal is, however, an educated and reasonable guess. Given that such materials would have been both easier to work with and more economical, it probably was the case that the scriptures were more often copied on papyrus or leather. As we have shown, however, that position is not inconsistent with claims made by the Book of Mormon.

I also recognize the possibility of an element of divine providence at work here, which Finley no doubt would deny, given his assumptions. Had Nephi training as a conventional scribe and were he expert in the preparation of papyrus for writing, what good would that knowledge have done him in the New World in the absence of actual papyrus plants? A good argument has been made that Lehi and his family were metalworkers;[16] this was a technology that would have been transferable to the New World. In addition, this record was intended to last a very long time—therefore a preference for metal, which of course lasts longer than papyrus, makes sense. For these reasons, Nephi's decision to fashion his own record on metal plates after the pattern of the brass plates appears deliberate.

Finley mentions some of the writing materials other than papyrus and leather referred to in the Old Testament text, such as stone (as with the Ten Commandments) and wood. He only mentions one allusion to writing on metal: "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36 KJV). Of course, from a later period, 1 Maccabees 8:22 reads: "And this is a copy of the letter which they wrote in reply, on bronze tablets, and sent to Jerusalem to remain with them there as a memorial of peace and alliance." This translation comes from the Revised Standard Version (RSV); the annotation observes that "important documents were often inscribed *on bronze tablets*."[17] But other possible allusions to writing on metal appear in the Old Testament proper.

Isaiah 8:1 KJV reads: "Moreover the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll [גִּלָּיוֹן *gillayon*], and write in it with a man's pen [בְּחֶרֶט אֱנוֹשׁ *becheret ʾenosh*] concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz." But the KJV has mistranslated the key terms. A *cheret* is not a "pen" in the sense of an instrument that would use ink but rather a stylus that engraves in a hard surface; Aaron fashioned the golden calf with a *cheret* (Exodus

16. See John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999), 94–97.

17. Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 241, emphasis in original.

32:4). Similarly, a *gillayon* is not a "roll" in the sense of a papyrus or leather scroll but rather a tablet of some kind, whether of metal, stone, or wood. The word occurs only one other time in the Old Testament, at Isaiah 3:23, where it means "tablets of polished metal" (i.e., "mirrors").[18] Therefore, the Lord most likely commanded Isaiah to write on a large, polished, metal tablet. Although this does not represent a lengthy text, it is yet another allusion to writing on metal in the Old Testament.

Job 19:23–24 KJV reads as follows:

> Oh that my words were now written!
> oh that they were printed [וְיֻחָקוּ *weyuchaqu*] in a book [בַּסֵּפֶר *bassepher*]!
> That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

A contemporary reader might understand Job to be talking about printing a book the way a modern press would, but, of course, at the time of writing the printing press had not yet been invented. The verb חָקַק *chaqaq* does not mean "to print" but "to cut in, to inscribe, to engrave." This is not a verb one would expect to see used for writing with brush and ink on papyrus. Therefore, a number of scholars have plausibly proposed[19] that the word *book* here (סֵפֶר *sepher*) does not refer to a scroll but to a bronze or copper tablet (based on Akkadian *siparru* "bronze").[20] Accordingly, Edouard Dhorme renders:

18. The KJV renders it "glasses" in the archaic sense, meaning "mirrors."

19. Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), 281–82, and bibliography cited therein; Samuel Terrien, *Job* (Neuchatel, Switz.: Delachaux and Niestle, 1963), 149; Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 129; *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 3:1050; R. J. Williams, "Writing," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:916; and the annotation to this verse in the New English Translation (the NET Bible), available online at www.bible.org/netbible as recently as 17 March 2003.

20. Ignace J. Gelb et al., eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1984), 15:296–99. My argument would not be that *sepher* derives from *siparru,* but that the Akkadian word influenced the word choice of *sepher* here.

Oh that my words might be written down!
Oh that they might be engraved on brass,
That with a tool of iron and lead
They should remain engraved in the rock for ever![21]

An alternative interpretation, based on a Phoenician parallel, would be to understand *sepher* here as meaning "inscription,"[22] in which case the writing would be the same as that in "the rock" of the next line. I personally think the parallelism works much better by understanding the book as referring to a bronze tablet, for that would then parallel the rock of the next line rather than refer to it,[23] and both the metal tablet and the rock would convey the sense of a writing meant to last a long time, which the context of the passage requires (KJV "for ever!"). Job is literarily referring to a hypothetical text rather than an actual one, but the hypothetical allusion would not be intelligible unless such texts (writings on bronze tablets) existed in the real world.

The significance of the word *lead* in the final line of the passage is uncertain. A lead instrument would be useless on rock, and so the New International Version (NIV) reads, "that they [i.e., 'my words'] were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!" taking this as a reference to lead plates inscribed by the iron stylus.[24] Writing on lead plates in antiquity is certainly attested.[25] While this translation would further support my argument as an ad-

21. Dhorme, *Job,* 281–82.

22. Henry S. Gehmann, "*Sepher,* An Inscription, in the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944): 303–7. Although some modern translations continue to understand *sepher* here as a "scroll," apparently taking the verb *chaqaq* in a greatly weakened sense, Gehmann shows why the verb should be understood as referring to inscribing into a hard surface of some kind. Gehmann was unaware of the theory that the *sepher* was a bronze tablet.

23. That is, *bronze//rock* (on which inscriptions are carved) works better as a parallel word pair than would *inscription//rock,* as in the former case both terms are the same class of nouns (i.e., materials on which inscriptions are written).

24. Apparently emending ועפרת *wʿprt* "and lead" of the Masoretic Text to בעפרת *bʿprt* "on lead." Pope, *Job,* 129, concurs: "With an iron stylus on lead/Carved in rock for all time."

25. Compare the *molubdinoi chartai* of the Greeks and the *tabulae plumbeae* of the Romans, mentioned in Dhorme, *Job*, 282.

ditional allusion to writing on metal, I am inclined to reject the NIV here, again largely for reasons of parallelism. Rather than referring to one writing material only (the rock), as posited by Gehmann, or three writing materials, as suggested by the NIV or the Anchor Bible,[26] I would view the parallelism of the passage as referring to two writing materials, *bronze//rock,* each of which is indicative of a writing that is to last a long time.[27]

Isaiah 30:8 KJV reads as follows:

> Now go, write it [כָּתְבָהּ *kathebah*] before them in a table [לוּחַ *luach*],
> and note it [חֻקָּהּ *chuqqah*] in a book [סֵפֶר *sepher*],
> that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.

Finley correctly observes that the *luach* is probably a wooden writing board. The same verb and noun combination as in the second line appears in Job 19:23 in a similar context of a writing intended to last a long time (KJV "for ever and ever"). Therefore the allusion in Isaiah 30:8 may also be to a writing on a bronze tablet,[28] with the first writing (on wood) containing the headings or a summary, and with the second writing (on metal) containing the full message in permanent form.[29] Alternatively, the parallelism of the passage may refer to one writing only, with the reference to both wooden and metal writing tablets simply being formulaic.

When we turn from biblical allusions to the archaeological record, it seems to me that it takes a little chutzpah to deny the plausibility of

26. The NIV posits *scroll//lead//rock* and the Anchor Bible *copper//lead//rock.*

27. I therefore would retain the reading of the Masoretic Text rather than emend the text. The way that lead was used in the process of engraving an inscription into rock is uncertain; among the possibilities are to understand (a) the stylus point as involving an alloy of iron and lead (just as iron and lead stand side by side as elements in an alloy described in Ezekiel 22:20); (b) the lead as being used to outline the lettering for the engravers; or (c) the lead as being used to fill in the grooves once they were cut into the stone.

28. Dhorme, *Job,* 282; Williams, "Writing," 4:916. Note also that the preposition used here is עַל *ʿal;* the writing therefore is not *in,* but literally *on* the *luach* and *on* the *sepher.*

29. For the understanding of two records, one a summary and the other a lengthier and more permanent one, see I. W. Slotki, *Isaiah* (London: Soncino, 1980), 141.

the brass plates when the entire universe of extant preexilic scripture is written on metal (by which I mean the two silver plates dating from seventh century B.C. Jerusalem containing a portion of the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24–26).[30] This raises an interesting question: where is all the scripture that presumably existed before the exile? Palestine is not as ideal a location as the sands of Egypt for preserving papyrus and leather, and no doubt much of it simply disintegrated with the ravages of time. But Palestine does have an arid climate, and one can well imagine a biblical minimalist arguing that at least something of that nature should have survived if it really ever existed.[31]

I suspect that part of Finley's response to such a minimalist would be the same as part of my response to him, and that is to point out the serendipitous nature of archaeological discovery. If young Muhammad adh-Dhib ("the Wolf") had not slithered through a hole in the rock in the Judean desert more than fifty years ago, it might well be that we still would not know of the existence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. There may yet be samples of preexilic scripture in existence, whether on papyrus, leather, metal, or some other medium; we cannot conclude from the bare fact that we have not yet found them that they do not now exist, much less that they never existed.

Consider another question: were scriptures ever written on clay tablets? We have hundreds of thousands of such tablets dating from great antiquity, but none of them contain any scripture. The only possible biblical allusion I am aware of to writing on such a tablet is Ezekiel 4:1, in which Ezekiel is directed to draw a plan of Jerusalem on a clay brick. Since less biblical support for writing on clay exists than for writing on metal, presumably Finley would similarly deny that scrip-

30. Finley discusses these plates (p. 340). See further William J. Adams Jr., "Lehi's Jerusalem and Writing on Metal Plates," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 204–6, and William J. Adams Jr., "More on the Silver Plates from Lehi's Jerusalem," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 136–37.

31. After all, our hypothetical minimalist might argue, we do have a seventh-century B.C. (nonscriptural) palimpsest from Wadi Murabbaʿat, as Finley mentions, as well as scriptural material from the third century B.C. among the Dead Sea Scrolls; if papyrus could survive there for 2,250 years, what is a few hundred more?

tures were ever written on clay tablets. I wonder, then, what he would make of the theory, put forth by D. J. Wiseman and elaborated by R. K. Harrison,[32] that the first thirty-six chapters of Genesis contain material originally written in cuneiform on a series of clay tablets. The linchpin to this theory is the repetition of the word תּוֹלְדוֹת *toledoth* "generations," which may have been used in the colophon to each successive tablet. Harrison wrote as a conservative Christian scholar, and this theory is probably one of the best possible alternatives to dealing with the data that gave rise to the Documentary Hypothesis of the origins of the Pentateuch. I assume Finley as an evangelical scholar has a commitment to biblical inerrancy, and the Documentary Hypothesis is fundamentally at odds with a strictly inerrantist approach to scripture. I therefore wonder whether Finley would find this theory to be plausible in the face of a lack of hard evidence. If it is plausible that a scriptural record was written on clay tablets—and I think that it is—it strikes me as at least equally plausible that a scriptural record was written on bronze tablets (i.e., the brass plates).

Hebraisms

Turning now to linguistic issues, Finley correctly observes that we do not have the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon derives, nor are we even certain what language or languages the record was written in. This definitely complicates any attempt to study the linguistic background of the book. The Anthon transcript long held by the Whitmer family and now in the possession of the Community of Christ (formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) has not been deciphered and, absent the discovery of some sort of Rosetta Stone, probably never will be deciphered, though not for lack of trying. Any attempt to decipher the transcript

32. Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 543–53. See also Robert Graves, *Adam's Rib and Other Anomalous Elements in the Hebrew Creation Myth: A New View* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), who suggests that the early part of Genesis was originally depicted on tablets that were read in the wrong order.

is complicated by at least three factors. First, many scholars have long believed that the Whitmer transcript is actually a poorly drawn copy of the original transcript (notwithstanding the belief of the Whitmer family that it possessed the original), as it does not match the description of the transcript given by Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia University.[33] Second, the characters on the transcript most likely came from Mormon's abridgment of the book of Lehi at the beginning of the plates of Mormon; this means that the script on the plates would have undergone about a millennium of linguistic development from the time of Lehi, including probable influence from New World languages. Third, the English translation of this portion of the record was lost with the 116 manuscript pages Joseph loaned to Martin Harris; therefore, the prospect of finding an English "translation pony" to reverse engineer the transcript is very slim.[34] For these reasons, we can only study the original language of the plates by various indirect means. Finley addresses two of these indirect approaches: the study of Book of Mormon Hebraisms and the study of Book of Mormon names.

A Hebraism is an expression, grammatical form, or syntactical structure that is characteristic of Hebrew but not characteristic of the language into which it is translated. To illustrate, consider the Hebrew word לִפְנֵי *liphne.* This word is formed by a combination of

33. Mark Hofmann knew of these scholarly expectations and used them in creating his fraudulent version of the transcript, including putting the writing into columns and providing a large circular structure at the bottom of the page. The fact that the Hofmann transcript was a fraud does not obviate the prior scholarly concern over the originality of the Whitmer transcript. Anthon's letters to E. D. Howe dated 17 February 1834 and to T. W. Coit dated 3 April 1841 are reproduced in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:102–7.

34. Barry Fell attempted to reverse engineer the Hofmann transcript using the opening verses of 1 Nephi 1 as a translation pony. This misguided effort was based on an ignorance of the history of the translation. So it was with some surprise that I saw Stan and Polly Johnson, *Translating the Anthon Transcript* (Parowan, Utah: Ivory Books, 1999), attempt to use Ether 6:3–13 as a translation pony in deciphering the transcript. The Johnsons apparently failed to learn from Fell's fundamental error. For a review of the Johnson effort, see John Gee, "Some Notes on the Anthon Transcript," *FARMS Review of Books* 12/1 (2000): 5–8.

the preposition לְ *le* "to, for" and the noun פָּנֶה *paneh* "countenance, face." This particular noun only appears in its plural form in Hebrew, פָּנִים *panim,* and the construct (or genitival) form of the plural is פְּנֵי *pene* "face of." Most literally, *liphne* means "to the face of," which would be abominable English. If an expression such as *liphne Dawid* were rendered into idiomatic English as "before David" or "in the presence of David," we might have no clue that this was a translation from Hebrew. If, on the other hand, that expression were rendered more literally as "before the face of David," the pleonastic use of *face* (which is unnecessary in English) would point to a translation from Hebrew or possibly to some other sort of Hebrew influence.

To a certain extent Finley's treatment of Hebraisms follows that of Ed Ashment[35] although apparently Finley only learned of Ashment's work relatively late in the process of writing his chapter. Finley reacts specifically to the work of John Tvedtnes on Book of Mormon Hebraisms,[36] an understandable approach since Tvedtnes's work is the most recent and linguistically sophisticated survey of the subject in general. Anyone wishing to deal with this subject comprehensively, however, should be aware that an entire body of literature deals with Book of Mormon Hebraisms, beginning early in the twentieth century and continuing to the present.[37]

35. Edward H. Ashment, "'A Record in the Language of My Father': Evidence of Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in the Book of Mormon," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon,* ed. Brent L. Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 329–93.

36. Finley cites John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon,* ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 79–91.

37. The relevant literature includes Thomas W. Brookbank, "Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* (1909–10): 117–21, 234–39, 336–42, 418–20, 538–43; (1914): 189–92; Sidney B. Sperry, "The Book of Mormon as Translation English," *Improvement Era* (March 1935): 140–41, 187–88; Sidney B. Sperry, "Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* (October 1954): 703, 728–29; E. Craig Bramwell, "Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960); E. Craig Bramwell, "Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi," *Improvement Era* (July 1961): 496–97, 517; John A. Tvedtnes, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey," *BYU Studies* 11/1 (1970): 50–60; M. Deloy Pack, "Possible Lexical Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young

Latter-day Saint scholars have typically focused on establishing that parallels with Hebrew characteristics exist. A significant number of such parallels have been firmly established. I believe that knowledge concerning Hebraisms is useful in helping us to understand the text in any event, quite apart from whatever evidentiary value they may have. If, however, we wish to put this literature forward as evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, then at some point we need to ask in each case whether a given Hebraism is best explained as a relic of an overliteral translation directly from the plates or is derivative from the KJV or some other English source available to Joseph Smith in the nineteenth century (and, in the case of the KJV, thereby an indirect reflection of a Hebraism found in that English text). To illustrate this distinction by an analogy, a Semitism in a New Testament text might point to the Greek being a translation from an underlying Aramaic or Hebrew source, or it might point to the author of the Greek composition simply being a Jew for

University, 1973); Angela Crowell, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," *Zarahemla Record* 17–18 (summer and fall 1982): 1–7, 16; John A. Tvedtnes, "Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?" I Have a Question, *Ensign*, October 1986, 64–66; Brian D. Stubbs, "Book of Mormon Language," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179–81; John Gee, review of *Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 172–82 at 179–80; John A. Tvedtnes, review of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 8–50 at 30–40; John Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 50–120; Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 121–44; Royal Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 28–38; Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 28–29; Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999); cf. the discussion in Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 134–35. Numerous treatments also deal with specific examples. For instance, I treat rhetorical interchanges of *number* (a type of *enallage,* Greek for "interchange"), in Kevin L. Barney, "Enallage in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 113–47, and Kevin L. Barney, "Divine Discourse Directed at a Prophet's Posterity in the Plural: Further Light on Enallage," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 229–34, an

whom Greek was a second language. Trying to parse between these two possibilities can be very difficult and, given the religious significance of New Testament texts, controversial. Notwithstanding the easy assumptions of Ashment and Finley that all Book of Mormon Hebraisms are indirect only, having been absorbed from the English of the KJV, I suspect that trying to make these kinds of distinctions concerning Book of Mormon Hebraisms will be no less difficult or controversial than in the case of the Greek New Testament.

Paul Hoskisson appropriately draws a distinction between Book of Mormon textual evidences that are necessary and those that are sufficient.[38] If the Book of Mormon is an ancient text, then we should expect to find parallels with the ancient world. Where such parallels are established, therefore, they count as necessary evidence. To be truly sufficient as proof of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, however, plausible nineteenth-century sources need to be excluded as the possible origin of the characteristic under study.

Hoskisson's study provides us with a useful methodological starting point. In the specific context of Hebraisms, however, I do not want to use the word *necessary* because the existence of Hebraism evidence is in no sense necessary to the Book of Mormon being a translation from a Hebrew language original. Hebraisms by definition are relics of overliteral translation; it is quite possible for a translation into strong idiomatic English to betray no hint whatsoever of its Hebrew origins. Further, rather than working with only two categories of positive evidence of the Book of Mormon, I would like to propose a broader six-point scale for evaluating purported evidence from Hebraisms, with

edited version of which appeared as "Further Light on Enallage," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s,* ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 43–48. For a treatment of rhetorical interchange of *person* in the Book of Mormon, see David Bokovoy, "From Distance to Proximity: A Poetic Function of Enallage in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 60–63.

38. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Textual Evidences for the Book of Mormon," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation,* ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 283–95.

1 being the weakest positive evidence and 6 being the strongest. The following is a summary of my proposed weighting paradigm:

1. *Ancient Near East (ANE) + Joseph Smith's pre–Book of Mormon Writings.* This would be a case in which a parallel with the ancient Near East also appears in Joseph's writings prior to the dictation of the Book of Mormon text. In this case, whatever the English source, we would know definitively that the characteristic at issue was part of Joseph's English style. This category is largely theoretical in nature, since we have precious little in the way of writings from Joseph prior to the Book of Mormon.

2. *ANE + KJV (Specific).* This would be a case in which a parallel exists with the ancient Near East, but the precise wording also exists in the English of the KJV. The relationship of the KJV to the Book of Mormon text is a big and complicated issue concerning which more work needs to be done, but the presumption is that Joseph Smith had pre–Book of Mormon access to the KJV and that the KJV is therefore a possible English source for the Book of Mormon. Finley gives four examples that would fit under this category in a table on p. 344. Since the KJV wording does not precisely match the Book of Mormon wording in these examples, I would characterize them as high 2s (or as a 2+).

3. *ANE + KJV (General).* This would be a case in which a parallel with the ancient Near East exists, and that characteristic is also *generally* present in the KJV, but with different wording. The KJV is a literal translation, so it reflects Hebraisms in its English. To illustrate, while we have numerous examples of the construct state in the Book of Mormon (such as "sword of Laban" in lieu of "Laban's sword"), such examples also generally exist in the KJV (such as "children of Israel"). In each such case, the reader has a fundamental decision to make: is it more likely that the Book of Mormon usage reflects a literal translation from the plates, or did Joseph "absorb" this usage from the KJV and make it his own in his Book of Mormon dictation? If one approaches the text with the a priori assumption that it

is a nineteenth-century composition, as Finley does, then the latter alternative will always be selected. Conversely, I am sure some Book of Mormon believers would always select the former alternative by assumption. If one is truly open to either possibility in the case of any given Hebraism (such as the "sword of Laban"), however, then the question is not so simple. Some purported Hebraisms might go one way, and others another; each must be evaluated on its own merits, often taking other considerations into account, as we shall illustrate below. This is inherently a subjective and individual judgment.

4. *ANE + Joseph Smith's post–Book of Mormon Writings*. If the KJV is a possible source tainting the validity of Book of Mormon Hebraisms, it is also true that the Book of Mormon is a possible source for supposed Hebraisms in Joseph's post–Book of Mormon writings. Ashment selected the 1833 Book of Commandments to use as a control text, and I would agree that this is probably the best such text from Joseph's writings available: it is in a scriptural style, it was published (or at least prepared for publication) only a few years after the appearance of the Book of Mormon, it is a decent-sized corpus, and it was subject to less editing than the later Doctrine and Covenants. Nevertheless, John Gee is absolutely correct when he points out that most of the Book of Commandments was written *after* the Book of Mormon, and thus is tainted as a control text, since Joseph's later usage could just as easily have been influenced by his intense work in preparing the Book of Mormon for publication as from the KJV or other English sources.[39] In my view, to deny this strong possibility is merely to beg the question, to assume the truth of the proposition which one wishes to demonstrate. I think it is worth looking at Joseph's later writings for this purpose, but the fact that they are post–Book of Mormon suggests that this evidence should be assigned a

39. Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs," 87–88, in a section appropriately entitled "*Ante hoc ergo propter hoc?*"

lesser weight than evidence from the KJV, which we know preexisted the Book of Mormon.[40]

5. *ANE + Other English*. This would be a case where a parallel exists with the ancient Near East and is attested neither in the KJV nor in Joseph's other writings but is attested elsewhere in pre-1830 English. Evidence in this category will vary in weight with the probability or improbability that Joseph could have had access to the posited English source. For instance, in a couple of places Finley alludes to rare, archaic English usages he found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Since these usages are attested in English, they belong in category 5, but given the low probability of Joseph's access to them, they would count as being high on the 5 scale.

6. *ANE Only*. This would be a case where a parallel exists with the ancient Near East and is otherwise unattested in pre-1830 English.

This weighting paradigm is subject to the following qualifications:

- It is *tentative*. The amount of pre-1830 literature written in the English language is staggering. If we cannot find an English parallel to some characteristic, that does not necessarily mean that one did not exist and that it will not be found with more searching. Therefore, a category 6 Hebraism is always at risk of becoming a category 5.
- The various categories are not necessarily equidistant from one another; they simply reflect a *relative* probity.
- While this is a tool meant to assist us in evaluating posited Hebraisms, the ultimate determination of whether a characteristic derives from the Hebrew of the plates or from KJV usage remains very *subjective*.

40. Ashment's recitation of evidence from the Book of Commandments is problematic on other levels as well, both for not excluding scriptural quotations and for often being inapposite to the form supposedly present. Finley cites this material in a couple of places, but even he notes that many of the examples given were not relevant to the form at issue (492 n. 31). Finley is to be commended for focusing his attention on the KJV evidence, which is the stronger evidence for his point of view.

• This paradigm in and of itself is *not dispositive.* In general, I would view a 1 or 2 as weak evidence, a 5 or 6 as strong evidence, and a 3 or 4 as possible evidence that generally requires further evaluation based on other factors. But it remains possible that a 1 or 2 reflects a genuine ancient Near Eastern parallel, and conversely that a 5 or 6 does not. Further, as Hoskisson noted, the elaborate chiasm at Alma 36, which would be necessary evidence in Hoskisson's scheme or analogous to a 3 in mine (since chiastic forms are attested in the KJV), might well be more persuasive than some trifle that counts as sufficient evidence in Hoskisson's scheme or a 6 in mine.

Having articulated this paradigm, I would like to run through a brief example of how to apply it. I have selected one case that Finley mentions but does not discuss (p. 343): "Hearken, O ye house of Israel, and hear the *words of me,* a prophet of the Lord" (Jacob 5:2). First, we must establish that the ancient Near Eastern parallel exists. The Hebrew word for "word" is דָּבָר *dabar.* The plural form would be דְּבָרִים *debarim,* and the plural construct, "words of," would be דִּבְרֵי *dibre.* The plural construct with the first person singular pronominal suffix would be דְּבָרַי *debaray.* This very literally means "words of me," which of course is not standard English; we would say "my words."

The parallel thus being established, we can apply the paradigm. The specific expression *words of me* does not appear in either Joseph's pre–Book of Mormon writing or the KJV. The Hebrew *debaray* does appear about fifty times in the Old Testament, but it is always translated "my words." Therefore, with no specific KJV parallel, we must next ask if there is a general KJV parallel. The form would be [noun] of [personal pronoun], used to show possession, where normal English would be [possessive personal pronoun] + [noun]. While this construction is quite rare in the KJV, I did find two examples, in the closing verses to a couple of Paul's epistles: "The salutation by the hand of me Paul" (Colossians 4:18) and "The salutation of me Paul" (1 Corinthians 16:21). The awkwardness of the English is overcome in both places by the RSV, which renders the passages as "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand," which is much better English.

I will also note that I did not find a comparable usage among Ashment's listing of examples from the Book of Commandments. Nevertheless, as this usage is attested in the KJV, I would categorize it as a 3. For someone like Finley, this is all that is needed to reject this example as sufficient proof of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. For someone like me, however, who is open to a conclusion that any particular Book of Mormon idiom may be either a genuine Hebraism or an adaptation of KJV usage, the inquiry continues. I am influenced by several factors to consider this a legitimate Hebraism reflecting a translation from a Hebrew source. First is the relative rarity and obscurity of the possible KJV source. Second is the genuine awkwardness of the construction in English. Third is the precision of the match between the English wording and the formation of the Hebrew *debaray*. Fourth is the Book of Mormon context; these words appear in a synonymous parallel structure, featuring an attested Hebrew formulaic word pair (*hearken//hear*):[41]

> *Hearken,* O ye house of Israel
> and *hear* the words of me, a prophet of the Lord.

Indeed, this passage lends itself to an easy retroversion back into Hebrew:

> שִׁמְעוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
> וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרַי נָבִיא יהוה

> *shimeʿu beth Yisrael*
> *weshimeʿu eth-debaray nabiʾ YHWH.*[42]

Such retroversions are of course highly speculative, but my point is simply that I find this particular Hebraism more likely to be based

41. See Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 49–50.

42. In this retroversion, I have hypothesized that the same verb is repeated twice, as in Genesis 49:2: "Gather yourselves together, and *hear,* ye sons of Jacob; and *hearken* unto Israel your father," where both verbs reflect *weshimeʿu*. Alternatively, two different verbs could be used here.

on translation than secondary KJV influence. Finley, of course, would disagree; that is why making these kinds of judgments is ultimately a subjective endeavor.

The Book of Mormon reflects numerous occurrences of the formulaic word pair *heart//soul,* as in 2 Nephi 4:17:

> Yea, my *heart* sorroweth because of my flesh;
> my *soul* grieveth because of mine iniquities.

This word pair also recurs a number of times in the English of the KJV, as in Psalm 13:2:

> How long shall I take counsel in my soul [נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*]
> having sorrow in my *heart* [לֵבָב *lebab*] daily?

I previously theorized that in at least some of the Book of Mormon recurrences the word rendered "soul" may have been כָּבֵד *kabed,* literally "liver," rather than *nephesh.* This usage is reflected several times in the Ras Shamra tablets, as in *UT,*[43] 1 Aqht 34–35:

> Pgt weeps in her *heart* [*lb*]
> She sheds tears in the *liver* [*kbd*]

It is also reflected a number of times in the Old Testament (albeit in a way that is hidden in the English of the KJV), such as in Psalm 16:9 KJV:

> Therefore my *heart* [לִבִּי *libbi*] is glad,
> and my glory [כְּבוֹדִי *kebodi*] rejoiceth

It is reasonably clear that the Masoretic Text *kebodi* was incorrectly pointed, or voweled; it should be repointed as כְּבֵדִי *kebedi* "my liver." Although the literal meaning of *kabed* is "liver," as an internal organ used metaphorically for the seat of feeling it would perhaps best be translated in English with the word "soul," as the RSV takes it in the Psalm 16:9 passage:

43. Ugaritic texts in this article derive from Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook,* Analecta Orientalia 38 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), abbreviated *UT*.

Therefore my *heart* is glad,
and my *soul* rejoices[44]

Hoskisson, working independently from me, also argued that some occurrences of Book of Mormon *soul* may be a translation of Hebrew *kabed* "liver." Hoskisson notes that in Alma 5:9 we read "their souls did expand," where the context suggests a meaning such as "they became happy." He further notes that *soul* is used with the verb *enlarge* in Alma 32:28 and later in that chapter with the verb *swell* (Alma 32:34). This is odd usage, since normally in English a soul does not "expand." If, however, "soul" here renders *kabed* "liver," then this usage is right at home in the ancient Near East, as demonstrated by another passage from the Ras Shamra tablets at *UT*, Anath II:25–26:

Her liver [*kbd*] swells [*gdd*] with laughter
Her heart [*lb*] fills up with joy,
Anath's liver exults.

This passage shows that a liver "swelling" was normal Ugaritic usage indicative of joy.[45]

Hoskisson searched diligently for an English attestation of a soul "expanding," but he was unable to find one. He did find the phrase *expand the soul* in German, however, so he concluded that this is necessary evidence only, not sufficient evidence. I can appreciate his rigor, but I would look at this a little differently. I would categorize this as a 6 on my scale. To me, the attestation in German simply goes to the tentativeness of that categorization (perhaps we should designate it a low 6 or a 6-). Since it would be years before Joseph would study any German, a German occurrence does not work as a possible source for the Book of Mormon idiom; only if and when the usage is found in English should we drop this evidence from a 6 to a 5.

44. For further details and citations for the material in this and the previous paragraph, see ibid., 51–54.

45. For further details and citations for the material in this paragraph, see Hoskisson, "Textual Evidences," 284–87.

I mention these arguments about the presence of *kabed* "liver" in the Book of Mormon to make a point about category 3 evidence. Where a Book of Mormon Hebraism is generally attested in the KJV, that in and of itself does not reject that Hebraism as evidence; it simply goes to the prima facie weighting of that evidence. If one is open-minded about the possibility that the Book of Mormon is an ancient text, the analysis should not stop there but should continue; recall that Finley himself urged us to examine such putative parallels carefully. The *heart//soul* word pair exists in the KJV, so its presence in the Book of Mormon would qualify as category 3 evidence. If one wishes to reject that evidence, however, the alternative should be considered: Joseph would have had to absorb (whether consciously or subconsciously) the formulaic word pair phenomenon from KJV English and reuse those word pairs as building blocks in different parallel structures, just the way the prophets of Israel did—and all of this at least a century before scholars would observe and begin to talk about the phenomenon of repeating word pairs. Coupling this with other evidence, such as the distinctive usage observed by Hoskisson, I think a persuasive (even compelling) case can be made for the *heart//soul* word pair reflecting an authentic Hebrew usage.

I personally believe that the English of the KJV had some influence on Book of Mormon language. I would therefore reject any notion that one can point to a few strong examples of Hebraisms and conclude that all Book of Mormon Hebraisms of necessity directly derive from a Hebrew translation. Conversely, however, I would also reject any notion that one can point to a few weaker examples of Hebraisms and draw the opposite conclusion across the board. In my view, every purported Hebraism has to be examined carefully for probable authenticity, and this not just by class. That is, one cannot study, say, a single cognate accusative and conclude thereby that *all* cognate accusatives in the Book of Mormon are either authentic or not, as the case may be. Finley's approach is governed by an all-or-none approach, black-or-white thinking, which seems to have been affected by his inerrantist premises. I would reject such an all-or-none approach to Book of Mormon Hebraisms. I believe our approach to

the evidence should be appropriately eclectic, and we must be open to the evidence, whichever way it points. If the case has already been prejudged, then there is little point in proceeding, except perhaps as some sort of rhetorical exercise.

Book of Mormon Names

Another indirect means of studying the language of the Book of Mormon is to study its onomasticon, or list of names. In a few isolated cases, such as with Bountiful, the names have been *translated* into English. In most cases, however, the names have only been *transliterated* into English; such names therefore are like fossilized little remnants of the original Book of Mormon languages. For instance, at the beginning of the Book of Mormon account we encounter a family and its patriarch, whose name is transliterated in the text as *Lehi,* a name which is easily recognizable as the Hebrew word meaning "jaw" (לְחִי).

For Finley, the dominant theme of his metals section was the lack of long, scriptural parallels to the brass plates, and the dominant theme of his Hebraisms section was the attestation of Hebraisms in the KJV. The central argument of his names section appears to be that, lacking the original text and dealing with inherent ambiguities in how one transliterates from Hebrew into English, we cannot be certain that the ancient parallels put forward for Book of Mormon names really match with precision their Book of Mormon counterparts. This premise is true, of course, but we must remember that we are working with translation literature. On the other hand, the converse is also true, that Finley cannot be certain that the ancient examples do *not* match their Book of Mormon counterparts. When dealing with ancient attestations of Book of Mormon names, the appropriate standard is not one of absolute demonstration, but of plausibility.

Since Finley is in large measure responding to a specific study of Book of Mormon names[46] and since two of the authors of that study

46. John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," *Journal of Book Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 40–51.

have prepared their own review of Finley's chapter,[47] I will make only a couple of brief comments. First, Finley objects to the argument made by Latter-day Saint scholars that the *-ihah* element of a number of Book of Mormon names is a reflection of the *-yahu* (or *-yah*) theophoric element that was common in preexilic Jerusalem. For instance, the name of Lehi's contemporary Jeremiah would be more accurately transliterated as *Yiremeyah* or *Yirmeyahu,* just as the name of Isaiah would be more accurately rendered *Yeshaʿyahu.* And yet Finley has no difficulty recognizing the KJV transliteration of the *-yahu* or *-yah* element with *-iah*. Book of Mormon *-ihah* works very well as an alternate transliteration of that theophoric element. Should we demand modern scientific precision (perhaps even complete with diacritics) in the lettering of transliterations in the Book of Mormon? Given the extraordinary nature of the translation, I for one would not. If the suffix *-yahu* (or *-yah*) can acceptably be transliterated as *-iah*, I do not see why it could not also be transliterated as *-ihah*. Further, Finley describes how the *-yahu* ending underwent different pronunciation shifts in different locations over time;[48] does he then imagine that the language of the Nephites was static and frozen in its late seventh century B.C. origins, impervious to linguistic development?

The second comment I wish to make has to do with Finley's discussion of the name Alma. Finley makes three points concerning this name: (1) he begins with his common theme that we cannot know for certain whether the initial a in Alma represents the Hebrew *ayin* or *aleph*; (2) he resurrects the old notion that Joseph derived the name from the Latin phrase *alma mater* ("fostering mother") and was simply ignorant that *alma* would be a feminine term and therefore inappropriate for a man's name; and (3) he suggests that Joseph may have

47. See John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, "One Small Step," in this number of the *FARMS Review,* 147–99.

48. In Finley, "Hugh Nibley's Comparisons," in the paragraph beginning "Torczyner refers to two issues."

picked up the word from a preacher's sermon on Isaiah 7:14, where KJV "virgin" is a rendering of the Hebrew word עַלְמָה *ʿalmah.*[49]

Finley is more than welcome to make the hoary *alma mater* argument, and I wish him luck with it. Either that argument or the notion that Joseph picked up Hebrew *ʿalmah* from a preacher's sermon will work only if we can posit that he was ignorant of the feminine form of the name. It seems to me that such ignorance is a difficult position to maintain in the case of *alma mater* because the Latin had entered English as a common enough woman's given name, Alma, and because in the case of Hebrew *ʿalmah* any preacher who mentioned that Hebrew word surely would have done so in the midst of commenting on the virginity of the young woman of Isaiah 7:14. Indeed, a critic must exercise some caution in pressing such arguments, for if Joseph begins to look *too* ignorant, that begins to interfere with the picture demanded by the environmental theory of Book of Mormon origins, which requires a young man of some intelligence and talent to be able to author the book in the first place.

Finley's comments on the Hebrew here suggest to me that he must have been unfamiliar with Paul Hoskisson's article on the subject.[50] Hoskisson notes that the initial letter of the name *Alma* as given in the Bar Kochba letters is an *aleph* but that the name probably derives from the root *ʿLM, with its initial ayin. As Hoskisson observes, "In the final centuries B.C. and the first centuries A.D., in the spoken language among the Jews the consonants *aleph* and *ayin* began to run together. As a result the letters representing those sounds tended to become interchangeable as well."[51] The root *ʿLM conveys

49. Incidentally, Finley transliterates this word as *ʿalma,* and I could not help but wonder whether his leaving off the final *heʾ* was a subtle attempt to influence the reader by suggesting a more precise correspondence with Book of Mormon "Alma." I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that this is simply Finley's normal manner of transliterating the feminine *-ah* ending, although I could not help but notice that in "Hugh Nibley's Comparisons" he writes the Hebrew word for scroll as *megillah*, not *megilla*.

50. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Alma as a Hebrew Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 72–73.

51. Ibid. Note that the Dead Sea Scrolls often confuse the two letters as well.

the basic sense of one who has come to sexual maturity; a segholate noun derived from this root, עֶלֶם *ʿelem,* meaning "young man, youth, lad," occurs a couple of times in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 17:56 and 20:22). The Hebrew word Finley mentions from Isaiah 7:14, *ʿalmah,* is simply the feminine form of this noun and means "young woman." Hoskisson theorizes that Alma is a hypocoristic (or shortened) form from the full theophoric form of the name. To spell this out a little more specifically than Hoskisson did in his article:

Verbal root *ʿLM [conveys the basic concept of having reached sexual maturity]

Noun (segholate) *ʿelem* [lad]

Plene theophoric form *ʿAlmiʾel* [lad of El]

Hypocoristic form *ʿAlmaʾ* [lad of El (hypocoristic)]

When the suffix is added to the segholate noun, the first vowel reverts to its original *a* and the second drops out, as can be seen in an analogous segholate noun used in a theophoric form: from *melek* "king" to the name Malkiel, "El is my king." The aleph at the end of the name Alma is a trace vowel deriving from the presumed *ʾel* (or *yahu* or *yah*) of the theophoric element. In the Bar Kochba letters the name appears twice, with slightly different spellings: *ʾlmʾ* and *ʾlmh*. The final *heʾ* of the second example is clearly *not* a feminine ending; rather, it appears to be a variant *mater* to the *aleph,* each of which reflects the presence of an *a* vowel.

What I find interesting here is Finley's suggestion that the Book of Mormon name Alma might have had an initial *ayin* rather than *aleph,* for that is Hoskisson's very argument; further, Finley mentions Hebrew *ʿalmah,* which is indeed probably a related form to the name Alma. So in his haste to throw water on the significance of the attestation of Alma as a masculine name in the Bar Kochba letters, Finley ends up actually underscoring the strength of Hoskisson's argument.[52]

52. For the attestation of this name at Ebla, which Finley also mentions, see Terrence L. Szink, "Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 70.

Hoskisson identified the name Alma as an example of sufficient evidence as he defined it.[53] Rather than a 6 in my scheme, however, I would categorize it as a 5, not because of *alma mater* or any such argument, but because the name Alma, though rare, is attested as a male given name in New England and elsewhere prior to the appearance of the Book of Mormon, as the following examples show:[54]

Alma Smith
Gender: M
Christening: 27 May 1798, First Church of Christ, Northampton, Hampshire, Massachusetts

Alma Smith
Gender: M
Birth: 1799, Danby, Rutland, Vermont

Alma Smith
Gender: M
Birth: About 1811, Providence, Rhode Island

Alma A. Smith
Gender: M
Birth: 1823, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Although it is not a 6, I am tremendously impressed by the post–Book of Mormon appearance of Alma as a male Semitic name, and I personally view it in that light.

Geography

Finley next addresses the geography of 1 Nephi. I frankly found his argument here to be rather odd. The conventional understanding

53. Hoskisson, "Textual Evidences," 288–89.

54. This information derives from a partial search of the name "Alma Smith" on www.familysearch.org. My thanks to Alma Allred (a male, by the way) for this information. We should note, however, that the male gender of these individuals has not yet been independently verified. As one of them was married to someone with the given name "Amasa" (usually a male name, as in "Amasa Lyman"), more research needs to be undertaken to verify that the database correctly reflects the gender of these individuals.

of Latter-day Saints is that Lehi and his family traveled from Jerusalem south "into the wilderness," veering to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba, heading south-southeast along or near the Frankincense Trail and the eastern shores of the Red Sea, turning eastward at or shortly after Nahom, and then alighting at Bountiful on the coast of the Arabian Sea, from which they departed by boat. Finley notes that the geographic indications in the text are somewhat sketchy, and he correctly observes that the "south south-east" direction indication only applies once the family reaches the Red Sea and does not necessarily convey their direction of travel as they leave Jerusalem. So Finley would have the family leave the city veering west south-west and coming to the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez in the Sinai peninsula, so that as they travel "south south-east" they are doing so along the Gulf of Suez in the western Sinai rather than along the Red Sea in Arabia.

What I found odd about Finley's argument is that he makes no attempt to describe his alternate route as an implausibility that would argue against a possible historical basis to the Book of Mormon account. Indeed, as a believing Christian he could scarcely do so without also casting serious doubt on the historicity of much of the material in the biblical book of Numbers. So why does he want to place the family in the Sinai rather than in Arabia if that alternate scenario would not advance his cause? Here I believe the cynicism of his argument becomes apparent, as he is aware that Latter-day Saint scholars have painted a highly plausible picture of the journey of Lehi and his family through Arabia to the Sea, and so he wants to place them in a different location.

The implausibility of Finley's scenario is made manifest simply by looking at a map and considering the "eastern turn." If I am understanding his argument correctly, he would have Lehi and company go far out of their way to the west, go down the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez in the western Sinai, then turn *back to the east,* with their Bountiful located on the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in the eastern Sinai. Notice that Finley has the group going almost in a full circle. Why would they go so far out of their way when they could simply have gone down the western side of the Gulf of Aqaba to get

to the same spot? Finley realizes this is a glaring weakness in his proposal and therefore suggests that perhaps the Lehites wanted to reenact a portion of the exodus. It is certainly true that a profound exodus symbolism is present in the story, but that symbolism is typological, not literal. Their "Egypt" was the wicked Jerusalem that was on the verge of falling to Babylon; their Canaanite "promised land" was the New World to which they were heading. Yes, they endured a period of "wandering in the wilderness," but this part of the typology did not literally have to be in the Sinai.

To make his case, Finley tries to portray the "three days in the wilderness" of 1 Nephi 2:6 as describing the journey from Jerusalem, rather than three days of travel after they had arrived at the Red Sea, as Eugene England takes it. I think Finley is almost certainly wrong. To appreciate why England's reading is correct, we need to read the verse in context with the previous verse:

> And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family which consisted of my mother, Sariah, and my elder brothers, who were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.
>
> And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water. (1 Nephi 2:5–6)

It is true that Lehi and his family went from Jerusalem into the "wilderness," and the pluperfect "had" of verse 6 could conceivably refer to their initial travel from the city. I find this to be a highly doubtful reading, however. In verse 5 they have already arrived at the Red Sea, and they travel "in the wilderness" near the Red Sea. "In the wilderness" is repeated twice in verse 5, both to inform us that the wilderness was near the Red Sea and to state that Lehi was traveling with his family there. It seems quite clear to me, therefore, that the three days of travel "in the wilderness" of verse 6 refers to the same wilderness as has just been emphasized in the preceding verse, that which is near the Red Sea.

Finley's back-up argument is that even if Lehi and his family traveled in Arabia, there is nothing about the geography of that region that Joseph could not have known. Finley's discussion of this topic is seriously flawed because he displays no knowledge of recent research on the subject. In particular, he discusses Nahom without being aware of two finely carved incense altars that were discovered by a German archaeological team in ancient Marib, near Jebel ("Mount") Nihm in Yemen. One of these altars has been dated to the seventh or sixth century B.C., making it roughly contemporaneous with the presence of Lehi and his group. This altar contains an inscription indicating that it was dedicated by a certain man named Biʿathar of the tribe of Nihm. The now firmly attested presence of the Semitic root *NHM in the right place and at the right time is dramatic new evidence for the Book of Mormon account. Since knowledge of this discovery is widespread in Latter-day Saint scholarly circles and even in popular venues like Internet message boards,[55] Finley's editors failed him in not apprising him of it. As a result, Finley's entire discussion of Nahom is simply wrong, and it is instructive to see how very much he gets wrong when we actually have a way to verify his arguments.[56] If Finley really wants to pursue this line of reasoning, he is going to

55. For the Latter-day Saint announcement of the discovery, see S. Kent Brown, "'The Place That Was Called Nahom': New Light from Ancient Yemen," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 66–68. Brown provided additional informal commentary on the discovery available online at pub26.ezboard.com/fpacumenispagesfrm47.showMessage?topicID=14.topic as recently as 17 March 2003. More recently, see S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 55–125. There are now three known altars in Yemen with the name NHM inscribed on them; see Warren Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 56–61.

56. If Finley had known of this evidence, I can imagine that he would have pointed to the Arabic *h* in *NHM being a softer form of the letter than the harder *cheth* of the likely Hebrew *NḤM underlying Book of Mormon "Nahom." Brown cogently addresses this point in "'The Place That Was Called Nahom,'" 79 n. 3: "The exact equivalency of the root letters cannot be assured. It is probable that the term *Nahom* was spelled with the rasped or fricative Hebrew letter for 'h' (ḥet or chet) whereas the name Nihm, both in modern Arabic and in the ancient Sabaean dialect, is spelled with a softer, less audible *h* sound." See G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian*

have to start over in another venue, as his discussion in this volume is fatally flawed.

Shepherd on Pseudotranslation

Let us now turn to the other contribution in *The New Mormon Challenge* relating to the Book of Mormon, David J. Shepherd's chapter entitled "Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon" (pp. 367–95). Between the two chapters under review, I preferred this one; indeed, together with the essay by Craig J. Hazen, "The Apologetic Impulse in Early Mormonism: The Historical Roots of the New Mormon Challenge" (pp. 31–57), I thought Shepherd's chapter was one of the strongest contributions to the book. Whereas Finley's approach struck me as more of a hasty reaction, with his dismissing every possible evidence favoring the Latter-day Saint position, I found Shepherd's effort a more thoughtful, more legitimate attempt to create meaningful dialogue.

Shepherd begins his chapter with a lucid discussion of various translation phenomena, describing different senses in which the word *translation* might be used. An *interlingual* translation is translation in the sense we usually think of it, conveying thoughts from one language directly into another. An *indirect* translation is a translation that does not come directly from the original source but from some intermediate language. An example of an indirect translation would be an English rendering of the Vulgate, which is in turn a Latin rendering of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. A translation of, say, Genesis directly from Hebrew to English would be interlingual; a translation of Genesis from Hebrew into Latin, and then from Latin into English, would be indirect. An *intralingual* translation is a rendering of a text in the same language as the source—what we

Names and Inscriptions (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 81, 602; and Joan C. Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1982), 296. One has to assume, it seems to me, that when the members of Lehi's party heard the local name for "the place that was called Nahom" they associated the *sound* of that local name with the term Nahom, a Hebrew word that was familiar to and had meaning for them.

might otherwise call a paraphrase. For example, a couple of intralingual translations of the Book of Mormon itself have been made, whose purpose is to restrict the lexicon and simplify the syntax of the English for the benefit of those with learning disabilities.[57] The final category Shepherd mentions is *pseudotranslation,* which would be a work purporting to be a translation from another language, but which really is not. An example of a pseudotranslation would be the Living Bible. Originally, its publishers made no effort to conceal the fact that the Living Bible is a paraphrase from an English rendering of the Bible rather than an independent translation from the original languages. As such, the Living Bible was an intralingual translation, and perhaps also in some sense an indirect translation, since it was paraphrasing a text that was itself a translation. Over time, however, the publishers began to try to conceal the nature of the text and put it forward as if it were a genuine translation from the biblical languages. To the extent this claim is made and accepted, the text is a pseudotranslation or "fictitious" translation.

How does one go about differentiating a pseudotranslation from a genuine one? Such differentiation is not always possible. One might look to *external* evidence. One type of such evidence would be a confession of the author, which Shepherd illustrates with an example. Another might be the appearance of a source text. As Shepherd explains, a source text can cut either way. For instance, Jerome claimed to have translated the Vulgate version of Tobit from an Aramaic original, but for a long, long time no such original was known, and the text was therefore believed by many to have been originally composed in Greek. With the appearance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) texts of Tobit that make it clear

57. Lynn M. Anderson, *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon: A Learning Companion* (Apple Valley, Minn.: Estes Book, 1995), and Timothy B. Wilson, *Mormon's Story: An Adaptation Based on the Book of Mormon* (N.p., 1993). Both volumes were reviewed by Camille S. Williams, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 3–12; the Anderson volume was also reviewed in the same number of the *Review* by Marvin Folsom, 13–18.

that the Greek text is itself a translation, not an original composition. The appearance of a source text can therefore work to verify the *bona fides* of a translation. Conversely, if a source text in the same language as the purported translation appears, and if dependence on the source can be demonstrated, then it can be concluded that the purported translation is not truly a translation from another language.

Since external evidence will often be lacking, one might also look to *internal* evidence, meaning clues within the text itself as to its own likely origins. A prominent type of such evidence involves the search for anachronistic concepts or ideas. Shepherd appropriately cautions, however, that our knowledge of the ancient world is fragmentary at best, and that such knowledge must always be open to revision in light of new discoveries. Ultimately, distinguishing between genuine translation and pseudotranslation hinges on whether a linguistic transfer from one language to another has taken place and on how this transaction has been represented.

Shepherd then begins to address the question of whether the Book of Mormon is a pseudotranslation. He notes that from the beginning of its existence it has been dogged by accusations of pseudotranslation and fraudulent composition (albeit not necessarily in those terms), which is certainly true. Shepherd writes a little about various attempts to paint the Book of Mormon as a pseudotranslation based on internal evidence. He freely acknowledges, however, the "astonishing" effort on the part of Latter-day Saint scholars to counter this type of evidence and portray the Book of Mormon as in fact a genuine translation. As he notes, "it seems unlikely that early critics could have imagined the volume of research that Mormons have, for example, recently devoted to squaring the cultural picture portrayed in the Book of Mormon with that revealed by Mesoamerican archaeology and anthropology" (pp. 383–84).

As an example of such internal evidence, Shepherd points to the question of whether the metallurgy apparently represented in the Book of Mormon is compatible with the Mesoamerican archaeological record. As Shepherd points out, John Sorenson's response to this issue has been to emphasize the incomplete and contingent nature

of the archaeological record. Shepherd quotes Sorenson as writing: "Be a little more patient. Recognize the selectivity of the 'archaeological record.' Only a fraction of the total record has been, or likely ever will be, dug up" (p. 502 n. 61). Compare this statement from Sorenson with the following quotation:

> For those who find such newspaper reports [describing a lack of evidence for the biblical exodus] disturbing, Hoffmeier and Kitchen urge patience. "The biblical record, when you give it a fair test, fits its world and the world fits it," says Kitchen. "When scholars say such things as 'We have no evidence,' that merely means we do not know. Negative evidence is no evidence. It only takes one fool with a spade to dig up a new inscription and, whoosh!, that 'no evidence' disappears. I'm just amazed over the 40 years I've been in this business how we keep blundering into things you didn't expect that tie in with the Scriptures. If something doesn't seem to fit, the answer is to wait and see, not out of cowardice, not out of escapism, but just to see what happens when you have fuller evidence."[58]

This paragraph concludes an article in *Christianity Today* responding to claims of a lack of evidence for the biblical exodus. Its similarity to the statement Shepherd quotes from Sorenson is palpable. This illustrates that a theistic critic of the Book of Mormon has to tread very carefully when it comes to that book, for his own arguments could easily be turned against that which he himself regards as scripture. Although Shepherd finds Sorenson's defense tenuous at best, to his credit he does recognize that arguments based on internal evidence "on the basis of anachronism will always be susceptible to

58. Kevin D. Miller, "Did the Exodus Never Happen? How two Egyptologists are countering scholars who want to turn the Old Testament into myth," *Christianity Today* (7 September 1998). The quotation is the last paragraph of the online edition, available at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/8ta/8ta044.html as recently as 17 March 2003. My thanks to Mike Parker for bringing this article to my attention.

counterarguments that legitimately recognize our incomplete knowledge of the past" (p. 384).

Ultimately, the distinction between genuine and pseudotranslation is largely a linguistic matter. Shepherd acknowledges the evidence that has been put forward for Book of Mormon Hebraisms. Like Finley, he too observes that many such Hebraisms occur in the KJV, so he finds the argument from Hebraism evidence "less than compelling," but he also acknowledges that "it is impossible to decide with complete certainty whether the Hebraized English undeniably present in the Book of Mormon reflects reliance on existing traditions of Hebraized English (e.g., AV [= KJV]) or an actual Hebrew text" (p. 385).

If internal evidence will not settle the matter definitively, what about the possible appearance of a source text? Shepherd rightly notes that the gold plates are not available, and all sides can agree that they will not be forthcoming—believers because the plates have been returned to the care of Moroni and critics because they never existed in the first place (p. 385).[59] Several source texts have been suggested over the years. As Shepherd explains, the dominant critical theory of Book of Mormon origins throughout the nineteenth century was the notion that the real source for the book was a manuscript written by Solomon Spaulding (p. 386). Remarkably, even today that theory continues to have its few adherents, but Shepherd intelligently dismisses it. Shepherd also discusses Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (pp. 386–87). Again, I thought his discussion of this as a possible source text was intelligently handled. While he no doubt grants more plausibility to this than I do, he acknowledges that the parallels are a "suggestive but shaky" piece of external evidence for a source text of

59. While for most purposes Shepherd's statement is correct, it is not absolutely so. If the Book of Mormon were a fraud, one still must somehow account for the statements of the witnesses to the gold plates. Therefore, a critic might argue that Joseph actually manufactured a set of plates to perpetrate this fraud. In that case, the appearance of such plates, if they could be authenticated as having been fashioned by Joseph's hand or at his instructions, would serve as strong external evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

the Book of Mormon. Even if Joseph drew some elements from that source, Shepherd rightly recognizes that existing parallels could not begin to explain the English text of the Book of Mormon as a whole.

This discussion inexorably leads to the real substance of Shepherd's paper, which is to point to the KJV Bible as a source text for the Book of Mormon. In particular, Shepherd focuses on the book of Isaiah, appropriately so because of its prominence in the Book of Mormon text. Shepherd briefly mentions variants in the Book of Mormon from Isaiah KJV and references David P. Wright's article on the subject[60] to suggest that the variants do not reflect a transference from a Hebrew language source but rather are secondary developments from the English KJV. As an example, Shepherd notes that the Book of Mormon includes the conjunction *and* at a number of places where it is not present in the Masoretic Text of Hebrew Isaiah, but where it is present in the Great Isaiah Scroll, the Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, or other ancient versions. He argues that the addition, substitution, or omission of conjunctions is often necessary to transform biblical Hebrew into acceptable, idiomatic versions in other languages such as Greek or Syriac, as well as English, for that matter. The same cannot be said for the Great Isaiah Scroll, it is true, since it too is written in Hebrew, but Shepherd heavily discounts the value of that scroll as a witness to the text of Isaiah. Shepherd therefore concludes that "the parallels are simply a function of a partial but explicable overlap in the conjunctional concerns of Joseph Smith and an anonymous Hebrew scribe" (p. 388).

While one might possibly reach this conclusion, I sense a couple of problems here. First, I object to the presumption that we can resolve these conjunctional modifications on a global basis. Each change has to be evaluated individually and considered on its own merits. On a related note, I would further object to the easy rejection

60. David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon . . . and Joseph Smith in Isaiah," (1998; updated, March 2000), available online at www.members.aol.com/jazzdd/IsaBM1.html as recently as 17 March 2003. This paper, in slightly revised form, has been published in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon,* ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

of the Great Isaiah Scroll as a witness to the text. I do of course agree that we should not simply roll over and accept its readings simply because of its relatively ancient date and fortunate preservation, but labeling it "an inferior, late, and popular version of Isaiah, modified in light of a Hebrew-Aramaic hybrid" (p. 388) in *no way* excuses us from considering its readings seriously as possible witnesses to the text in any individual instance. If the Great Isaiah Scroll is inferior, late,[61] or popular, that must be demonstrated in each individual case and cannot be assumed on a universal basis throughout the text. Shepherd seems to be encouraging a massive, even shocking application of the bad-witness fallacy[62] to what should be an important possible witness to the text of Isaiah. A fundamental principle of good textual criticism is eclecticism, and each reading must be examined on its own merits.

Second, Shepherd seems to envision only two possibilities: either a Book of Mormon variant reflects the original text of Isaiah or it is necessarily an intralingual adjustment to the KJV English made by Joseph. But other possibilities exist. For instance, the Book of Mormon Isaiah was not the original text but rather a developed version that had undergone a textual transmission from the time of Isaiah no less than other copies of that book. Therefore, if other Hebrew copies and ancient versions of Isaiah reflected conjunctional modification from the original, it may well be that the Book of Mormon version did as well, and for similar reasons.

61. Given that the Great Isaiah Scroll predates the earliest manuscripts of the Masoretic Text by about a millennium, it is difficult to see in what sense Shepherd means to call it "late."

62. The bad-witness fallacy involves the failure to take an ancient witness to the text seriously in any given instance simply because that witness is viewed by the textual critic as among the less reliable witnesses to the text generally. All the evidence for and against a particular variant must be evaluated in every case, for even the worst general witness to a text can sometimes preserve an original reading. This is the principle of eclecticism, which is a fundamental principle of good textual criticism. Ancient witnesses cannot be prejudged and then dismissed and ignored on a global basis.

Shepherd goes on to point out that the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah passages is verbatim the same as the KJV for long stretches; variations often center around italicized passages in the KJV; and variations sometimes appear to be based more on polysemy in the English text rather than on anything that is going on in the Hebrew. He then comes to the substantive point he really wishes to make and which forms the centerpiece of his article. Some Latter-day Saint scholars have suggested, he says, that the Book of Mormon only followed the KJV when it adequately represented the Hebrew; where the KJV diverges from a proper understanding of the Hebrew, however, variants were often introduced into the text. Shepherd then spends several pages demonstrating that translation errors do exist in the KJV of Isaiah, in passages that were quoted in the Book of Mormon *without* revision. Inasmuch as the KJV would appear to be the source for these passages and since the Book of Mormon is portrayed as a translation from an ancient language, the Book of Mormon—at least in relation to the Isaiah passages—is a pseudotranslation as defined by Shepherd. He then subtly suggests that we can extrapolate from this conclusion with respect to the Isaiah material a similar conclusion with respect to the book as a whole.

I agree with Shepherd that translation errors appear in the KJV and that some of these are reflected in the Book of Mormon. For example, Isaiah 2:4 KJV and 2 Nephi 12:4 agree in reading in part:

> And he shall judge among the nations
> and shall rebuke [הוֹכִיחַ *hokiach*] many people.

Shepherd points out that while the Hebrew verb *hokiach* does appear with the sense of "rebuke, reprove, chide" elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (such as at Proverbs 9:7–8; 15:12; and 19:25), modern scholars agree that because of the parallelism both here and at Isaiah 11:3 in this passage the verb means "to decide, judge." Modern translations therefore render it "settle disputes" (NIV), "render decisions" (NASB), or "arbitrate" (NRSV). Donald Parry, a conservative Latter-day Saint scholar, renders it thus:

Thus he will judge among the nations,
And he will *settle the case* for many people.[63]

Parry would also agree with some, though not all, of Shepherd's other examples. So where Isaiah 3:2–3 KJV and 2 Nephi 13:2–3 render the terms קֹסֵם *qosem* and נְבוֹן לָחָשׁ *nebon lachash* as "the prudent" and "eloquent orator," respectively, these terms in reality should be rendered something like "diviner" and "expert enchanter," respectively, which is indeed the way Parry renders them.[64] At Isaiah 3:24 KJV and 2 Nephi 13:24, the word נִקְפָּה *niqpah* is rendered as "a rent" (i.e., a tear), but in reality the word should be rendered "a rope," which is again the way Parry renders the word.[65] Although we could multiply examples, this should be sufficient to make the point.

Further, I would agree with Shepherd that some of the introduced variants in the Book of Mormon seem to cluster around italicized words in the KJV and also that some variants seem to depend more on polysemy in English than on anything in the Hebrew text. I think it is correct to say that elements of intralingual translation occur in some Book of Mormon Isaiah passages.

Latter-day Saint scholars of course do not all agree among themselves on these matters, and they sometimes take different views concerning just what the Book of Mormon represents. Royal Skousen introduced these issues by writing about various evidences for "tight" versus "loose" control over the translation.[66] In other words, he explores to what extent the translation is direct and literal, as opposed to a paraphrase or restatement in Joseph's own words of ideas that came into his mind during the translation process. Suggestive of a "tight" control over the language of the translation are (1) a number of witness statements that suggest Joseph would put his face in a

63. Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 43.

64. Ibid., 46.

65. Ibid., 49.

66. Royal Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/1 (1990): 41–69, at 50–56.

hat to exclude outside light and then would see the wording of the translation, given a sentence at a time as he dictated it; (2) evidence that proper names were not just pronounced but actually spelled out; and (3) Semitic textual evidence such as Hebraisms, names, or structural elements (such as chiasmus). Suggestive of a "loose" control are (1) the poor grammar of the English text as it was first dictated; (2) the explanation of Doctrine and Covenants 9:8 that Joseph was to "study it out in his mind" and then ask the Lord if it were right; (3) the possibility that Joseph used a King James Version in the production of the text (which bears directly on our issue and to which we shall return); and (4) the reality that Joseph permitted and even participated in the editing of the text. Skousen made it clear that he preferred a tight control model of the translation. My own approach is to apply the eclecticism of a textual critic to these categories. I acknowledge these various types of evidence spelled out by Skousen, and so I simply do not prejudge the case. I try to keep an open mind about whether a given passage might be on the tighter or looser end of the spectrum. I accept various types of Semitic textual evidence, which does point to tight control, but I also believe that Joseph's role in the translation involved more than simply reading the English text from a divine teleprompter. Most of the Book of Mormon is a redacted text, and if we read very carefully we can sometimes discern the hand of the redactor (Mormon) in the text. But the Book of Mormon is also a translated text, and I believe that at times we can also discern the hand of the translator. Since I accept Joseph as a prophet in his own right, I see the incorporation of occasional interpretations, explanations, and commentary on the ancient text by the modern prophet as a positive characteristic of the text as we have it.[67]

67. I would include the possibility of Joseph "expanding" the text with authoritative commentary, interpretation, explanation, and clarification under the rubric of "loose" translation. I would view such an expansion as simply being a little more extensive form of translator's gloss. The possibility of such expansions in the text has been articulated in Blake T. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue* 20/1 (1987): 66–123, rejected in Stephen E. Robinson, "The 'Expanded' Book

I think Shepherd, without realizing it, gives the model for how we should look at the Book of Mormon in general as translation literature. In his conclusion he states: "Although it will be faint praise indeed for defenders of Smith's 'translation' work, it seems clear to the present author that the Book of Mormon is the most complex, ambitious, and influential pseudotranslation that the world has ever seen or is, indeed, ever likely to see" (p. 395). Now, look again at some explanatory text Shepherd wrote near the beginning of his essay:

> One example of such complexity [i.e., between the distinctions "author" and "translator" or "original composition" and "translation"] has been identified by Rita Copeland in the *Ovide Moralise,* medieval texts in which translation and commentary/original composition are freely interspersed without any demarcation or delineation between them to alert the reader. Early Bible translation shows the same blurring of distinctions: Jewish Aramaic translations or "targums" often integrate supplementary material drawn from earlier traditions seamlessly into their usually quite literal renderings of the Hebrew Bible. (p. 369)

I do not view the Book of Mormon as a pseudotranslation because, unlike Shepherd, I believe there has been a linguistic transfer from the record of the plates. But it does not necessarily follow that every word of the Book of Mormon is a translation in precisely the sense of, say, Richmond Lattimore's translation of Homer's *Odyssey* into English. I like the analogy of the Targums, which are a mixture of interlingual translation and explanatory materials and commentary, often interwoven in such a way that without access to the original source text it would be quite difficult to tell precisely where the

of Mormon?" in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, the Doctrinal Structure,* ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 391–414, and clarified in Blake T. Ostler, "Bridging the Gulf," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 103–77. I accept the possibility of such interpretive material in the text, but we should be clear that not all Latter-day Saint scholars do.

translation stopped and the explanatory comments began. I would therefore proffer an addition to the lexicon; I would characterize the Book of Mormon not as a pseudotranslation, but as a *complex* translation, much like a Targum.

Returning to the use of Isaiah KJV in the Book of Mormon, I see at least three issues.[68] First, why does the Book of Mormon reproduce long stretches of Isaiah KJV rather than presenting a completely fresh translation of whatever was on the plates? I think the key to understanding this is to be found in Doctrine and Covenants 128:18. There Joseph has just quoted Malachi 4:5–6 KJV verbatim, and he then says, "I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands." Similarly, quotation of the KJV in the Book of Mormon is no guarantee that such KJV text is without error or is a precise match to what was on the plates, only that it is "sufficiently plain" to communicate the message to be conveyed. We live in an era when you can walk into a bookstore and find the Bible printed in dozens of translations, but in Joseph Smith's era the Bible and the KJV were virtually synonymous. It made sense to present biblical quotations in the language of the commonly accepted version, the KJV. Therefore, much of the Isaiah material in the Book of Mormon may be a sufficiently close *representation* of the original as opposed to a new and specific translation of that material.

Second, how was this use of the KJV mechanically accomplished? The short answer is that we do not know. The witness statements indicate that Joseph had no books present, and since he dictated with his face covered to exclude light, it is difficult to see how Joseph could simultaneously be reading from a printed KJV. Perhaps the witness statements are from different periods in the translation; most of the Isaiah quotation would have come near the end of the translation sequence, in 2 Nephi (assuming the priority of Mosiah). Maybe

68. A fourth issue would be the quotation in the Book of Mormon of material deriving from Deutero-Isaiah, a hypothetical author scholars would date to after the time the Lehites left Jerusalem. Shepherd does not address this issue, presumably because as an inerrantist the existence of a Deutero-Isaiah would be no less a difficulty for him.

Joseph memorized the text; while this is possible, to memorize so many chapters of Isaiah KJV near verbatim would be a prodigious feat indeed. Maybe the Lord or an angel dictated the text to Joseph, as suggested in the "divine teleprompter" theory.[69] All we can be certain of is that, no matter how it was done, the KJV was used as the basic source for the Isaiah passages, since the characteristics of the Book of Mormon text make such reliance quite clear.

Third, what are we to make of the variants from Isaiah KJV in the Book of Mormon? I address this issue in this number of the *Review*.[70] Contra Shepherd, I do believe that some of the variants reflect textual restorations or alternate translations and therefore are interlingual in nature. Nevertheless, I also believe that some of the variants address issues present in the KJV English and therefore are intralingual in nature. I see the variants as working in a variety of ways to accomplish a number of different things.

As I have already indicated, I would reject the label of *pseudotranslation* for the Book of Mormon as a whole; I would prefer the term *complex translation,* which reflects my belief that a linguistic transfer has taken place but also my openness to viewing Joseph Smith as an active participant in the translation process rather than as a mere passive conduit for divinely dictated words. With respect to the Isaiah passages in particular, I do not think that anyone is operating under the illusion that Joseph specifically translated the words on the plates and just happened to reproduce the English of the KJV. The KJV is an obvious source for these sections, one we make no effort to hide, nor could we hide it even if we were so inclined. The KJV was used as a readily available, accepted, and sufficiently close representation of the actual Isaiah text that was on the plates, which may have varied at points from the simple Isaiah KJV presentation. So the issue really boils down to whether the plates existed and whether they in fact contained Isaianic material. At this point, the reader will likely return

69. The characteristics of O, the original Book of Mormon manuscript, make it quite clear that the Isaiah material was dictated, just as was the rest of the Book of Mormon, and that a scribe did not visually copy a King James Version of the Bible.

70. Kevin L. Barney, "Isaiah Interwoven," in this number of the *FARMS Review,* 353–402.

to his or her a priori assumptions, some to the position that the plates existed and others to the position that they did not.

Is there any sense in which the Book of Mormon could be called a pseudotranslation? Some elements of pseudotranslation as defined by Shepherd may be present. I would nevertheless object to the use of the term for the following reasons. First, I think the term would be inappropriately applied to isolated elements only, as opposed to a translation as a whole. If someone misunderstood a Targum to be *in toto* a tight, literal rendering of its source, that would not change the fact that a fundamental interlingual transfer had indeed taken place. Second, the term *translation* itself (derived from Latin *transferre,* "to carry across") as used with respect to Joseph's revealed scriptures is—or at least should be—already understood in a very broad sense. Third, unlike interlingual, indirect, and intralingual translation, the notion of pseudotranslation is not an objective status that inheres in the text itself but is rather a subjective status that depends entirely on the knowledge and understanding or lack thereof of a particular reader. If I understand portions of the Isaiah KJV to be representational in nature, if I understand some of the Isaiah variants to be intralingual translations, if I acknowledge the presence of a midrashic element in the text, and if my understanding is correct, then as far as I am concerned the text contains no pseudotranslation whatsoever. And I am unwilling to use the term vis-à-vis the way others understand the text because that presumes that my understanding is necessarily correct, whereas in fact I might be the one who is wrong. Fourth, it is well known that the prefix *pseudo-* means "false," and given the historic polemical abuse of such terms as *cult* and *Christian* I am quite confident that it would not be long before a carefully defined scholar's term meant to describe the incorrect assumptions of some readers concerning the nature of certain portions of the text were twisted into a blatant assertion that the text itself is simply "false." For all of these reasons, I reject the proposed application of the term *pseudotranslation* to the Book of Mormon in favor of my proposed alternative, *complex translation.*

Even though ultimately I disagree with Shepherd's thesis, I appreciated his chapter. I found it to be both thoughtful and sensitively written, and it caused me to think more deeply about the nature of one of our foundational volumes of scripture.