

DELUSIONS: ALEXANDER CAMPBELL EXAMINES THE FIRST EDITION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

by **David Lee Burris**



RESULTS OF SPOOFING

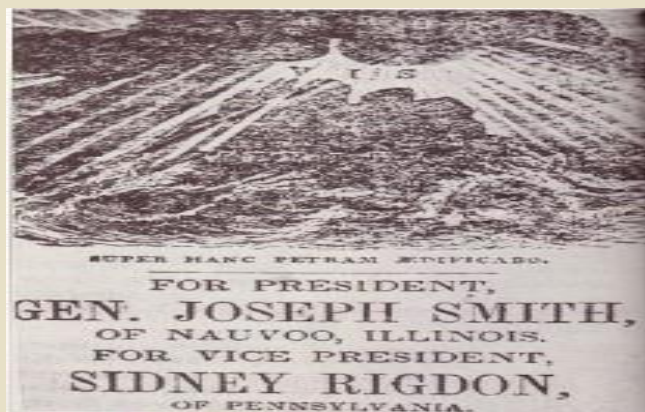
Although he had written a paper criticizing Book of Mormon archaeology, Tom Stuart Ferguson felt that it was generally best for those who doubted the faith to keep their "mouth shut." In a letter written Feb. 9, 1976, he gave this advice:

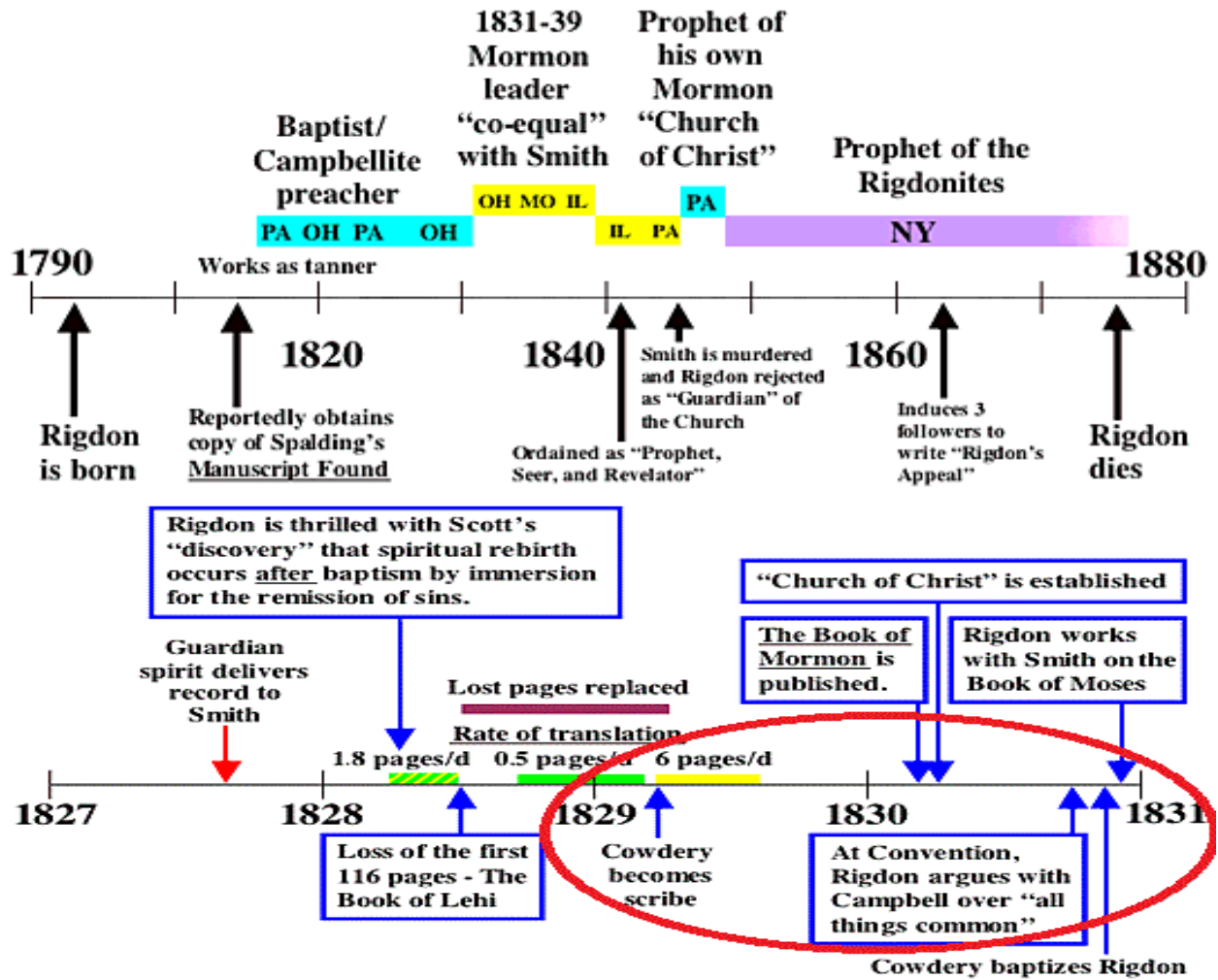
"...Mormonism is probably the best conceived myth-fraternity to which one can belong... Joseph Smith tried so hard he put himself out on a limb with the Book of Abraham, and also with the Book of Mormon. He can be refuted--but why bother... It would be like wiping out placebos in medicine & that would make no sense when they do lots of good.... Perhaps you and I have been spoofed by Joseph Smith. Now that we have the inside dope-- why not spoof a little back and stay aboard? Please consider this letter confidential -- for obvious reasons. I want to stay aboard the good ship, Mormonism..." Salt Lake City Messenger

Alexander Campbell Had Personal History With The Mormon Leaders



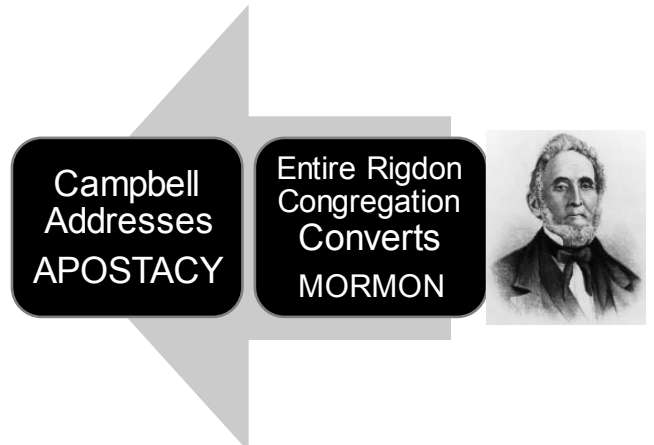
JOSEPH SMITH & SIDNEY RIGDON





"On their way to Missouri, Cowdery's *New Jerusalem* party passed through northeastern Ohio, where Sidney Rigdon and over a hundred followers of his variety of Campbellite Restorationism converted to Mormonism, more than doubling the size of the *Mormon* church. Rigdon soon visited New York and quickly became Smith's primary assistant." - Wiki

1830



THE
MILLENNIAL HARBINGER.

"MORMONISM -- *The Means by which it stole the True Gospel.*

"IT is well known that the Mormons preach the true gospel and plead for immediate obedience to it on the part of the hearers, as the advocates of original Christianity do. This was not an original measure of Mormonism; for, indeed, baptism for the remission of sins is a phrase not found in their book. A few of their leaders took it from Rigdon, at Euclid, on the Western Reserve, as may be learned from brother Jones' account of their first visit to Kirtland, published in a preceding volume of the *Evangelist*. Rigdon, we were perfectly aware, had possessed himself of our analysis of the gospel and the plea for obedience raised thereupon; but not, choosing to rely on my own recollection of the means by, and the times at, which they were imparted to him, we wrote to Mr. Bentley, who is his brother -in-law, for the necessary information. Mr. Bentley's letter shows not only whence he received his knowledge of the true gospel; but also that, coward that he was, he had not the independence necessary to preach it in his own vicinity after he had received it. Thus, knowledge of ordering and pleading the elements of the true gospel by that people, is seen to arise near the same time and from the same source as that of our own reformation."

THE
MILLENNIAL HARBINGER.

Men remember what they *hear*, as well as what they *see*. Again, if men are said to "steal" what they see, may they not be said to "steal" what they hear? And if nothing short of seeing an action performed could explain this mystery, how comes the good Baptist Taylor to insert in his history of churches in Kentucky, writing about the time of the aforesaid conversation, the same views on this subject which are contained in the Book of Mormon? It is, therefore, no disparagement of these views of baptism that they are found in the Book of Mormon, more than that they are found in Taylor's History of Ten Baptist Churches in Kentucky, published three years before the Book of Mormon. But that **Sidney Rigdon** had a hand in the manufacture of the religious part of the Book of Mormon is clearly established from this fact, and from other expressions in that book, as certainly "stolen" from our brethren as that he once was amongst them. Our brother of the *Evangelist* seems on other occasions, as well as this, to draw conclusions.

Mormons often refer to the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Most of these men left the Church, but claims are also made that even though they did, they never denied that they had seen an angel who showed them "the plates of the Book of Mormon." However, in the *Journal of Discourses*, (7:164), **Brigham Young stated that:**

...witnesses of the Book of Mormon who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel.

Joseph Smith himself called these men wicked and liars, and by many other demeaning names. In the *Journal of Discourses*, 7: 114-115, George A. Smith lists those who have left the Church and mentions specifically, among others, "the witnesses of the Book of Mormon." Martin Harris later claimed that he had a *better* testimony of the "Shakers Book" than he ever had of the Book of Mormon. Reading about these witnesses, one is drawn to the conclusion that they were unstable men and easily convinced; for example, Martin Harris changed his religion at least eight times. Some of the others started their own religions later. -*The Truth About Mormonism (Website)*

Was Sidney Rigdon Grooming The Restoration Movement For Joseph Smith & Mormonism?

Rigdon Preached "Gathering of Israel" America Fulfilled:

Millennial Harbinger Quote: "Chap. xvi. verse 16. 'Behold I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.' From this last expression **it is possible the ten tribes are now in some of the high and yet unexplored table lands of central and northern Asia, or they may be the American Indians**; at all events, there are many portions of this globe the geography of which is but inadequately understood. Let Infidelity look to this, and be afraid; let Scepticism and Atheism hide their diminished heads when the Lord does this great miracle before men." (June, 1830)

"This millennial craze did the Disciples much injury, especially in the circumstance that **it prepared the minds of numbers of their communicants to give a favorable reception to Joseph Smith, and to think with more regard than was becoming upon the literal "gathering" of the faithful to Zion, an idea with which the Book of Mormon, and all other Mormon literature is crowded to repletion. Hayden says concerning this subject that "Rigdon, who always caught and proclaimed the last word that fell from the lips of Scott or Campbell, seized these views and with the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere (p.186). But from the extensive place occupied by the topic in the Book of Mormon as edited by Sidney Rigdon, we are bound to conclude that he was inoculated with this unhappy madness at the time when himself & Scott were fellow elders of the Sandemanian church in Pittsburgh. The fact that the latter was already at this early period infected with a millennial malady may be concluded from the circumstance that upon his removal to Steubenville he had made all his preparations to issue the "Millennial Herald," when he was unexpectedly called away to serve the Mahoning Association as their missionary" (Rich., [II:173](#)). – *William Whitsitt***

Rigdon Carried Advance Copies of the Book of Mormon:

Sidney Rigdon, a wolf in Campbellite preacher's clothing, already had the Spaulding manuscript (future Book of Mormonism) in 1823 when he offered to ride 300 miles on horseback with Alexander Campbell to the Campbell-McCalla debates in Kentucky, where he also served as the debate's "recorder". He was a mole from the start. He wanted to pick Alexander Campbell's brain! This explains many Restoration-themed similarities between the two great American religious movements of the time. He had already been hinting in his sermons to get ready for some exciting new "direct revelations" from God... CH Presentation

Said Darwin Atwater, a Patriarch in the Disciples Church at Mantua:
That he [Rigdon] knew before of the coming of The Book of Mormon is to me certain, from what he said the first of his visits to my father's some years before [at about the close of January 1827]." "He gave a wonderful description of the mounds and other antiquities found in some parts of America, and said they must have been made by the aborigines. He said there was a book to be published containing an account of those things. He spoke of these in his eloquent, enthusiastic style as being a thing most extraordinary.

Thomas Clapp said: Elder Adamson Bentley told me that as he was one day riding with Sidney Rigdon and conversing upon the Bible, Mr. Rigdon told him that another book of equal authority with the bible, as well authenticated and as ancient, which would give an account of the history of the Indian tribes on this continent, with many other things of great importance to the world, would soon be published. This was [two years] before Mormonism was ever heard of in Ohio, and when it appeared, the avidity with which Rigdon received it convinced him that if Rigdon was not the author of it he was at least acquainted with the whole matter some time before it was published to the world.

Samuel F. Whitney said:
I heard Sidney Rigdon preach in Squire Sawyers' orchard in 1827 or '28. He said how desirable it would be to know who built the forts and mounds about the country. Soon it would all be revealed. He undoubtedly referred to the "Book of Mormon" which was published in 1830.

John Rudolph stated:
For two years before The Book of Mormon appeared Rigdon's sermons were full of declarations and prophecies that the age of miracles would be restored, and more complete revelations, than those in the Bible, would be given. When The Book of Mormon appeared, all who heard him were satisfied that he referred to it.

Reuben P. Harmon said:
I resided in Kirtland when the Mormons first arrived. I was personally acquainted with Rigdon... I heard [him] several times say in his sermons that before long the Indian mounds and forts about there would all be explained. **He caused a row of log houses to be built on Isaac Morley's farm and established a Communistic Society.** I heard Rigdon preach his first sermon at Kirtland Flats, and after he embraced Mormonism. He said that he had been preaching wrong doctrine and asked their forgiveness...

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL RESPONDS:

INTERNAL & EXTERNAL EVIDENCES

It admits the Old and New Testaments to contain the revelations, institutions and commandments of God to Patriarchs, Jews, and Gentiles, down to the year 1830, and always, as such, speaks of them and quotes them.

This admission at once blasts its pretensions to any credibility. Admitting the bible now received to have come from God, it is impossible the book of Mormon came from the same author. For the following reasons: —

1. Smith, its real author, as ignorant and impudent a knave as ever wrote a book, betrays the cloven foot in basing his whole book upon a false fact, or a pretended fact, which makes God a liar.

With the Jews, God made a covenant at Mount Sinai, and instituted a priesthood and a high priesthood. The priesthood he gave to the tribe of Levi, and the high priesthood to Aaron and his sons for an everlasting priesthood. He separated Levi, and covenanted to give him this office irrevocably while ever the temple stood, or till the Messiah came. ‘Then, says God Moses shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest’s office, and the stranger, (the person of another family,) who cometh nigh, shall be put to death.’

Numbers iii.10. 'And the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord, and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried.'

Deut. xxi.5. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with 250 men of renown, rebelled against a part of the institution of the priesthood, and the Lord destroyed them in the presence of the whole congregation. This was to be a memorial that no stranger invade any part of the office of the priesthood.

Num. xvi.40. Fourteen thousand and seven hundred of the people were destroyed by a plague for murmuring against this memorial.

In the 18th chapter of Numbers the Levites are again given to Aaron and sons and the priesthood confirmed to them with this threat – 'The stranger that cometh night shall be put to death.' 'Even Jesus, says Paul, were he on earth, could not be a priest, for he was of a tribe concerning which Moses spake nothing of priesthood.'

Heb. vii.13. So irrevocable was the grant of priesthood to Levi, and of the high priesthood to Aaron, that no stranger dare approach the altar of God which Moses established. Hence, Jesus himself was excluded from officiating as priest on earth according to the law.

Although God had promised in the law of Moses, that if any man, not of the tribe and family of Levi and Aaron, should approach the office of priest, he would surely die; he is represented by Smith as blessing, approbating, and sustaining another family in this approbated office. The God of Abraham or Joseph Smith must then be a liar!! And who will hesitate to pronounce him imposter? This lie runs through the first 600 years of his story.

2. This ignorant and impudent liar, in the next place, makes the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, violate his covenants with Israel and Judah, concerning the land of Canaan, by promising a new land to the pious Jew.

If a company of reprobate Jews had indeed departed from Jerusalem and the temple, in the days of Zedekiah, and founded a new colony, it would not have been so incongruous. But to represent God as inspiring a devout Jew and prophet, as Levi and Nephi are represented by Smith, with a resolution to forsake Jerusalem and God's own house, and depart from the land which God swore to their fathers so long as they were obedient; and to guide by miracle and bless by prodigies a good man in forsaking God's covenant and worship – is so monstrous an error, that language fails to afford a name for it. It is to make God violate his own covenants, and to set at nought his own promises and to convert his own curses into his blessings.

Excision from the commonwealth of Israel, and the banishment from Jerusalem and the temple, were the greatest curses the law of Moses knew. But Smith makes a good and pious Jew the subject of this curse, and sends him off into the inhospitable wilderness, disinherits him in Canaan, and makes him more happy in forsaking the institutions of Moses, more intelligent in the wilderness, and more prosperous in adversity, than even the Jews in their best days, in the best of lands, and under the best of all governments!!!

The imposter was too ignorant of the history of the Jews and the nature of the covenants of promise, to have even alluded to them in his book, if he had not supposed that he had the plates of Moses in his own keeping, as he had his 'molten plates' of Nephi. To separate the family from the nation of Israel, was to accumulate all the curses of the law upon that family.

3. He has more of the Jews, living in the new world, than could have been numbered anywhere else, even in the days of John the Baptist; and has placed them under a new dynasty. The sceptre, with him, has then departed from Judah, and a lawgiver from among his descendants, hundreds of years before Shiloh came; and king Benjamin is a wiser and more renowned king than king Solomon. He seems to have gone upon an adage which saith, 'the more marvelous, the more credible the tale,' and the less of fact, and the more of fiction, the more intelligible and reasonable the narrative.

4. He represents the temple worship as continued in his new land of promise contrary to every precept of the law, and so happy are the people of Nephi as never to shed a tear on account of the excision, nor turn an eye toward Jerusalem or God's temple. The pious Jews in their captivity turned their faces to Jerusalem and the holy place, and remembered God's promises concerning the place where he recorded his name. They hung their harps upon the willow, and could not sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land; but the Nephites haven't a single wish for Jerusalem, for they, in their wigwam temple, in the wilderness of America, enjoy the presence of God more than the most righteous Jew could enjoy in that house of which David had rather be a doorkeeper, than to dwell in the tabernacles of men. And this too, when God's only house of prayer, according to his covenant with Israel, stood in Jerusalem.

5. Malachi, the last of the Jewish prophets, commanded Israel to regard the law of Moses till the Messiah came. And Moses commanded them to regard him till the Great Prophet came. But Nephi and Smith's prophets institute Jewish ordinances & observances, subversive of Moses, 500 years before the Great Prophet came.

6. Passing over a hundred similar errors, we shall next notice his ignorance of the New Testament matters and things. The Lamb's twelve Apostles, are said by Paul, to have developed certain secrets, which were hid for ages, which Paul says were ordained before the world to their glory, that they should have the honor of announcing,

But Smith makes his pious hero Nephi, 600 years before the Messiah began to preach, and disclose these secrets concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the blessings flow through the Messiah to Jews and Gentiles, which Paul says were hid for ages and generations, 'which in these ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it's now revealed to the holy Apostles and prophets, by the spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.' Smith makes Nephi express every truth found in the writings of the Apostles concerning the calling and blessing of the Gentiles, and even quotes the 11th chapter of Romans, and other passages before he had a son grow up in the wilderness able to aim an arrow at a deer. Paul says these things were secrets and unknown until his time; but Smith makes Nephi say the same things 600 years before Paul was converted! One of these two men is a false prophet. Mormonites, take your choice!

7. This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies – infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, the call to ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man. All are repeatedly alluded to.

How much more benevolent and intelligent is this American Apostle, than the holy twelve, and Paul to assist them!!!! He prophesied of all these topics, and of the apostacy, and infallibly decided, by his authority, every question. *How easy to prophecy of the past or of the present time!!!*

8. But he is better skilled in the controversies in New York than in the geography and/or history of Judea.

He makes John baptize in the village of Bethabara, (22) and says **Jesus was born in Jerusalem**, p. 240. Great must be the faith of the Mormonites in this new Bible!!!! *The mariners compass was only known in Europe about 300 years ago; but Nephi knew all about steam boats and the compass 2400 years ago.*

9. He represents the Christian institution as practiced among his Israelites before Jesus was born. And his Jews are *called Christians while keeping the law of Moses, the holy sabbath, and worshipping in their temple at their altars, and by their high priests.*

10. But not to honor him by a too minute examination, I will sum up the whole of which I deem remark worthy:

The book professes to be written at intervals and by different persons during the long period of 1020 years. And yet for uniformity of style, there never was a book more evidently written by one set of fingers, nor more certainly conceived in one cranium since the first book appeared in human language, than this book. If I could swear to any man's person, assuming different names, I could swear that this book was written by one man.

The Book of Mormon and the Ancient Evidence

by Dewayne Bryant, Ph.D.



Mormonism began in 1820, when Joseph Smith, Jr. purportedly received a vision of two heavenly beings claiming that all churches had become corrupted and that their creeds were abominations. Smith's divinely ordained duty was to restore the one true church. He claimed three years later an angel, named Moroni, paid him a visit, showing him the location of gold plates containing the true, eternal gospel. Written in "reformed Egyptian" hieroglyphs, this golden book contained the *Book of Mormon*, which Smith translated with a pair of magic spectacles. Seven years later in 1830, the Mormon church became a recognized entity for the first time.

The Mormons are a growing group which many people have labeled a "Christian denomination." This is the longstanding position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), and continues to be promoted today (Hickenbotham, 1995, p. 5). Unfortunately, Mormonism bears the hallmarks of a manmade religion, one of which is the reinvention and reinterpretation of an existing religion. Mormonism takes Christianity and reinterprets it. Mormonism's divergences from true Christianity include: Jesus being Lucifer's spiritual brother, the denial of the Trinity, and the belief that the faithful will one day become gods. The God of Mormonism is not the one true god of the Universe, but merely one god among many.

Smith once called the *Book of Mormon* "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion" (Smith, 1902, 4:461). In the introduction of the *Book of Mormon*, Smith states that it is "the record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas," which also contains "the fullness of the everlasting gospel." Any religion centered on a scriptural foundation stands or falls on the accuracy of its sacred text. While the Bible has a wealth of evidence supporting its historical, chronological, and geographical accuracy, the *Book of Mormon* has been heavily criticized for its inaccuracies. Is the *Book of Mormon* divine revelation, or is it simply the invention of a gifted storyteller?

One of the problems that plagues the Mormon scriptures is the anachronistic portrayal of various animals in the New World. The most problematic is the portrayal of horses in the Americas in the *Book of Mormon*, where they appear frequently prior to the age of exploration (1 Nephi 18:25, et al.). Anthropologists are in near-universal agreement that horses had become extinct in the Americas until European explorers reintroduced them to the continent. Scientists have found evidence of horses in the Americas prior to and after the period of time covered by the *Book of Mormon*, but not during. In addition to a lack of fossil evidence, Bruce MacFaden says, "Their extinction is...suggested by the fact that no horses are known to have been depicted in pre-Columbian art.... Horses were reintroduced into the New World by the Spanish explorers during the sixteenth century" (MacFaden, 1992, p. 3).

Janey Dohner notes that the horse was reintroduced to North America by Columbus on his second voyage, while Hernando de Soto reintroduced them to South America in 1539 (Dohner, 2001, p. 313).

Mormon author Diane Wirth dismisses this criticism and points to what she considers evidence of the presence of horses, although her best examples consist of a handful of poorly executed relief carvings and petroglyphs (Wirth, 1986, pp. 52-55). Wirth defends her point by drawing a parallel between the lack of evidence, particularly bone evidence, of horses in the Americas with the lack of evidence of lions in Palestine. She notes: "Today there are no so-called archaeological remains of lions in the land of Israel. Apparently not a bone has been left. Therefore, a lack of skeletal remains of an animal in a particular area does not necessarily mean that the animal was never there" (p. 56). Wirth is correct. If one were to rely purely on skeletal evidence, the existence of lions in Palestine would be nearly impossible to prove. But archaeologists have also discovered numerous reliefs depicting kings hunting lions, lion-shaped artifacts, and numerous references to lions in ancient texts. There is a wealth of evidence attesting to the existence of lions in ancient Israel. There is absolutely no parallel for the existence of horses in America prior to European exploration. This is not to say that the *Book of Mormon* is wrong because of a lack of evidence--which would be an argument from silence. Rather, it is simply to note that there is an inexplicable lack of evidence where it would be **reasonably expected**.

The lack of evidence of horses has prompted a shift in tactics on the part of Mormon apologists, who claim that the settlers in the New World would have called some other animal a "horse," most likely the tapir. Tapirs have toes rather than hoofs and are pig-like in appearance, including a short, thick neck and stubby tail. They are also smaller than horses. It is highly unlikely that one could have been mistaken for the other--and if the *Book of Mormon* was inspired, such mistakes would not have been made.

Steel was also unknown in the New World prior to the arrival of European explorers, yet the *Book of Mormon* mentions the use of both iron and steel (2 Nephi 5:15; Ether 7:9). A particularly noteworthy reference concerns a military leader named Laban, who is described as having a steel sword with a gold hilt (1 Nephi 4:9). While New World peoples did have metallurgy, it lagged behind the technological developments in the ancient Near East. Studying evidence from South America, Purdue University archaeologist Kevin J. Vaughn notes: "Even though ancient Andean people smelted some metals, such as copper, they never smelted iron like they did in the Old World.... Metals were used for a variety of tools in the Old World, such as weapons, while in the Americas, metals were used as prestige goods for the wealthy elite" (Purdue University, 2008). People in the New World did make use of copper and precious metals like gold and silver, but scientists believe ironworking did not emerge until about A.D. 800.

Moroni supposedly showed Smith the location of gold plates, upon which were written the text of the *Book of Mormon*. Smith claimed it was written in "Reformed Egyptian." The only problem here is that this language does not exist. "Reformed Egyptian" is not a language found in the ancient world. Ancient Egyptian had numerous dialects (Archaic, Old, Middle, Late, Demotic, and Coptic), but a "reformed" dialect was not one of them. Smith may have chosen Egyptian as his text because he was unaware that French scholar Jean Francois Champollion had recently deciphered the language (the first translation of the Rosetta Stone was not published until 1822). Until that time, hieroglyphs were mysterious and unknown. Although it is speculative to say, Smith may have thought that the language was unreadable and would remain so, and therefore believed his grand story would never be proven false.

Modern Egyptology has discredited Mormon scriptures such as the *Book of Abraham*, which depicts the patriarch's journey to Egypt. His travels include nearly being sacrificed by an evil priest and later being honored by the pharaoh. The book was published with three facsimiles taken from an ancient papyrus, which was lost. Far from being inspired scripture, the *Book of Abraham* was shown to be a fraud years later when the papyrus was rediscovered. The book is based on a funerary papyrus depicting several scenes from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. In Facsimiles Nos. 1 and 3, Smith misidentifies virtually everything depicted in these scenes, demonstrating his attempts were nothing more than uneducated guesswork. He had virtually no familiarity with Hebrew or Egyptian names, and seemed to have made up names that sounded sufficiently biblical to be believable (although many of his spellings are impossible in biblical Hebrew, which exposes them as inventions as well). He guessed at the names of the pagan deities, getting every one of them incorrect. For instance, in Facsimile 1 he misidentified the deities on the canopic jars (which held the internal organs of the deceased) in the scene (from left to right) as Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, and Korash. The gods should have been identified as Qebesenuf, Duamutef, Hapi, and Imseti. It is not likely that he even knew that the objects depicted were canopic jars. He likely thought of them as idols, since he misidentified the scene as sacrificial rather than funerary in nature.

Why do so many Mormons maintain belief in these scriptures when they are so obviously false? As Charles Larson notes in his book *...By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, "[M]any Mormons are relatively uninformed of any controversy concerning the validity of the Book of Abraham; or if they become aware controversy exists, will tend to fall back on the trust they have in their system, and avoid further investigation" (Larsen, 1985, p. 161). The real problem is that the Mormon faith stresses belief even in the face of contradictory evidence. Some have advised their fellow Mormons to simply fall back on their faith. This is a key part of the Mormon belief system: believe in the Mormon scriptures and you will know them to be true—the sheep will recognize the voice of the shepherd. [NOTE: Of course, such an anti-logic stance contradicts the nature of God; see Miller, 2011.]

In addition to linguistic and historical evidence, the sciences have not been kind to Mormon beliefs. From the field of archaeology, nothing in the *Book of Mormon* has ever been discovered, though Smith painted a picture of vast civilizations with major urban centers and populations ranging in the millions (the Jaredites are a people group who lost two million soldiers in one war). At one point, some members of the LDS church claimed that the Smithsonian Institute had used the *Book of Mormon* as a scientific guide for locating archaeological sites. The Smithsonian adamantly denied this was the case in 1986. The National Geographic Society did the same in 1982. Similar claims issued by the LDS church prompted Mormon anthropologist Dee Green to say, "The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists," even conceding that 20 years of research "left us empty-handed" (Green, 1969, pp. 77-78).

Another area of concern is the origin story of the Native American Indians, who are claimed to be descendants of the Lamanites. According to Mormon doctrine, these Jewish migrants supposedly traveled to the Americas in ancient times. These travelers "are the principal ancestors of the American Indians," according to the introduction to the *Book of Mormon*.

In an essay titled, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," anthropologist Thomas Murphy challenges this idea, stating:

So far, DNA research lends no support to the traditional Mormon beliefs about the origins of Native Americans. Instead, genetic data have confirmed that migrations from Asia are the primary source of American Indian origins. This research has substantiated already-existing archaeological, cultural, linguistic, and biological evidence (Murphy, 2002, p. 48).

Murphy was nearly excommunicated in 2003 by the president of the Lynwood LDS Stake for his work [NOTE: a stake is the rough equivalent of a diocese in the Roman Catholic Church.] Only popular support for Murphy prevented Latimer from following through with the excommunication (Kennedy, 2003). Latimer postponed the disciplinary hearing indefinitely, in part, for fear of negative publicity.

Murphy is not alone. Two Mormon biologists, D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens of Idaho State University, agree with Murphy's conclusions. In the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, both men agreed in the article "Who are the Children of Lehi?" that

the data accumulated to date indicate that 99.6 percent of Native American genetic markers studied so far exhibit Siberian connections.... There has been little if any evidence seriously considered by the mainstream, scientific community that would indicate a Middle East origin, or any other source of origin, for the majority of contemporary Native Americans (Meldrum and Stephens, 2003, p. 41).

In an issue of *Dialogue*, the oldest independent journal for Mormon studies (that is, not owned or operated by the LDS Church), Yale anthropologist Michael D. Coe, who specializes in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica studies, summarizes some of the most troubling issues:

There is an inherent improbability in specific items that are mentioned in the Book of Mormon as having been brought to the New World by Jaredites and/or Nephites. Among these are the horse...the chariot, wheat, barley, and metallurgy (true metallurgy based upon smelting and casting being no earlier in Mesoamerica than about 800 A.D.). The picture of this hemisphere between 2,000 B.C. and A.D. 421 presented in the book has little to do with the early Indian cultures as we know them, in spite of much wishful thinking.

There is also little doubt in the minds of non-Mormon scholars that Joseph Smith had no ability whatsoever to read "Reformed Egyptian" or any other kind of hieroglyphs. The papyri translated as the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price are, in the opinion of qualified Egyptologists, a series of fragments of the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," something which Smith could not have known since Champollion's decipherment of the Egyptian script had not yet been published (Coe, 1973, p. 42).

These are just a few problems besetting the Mormon church. If the *Book of Mormon* is the "most correct" book ever written, why does it contain so many mistakes? Why so many contradictions with history, archaeology, and ancient languages? Scientists, historians, archaeologists, and linguists have exposed the Mormon scriptures as the invention of a marvelously fertile imagination. So marvelous, in fact, that it has taken a century and a half to prove it conclusively false. Convincing though it was to Smith's contemporaries, this grand old story has proven to be no match for scientific investigation. [For additional analysis of the *Book of Mormon*, see Miller, 2009.]

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