

MORMONISM AND PLAGIARISM

For almost thirty years the editors of this newsletter have studied the contents of LDS documents in an attempt to determine the truth about Mormon history. Over the years we have found a number of documents (both Mormon and anti-Mormon) that bear all the earmarks of forgery. The Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley gives this information about forgery in *Since Cumorah*, page 160: "A forgery is defined by specialists in ancient documents as 'any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.'" Although we do not agree with Dr. Nibley on many things, we feel that the definition he cites with regard to forgery is very good.

One of the most controversial documents that we ever dealt with was the White Salamander Letter—a letter attributed to Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris which cast doubt on the origin of the Book of Mormon. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, March 29, 1987, page 12, Robert A. Jones related the following:

After nearly a year of testing the Salamander Letter's paper, ink and the handwriting itself, Rendell reported that he could find no indication of tampering or forgery.

Still, there were some who were unsatisfied. The most unlikely of those was Jerald Tanner, a born-again Christian who has conducted a genteel campaign of intellectual warfare against the Mormon Church for 20 years. Operating from a Victorian home in Salt Lake, Tanner and his wife, Sandra, publish the *Salt Lake Messenger*, a newsletter that disgorges any and all items that might discredit the church's claims to divine origins. A historian at Brigham Young University once remarked that the *Salt Lake Messenger* was read by more people who denied it than any publication in Utah save for *Playboy*.

The Tanners wanted dearly to believe that the Salamander Letter was real. But Jerald had a problem. . . . Tanner was familiar with the accounts of the



gold plates contained in a critical 1834 volume titled "Mormonism Unveiled." The more Tanner looked through the book, the more connections he saw between those accounts and the newly produced letter. . . . Could the Salamander Letter be a modern plagiarism of the old affidavits? It was spooky, and Tanner was suspicious. . . . Tanner . . . said the letter was a fake.

About two years after we began to criticize the Salamander Letter in the March 1984 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, it was revealed that document experts had come to the conclusion it was a forgery. Finally, on January

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23, 1987, Mark Hofmann admitted the letter was a fake. In addition, he also pled guilty to two counts of murder. While many Mormons were relieved to find out that the letter is not authentic, the fall of the Hofmann documents does not sweep aside some serious problems that have been uncovered in the Mormon Church's own documents.

ANCIENT OR MODERN?

One document which we have spent a great deal of time testing is the Book of Mormon. We originally believed that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon from golden plates by the power of God. It seemed to have a scriptural sound to it, and we were convinced that it was genuine. We were, in fact, trying to find all the evidence we could to support its authenticity. The more we studied the Bible, however, the more problems we began to find. We saw that there were many parallels between the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon purports to give a history of a group of people (known as the Nephites) who came to the New World about 600 B.C. and were destroyed around 400 A.D. Since the Book of Mormon claims that the Nephites had portions of the Old Testament, we were not disturbed to find quotations from those Old Testament books in the Book of Mormon. As we became more familiar with the Bible, however, it became obvious that portions of the New Testament which had not even been written yet were used by the ancient Nephites. We found well over a hundred quotations from the New Testament in the first two books of Nephi alone. These two books were supposed to have been written between 600 and 545 B.C., whereas the New Testament was written in the first century A.D. (For a list of some of these parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 73-79.) In the Book of Mormon the writings of Paul, Luke, John and others are quoted extensively hundreds of years before these men were even born!

The ministry of Christ seems to have been the source for a good deal of the Book of Mormon. For instance, the story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead appears to have had definite influence upon a story concerning Ammon (dated about 90 B.C.) which is found in the Book of Mormon: (1) In both stories a man seems to die. (2) In both cases the servant of the Lord comes to the scene. (3) A period of time elapses in both stories. (4) In both cases there is great sorrow. (5) Martha and the queen use the word "stinketh." It is significant that this is the only time this word is used in the Book of Mormon and it is only used one other time in the Bible. (6) Both Ammon and Jesus use the word "sleepeth" with regard to the man. This word is only used twice in the Book of Mormon and

only appears seven times in the Bible. (7) Ammon and Martha both use the words "he shall rise again." (8) The conversation between Ammon and the queen contains other phrases that are similar to those used by Jesus and Martha. (9) In both cases the man arose. On page 3 the reader will find a photographic comparison of the two stories. The lines have arrows pointing from the Bible to the Book of Mormon because it is the only possible way the plagiarism could have occurred. The Nephites did not have the King James Version of the New Testament and the Apostle John did not have the Nephite scriptures. The only logical conclusion, therefore, is that sometime after the King James Bible was published in 1611 A.D. someone borrowed from it to create the story in the Book of Mormon. In our publication, *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, pages 87-102, we listed 400 parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, and we feel that we could have found more if we had the time to make a very careful search.

While the evidence of plagiarism we found in the Salamander Letter seems very strong, the evidence against the Book of Mormon on the grounds of plagiarism is much stronger. In fact, it is completely devastating. Although we have read the attempts by Mormon apologists to explain this matter, they just do not hold water. The only reasonable conclusion is that the Book of Mormon did not come from ancient gold plates but rather was written sometime after the King James Version appeared.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, B. H. Roberts, one of the greatest apologists the Mormon Church has ever produced, began to try to work out an explanation for the King James verses in the Book of Mormon. He claimed that it is possible that Joseph Smith did in fact use the King James Version in some cases when he was translating the Book of Mormon plates. B. H. Roberts' attempt to plow around this serious problem did not impress one reader of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. On December 6, 1903, the following was printed in a letter to the *Tribune*:

The only way, therefore, to lift Nephi out of this fatal situation is for Elder Roberts to show that he had, in addition to the Jewish Scriptures, a copy of our English Bible with him back there in the wilderness [in] 600 B.C., or else a copy of Shakespeare. Or else let Mr. Roberts agree with me according to the evidence, that Mr. Nephi was simply a very modern gentleman from New York or Pennsylvania, having in his possession both the Bible and Shakespeare, and then the difficulty is solved. . . . if Joseph Smith turned aside to quote from our English Bible, as Elder Roberts admits that he did, then what was to prevent him from putting into the Book of Mormon, when it suited him, quotations

CHAPTER 19.

A wonderful conversion—Abish the Lamanite woman—Lamanite king and queen espouse the faith—Ammon establishes the church in Ishmael.

1. And it came to pass that after two days and two nights they were about to take his body and lay it in a sepulchre, which they had made for the purpose of burying their dead.

5. Therefore, if this is the case, I would that ye should go in and see my husband, for he has been laid upon his bed for the space of two days and two nights; and some say that he is not dead, but others say that he is dead and that he stinketh, and that he ought to be placed in the sepulchre; but as for myself, to me he doth not stink.

8. And he said unto the queen; He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again; therefore bury him not.

9. And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.

12. And it came to pass that he arose, according to the words of Ammon; and as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said: Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou.

CHAPTER 11

Jesus testifies he is the resurrection and the life—Mary and Martha testify of him—He raises Lazarus from the dead—Caiaphas speaks prophetically of the death of Christ.

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Selected verses from chapter 19 of Alma in the Book of Mormon (to the left) compared with verses from chapter 11 of John in the Bible (to the right). The verses in the Book of Mormon were supposed to have been written over a century and a half before the book of John was penned. The close relationship between the texts provides evidence that the Book of Mormon story was plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible.

MORONI, 7

44. If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

45. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

46. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

MORONI, 10

8. And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many, and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all, and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

9. For he saith, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

10. And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

11. And to another, exceeding great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

12. And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles;

13. And again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things;

14. And again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits;

15. And again, to another, all kinds of tongues;

16. And again, to another, the interpretation of languages, and of divers kinds of tongues;

17. And again these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

1 CORINTHIANS, 13

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; (is not puffed up.)

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away;

1 CORINTHIANS, 12

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues;

to another, the interpretation of tongues;

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

A comparison of verses from the 7th and 10th chapters of Moroni in the Book of Mormon (to the left) with the 13th and 12th chapters of 1 Corinthians in the Bible (to the right). According to Moroni 7:1, in that chapter Moroni is quoting "the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope and charity: . . ." In reality the words are plagiarized from Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians (chapter 13). the 10th chapter of Moroni purports to be Moroni's own words, but it is obvious that they are taken from the 12th chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. That both Mormon and Moroni would independently come up with almost the same words as Paul over three centuries after he wrote 1 Corinthians seems totally beyond belief. The evidence clearly shows that the author of the Book of Mormon plagiarized the Bible.

from other English books, from Shakespeare, from books on geography and history? . . . What prevented him from putting in his own views? Undoubtedly, that is just what he did, for the book utterly fails. The statement and admission of Elder Roberts gives us all the light we need as to its modern origin and spurious character. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 6, 1903, as quoted in *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, vol. 1, pages 347 and 351)

As the years passed, Mormon apologist B. H. Roberts realized that the Book of Mormon problems were more serious than he had previously believed. Consequently, he prepared two manuscripts which he never released to the public. We finally published these secret manuscripts in 1980, and in 1985 the University of Illinois Press came out with a hard bound copy of Roberts' work under the title, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. Although Professor Truman Madsen, of Brigham Young University, maintains that B. H. Roberts was only using the "Devil's Advocate" approach so that he could "stimulate thought" in these secret manuscripts, a careful examination of Roberts' work seems to show that his investigation had tended to erode his faith in the Book of Mormon. On page 243 of *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, B. H. Roberts asked the question of whether Joseph Smith was "possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination" to produce the Book of Mormon from materials he had available to him. Roberts concluded "that Joseph possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question." On page 250 Roberts suggested that the "creative imagination" of Joseph Smith combined with the "common knowledge" of his time and a book like *View of the Hebrews* "would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is." Roberts went so far as to admit that in the Book of Mormon "there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency" (*Ibid.*, page 251).

On page 271, B. H. Roberts conceded that some portions of the Book of Mormon "are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America."

The evidence seems to show that while B. H. Roberts at first rejected the suggestion that appeared in the *Salt*

Lake Tribune that "Mr. Nephi was simply a very modern gentleman from New York or Pennsylvania," he later came to believe the evidence pointed in that direction. Since B. H. Roberts' death, many scholars have wrestled with the evidence of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon. As we already indicated, in the early 1960's the editors of this newsletter struggled with this painful question. Like B. H. Roberts, we were finally forced to admit that "The evidence . . . points to Joseph Smith" as the creator of the stories in the Book of Mormon. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 63-88, we presented a great deal of evidence to show that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century. This evidence appears to be irrefutable, and many Mormon scholars are coming to the same conclusion.

JOSEPH'S EXPANSIONS?

The reader will remember that the letter printed in the *Salt Lake Tribune* asked the following questions:

. . . if Joseph Smith turned aside to quote from our English Bible, as Elder Roberts admits that he did, then what was to prevent him from putting into the Book of Mormon, when it suited him, quotations from other English books, from Shakespeare, from books on geography and History? . . . What prevented him from putting in his own views?

The evidence of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon has now forced some Mormon scholars into a very compromised position. Some are even beginning to maintain that the Book of Mormon is both ancient and modern. In the Spring 1987 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Blake T. Ostler has a very long article which puts forth the point of view that there was an ancient record but Joseph Smith expanded the text with his own comments:

It is my purpose to . . . offer a theory of the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith's expansion of an ancient work by building on the work of earlier prophets to answer the nagging problems of his day. In so doing, he provided unrestricted and authoritative commentary, interpretation, explanation, and clarifications based on insights from the ancient Book of Mormon text and the King James Bible (KJV). The result is a modern world view and theological understanding superimposed on the Book of Mormon text from the plates. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1987, page 66)

Although Mr. Ostler seems to be arguing that Joseph Smith possessed ancient gold plates, he admits that "No clearly identifiable ancient sources appear in the Book

of Mormon except as might derive from the King James version of the Bible” (*Ibid.*, page 68). He goes on to state:

The King James Bible. At least one modern source was undisputably used in the Book of Mormon—the King James Version of the Bible . . . the Book of Mormon adapts many phrases, particularly from the New Testament, to a new context. . . .

Jacob’s speech reinterprets the KJV snippets into a new synthesis on death, resurrection, and the judgment . . . these phrases may represent interpretation of an original text using the KJV New Testament and a nineteenth-century theological framework. Yet it is clear that the KJV New Testament phrases have become part of the structure itself. This mode of using the KJV, replicated throughout the Book of Mormon, suggests that Joseph Smith freely adopted KJV phraseology and concepts to present his “translation.” . . . Joseph Smith clearly used the KJV Old Testament to render the Book of Mormon translation. The Book of Mormon also quotes the KJV Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7. . . .

What, then, may we conclude from the Book of Mormon’s use of modern sources? Only that the Book of Mormon as translated and presented by Joseph Smith relied on the KJV and was influenced by nineteenth-century American culture in rendering its message. . . . it is possible that an ancient source contained on gold plates underlies the Book of Mormon, but Joseph Smith uses the KJV both for language and to clarify, expand, and interpret the thought of the original text. . . . Both ancient and modern sources could have influenced the text published in 1829 without ruling out either. . . .

Many Book of Mormon doctrines are best explained by the nineteenth-century theological milieu. . . . it is likely that Joseph Smith expanded the Book of Mormon . . . some doctrines in the book’s pre-Christian sections are simply too developed and too characteristic of the nineteenth century to explain as pre-exilic ideas. The presence of the KJV in the book is, it seems to me, indisputable. . . .

The expansion theory of the Book of Mormon has far-reaching implications for our ideas of revelation and scripture. . . .

The model of revelation I propose here is that of creative co-participation. It seems to me that the Book of Mormon makes most sense if it is seen as both a revelation to Joseph Smith and as Joseph’s expansions of the text. . . .

It also appears that the usual relationship existing between a translator and an identifiable, objective text did not exist for Joseph Smith, for the ancient text merged with his own thought processes. Though Joseph Smith did not lose self-consciousness, the distinction between the text being revealed and the person receiving the revelation apparently dissolved.

What we have therefore is neither an ancient document nor a translation rendering an ancient document from one language into another. The Book of Mormon as we know it is a “text-as-revelation”—the revelation is the text.

However, the presence of translator anachronisms or expansions in the book show that Joseph Smith imposed an interpretation on the text which was foreign to the ancient text, . . . (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1987, pages 76-80, 102, 108, 109, 111 and 112)

It appears that Blake Ostler is using his expansion theory to solve two very difficult problems in the Book of Mormon—i.e., the presence of modern material in the text and the existence of doctrines which the LDS Church no longer believes:

But the voice heard in revelation is not a solo by God. It is a chorus in which the experience of the prophet and God merges. . . . The Book of Mormon reflects the influence of Joseph Smith’s earliest belief structure in its synthesis of passages from the KJV and contemporary theology with nineteenth-century concerns. Joseph Smith’s interpretive framework was largely derived from Christian Primitivism, a particular orientation within nineteenth-century Protestantism . . . In expressing the message of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s revelatory experiences naturally assumed the world view arising from his culture. Later revelations, however, necessitated so much revision in this basic set of assumptions that the paradigm reflected in the Book of Mormon was largely abandoned.

Book of Mormon doctrines of God, human nature, heaven, and hell have been refined, expanded, and perhaps superseded by further light and knowledge. The Book of Mormon doctrine of God, though not explicitly trinitarian, is not the developed tritheism that now characterizes Mormon thinking . . . (*Ibid.*, page 112)

Mr. Ostler seems to feel that he can discern some of the portions which came from an ancient text and the ones which Joseph Smith inserted into the text:

1 Nephi 13-15 can be distinguished as Joseph Smith’s expansion through motif criticism. Its denunciations of the devil’s great and abominable church depend on Revelation and appear to express anti-Catholicism characteristic of nineteenth-century New York . . . These chapters contain ideas foreign to pre-exilic Israelites. . . . The expansion can be distinguished from the original text because the angel’s purpose in 1 Nephi 11-12 is to explain the symbolic significance of Lehi’s vision. . . . In 1 and 2 Nephi, Jacob and Enos, however, expansions must come from Joseph Smith . . . Mosiah 3:1-23 (on Christ’s

mission), 4:1-5 (the audience's conviction of sin), 5:1 (Benjamin's request for responses), and 6:4-5 (the beginning of Mosiah's reign), do not reflect the covenant form . . . In my view, they are better explained as Joseph Smith's nineteenth-century expansions. . . . Mosiah 3:5-4:8 seems to be nineteenth-century expansions on the atonement stressed at covenant renewal . . . I see the cry for mercy in Mosiah 4:2 as typical of revival preachers and hence a possible expansion by Joseph Smith . . .

The prophetic speech form and metaphors in Abinadi's diatribe show evidence of an ancient text. . . .

At the same time, Abinadi's prophetic speech is interrupted by clearly identifiable expansions of the text. . . . Mosiah 13:28-32 appears to be Joseph Smith's expansion to clarify Abinadi's view that the law of Moses was sufficient for salvation by having Abinadi explain that the law of Moses, then sufficient, would not always be so. . . .

Mosiah 14-16 are also best explained as Joseph Smith's expansions or interpolations. . . .

Mosiah 15-16 appear to be Joseph Smith's expansions to explain how God becomes man. Mosiah 15 . . . attempts to answer theological questions that were asked only after the council of Nicea in A.D. 325, and the answer is premised on Anselm's medieval satisfaction theory. (*Ibid.*, pages 86, 87, 92, 96 and 97)

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 69-72 we demonstrated that the anti-Masonic controversy of the 1820's is reflected in the Book of Mormon. While Ostler feels that some of this material came from an ancient record, on page 76 of his article, he admits that "Helaman 6:21-30; 8:3-4; 3 Nephi 6:28-30 and Ether 8:10-16, 22-26 appear to be influenced by anti-Masonic terminology and concerns. They may be explained best, it seems to me, as Joseph Smith's independent commentary on Masonry, sparked by his reflection on Nephite secret combinations."

On pages 64-65 of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we told of the revivals which swept through New York in the early 19th century and their effect on the text of the Book of Mormon. In his article in *Dialogue*, page 87, Mr. Ostler is willing to concede that

A Christian expansion in Mosiah's speech is detectable on form critical grounds. Mosiah 2-5 would appear to be reminiscent of a nineteenth-century camp/revival meeting on first reading . . .

However, not all of Mosiah 1-6 can be explained as a nineteenth-century camp meeting and conversion experience.

In our book, pages 65-66, we showed that the Book of Mormon's statements concerning baptism of infants probably came from the controversy that was going on in Joseph Smith's day. On pages 80-81 of his article, Mr. Ostler admits that the discussion over baptism of infants came from 19th century teachings:

The Book of Mormon also addresses problems that simply were not, and could not be, problems for Israelites. For example, the salvation of infants and those who had not heard the gospel arises only if a soteriology is adopted which excludes the unbaptized or non-Christians. In Hebrew thought non-Israelites are not thus excluded . . .

Nineteenth-century Methodist theology taught, however, that non-Christians and the unbaptized could not be saved. The Methodist solution resembles the Book of Mormon's. John Fletcher . . . a Methodist theologian . . . stated that "Christ died for the entire human race, first to procure absolutely and unconditionally a temporal salvation, for men universally, and secondly, to procure a particular redemption, or an eternal salvation, conditionally for all men, but absolutely for all that die in infancy . . .

Those who accept Blake Ostler's idea that the discussion of the salvation and baptism of infants was not on the gold plates are forced to the conclusion that Joseph Smith put words into the mouths of the ancient "Nephite" prophets that they never uttered. In Mosiah 15:1 and 25 we read: "And now Abinadi said unto them: . . . little children also have eternal life." In Moroni 8:1, 2 and 9 we find the following: "An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; . . . My beloved son, Moroni, . . . if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children. . . . wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children."

On page 70 of his article in *Dialogue*, Mr. Ostler commented: "The prophecies of the discovery of America and the role of a gentile nation in the Book of Mormon can be most reasonably explained, in my opinion, as popular nineteenth-century concepts inserted in the text by Joseph Smith (1 Ne. 13:10-20)." The reader who takes the time to examine the verses cited by Ostler, 1 Nephi 13:10-20, will find that Nephi identifies himself three times in these verses as the actual author of the prophecies. The words "I, Nephi, beheld" are found in verses 16, 19 and 29. What we have in these examples goes far beyond adding some explanatory material to the text. If Blake Ostler's theory is correct, this would mean that Joseph Smith was actually impersonating the ancient Nephite prophets Abinadi, Mormon and Nephi! That Ostler believes that Joseph Smith was taking the role of Abinadi to present his own views is obvious from his comment about Mosiah 15 on page 97 of his article: ". . . Joseph Smith here addresses, **through Abinadi**, how the Son can be both fully man and fully God." It would appear to us that Mr. Ostler's theory puts the Book of Mormon in the same class as the Salamander Letter. Actually, if Ostler's theory is taken seriously, the Salamander Letter would be in a

superior position to some portions of the Book of Mormon because it relates a number of historical facts that can be established from other sources. It is true that the letter was not really written by Martin Harris and that Mark Hofmann added some of his own ideas, but most of the letter is based on actual historical facts found in affidavits and early Mormon writings. Hofmann, of course, cannot be commended for his devious work on the Salamander Letter, but at least his document has some basis in fact. The portions of the Book of Mormon which Ostler cites as Joseph Smith's expansions appear to be made up out of nothing but whole cloth and verses plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible. Ostler's theory would have Joseph Smith making up large sections of material which were not based on historical facts and attributing them to the ancient Nephites.

To us the expansion theory seems like a theory of desperation put forth by someone who feels that the Book of Mormon must be salvaged at any cost. It might be compared to Hugh Nibley's attempt to save the Book of Abraham when Egyptologists found that the papyrus it was translated from was in reality the pagan Book of Breathings (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 311-331). One of Dr. Nibley's theories was that the characters may have had more than one meaning and that Egyptologists were unable to find the real text "concealed within it." Rather than admit that any of Joseph Smith's documents are forgeries, some Mormons will come up with fantastic theories. We all seem to have a difficult time adjusting to new evidence which does not fit our previous beliefs. There are, in fact, a number of people who still believe in the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. Some of them will probably find a way to continue to believe no matter what evidence is presented.

It might help those who subscribe to the expansion theory of the Book of Mormon to try to apply the same ideas to the Salamander Letter. It could be argued, for instance, that while the letter we have today is not really in the handwriting of Martin Harris, the majority of the text really came from him. Mr. Ostler finds evidence in the Book of Mormon that he feels points to the existence of an ancient record. We can also find plenty of evidence in the Salamander Letter to show that it could be ancient—i.e., could be dated to 1830. We could say, then, that some individual allowed Mark Hofmann to make a handwritten copy of a real letter written by Martin Harris in 1830. The person who let him make the copy has since disappeared and therefore the original cannot be checked against the present copy. This would be equivalent to the story of the angel taking back the Book of Mormon plates so that the text of the printed book cannot be checked. The problem concerning portions of E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* being found in the letter (which is equivalent to portions of the King James Version of the Bible in the

Book of Mormon) could be explained by the expansion theory. That is that Mark Hofmann recopied the letter and added these portions because he thought they were also good history. This would explain how the text could really date back to 1830 and yet have portions that were plagiarized from a book printed four years later. While this might make a good sounding theory on paper, it is doubtful that it would find acceptance among scholars. If we have to admit that Hofmann would use plagiarism to create part of the letter, how can we be certain that the entire letter was not made in this way? It would, in fact, be much easier to get rid of the whole cumbersome theory and just admit that the letter is a forgery. So it is with the Book of Mormon. Once we admit that Joseph Smith used plagiarism and included his own ideas in the book, how can we trust the rest of his "translation"? Such incompetence would throw the entire book into question. It would be much easier to believe that Joseph Smith made up the Book of Mormon.

In the Articles of Faith, written by Joseph Smith himself, we find the following: "8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God so far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." The reader will note that the Bible is only "the word of God as far as it is translated correctly," whereas the Book of Mormon is accepted as "the word of God" without qualification. Blake Ostler's theory would certainly make the 8th Article of Faith out of date. According to this theory, belief in the Book of Mormon would have to be qualified by the possibility of plagiarism of mistranslated verses from the Bible as well as Joseph Smith's interpolation of his early theological views which were superseded by later revelations.

Mr. Ostler apparently realized that his theory was not very flattering to Joseph Smith's image as a translator, and therefore on page 111 of his article he indicated that Smith might not have intentionally made the expansions:

It would not be necessary for Joseph Smith to be aware of his expansions and interpretations of the Book of Mormon simply because they were a part of his experience. In fact, he seems to have been unaware of how his nineteenth-century framework and theological categories or past experiences affected the Book of Mormon or his other revelations since he appears to have believed, despite recognitions in revelation to the contrary, that the words used were God's . . .

While Ostler's idea that Joseph Smith did not really realize that he was expanding the text may remove the sinister element in some people's minds, it certainly does not instill confidence in the contents of the Book of Mormon. If Ostler is correct, then it is obvious that at least part of the Book of Mormon is the work of Joseph Smith's own imagination. The reader will remember that Dr.

Hugh Nibley claimed that a “forgery” is defined as “any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.” If Ostler’s theory is correct, then at least part of the Book of Mormon must be considered as forged material. While it might make some people feel better to believe that Joseph Smith really thought he was translating this material from gold plates, it would not change the fact that the material is spurious.

Actually, Blake Ostler’s thesis concerning the Book of Mormon is quite similar to our own. While he maintains that part of the words attributed to the ancient Nephites really came from Joseph Smith’s creative imagination, the Bible or other sources, we believe that the contents of the entire book are a product of the 19th century. We feel that what Ostler identifies as an ancient text is in reality plagiarism of ideas and verses from the Old and New Testaments of the King James Bible. It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith may have also used other ancient sources like Josephus which were available in his time. While Mr. Ostler’s theory seems to provide a way of escape from some serious questions about the text of the Book of Mormon, it opens up the floodgate to many other problems. How could a person really trust any of the text once it is admitted that Joseph Smith was capable of putting his own words into the mouths of the ancient Nephite prophets? Once a person goes so far as to admit that Joseph Smith made up part of the story, it is very easy to go one step further and conclude that the Nephites only existed in Joseph Smith’s own fertile imagination. While Mr. Ostler has not followed his research to its logical conclusion, he has presented a very interesting and provocative article. That *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* would print such a long article on this sensitive subject shows that there is a great deal of interest in the subject of the historicity of the Book of Mormon among Mormon scholars.

Even though Blake Ostler does put a great deal of trust in Hugh Nibley’s claim that the Book of Mormon comes from an ancient text, he has not fallen for some of the other sensational claims put forth by Mormon apologists. Concerning the wordprint analysis of the text of the Book of Mormon, he says that this “is a far-from-fixed field” (*Ibid.*, page 101), and goes on to say that the claim that chiasms appear in the Book of Mormon does not prove the text is ancient: “Chiasmus can also be found in some nineteenth-century works, including the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Book of Abraham* . . . Thus, the assumption that chiasmus is an exclusively ancient poetic device appears to be false” (*Ibid.*). On the same page, Mr. Ostler also frankly admits that “Despite vigorous debate, no concrete evidence exists establishing a Book of Mormon archeology . . .”

On page 97 of his article, Mr. Ostler suggested that in one instance Joseph Smith may have suppressed “Nephi’s

own prophecy” and copied some material from the King James Version in its stead. In our opinion, this would mean that Joseph Smith was falsifying the ancient text rather than providing a correct translation. This would certainly be contrary to Joseph Smith’s own statement about the translation. In one case he even cited an angel of God as certifying that the translation was correct:

. . . we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, “These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 54-55)

In the *History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 461, we read that Joseph Smith stated he “told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, . . .” Joseph Smith’s own statements certainly do not leave any room for the expansion of the text which Blake Ostler speaks of, nor do they allow for the plagiarism which is apparent to everyone who makes a serious study of the Book of Mormon. As strange as it may seem, Joseph Smith even made an attack on those who translated and transcribed the text of the Bible: “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 57). In the Book of Mormon itself the Catholics were charged with altering the Bible:

. . . thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book [the Bible] hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book. . . . because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book. . . . because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (*Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 13:26-29)

The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen made these statements concerning the Bible: “Many insertions were made, some of them ‘slanted’ for selfish purposes, while

at times deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated” (*As Translated Correctly*, Salt Lake City, 1966, page 4). On page 14 of the same book, Apostle Petersen talked of “deliberate changes, deletions and forgeries” made in the Bible. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., the son of the tenth President of the Mormon Church, charged:

The early “apostate fathers” did not think it was wrong to tamper with inspired scripture. If any scripture seemed to endanger their viewpoint, it was altered, transplanted or completely removed from the biblical text. All this was done that they might keep their traditions. Such mutilation was considered justifiable to preserve the so-called “purity” of their doctrines. (*Religious Truths Defined*, Salt Lake City, 1959, pages 175-176)

Those who accept Blake Ostler’s theory concerning Joseph Smith expanding the text of the Book of Mormon with his own ideas will have a difficult time explaining away the statements by Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders concerning the evil practice of altering scripture. As we have already stated, our position is that the entire Book of Mormon is the product of Smith’s vivid imagination. Very few people would have the audacity to plagiarize the Bible and other sources to create a book of over 500 pages, claim that it was scripture and then turn around and condemn the Catholics for altering the Bible. This might best be compared with Mark Hofmann’s brazen-faced approach to the Mormon leaders—i.e., using the church’s own archives to obtain material to create forgeries to sell to the church.

As to the charge that the Catholics made serious changes in the Bible, since Joseph Smith’s time many ancient Bible manuscripts have been found. Some of the papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament date back to 200 A.D., and one fragment from the book of John goes back to about 125-130 A.D. With regard to the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided a great deal of evidence for the text of the Bible. A copy of the Isaiah Scroll is dated about 100 B.C. and a fragmentary copy of the book of Samuel is believed to be 125 to 175 years earlier! These manuscripts reveal that there was no Catholic conspiracy to alter the scriptures as Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders have charged. We have a great deal of information on this matter in our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 375-385.

In Mormonism we were always taught that the Bible was corrupted and that we needed Joseph Smith to restore the truth. Now that we understand his methods, it is clear that he just added his own confusion. While we would think that the doctrinal teachings in the Book of Mormon, which is supposed to contain “the fulness of the

everlasting Gospel” (Book of Mormon, Preface), could be relied upon, it is obvious that the church has abandoned some of the most important doctrines of the Book of Mormon. Blake Ostler, in fact, says that “Many Book of Mormon doctrines are best explained by the nineteenth century theological milieu.” If this is the case, how do we know that Joseph Smith’s later doctrines are any more reliable? Since he originally claimed that the teachings in the Book of Mormon were the word of God, how can we be certain that his later doctrines didn’t come from sources that he became familiar with after he wrote the Book of Mormon? We know, for instance, that Joseph Smith became a Mason and right after this he brought forth a temple ceremony that has many parallels to Masonry (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 484-492).

So far the Mormon leaders have not been willing to come to grips with the question of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon. This was made very clear in 1985 when Stan Larson lost his job with the church. Dr. Larson, who is considered to be one of the top scholars in the Mormon Church, made a detailed study of 3 Nephi, chapters 12-14, and found unmistakable evidence that this portion of the Book of Mormon “is not a genuine translation from an ancient language” which appeared on the gold plates; instead, he discovered that it was plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible. He even found that the plagiarism occurred some time after the “1769 printing” of the King James Version. In the September 1977 issue of the church publication, *The Ensign*, page 91, Stan Larson was referred to as “coordinator of the standard works translation in the Church Translation Services.” After church officials learned of his study, he was forced to resign (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1986, pages 26-29).

JOSEPH SMITH’S HISTORY

Twelve years after Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon, he came out with the Book of Abraham. As we stated earlier, the papyrus he claimed he translated it from turned out to be nothing but a pagan document known as the Book of Breathings. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 365-367 we demonstrated that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in writing the Book of Abraham. Plagiarism in Mormon Church documents did not cease when Joseph Smith died in 1844. In fact, one of the most ambitious forgeries we have ever encountered occurred during the time Brigham Young was running the church. This is the *History of the Church* which is still published by the Mormon Church. On the title page to volume 1 it is claimed that it is the “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet BY HIMSELF.” In the Preface to the *History of*

THE WASP

"...JOSEPH SMITH was arrested upon a requisition of Gov. Carlin, ... in accordance with a process from Gov. Reynolds of Missouri, upon the affidavit of Ex-Governor Boggs, complaining of the said Smith as 'being an accessory before the fact, to an assault with an intent to kill, made by one O. P. Rockwell on Lilburn W. Boggs,' on the night of the sixth of May A. D. 1842. Mr. Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. There was no evasion of the officers, tho' the Municipal court issued a writ of habeas corpus according to the constitution of the State, article 8, and section 13. This writ demanded the bodies of Messrs. Smith and Rockwell to be brought before the aforesaid Court, but these officers refused to do so, and finally without complying, they left THEM in care of the Marshal, without the original writ by which THEY were arrested, and by which only THEY could be retained, and returned back to Gov. Carlin for further instruction, — and MESSRS. SMITH and Rockwell went about THEIR business....

"As to Mr. Smith, we have yet to learn by what rule of right HE was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated. 'An accessory to an assault with an intent to kill,' does not come under the purview of the fugitive act, when the person charged has not been out of Illinois &c., An accessory before the fact, to manslaughter is somewhat of an anomaly. The isolated affidavit of Ex-Governor Boggs is no more than any other man's, and while the Constitution says 'that no person shall be liable to be transported out of the State, for an offense committed within the same.' ... The whole seems to be another Missouri farce. In fact, implied power, and constructive guilt, as a dernier resort, may answer the purpose of despotic governments, but are beneath the dignity of the sons of liberty, and would be a blot on our juridical escutcheon...."
(The Wasp, August 13, 1842)

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

"...I was arrested... on a warrant issued by Governor Carlin, founded on a requisition from Governor Reynolds of Missouri, upon the affidavit of ex-Governor Boggs, complaining of the said Smith as 'being an accessory before the fact, to an assault with intent to kill made by one Orrin P. Rockwell on Lilburn W. Boggs.' on the night of the sixth of May, A. D. 1842. Brother Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. There was no evasion of the officers, though the municipal court issued a writ of habeas corpus according to the constitution of the state, Article 8, and Section 13. This writ demanded the bodies of Messrs. Smith and Rockwell to be brought before the aforesaid court; but these officers refused to do so, and finally without complying, they left US in the care of the marshal, without the original writ by which WE were arrested, and by which only WE could be retained, and returned to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and MYSELF and Rockwell went about OUR business.

"I have yet to learn by what rule of right I was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated. 'An accessory to an assault with intent to kill,' does not come under the provision of the fugitive act, when the person charged has not been out of Illinois, &c. An accessory before the fact to manslaughter is something of an anomaly. The isolated affidavit of ex-Governor Boggs is no more than any other man's, and the constitution says, 'that no person shall be liable to be transported out of the state, for an offense committed within the same.' The whole is another Missouri farce. In fact, implied power, and constructive guilt, as a dernier resort, may answer the purpose of despotic governments, but are beneath the dignity of the Sons of Liberty, and would be a blot on our judicial escutcheon."
(History of the Church, Vol. 5, pp. 86-87)

A comparison of part of the text from the newspaper, *The Wasp*, with the *History of the Church*. There can be no question that the newspaper article has been plagiarized to create part of "Joseph Smith's *History*." Notice that the words have been changed to the first person to deceive the reader into believing Joseph Smith was the author.

the Church, it is asserted that “a history more correct in its details than this was never published,” and that it is “one of the most authentic histories ever written.” As early as 1965 we published a book entitled, *Changes in Joseph Smith’s History*, in which we demonstrated that the *History of the Church* is anything but “one of the most authentic histories ever written.” On the cover we charged that since the first printing more than 64,000 words had been added or deleted. Even more important, however, was our suggestion that “most of the history was not written by Joseph Smith.” Only a small part of the History had been published before Joseph Smith’s death, and we concluded from evidence we found in the text that church historians under Brigham Young had made up the largest portion of Joseph Smith’s *History* after his death. We speculated that Joseph Smith’s diaries were probably used for part of the *History*, but that church historians interpolated material of their own “and tried to make it appear that Joseph Smith had written it.” This theory was finally confirmed in 1971, when *Brigham Young University Studies* published an article by Dean Jessee. At that time Mr. Jessee was working at the LDS Church Historian’s Office and had access to the manuscript of Joseph Smith’s *History* and diaries which told how the *History* was written. In his article Dean Jessee frankly admitted that the manuscript was only completed to page 812 at the time of Joseph Smith’s death. Since there were almost 2,200 pages, this meant that over 60% of Joseph Smith’s *History* was not compiled during his lifetime! Mr. Jessee also gave this information in his article:

At the time of Joseph Smith’s death [June 27, 1844], the narrative was written to August 5, 1838 . . .

By February 4, 1846, the day the books were packed for the journey west, the History had been completed to March 1, 1843. . . .

The rigors of establishing a new commonwealth in the mountains precluded even the unboxing of the historical records of the Church until June 7, 1853. . . . resumption of work on the History occurred on “Dec. 1, 1853 [when] Dr. Willard Richards wrote one line of History being sick at the time—and was never able to do any more.” . . .

The remainder of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church from March 1, 1843 to August 8, 1844, was completed under the direction of George A. Smith. . . .

The Joseph Smith History was finished in August 1856, seventeen years after it was begun. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1971, pages 466, 469, 470 and 472)

The Church historians who worked under Brigham Young plagiarized from many sources to complete Joseph Smith’s *History*. Material was taken from newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed to the

first person in an obvious attempt to mislead readers into believing that it was written by Joseph Smith himself. A good example of the plagiarism is found in a comparison of an article from the newspaper, *The Wasp* with the *History of the Church*. The reader will find both texts in parallel columns on page 11. Our research has led us to conclude that the purported Joseph Smith prophecy concerning the Saints coming to the Rocky Mountains and the famous prophecy concerning Steven A. Douglas are both forgeries added to the *History* after Joseph Smith’s death. The reader will find a great deal more concerning the falsification of Joseph Smith’s *History* in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 126-142.

AVOIDING THE PROBLEM

The Mark Hofmann affair raises some serious questions for the Mormon Church. For instance, in a statement published by the church, the General Authorities now acknowledge that they were the victims of fraudulent activities:

Like other document collectors throughout the nation, the Church has relied on competent authorities in document acquisition and with the others has been a victim of the fraudulent activities which have now been acknowledged in the courtroom. As earlier announced, the Church acquired forty-eight documents directly from Mark W. Hofmann . . . (*The Ensign*, April 1987, page 77)

It is good to see the Mormon leaders frankly admitting they were victims of fraud. The fact that they acknowledge that they relied only upon “competent authorities in document acquisition” when they acquired the forgeries seems to belie their claim that they are led by revelation. The important question, of course, is why was the Prophet, Seer and Revelator Spencer W. Kimball unable to detect that the church was being deceived when he examined the Anthon Transcript—a document supposed to contain Joseph Smith’s copy of characters from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon—with a magnifying glass? Instead of denouncing Mark Hofmann as a deceiver, as Peter did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3), the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” allowed Mr. Hofmann to have \$20,000 worth of trade items for the forged document. That Spencer W. Kimball and all the other leaders of the church were deceived by Hofmann time after time does not seem to square with their claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible. At least two of the documents they obtained contain revelations purporting to come from the Lord. It now appears that a wolf in sheep’s clothing can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them

past the scrutiny of the highest officials of the Mormon Church.

It also seems likely that if Mark Hofmann had not given himself away by planting bombs, the church might have bought an entire book of “scripture” from him. The book we are referring to is the book of Lehi—also known as the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. In the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, April 5, 1987, page 47, Robert Jones claims that “in Hofmann’s house detectives found evidence that the 116 Lost Pages of the Book of Mormon were being prepared.” Hugh Pinnock, the Mormon leader who helped Hofmann obtain a loan for \$185,000 to buy the McLellin Collection, was apparently very interested in acquiring the book of Lehi for the church. Robert Jones reported:

The church officer [Hugh Pinnock] smiled and then said there was a favor he would like to ask in return. Christensen recorded the request in his diary:

“Elder Pinnock mentioned to Mark that sometime he would like to talk with him about retaining his services to track down two items. One was revealed as the missing 116 pages. Elder Pinnock was not in a position to reveal the second item.” . . . The highest leaders of the church, by all appearances, had succumbed to his talents and were asking for his help. (*Ibid.*, March 29, 1986, page 35)

On page 11 of the same article, Robert Jones reveals: “Hofmann said he thought the 116 pages were out there, somewhere; he was investigating some leads. At one dinner party he told a friend that the church had offered him \$2 million for the Lost Pages. He said he thought the offer was low. He would ask \$10 million.” One of Mr. Hofmann’s associates has confirmed to us that this story is essentially true—the only difference he noted is that he thought Hofmann said the church had offered him 2 to 3 million dollars for the missing pages. In *Tracking the White Salamander*, page 108, we reported that one Mormon scholar paid “\$25,000 for just one leaf” Hofmann had forged from the book of Nephi. We reasoned that since the book of Nephi exists in printed form in the Book of Mormon and the RLDS Church owns the handwritten copy of the manuscript the Book of Mormon was printed from, the lost pages from the book of Lehi “would certainly be worth far more.” According to Mark Hofmann’s associate, this was the very reasoning Hofmann used when he said the offer of 2 or 3 million dollars by the church was not enough for the missing portion of the Book of Mormon. In any case, the bombings ended Mark Hofmann’s career as a document dealer and the Mormon Church was apparently spared the ultimate embarrassment of being caught with a forged copy of the

book of Lehi. The church’s own newspaper, *Deseret News*, had already reported that the Salamander letter had been “authenticated” as having come from the pen of Martin Harris, and since Harris was supposed to be the main scribe for the 116 missing pages, the Salamander letter would have been used to authenticate the book of Lehi.

Although we may never know the full story concerning the 116 missing pages and Mark Hofmann’s plan to sell them to the church, it is obvious that he already had the Mormon leaders in the palm of his hand. In an article written for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 19, 1986, Mike Carter talked of the blind trust the church authorities had in Hofmann:

Convoluted deals involving the attempted sale of million-dollar documents, the manufacturing of plates to counterfeit “Mormon money” and the seemingly blind trust of LDS officials in bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann dominated the fifth day of his preliminary hearing . . .

It was apparent from Mr. Schmidt’s testimony that the LDS Church relied on its own people—who the historian acknowledged were “not forensic or handwriting experts”—to authenticate the more [part of] almost 50 documents the church purchased from Mr. Hofmann. It also was apparent that church leaders, including President Hinckley, trusted Mr. Hofmann implicitly, to the point where negotiations over the price the church was willing to pay for Hofmann documents reached the offices of the first presidency.

Now that the leaders of the Mormon Church have acknowledged that they were fooled by a young man who was about Joseph Smith’s age when he brought forth the Book of Mormon, they need to take a closer look at Joseph Smith’s remarkable discoveries. While the evidence against Hofmann’s forgeries seems irrefutable, that against the “scriptures” produced by Joseph Smith is much stronger. It is, in fact, absolutely overwhelming. In Chapter 3 of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we demonstrated photographically the serious textual changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations which are published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Chapter 5 shows how Smith plagiarized the King James Version of the Bible in producing the Book of Mormon and how he borrowed from other sources such as the Westminster Confession. Chapter 22 shows that he mistranslated the Egyptian papyrus which he claimed was the Book of Abraham. This pagan text has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Chapter 24 proves that Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Revision” of the Bible finds no real support in the thousands of ancient manuscripts of the New Testament and that the Old Testament portion contradicts the evidence found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. As if this were not bad enough, Chapter 7 shows how Joseph

Smith's successors used plagiarism and falsification to create what they called Joseph Smith's *History* "BY HIMSELF."

Taken as a whole, the evidence clearly shows that the foundational documents of Mormonism are unreliable and must be viewed in the same class with Mark Hofmann's forgeries. The seriousness of this matter cannot be overemphasized. What would be the difference between Joseph Smith plagiarizing the King James Version of the Bible to create the Book of Mormon and Mark Hofmann appropriating ideas and words from *Mormonism Unveiled* to write the Salamander Letter? In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 133-135 we discussed how after Joseph Smith's death the church historians interpolated the prophecy into the *History of the Church* that the Saints would "become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." It is put in the first person ("I prophesied") in a deliberate attempt to convince the reader that Joseph Smith himself had written it, and was obviously intended to bolster up the claim that the group which went west under Brigham Young was the true church. Mark Hofmann, on the other hand, forged a blessing document which was supposed to have been dictated by Joseph Smith which designated his son as his true successor. There is actually some evidence that Joseph Smith may have named his son as his successor to lead the Mormon Church. Much to Brigham Young's dismay, Joseph Smith's son became the prophet for a rival group known as the Reorganized Church. What Mark Hofmann did was supply a handwritten document which seemed to prove that Brigham Young was not the true successor. It would appear that Hofmann used the Mormon Church's own method to create his forgery—i.e., put his own words into Joseph Smith's mouth. What is the difference between Brigham Young having his historians insert a forged prophecy to promote his leadership and Mark Hofmann creating a blessing document that said the true successor was Joseph Smith's son?

We are of the opinion that Mark Hofmann was well aware of the plagiarism and forgery that took place under the early Mormon leaders, and, although his actions cannot be excused, he may have decided to use their methods in an attempt to show what the true history of the church was really like.

Whatever the case may be, the serious nature of the crime of forgery became evident when Mark Hofmann was sentenced to "1-to-15 years" in the Utah State Prison for his deception in selling the forged Salamander Letter. While it could be argued that the early Mormon leaders did not receive the same type of financial remuneration that Hofmann did when he sold his documents, they undoubtedly received many benefits. David Whitmer, one of the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon, indicated that there was some discussion about receiving

a profit when the Book of Mormon was published:

When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, . . . Brother Hyrum thought they should not wait any longer on Martin Harris, and that the money should be raised in some other way. Brother Hyrum was vexed with Brother Martin, and thought they should get the money by some means outside of him, and not let him have anything to do with the publication of the Book, or receiving any of the profits thereof if any profits should accrue. . . . Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money: . . . Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go . . . sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. . . . but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, pages 30-31)

Like Mark Hofmann, Joseph Smith seems to have gone through a great deal of money. He was unable to handle it, and in 1842 he petitioned to be declared bankrupt. United States Attorney for Illinois J. Butterfield said that he "defeated Joseph Smith . . . from obtaining the benefit of the Bankrupt Act." In a letter to C. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, dated October 13, 1842, Butterfield said that he had found that Smith was guilty of "fraudulent transfers of his property" to avoid paying his debts (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 534-535). Brigham Young, the second president of the church, became extremely wealthy. Stanley P. Hirshon says that "in the 1870 census he declared personal property worth \$102,000 and real estate valued at \$1,010,600" (*The Lion of the Lord*, page 247). Leonard J. Arrington, who later became Church Historian, wrote:

Brigham Young and other church authorities, when need required it, drew on the tithing resources of the church, and at a later date repaid part or all of the obligation in money, property, or services. No interest seems to have been paid for the use of these funds. . . . This ability to draw, almost at will, on church as well as his own funds, was a great advantage to Brigham Young and was certainly one of the reasons for his worldly success. . . . while Brigham Young was probably the largest borrower of funds from the trustee-in-trust, he was certainly not the only one. ("The Settlement of the Brigham Young Estate," 1877-1879, Reprinted from the *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, February 1952, pages 7-8)

In addition to money, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young derived a great deal of power over the people who

were converted to Mormonism. If it were not for the questionable documents they published, they probably never would have gained such notoriety. It could be argued, of course, that Brigham Young was not aware of the truth concerning the Book of Mormon. While this may be true, he was directly responsible for the falsification of Joseph Smith's *History*. This massive forgery was not completed until August 1856, over a decade after Joseph Smith's death.

While the present leaders of the Mormon Church had nothing to do with the creation of this spurious history, they have continued to print it without giving any notice that the largest portion of it was not compiled by Joseph Smith. The title page still states that Joseph Smith's *History* was written "BY HIMSELF." In 1975 it did appear that the church was making a move to get an honest history. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 13-B, we reported that Church Historian Leonard Arrington was appointed to oversee the production of a sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church. These volumes were to be authored by prominent Mormon scholars. Contracts were signed with 16 Mormon historians and publication was scheduled for the 150th anniversary of the church (1980). Unfortunately, however, the church leaders decided not to publish the history when they found that the scholars were telling too much. Since they had binding contracts with the authors, they were forced to pay those who had completed their volumes \$20,000. That the General Authorities would approve this immense project and then abort it after some of the church's top scholars spent years working on it shows a total lack of inspiration and a desire to suppress the truth.

Some people felt that when the sesquicentennial history was published the Joseph Smith *History* would be phased out. As it turned out, Mormons are still stuck with the bogus history, and there is no indication that church leaders will face up to the issue. A statement by Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer concerning the changes in Joseph Smith's revelations seems to apply equally well to this situation:

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given . . . You have changed and altered the revelations to support the error of publishing those revelations in a book: the errors you are in, revelations have been changed to support and uphold them. You who are now living did not change them, but **you who strive to defend these things, are as guilty in the sight of God as those who did change them.** (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 49)

Now that the Hofmann documents have been discredited and it is plain to see that church leaders have been deceived, Mormons need to take a closer look at the documents that came through the hands of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Prior to the Salamandergate scandal, many Mormons believed that their leaders could not be fooled by fake documents or con men. It is now evident, however, that they are not infallible and that they make mistakes just like the rest of us. It is painfully obvious that they have no special insight even with regard to documents that are purported to be sacred. They cannot tell a Hofmann letter from a Joseph Smith letter, or even a Hofmann revelation from a revelation given by the Lord. The ward teacher's message for June 1945 admonished Mormons to let the leaders do the thinking:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the "prophets, seers, or revelators" of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . . Lucifer has a very cunning way of convincing unsuspecting souls that the general authorities of the Church are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right. . . . **He wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to "do their own thinking."** . . .

When our leaders speak, the **thinking has been done**. When they propose a plan—it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 26, 1945, page 51)

In Jeremiah 17:5 we read: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." In the light of what has happened in the Hofmann scandal, it is time for the Mormon people to wake up and begin to examine their own faith with a prayerful attitude and an honest heart before the Lord.

For all those who would really like to investigate the truth, we highly recommend our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* The regular price is \$11.95 for soft cover and \$14.95 for hard cover, but if it is ordered before June 30, 1987, the price will be only \$9.95 for soft cover and \$12.95 for hard cover (mail order add 10% for postage and handling).



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