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## "Daddy, what's a 'frontier?": Thoughts on the "Information Environment" That Supposedly Produced the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** In the past, substantial scholarly effort has been expended on questions of “Mormon” origins such as the significance of the “frontier” environment as contrasted to New England influences on the early Church; the impact of the Burned-over District of New York on Mormonism; whether New York or other locales of early LDS history were “frontiers” in the normal scholarly (let alone popular) use of that word; or if the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ Ohio-Missouri-Illinois experiences were more determinative than its supposed Burned-over District roots in their influence on the subsequent development of Mormonism, and etc.

It is not the purpose of this study to answer all these questions, but rather to develop at least one foundation stone for study of the general intellectual history of the upstate New York area in which the Book of Mormon was first published.

**“Daddy, what’s a ‘frontier’?”:  
THOUGHTS ON THE “INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT”  
THAT SUPPOSEDLY PRODUCED THE BOOK OF MORMON<sup>1</sup>**

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**INTRODUCTION: THE “INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT”**

The Book of Mormon was not translated<sup>3</sup> in a vacuum, nor was it published hidden in a corner. This is obvious from the negative press that preceded it into print. The nature of the Book of Mormon is such that the honest and serious student cannot ignore either its all-too-often simply

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<sup>1</sup>This paper was first delivered on April 25, 1970, at the BYU Book of Mormon Symposium in Provo, Utah. It is part of a never completed masters degree project—“A critical examination of LDS Apologetics for the Book of Mormon, 1830-1967”. It was based in the philosophy of history and of science, and was being developed under Hugh W. Nibley and Richard L. Anderson (1966-1968) before two severe automobile accidents interrupted the project. Contact with John L. Sorenson in Goleta, California while subsequently attending the University of California, Santa Barbara (1968-1973), also had an impact on this work. I am grateful to them for inspiration and guidance. The faults are, of course, my own responsibility. While a first draft of this manuscript was in limited circulation through Mormon Heritage in 1970, and has been available in Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library, it otherwise has laid dormant for many years. I am grateful to F.A.R.M.S. for prompting me to revive the project, and for providing assistance in having it retyped for computer word processing.

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<sup>3</sup>By my choice of the word “translated” I am, of course, revealing that I, like everyone alive on earth who can think, have a perspective—a bias if you will—but it is not hidden behind the mystical cloak of a self-proclaimed but self-deluded or others-deluding “objectivity”.

assumed or asserted to be obvious "environmental" roots<sup>4</sup> or its claims of ancient historical origins, content, contexts and background.<sup>5</sup>

In the past, substantial scholarly effort has been expended on questions of "Mormon" origins such as the significance of the "frontier" environment as contrasted to New England influences on the early Church; the impact of the Burned-over District of New York on Mormonism; whether New York or other locales of early LDS history were "frontiers" in the normal scholarly (let alone popular) use of that word; or if the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Ohio-Missouri-Illinois experiences were more determinative than its supposed Burned-over District roots in their influence on the subsequent development of Mormonism, and etc.<sup>6</sup>

## THE "INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT"

It is not the purpose of this study to answer all these questions, but rather to develop at least one foundation stone for study of the general intellectual history of the upstate New York area in which the Book of Mormon was first published. This foundation is both data-based<sup>7</sup> and theoretical. Toward the theoretical dimension, in 1970 I first publicly presented the term "information

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<sup>4</sup>Those who simply assert that an environmental explanation exists without a detailed exposition of evidence to support their claim are pretending to a most dishonest sort of pseudo-scholarship. Challenging your opponents to "prove a negative" (which cannot be done), or show an absence of evidence to the contrary of your asserted thesis, when you have given no evidence they can test let alone falsify, is methodological hypocrisy.

<sup>5</sup>The same is true, in fact, of much of Mormonism and the Mormon experience.

<sup>6</sup>Compare Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District* (1950); Mario S. De Pillis, "The Social sources of Mormonism" (1968); and Marvin S. Hill, "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York" (1969). Cross defines the Burned-Over district as that area of western New York which was swept over by waves of religious revivalism, enthusiasm and innovation through the first half of the nineteenth century (1950:XXX). The district usually is seen or defined as having spawned a number of religious sects, the most prominent supposedly being the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (for non-believers and antagonists this provides a convenient but arbitrary pre-judgement and denial of its claims to being a revealed religion with ancient roots).

<sup>7</sup>I say "data-based" rather than "factual" precisely because for me, scholarship does not present "facts" which somehow "speak for themselves". However responsible I might propose to be, and I do my best, anyone can only filter, process and re-present a selective and partial representation of the absolutely infinite data-set which is "reality" at any given moment in the past or present as "fact". I am also too much the anthropologist to pretend that I, or any other human, can escape or totally transcend the bounds of my culture. While as a child I was raised in an "inactive/part-member" family, today my culture and world-view is that of a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nevertheless, I believe my ideas are as much worth consideration as are those of scholars who worship at the altar of secularism yet are so naive as to deny being religious.

environment,"<sup>8</sup> to refer to any finite body of media (ranging anywhere from the written or printed page, or a marble sculpture, to the internet), and media-contents (data), which a person living in any particular place and time conceivably could come to know about any subject. By definition, all possible knowledge is not part of any particular information environment, for all possible knowledge is an infinite set, and command of all possible knowledge thus is omniscience. By contrast, I define every given historical information environment as a necessarily finite set. And for any human to pretend to independently transcend finite knowledge is precisely to pretend omniscience—an especially awkward posture for both theists and secularists.

In the present context, the information environment upon which I initially focus is that within which the Book of Mormon is first published: New York (not restricted to upstate) in 1830.<sup>9</sup> Note however that the emergence of the Book of Mormon in 1830 New York no more makes its contents automatically a product of that information environment than does the Dead Seas Scrolls' emergence in 1947 Palestine make them a product of that year's information environment.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>8</sup>I coined this term in 1967 to emphasize that we are dealing with the media of a period and the data which were potentially media-contents rather than "knowledge" (which implies a knower) or an "intellectual environment" (with its implied attitudes, values or sophistication). An "information environment" can be dealt with in terms of sheer data-accessibility. 1830 America will be shown to have been much richer in data relevant to the Book of Mormon than either its critics or defenders had imagined. An information environment is not defined, however, as containing everything that is potentially knowable. In 1830, for instance, an enormous amount of archaeological knowledge had not been excavated or reported, ancient texts—e.g.: the Dead Sea Scrolls—had not been discovered or deciphered, and myriad other kinds of information were not at that moment in time available to any human knower. On the other hand, the majority of the Spanish histories and chronicles were not only available in terms of existing in archives, but also were circulated widely and cited in countless other publications. It was use of this concept which, in considering several Mark Hoffman forgeries, led to my recognition of the significance of W.W. Phelps' use of the phrase "short-hand Egyptian" in his letter of 15 January 1831 to Eber D. Howe which the latter published in 1834 (Howe, 1834:273). As was subsequently shown, the technical concept of "short-hand Egyptian" was part of the information environment for Professor Charles Anthon, but not that of Martin Harris, Joseph Smith, or W.W. Phelps (F.A.R.M.S. Staff, 1985).

<sup>9</sup>Note that the information environment has always been broadly defined in a combination of spatial terms and actual availability. Whether or not there was a library in Manchester, New York (Paul, 1982), or Harmony, Pennsylvania (Welch, 1999), is quite beside the point. Even the accumulated stock lists from E.B. Grandin's bookstore are a drop in the bucket of the information environment, as this article goes on to show. Moreover, we cannot, with any rationality, arbitrarily restrict when a prospective Book of Mormon forger *might* have had access to a source that could later influence the text, or require that "research" could only have taken place in the specific locale and during the narrow time window in which the translation is understood to have occurred. Such assumptions "load the dice" and blind us to the nature of the information environment.

<sup>10</sup>It is important here to distinguish the question of the relationship of the information environment of 1830 New York insofar as it influences a Book of Mormon "vocabulary of

empirical investigation of the information environment in Joseph Smith's time shows it to have been far richer than commonly has been assumed. To discuss the Book of Mormon we must examine an information environment centering in but certainly not limited to upstate New York in 1830. This information environment is a set that contains all the potentially available sources, historical, archaeological and cultural, geographic (maps and atlases)<sup>11</sup>, theological ideas and questions, etc., which could conceivably relate to the text of the Book of Mormon. I will attempt to outline certain critical dimensions of that information environment, including something of its breadth, depth, and contents. It should be remembered that it is far more easy to show what **was** a part of a given information environment than it is to "prove a negative" and show that something was absent. Nevertheless, as is evident with the Dead Sea Scrolls example, empirical means can leave those arguing that something, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls' messages hypothetically could have been preserved within human culture and somehow transmitted into New York by 1830, must create hypothetically "plausible" explanations that are more fantastic than the Book of Mormon's.

## REDUCTIONISM

The study of religious, political, demographic, social and historical factors relating to Latter-day Saint origins (including the information environment of 1830), can provide a meaningful context within which Mormonism can be studied as a phenomenon. But such data are all too often reduced, far beyond what evidence could support, to a convenient explanation of Mormonism or the Book of Mormon as the result of ideological bias. In the earliest anti-Mormon book, Alexander Campbell, referring to many then current religious and social questions, argues that the Book of Mormon contained:

... every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years.<sup>12</sup>

Since Campbell's time, the vast majority of both sectarian critics and secular scholars have continued to deal with the Book of Mormon only as an object of interest intelligible within and relating to American history in the years immediately proceeding 1830. Upon finding a possible parallel between the Book of Mormon and some bit of early American history, it is all too often assumed that the source for the idea has been found and further study is neglected or even ridiculed. Such an at best naive, reductionist approach ignores the fact that where parallels occur they almost invariably relate

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translation" and the possible correlation of the information environment to the religious, cultural, and historical contents of the book. The lexical and semantic range of alternatives available to any translator in a given culture has to be approximately matched with the linguistic universe of the text's origin in order to convey meaning from the text to the intended audience who exist within yet a third set or universe of meaning (Thomasson, 1988, 1974b). This is a very different aspect of an information environment than, for example, what was or was not known in the New York of 1830 about architectural aspects of fortifications in ancient Mesoamerica.

<sup>11</sup>Several atlases were sold at E.B. Grandin's bookstore. These need to be studied with some care. Maps had been increasing in accuracy and in the quantity of information contained for centuries (Whitfield, 1994).

<sup>12</sup>*Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* as cited in Cross (1950:145).

to what are perennial questions—themes which recur in countless religious histories—and which are by no means unique to the Burned-over District in space or time, and/or may correlate even more significantly with ancient evidence than it does with the more recent.

Scholarly treatment of the Book of Mormon is a possible endeavor, but it has generally resulted in portrayals of the book as no more than an American cultural artefact, and not as a phenomenological object on its own terms. Thomas F. O'Dea, in what still is one of the best studies of Mormonism by a non-Mormon, still views the Book of Mormon as:

... an almost completely neglected primary source for the intellectual history of the common man (O'Dea, 1965:27).

Another author, Douglas L. Wilson, while desiring to study the Book of Mormon as literature, wished to be free from:

The problems posed by a literal approach to the narrative [which] increasingly block the path to the book of for many contemporary readers who should know something about it; [His recommendation is that] the mythic approach, as in the case of the book of Genesis, opens the way. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."<sup>13</sup> (Wilson, 1968:41)

Psychological trends in twentieth century religious scholarship (*e.g.*: Jung, Eliade, Campbell) are in fact interesting, insofar as they reflect people trying to better understand myth and "mythic truth" without necessarily implying the older and even more pejorative connotation (myth = NOT TRUE), which those words still have in vernacular usage (though Campbell, in a televised interview with Bill Moyers about their PBS series on the "Power of Myth," admitted that this older rejection was in fact at the base of his own approach). But even this taking of religious language "seriously"—or at least seriously enough to attempt to speak of universal human symbols or relevant quasi-psychological development models—however conscientious and honestly done, begs the question of TRUTH that any really religious text poses for us, whether or not it claims to be historical.

In today's scholarly jargon taking religious documents as "myths" is not to say that such texts are "false," but rather that they represent "human" rather than "historical" let alone, God forbid!, supernatural truths. Assigning an historical or scientific origin to events or ideas related in a scripture has been the less popular approach. Of this latter genre one of the more recent and responsible, and therefore highly controversial is Professor Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend's *Hamlet's Mill: an essay on myth and the frame of time* (1969) which dealt with one nearly universal "myth" that is actually a "coded" and complex astronomical text rather than a simple-minded fantasy. Even more threatening in the modern day is being open to the potential for ultimate Truth in a religious text. In Jacob Neusner's words,

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<sup>13</sup>The "mythic" approach to texts such as Genesis, which is once again being recognized as having some historical content, in fact does the opposite: the mythic approach killeth, while history giveth life to the text.

... among our colleagues are some who do not really like religion in its living forms, but find terribly interesting religion in its dead ones. That is why an old Christian text, one from the first century for example, is deemed a worthy subject of scholarship. But a fresh, Christian expression (I think in this connection of the Book of Mormon) *is available principally for ridicule*, but never for study. Religious experience in the third century is fascinating. Religious experience in the twentieth century is frightening or absurd (Neusner, 1977:118, *italics added*).

Professor Neusner's challenge is all the more problematic if we approach the Book of Mormon on its own terms, as a modern translation of an angelically restored ancient text, rather than as a modern or "fresh, Christian expression".

The Book of Mormon goes one step further with its self-proclaimed historicity and the challenge of its religious message. In the words of Richard L. Bushman:

The Book of Mormon and the writings of Abraham [and Enoch] in the Pearl of Great Price are the aspects of Mormon teaching which offer scholarly leverage on the authenticity of revelation. Their claim to be ancient writings can be readily tested by established canons of proof. Unfortunately, non-Mormons have started at the wrong end again by showing similarities with nineteenth century beliefs. By the same measure, the appearance of Paul's theology in the sermons of New England ministers would prove his epistles fraudulent. The only way to prove the Book of Mormon and the writings of Abraham false is to find contradictions with the milieu of the ancient world from which they claim to have arisen.

No non-Mormon historians have undertaken this task, however, and all we hear is that the Gadianton bands were disguised versions of the Masons. Meanwhile Mormon historians have gotten the jump on their antagonists and brought to light a multitude of similarities and harmonies which go far toward proving the Book of Mormon authentic ancient history. (Bushman, 1966:82).<sup>14</sup>

The Book of Mormon's claim is straightforward: that it is a true, reliable and valid ancient religious/historical record, even though it may contain "the errors of men,"<sup>15</sup> and that it also contains

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<sup>14</sup>Note here that Bushman speaks only of proof in terms of "authentic ancient history." Whatever "leverage" such data provides on revelation, it must be remembered that historical evidences can only validate an historical claim—but this would have no bearing on the validity of the religious message. The only possible "proof" of ultimate religious truth is revealed proof or testimony. Also, Bushman seems to lean toward an environmentalist-like explanation with:

... on closer reading, the Book of Mormon contests the amalgam of Enlightenment, republican, Protestant, capitalist, and nationalist values that constituted American culture. The combination is not working, the book says, America is too Gentile, too worldly, too hard-hearted. . . . The nation must remember God and restore Israel--or be blasted.

Richard L. Bushman, JS, Rough Stone Rolling, 104

<sup>15</sup>Textual "faults" (Introduction and Mormon 8:17), and "weaknesses" (I Nephi 19:6; II Nephi 33:4, 11; Ether 12:25ff.) are freely acknowledged in the Book of Mormon in a decidedly non- (or

the word of God. While the latter is beyond the purview of scholarship, the former claim can be tested. It should be remembered however, that the delusion that one could "prove" Mormonism "true" in a religious sense through the practice of history, archaeology or some other scholarly discipline should be as professionally unacceptable as is begging the question its of historical accuracy and by fiat proclaiming the Book of Mormon to be "false", reducing it to an allegorized intellectual history of the Burned-Over District. Both positions should be unacceptable to the responsible scholar.

The question of whether the Book of Mormon is a valid religious/historical record could led in several directions, and none of these can be ruled out *a priori* by honest scholarship.

- 1) The book might be "true" just as Joseph Smith and the eleven "witnesses" assert--accurate religious history of what transpired on this continent and in the Old World in pre-Columbian times, along with the word of God.<sup>16</sup>
- 2) It could be "false" in toto--the result of a monstrous fraud by Joseph Smith or some anonymous individual or committee who were free to fable-ize wherever their prodigious imaginations led them and the Book's ignorant and credulous followers.
- 3) It could be the product of Joseph Smith or someone else's creative genius as it was shaped or determined by what C. G. Jung defined as "archetypes"--a thesis which is patently inappropriate for dealing with the historicity of records, however elegantly it allows for the pigeon-hole classification of types and symbolic images, or
- 4) It could be both true and false--the result of a college term paper gone amok, or a tour de force historical novel. It might be the result of extensive historical research, plagiarism,<sup>17</sup>

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even anti-?) fundamentalist/inerrantist way. A sure-measure of Mormonism being slandered rather than studied or fairly represented is when it is called "fundamentalist". Neither the Book of Mormon itself nor the eighth Article of Faith allow the intellectually honest application of that term to Mormonism, Martin Marty's pretensions notwithstanding. Not even "literalist" can honestly be applied when a text so explicitly defines itself, for example, as representing types and shadows demanding interpretation, to say nothing of requiring later prophetic interpretation, and individual guidance and confirmation of meaning by the Holy Spirit, rather than a "plain sense" reading of the text.

<sup>16</sup>For a more substantial discussion about the assumptions I bring to the study of apologetics see my pre-publication manuscript: "Nephite Observance of the Performances and Ordinances of God: Pre-Exilic Israelite Religious Patterns in the Book of Mormon" (Thomasson, 2000:2-5).

<sup>17</sup>The Spaulding hypotheses, 1-N, are not only self-canceling but, finally silly. The Ethan Smith hypothesis is of note only because inordinate pseudo-scholarly attention has been given it in recent years. Perhaps the most eloquent refutation of that view of Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (1825), comes by examining its author's reputation after the Book of Mormon had become notorious, especially with the publication of Alexander Campbell's *Delusions*. In 1833 Ethan Smith published his *Key to the [Book of] Revelation*, carrying endorsements from some of America's



archaeological excavations, or even interviews with talkative or drunken indians (informants) who had good recall of their own traditions and oral history.<sup>18</sup> It is even possible (and here I need only mention the case of the Nag Hammadi "gnostic" library [fair portions of which were written in what were to modern scholars previously unknown dialects of Coptic]) that Joseph Smith or someone else actually found an ancient record (even one engraved upon gold plates) and managed to translate it, interpolating into the history their own peculiar religious beliefs.<sup>19</sup> In this last example it should be especially obvious that while research might

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leading Protestant divines, while explicitly mentioning Smith's authorship of *View of the Hebrews* (and three other works, including a *View of the Trinity*) on the title page. If there had been the slightest suspicion that Ethan had been connected with the authorship of the Book of Mormon his contemporaries and colleagues would have been quick to take note of it and to protest. They were, however, far better trained and read than recent "experts" who see Joseph Smith's work deriving from that of Ethan Smith. The silliness or cynicism extends to the point where some have even suggested against all evidence that the two Smiths were closely related and co-conspirators.

<sup>18</sup>After the first version of this paper was publicly delivered in 1970 and the thesis was advanced that anti-Mormon scholars would someday postulate an American Indian source for the Book of Mormon, a rather strained re-hash of standard "anti" arguments appeared in *Temenos: Studies in Comparative Religion* under the title "Red Indian Elements in Early Mormonism" by Ake V. Strom (dated 1969). Strom ended his piece suggesting in contradiction to all the economic and demographic evidence, that "Delawares lived in the vicinity of Smith's different homes, and it is not impossible that an Indian nurse or neighbour could have furnished the boy with old Lenape material" (1969:163). This is ultimately untestable and thus unrefutable. Given the Smith's highly fluctuating economic conditions and related frequent changes in residency, anything "might" seem to be possible, but examination of the status of Native American populations in those places and times makes this typically European prejudice ("white Americans—the Smiths—all lived on the frontier surrounded by wild indians"), more than ridiculously improbable. This "environmental" hypothesis is all too characteristic of arguments advanced by those who would account for the Book of Mormon as a forgery. Unfortunately, in this case *Temenos* published under the guise of modern comparative religion, an essay in the embarrassingly old "comparative" style where everything was intended to demonstrate the superiority of their version of the "Christian" religion. Moreover, *Temenos*' stated policy of providing a format wherein "Scandinavian" scholars could publish, gave them a convenient means of refusing to print a response to Strom. This journal stood as an embarrassing example of the effects of both sectarian prejudice and the influence of the "publish or perish" ethic on scholarship. Jan de Vries, in *The Study of Religion: A Historical Approach*, on the other hand, provides one of many examples that could be cited to show that in some cases early (frequently French) Christian contacts and missionizing efforts among the "indians" in America planted very un-Book of Mormon-like ideas and stories in those cultures which later generations of native Americans fed back to successive waves of too-eager-to-uncritically-hear missionaries, anthropologists, mythographers, and folklorists (1969:31, cf. 76).

<sup>19</sup>Robert F. Smith, in his seminal study of Joseph Smith as a renaissance magus, is accurate in his description of my 1975 discussion with Matthew Black in which that eminent scholar accounted for the indisputably "ancient" (e.g.: not found in Lawrence's 1821 translation of the Ethiopic Enoch

continue to validate the historical record, it would have no bearing whatsoever on the significance of the book's spiritual message.<sup>20</sup>

Any attempt to deal with the Book of Mormon as a testable historical document must examine its contents in the light of at least two criteria.

First: its assertions must be evaluated in terms of what is known today.

Second: those same assertions should be considered in terms of what was known or "knowable" in 1830.

If the book supplies information which was otherwise unavailable at the time of its first publication (not a part of the information environment), then its claim to historical validity is enhanced—if that information is accurate, or if future research confirms it. The presence or absence of resources for any potential forger is basic to an examination of the historical significance of the Book of Mormon.

### 1830: An Easily Definable Point

While some might object to freezing history in favor of a process view or a climactic evolutionary development of Mormonism, the one really irrefutable fact is that the Book of Mormon was published at E.B. Grandin's press in Palmyra in 1830. That date of publication sets a point in time from which Mormon culture can be spoken of as existing, and fixes a definite limit on the availability of data within the information environment that might have been available to any hypothesized forgers of Nephite history. Also, it establishes the essential character of the Latter-day Saint religion.<sup>21</sup>

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[I Enoch], and only known to scholars from ancient texts discovered after Joseph Smith's death) content of the Enoch text in the Book of Moses in the L.D.S. Pearl of Great Price. Black, in conversation, suggested that a member of an underground hermetic/gnostic sect in Italy (the existence of which he had previously suggested had influenced Dante) must have come to New York and delivered the text to Joseph Smith (R. Smith, 1987:47).

<sup>20</sup>It can be predicted with a fair degree of confidence that insofar as L.D.S. scholars can show the Book of Mormon to be accurate in terms of the secular history, cultural or even geographic data which it contains, critics will increasingly turn to an explanation of the book's origin as a conscious historical forgery (or historical novel). Since explanations of the book's "authorship" in terms of a committee (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon/Spaulding, Cowdery, Whitmer, Pratt *et al.*) have enjoyed long popularity, it is likely that these individuals and other "scholars" yet to be postulated will soon be pictured scurrying from library to bookstore to archaeological site, collecting data to prepare an historically accurate but religiously "apocryphal" forgery.

<sup>21</sup>As Hugh Nibley noted

The theory that Genesis was not intended as history but as "poetic media for the conveyance of divine truth" must now be discarded. For "none of the Pentateuchal and other early historical sources of the Old Testament invented its material; ... [they] cannot be charged with any kind of fabrication." And not long ago it was thought to be *all* fabrication! "It is clear," writes Albright, "that the substantial historicity of biblical tradition has been vindicated to an extent which few unprejudiced bystanders could ... have deemed possible a generation

If a given datum was not part of the information environment of 1830, then it will have a different relationship to the question of the book's historicity than one that was. The scholar must establish the extent to which data was available in several major information categories that the text purportedly describes, including such topics as religions and religious practices, laws, sacred texts, customs, cultures, taxonomies, technologies, and languages of, among other places, both the pre-Columbian Americas and the ancient Near East.

## THE "FRONTIER"

Critics of, and apologists for the Book of Mormon have at various times both under-, and over-estimated the extent of the information environment of early America, and especially the Burned-over district. The frontier myth has created views of colonial and late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century America that at times are quite inaccurate.

Whitney Cross was factually wrong, for instance, when he held that

... a new English edition of Swedenborg's works in 1845 probably made them fairly widely available to Americans for the first time (1950:342).

Such ideas cannot just be asserted--they must be evidenced. Here, Cross simply didn't do his homework. A quick perusal of the *Author Catalog* of the U.S. Library of Congress (1945) reveals that, apart from the fact that many editions of Swedenborg's works were printed in Latin and many other languages, and were available prior to 1845 (and a surprising number of Americans read Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and German--judging by the number of books published in the U.S. in those languages prior to 1830), at least ten of Swedenborg's books were published in English prior to 1816, three of those being printed in America. Isaiah Thomas (see below), the founder of the American Antiquarian Society, printed two of these in his own establishment. Relatively speaking, Swedenborg's works were commonplace, not rare. They were also frequently discussed in other media of the period.

Cross, on the other hand, writing in reference to early American interest in the origin of the Indians, theories of the "lost tribes" and other factors such as mound-builder culture, was on better ground when he asserted that:

Neither Solomon Spaulding ... nor Joseph Smith required any originality to speculate in this direction. Their writings would scarcely seem fanciful, possibly not even novel, to their contemporaries. Neither in any case need have borrowed from the other (Cross, 1950:81, see especially footnote 5).

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ago." In commenting on this, Albright observes that the peculiar genius of the Jewish and Christian religions, as over against all other religions, is the total involvement of their teachings with a real historical background; he also notes that this background has been largely lost today, but has its clearest expression in the Book of Mormon, which commits the Mormons, whether they like it or not, to a literal and historical interpretation of the story of salvation. (Albright, 1959:111, cited in Nibley, 1988:51-52.)

The anti- Book of Mormon critic must show that Cross's proposition regarding New Yorker attitudes about the Indians were accurate and accurately represented, not just in terms of minor points, but in relation to the broad cultural and historical picture which the Book of Mormon paints—or that such images have no relationship to any actual native American histories as they came to be known. The apologist must take other tack and show, apart from the broad cultural and historical picture, correlations between what was not known in 1830, what the Book of Mormon said, and what is now known to be true.

On a popular level, one common basis for misunderstanding Mormon origins is the acceptance of a number of historically inaccurate cliches derived from references made to the concept of the "frontier". The word frontier elicits picturesque Davy Crockett cum Walt Disney images—it is then but a step to assuming that the Book of Mormon sprang *ex nihilo*, the only rose in a cultural wilderness. Under close examination however, even the log cabin image often associated with Joseph Smith is fallacious.

The first permanent white settlement of Palmyra (and the Wayne County area) occurred in 1789.<sup>22</sup> When the Smiths removed to Manchester in 1818 it was precisely the log cabin (recently replicated), which made their farm a "pioneer" homestead. By 1820 there were some 4,000 miles of turnpikes across the state, serving as a foundation for export agriculture and industrialization rather than pioneering. The more important fact regarding the Smith family is that by at least 1822 they were involved in building a frame house. With the construction of the Erie Canal (completed October 25, 1825), the upstate economy and population spurted and then experienced a more or less continuous growth for several decades following, including creation of a complex network of canals linking much of the rest of the state to the Erie, and correspondingly expanding the pace development to even the Southern Tier. In New York the second railroad in the nation was chartered in 1828, and rail service would expand along with the canals. And in Palmyra itself, E.B. Grandin's press was and today again is located in its three-story brick city building, where it was in 1830 (and a marvelous example of historic restoration). The Smith's original cabin was mentioned by some of their neighbors as a negative comment on the Smiths in contrast to the nature of the community. A "shack on the poor side of town" comes closer to describing the first Smith residence in New York that does a "log cabin on the frontier."

Easily as misleading as the log cabin image is the common description of Joseph Smith as an "illiterate" farmboy. What was illiteracy in 1830? It was what we might consider as being "unlettered"; that is, a person at that time was said to be illiterate who read newspapers, tracts, the family Bible and whatever books might find their way into his hands. A "literate" man was one who had engaged in a systematic study of the classics—a college graduate. As Cross notes, the inhabitants of the Burned-over District were quite able to understand whatever information might have been available to them.

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<sup>22</sup>For interesting and readable views of Palmyra and environs in Joseph Smith's time there, I recommend an historical novel and several short stories by Samuel Hopkins Adams—*Canal Town* (1944), and *Grandfather Stories* (1955).

... nearly the entire native born population had at least an opportunity to learn reading ... It seems likely that the quality of this education exceeded that of any other available west of New England, while it probably at least equalled what the parent section had to offer. ... The Burned-over District consistently sent a larger proportion of its children to school than did the eastern half of the state (Cross, 1950:92-93, especially footnote 21).<sup>23</sup>

This applied not only to basic but also to higher education. In 1829 more New Yorkers went to college than did residents of Pennsylvania and New Jersey combined (Cross, 1950:98).

All this serves to emphasize both widespread ability to appreciate the media and interest in their message.<sup>24</sup> Cross is correct that Joseph Smith's New York contemporaries were not too busy "taming the frontier" to have paid much attention to the questions raised and answered by the Book of Mormon.<sup>25</sup> How would material which could have been used to compose a Book of Mormon have sold to a Burned-over District populace prior to 1830? From 1492, in fact, curiosity was rampant in Europe about America, and in America about itself.

## A NATION OF BOOKAHOLICS

Authors such as Swift and Voltaire satirized the mania which produced and sold countless fictional and real travel narratives, literary descriptions of voyages of discovery, exploration, conquest and colonization. Every evidence indicates that western New Yorkers shared this literary taste and curiosity. Pre-1830 newspapers in the area were constantly discussing aspects of the pre-Columbian world—these had a ready market because local curiosity was consistently whetted by the frequent plowing up of Seneca and earlier artifacts, a process that is maintained by archaeological research discoveries in the area up to the present day.

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<sup>23</sup>As the following discussion will elaborate, a significant body of a subset of potentially Book of Mormon-related material was available—that is was in the information environment of upstate New York in 1830—to an energetic prospective forger (-s). Nevertheless, I must repeat that potential availability does not prove borrowing. As Richard L. Anderson's excellent research on the Smith family background and the life of Joseph Smith has highlighted (2003), economic necessity may have caused young Joseph to forego some of the kind of education so many of his New York contemporaries enjoyed and that was basic to his family history. Moreover, Lucy Smith points out that Joseph was not an avid reader, and that at the beginning of his "ministry" he had not even read the Bible through. Nevertheless, exploration of what could have been available to a prospective forger cannot be dismissed *a priori* by the Book of Mormon apologist. As critics increasingly are forced to recognize the cultural/historical accuracy/plausibility of the text they will again attempt to counter clear evidences of Joseph's practical isolation from historical material such as Wesley Jones postulates influenced Joseph (Jones, 1964), and offer various new conspiracy theories of multiple authorship.

<sup>24</sup>See Ranz, 1964; U.S. Bureau, 1876; U.S. Congress, 1830; and Harvard, 1830.

<sup>25</sup>The history of the Book of Mormon that led to Brigham Young's conversion is a typical example of this.

Perhaps the most serious misunderstanding of the "frontier" was in terms of what could have been known. While it is true that in the early sixteenth century a relative information vacuum existed in England regarding the Spanish colonies and their histories (this due to the "iron curtain" which Spain imposed on information about the Americas to protect her economic interests), as England began colonizing this vacuum was rapidly filled, especially by the publishing efforts of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas.<sup>26</sup>

The already torn curtain was shredded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and fully rent by the independence movements of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Spain's policy of attempting to restrict information (as censorship is always paradoxically successful in doing) only aroused greater curiosity among those who, at best, heard vague rumors.

A good example of the result of Spain's attempted information embargo was the enthusiastic public reception of Thomas Gage's *The English-American: A New Survey of the West Indies, 1648* (1946). This book was a "best seller" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Along with descriptions of the Spanish colonies it openly advocated English expansion into Spanish lands on a theory of "manifest destiny" that reappears in 19<sup>th</sup> century America.<sup>27</sup> This policy was justified both by religious differences (opposing "papism") and England's economic difficulties. The book's popularity also can be accounted for in terms of several other factors: 1) Spain's policy of restricting information, 2) the constant outflow first of gold and then silver from the Spanish colonies accompanied by the riches of the Manilla galleon trade, and 3) the fact that from the time it was realized that Columbus had discovered a "new" world, this generated endless speculation on the origin of the "Indians."

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<sup>26</sup>The most important English sources, with the longest lived impact on English and American information environments, whether in libraries or scholarship on the one hand or through popular writing and journalism on the other, are the multi-voluminous 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century publications of the Hakluyts, for example Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries*, and Samuel Purchas' *Pilgrims* (1626). These two collections, each containing countless reports of discovery, exploration and the first contacts of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europeans with many non-Western peoples, are a wealth of information, as much today as then, or in the 1820's. In fact, these works constitute the foundations of any properly done "ethnography" and study of culture change for many peoples in the aftermath of European contact (e.g.: Lionel Wafer's [ca. 1643] report of "white Indians" in Panama). Together with the new generation of maps and atlases that geographers began to produce (e.g.: Cantino in 1502; Waldseemüller in 1507, and Mercator in 1569), the explorers' narratives also represented the first substantial challenge to the medieval European perspective on peoples outside the Greco-Roman world, and began to replace the works of Herodotus and others which previously were slavishly followed, to say nothing of plagiarized. Two millennia of reports of cyclopes, monopeds, and other monstrous forms of life at the antipodes not only influenced medieval scholarship, but even Charles Darwin's reports from the Beagle. By contrast, data found in Purchas on Bali, for example, is intelligible and verifiable today, in spite of Purchas' explicit Protestant imperialist bias. I must confess a fondness for Purchas, because his publishers, Henry Fetherstone and his then apprentice, George Thomason, are family.

<sup>27</sup>The phrase "manifest destiny" only appears in 1845, but the ideology it capsulizes pre-dates the slogan by several centuries. Its essence is certainly present in Purchas (1626), and Gage (1648).

## DEFINING THE SHELF LIST

Given that inhabitants of the Burned-over District had both the ability to appreciate and interest in Book of Mormon related topics, how much could they have learned.

Careful examination of the information environment of 1830 predictably seems to have begun, and until recent years beginning with the work of M. Wilford Poulson (analyzed and expanded in Paul, 1982), lamentably ended with B. H. Roberts. In Volume III of his *New Witnesses for God*, Roberts conceded the availability of certain sources to a prospective Book of Mormon forger. After examination of these sources, he nevertheless concluded that the data available through such literature was insufficient to explain away the Book of Mormon (Roberts, 1951:89).<sup>28</sup>

A glance at apologetics for the Book of Mormon advanced in the first few years after 1830 provides added insight as to the extent of the information environment and the problem of source availability. In referring to several items dealing with American antiquities, the editor of the *Millennial Star* with honest naivete remarked:

We know it is an easy matter for the unbeliever and the mocker to remark that our lamented prophet might copy from various writers the passages we have quoted below; but we would

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<sup>28</sup>Roberts dealt primarily with the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, James Adair's *History of the Indians*, Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* and the writings of Baron Von Humboldt. Regarding the *View of the Hebrews*, Roberts remarked with an appropriate rhetorical sarcasm which is usually lost on anti-Mormons "could all this have supplied structural work for the Book of Mormon?" (See Welch, 19??). It should be remembered, as Roberts was well aware, that the works of Humboldt and several early AAS paper were major inputs to the information environment, especially considering the extensive bibliographic references which they supplied. This writer must confess an extreme lack of patience with recent studies which make too much of trivial materials that might have been employed by a Book of Mormon forger. Wesley M. Jones' *A Critical Study of Book of Mormon Sources* (1964) is typical in its use of an "it could have happened this way, therefore it did" methodology disguised behind a façade of scholarship. Jones avoids the Smith's economic situation and postulates their having a home library which included, beside the Bible, a collection of Jonathan Edwards' sermons, a copy of Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, *An Expose of Masonry*, an atlas of the New World, the works of Ethan Smith and Elias Boudinot and miscellaneous pamphlets on topics such as bimetallism and utopian communism. He "charitably" assumes that Joseph Smith read these works so often, and so integrated them into his psyche, that he was not even aware he was plagiarizing when he dictated the Book of Mormon. A similar if less disguised anti-Mormon writer, Larry Jonas, in his pamphlet *Mormon Claims Examined* (1965) dedicates the chapter "Availability Checked" to potential Book of Mormon sources. Jonas, like Jones, is unafraid to build his case on dramatic speculation. In commenting on an issue of the *Wayne Sentinel* which carried a story of conceivable interest to a Book of Mormon forger he states (regarding the newspaper facsimile reproduced) "The type is blurred some by restoration, but it is the actual type which Joseph Smith read," (1965:42). Potential source availability for specific points of historical import become, for the anti-Mormon, proof of forgery. Availability does not prove forgery, however, and such writers scrupulously avoid mention of those areas where the Book of Mormon is accurate but for which no sources were available.

here remark, once for all, the researches from which we have extracted, were not printed until about three years after the Book of Mormon had been published (*Millennial Star* VII: 70).<sup>29</sup>

The breadth, that is the types of media, and depth or extent of the content of the information environment of 1830 is remarkable.

## FOLKLORE

Probably the richest part of the 1830 information environment is also the least available to modern scholars, except insofar as it was recorded in more permanent media—specifically, the ideas, concepts and folklore that were carried by oral tradition are essentially impossible to delimit. There is no way of definitively stating what Joseph Smith, or anyone else might or might not have heard. Many ideas such as those involving Tree of Life imagery, a tradition of three days of darkness after the crucifixion and other concepts can be shown to have persisted in some cultures through the middle ages and Renaissance by oral transmission, though seldom finding their way into print. Beyond the capability of this author, and remaining to be studied, is another probably rich source of information—first or second hand popular awareness of the various plastic arts as they extended through western New York.

## THE PRINTED PAGE

The key to a basic definition of the rest of the information environment in 1830 lies primarily in countless sources of written and printed language. By 1810, the American printing industry had a substantial history. In that year its history was outlined in the two volume *History of Printing in America* by Isaiah Thomas (1970). A few examples from that work serve to illustrate the pervasiveness of the printed page. The improved quality and low cost of locally manufactured printing presses was such that “importation had in consequence almost entirely ceased as early as 1800s” (Thomas, 1970:41). As early as 1662 the Harvard College press had type fonts of not just English but Greek and Hebrew. As it did in Europe and England (Anderson, 1991), printing had an explosive and continuing role in the creation of American nationalism. The industry and its supporting components (widespread popular literacy, paper manufacturing, printing, etc.), grew

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<sup>29</sup>To the contrary of what the *Millennial Star* writer assumed, earlier apologetics made frequent use of Josephus, Jahn’s *Biblical Archaeology* (1823), and other sources which were available in New York before 1830. Early members’ individual knowledge of such sources after 1830 does not prove that Joseph Smith knew of them or had access to them prior to 1830, of course. Perhaps the most interesting reference of this type was in the *Times and Seasons* 3:15 (June 1, 1842):813-814—Joseph Smith was the nominal editor at this time—where citations from Ethan Smith (1825), as extracted from Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities*, are presented in reference to the Book of Mormon. This is hardly a clever move for a sophisticated conspirator (as some of his critics would have us believe he was) if he had used the same book in the preparation of his forgery. For further information see my surveys of LDS apologetics for the Book of Mormon 1830-1851 (to be published subsequently).



astonishingly. "There were, in 1830, eight or more type foundries in the United States" (Thomas, 1970:33), and the stereotype process was passing out of its infancy.<sup>30</sup> We find further:

In 1800, there were at least one hundred and fifty publications of this kind [weekly newspapers] printed in the United States ... and since that time [to 1810], the number has increased to three hundred and sixty ... and there are now, 1810, more than twenty published, daily, in the United States (Thomas, 1970:15-16).

Sixty seven of the newspapers listed by Thomas in 1810 were being printed in the state of New York. This phenomenal increase in journalistic endeavor, characteristic of a healthy and expanding democracy, continued for some time after—thus in the Burned-over District, "at least 129 weeklies had commenced in the area before 1820" (Cross 1950:103, see also Hamilton, 1964:7).<sup>31</sup>

## THE BOOK

As sources for comprehensive treatments of specific topics, newspapers remain secondary to books. The first books in the colonies were imported from England. The Harvard Press was established to produce works necessary for "christianizing" the Indians. Later "booksellers" found it profitable both to import their merchandise and to underwrite the costs of local publication. Works which created sufficient demand (in terms of import sales) were reprinted domestically. Along these lines Gage's already mentioned *English-American* was not exceptional, and its commercial success reflects the interests of consumers.<sup>32</sup> Bookstores were common in the Burned-over District, and commonly advertised in the newspapers of the period. Newspaper offices, including E. B. Grandin's

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<sup>30</sup>For example, the H. & E. Phinney Company published version of the (King James') Bible, was printed in stereotyped form at Cooperstown, N.Y. in numerous editions through the 1820's and 1830's.

<sup>31</sup>Research and analysis of products of the Burned-over District presses remains relatively obscure, as far as content. Impressive evidence, though, of the Yorker infatuation with Gutenberg is the following:

"During the two years following its foundation in 1825, the American Tract Society (New York) printed forty-four million pages ... a million tracts, nearly a million Christian Almanacs, and over two million miscellaneous magazines, books, and pamphlets. Probably not more than a quarter of this output left the confines of the state." (Cross, 1950:25)

<sup>32</sup>Along with numerous English and continental editions, Gage's 1648 work (1946) was reprinted in the colonies (Woodbridge, N.J.: J. Parker, 1758) in book form, and like Stephens and Catherwood's *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* a century later (in 1843), appeared serially (in this case in the *New American Magazine*, from January 1758 through May 1759), indicating the persistence of public curiosity and a market in America on the subject. A parallel European interest is reflected in publications there of Jean Frédéric Maximilien, *comte de Waldek* (1766-1875). His *Voyage pittoresque et archéologique dans la province d' Yucatan (Amérique Central), pendant les années 1834 et 1838 par Frédéric de Waldeck* (Paris: B. Defour et c<sup>o</sup>, 1838), while outside any would-be Book of Mormon forger's "window of opportunity," contained interest provoking color plates and maps for later generations.

in Palmyra, usually sold books and often maintained "fee" reading rooms on their premises.<sup>33</sup> Yankee peddlers included books among their wares, and at least one floating library regularly traversed the Erie Canal and in fact stopped in Palmyra, serving as an early bookmobile. Jesse H. Shera provides an excellent overview of these and other factors in *Foundations of the Public Library: The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England 1629–1855* (Shera, 1949).<sup>34</sup>

As the most important information source of the period we find the library. Much fruitful study remains to be done, not only regarding library holdings of the schools, seminaries and colleges of the area—but also their curricula.<sup>35</sup> Many such institutions did exist, and various sources can help

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<sup>33</sup>A letter to the author from the Librarian of the Rochester Public Library on the subject of early libraries and bookstores, for example, provided some interesting references from a "Minute Book" of the Farmer's Library in Garbutt and Wheatland which indicated accessions to the society's collections from Holley's Bookstore in Canandaigua. Research on the much later (in terms of the information environment of 1830) holdings of the Manchester library as of the 1850s has been published, though this library's holdings were modest compared to what was actually in circulation generally (Paul, 1982, especially pages 343-356). Of greater interest here is the Church's superb reconstruction of the E.B. Grandin Press building in Palmyra. One evidence of the care that went into that project was the researching from various sources the books which Grandin had sold through the bookstore he maintained on the first floor. The bookstore as reconstructed contains dummies of all the books that are known (it would be a crime to use real books where they could not be read), including everything from atlases to histories, and is a self-contained education on the "information environment". The building also has a prominently displayed H & E Phinney stereotype edition of the Authorized or King James' Bible with Apocrypha (not a dummy) which was published in Cooperstown, New York in the 1820s and 1830s. It matches the copy Oliver Cowdery purchased that was used by the Prophet for his (at least four successive) partial/thematic (?) revisions of those scriptures. The Phinney Bible is the source for 90%+ of the trivial differences between Joseph's Inspired Revision and today's King James' Bible, as the texts themselves differ widely on the choice or use of words such as "a" and "an". In fact, of course, the King James' text has seen frequent changes starting with the two different editions produced in 1610.

<sup>34</sup>Fascinating comparative perspectives are available. Consider, for example, Irving A. Leonard's chapter "On the Book Trade, 1683" in *Baroque Times in Old Mexico* (Leonard, 1966:157-171); my discussion of literacy, printing and religious education in the pre-Hispanic and earliest colonial Philippines (Thomasson, 1980); literacy in ancient and medieval Judaism (Thomasson, 1974a); and among Chinese and Europeans in early 19<sup>th</sup> Century China as described in Jonathon Spence (1996).

<sup>35</sup>A good alternate understanding of what the "frontier" was like as an educational environment, with regard to early Mormon settlements, can be had in Professor L.C. Zucker's "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew" (1968:41-55). In it we find that a scant five years after publication of the Book of Mormon—with the Saints having moved west, in fact quite a bit behind the "frontier"—it was only necessary to look four miles to the north of Kirtland, to Willoughby, to find a prospective Hebrew teacher. When this individual declined the position they had to go no further than Hudson, Ohio to hire Professor Seixas. While admittedly Joseph had to send Oliver to New

us to understand New York state in general and the boom counties along the Erie Canal in particular. From 1796 onward, when the government of the state of New York passed legislation enabling the organization and registration of library companies, growth was substantial if fluctuating with the rise and fall of local and national economies. (McKelvey, 1937:1-50) School libraries had similar problems in terms of finances, but served a rather limited clientele.<sup>36</sup>

The most important (or most available to the public) information source in early America would have been the "Society Library." This particularly American institution, like newspapers, developed and expanded in response to the needs of an expanding democracy. Society libraries were cooperatives that were supported by yearly subscriptions from members, and by "use" fees from non-members. These libraries made most books available long before public libraries were commonplace.<sup>37</sup> The collections of these institutions varied according to the interests of the subscribers; some held rather narrow collections on specific subjects, while the majority had quite broad holdings. Society libraries generally died out (the most notable exception being the Philadelphia Library Company) due to several causes including the normal problems of voluntary cooperatives in America; towns dying due to soil depletion, subscribers leaving to follow the frontier, economic depression, and finally, of course the rise of the Public library. Until the 1850s, however, they served a major portion of the population. Study remains to be done on the number, location and holdings of such institutions in the Burned-over District.<sup>38</sup>

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York to obtain "textbooks" for the Saints' permanent use—local college bookstores did not yet exist—this in no way implies that other institutions in the area lacked copies of the same works in their libraries. (See Appendix 1 on Dartmouth's early libraries.)

<sup>36</sup>College students at this time:

... did not passively accept the meager course offerings and the inadequate libraries. In dissatisfaction and in protest there arose on most of the campuses an institution known as the "student society" ... To carry out their programs these societies customarily established their own libraries. Of the colleges in existence in 1830, fully 80 per cent had society libraries, half of which were larger than the college libraries. Since the collections in the student libraries were well selected and freely available they were frequently the only libraries used by the students (Ranz, 1964:19).

<sup>37</sup>The first public library in the U.S. was founded in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833. State funds that had been appropriated for a college in Peterborough went to founding a library after the college proposal was abandoned. The pioneering British Library and Museum were, of course, products of 18<sup>th</sup> Century philanthropy. In what can be interpreted as a reflection of the democratic or democratizing nature of libraries in America—"the people's university" (Hessel, 1955:99-102, but, contrast Anderson, 1991)—society libraries of all sorts developed. A Mechanics Literary Association library in Rochester, organized in 1836, for example, was soon serving the needs/demands of "plumbers, joiners, coopers, carpenters, bakers, grocers, millers, and tombstone cutters". (McKelvey, 1937:32)

<sup>38</sup>Any libraries existing in the vicinity of Harmony, Pennsylvania also would be especially interesting.

## THE OUTER LIMITS

Recognizing that books generally were more available than is usually assumed, the question remains as to what specific sources might have been found, not just in an average library of the period, but in the largest libraries to which a diligent researcher might have gained access. This is facilitated by the fact that libraries at that time published their catalogs in book form. To establish basic outer limits of what might have been available in the United States, the published and manuscript catalogs of a number library holdings up to 1830 have been examined. Foremost among these are the catalogs of the (at that time) two largest libraries in the United States; the Harvard College Library Catalog, and the Catalog of the U.S. Library of Congress<sup>39</sup>--an edition of each conveniently having been published in 1830. Preliminary to this study, those catalogs were examined in entirety. Their collections go far towards indicating how much information was "in" the environment, but it should be remembered that Charles A. Cutter<sup>40</sup> listed 138 library catalogs as having been published up to the year 1831. Beyond these are countless manuscript catalogs, accession lists, inventories and other records from smaller institutions.

The degree to which information available in the larger libraries was diffused remains to be established, but research should proceed to determine the actual holdings of libraries in the Palmyra area itself. This same procedure of establishing baseline library holdings should be repeated, by the way, with regards to library holdings in 1842--and their relationship to the information environments in which the "Book of Abraham" becomes available, the availability of Semitic "Enoch traditions" prior to the publication of the "Book of Moses" in 1831, and other aspects of ancient religions, histories, and cultures about which Joseph Smith's revelations provide a perspective.

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<sup>39</sup>Thomas Jefferson's personal library was purchased to replace the Library of Congress that was destroyed in the War of 1812. The consequent structure of knowledge and definition of academic disciplines in the U.S. was in substantial part defined by Jefferson's cataloging and shelving of books. Jefferson had modified Francis Bacon's organization of knowledge--memory, reason, and imagination--into 44 divisions or chapters.

<sup>40</sup>Besides the Ranz work mentioned above (1964), a number of other crucial sources should be mentioned here. Along general line see the *U.S. Bureau of Education, Dept. of the Interior, Special Report: Public Libraries in the United States of America ... Their History, condition and management* (U.S. Bureau of Education. See especially Charles A. Cutter's "List of Printed Catalogues..." 1876:577ff). For broad definition of holdings see the *Catalog of Library of Congress, December 1830* (U.S. Congress, 1830), and *A Catalog of the Library of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts* (Harvard, 1830, Metcalf and Co.). Of more specific import to our work are such sources as A. Curtis Wilgus' *Histories and Historians of Hispanic America* (New York, N.Y.: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc. 1965), which along with other data lists the dates when many of the Spanish records were first published in English; and such small collections as M.H. Saville, *Bibliographic Notes on Palenque* [see also Notes on Uxmal, Xochicalco, Quirigua by the same author], Vol. 6:5 (New York, N.Y.: The Heye Foundation). To maintain proper perspective in light of the wealth of material which these sources show to have been available, it should be remembered that after several centuries of growth, Harvard, the largest library in the U.S. at that time, held a collections of some 75,000 volumes--while Göttingen, for instance, contained some 360,000 volumes in the same year (Ranz, 1964:18).

## AN 1830 INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT: A SAMPLED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A brief sampling of the types of works that enjoyed wide circulation in the U.S. and almost unquestioningly were "available" (either directly in book form or indirectly, whether through citation in secondary sources or extracted and published in newspaper stories), in the Burned-over District follows. It gives special emphasis to material contained in those works which many Book of Mormon apologists have previously assumed to have been unavailable in the United States before 1830.

Thomas Gage's *The English-American* (1946) contains, among other things, a good description of a severe earthquake in the valley of Mexico. More important, however, is the fact that Gage definitely utilized the works of such Spanish historians as Lopez de Gomara, Oviedo, Herrera and others in his writing. The various works authors make reference to and quote from (whether properly attributed or not), provide a much bigger picture of what was directly or indirectly available than do just the titles of books in a particular library, or the articles quoted in a local newspaper (often citing an author as authority, less often a title, virtually never with footnotes, etc.).

*The History of America* by William Robertson (1827, first publication 1771)<sup>41</sup>, enjoyed extended popularity through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and appeared in numerous editions. An impressive scholarly effort, it contained a "Catalog of Spanish Books and Manuscripts" (a bibliography) used by Robertson which included more than two hundred and eighty entries. This indicates something of the wealth of material relating to the New World that was available to the diligent (and/or affluent) scholar in the eighteenth century. Others who could not afford to travel could nevertheless have access to secondary sources such as Robertson. To the degree that Robertson's writing effectively reflected such primary and other secondary source material, it was of course available to the public, though the manuscripts themselves might not have been. This work is required reading for defining the information environment of 1830 regarding Spanish America.

*The History of Mexico* by the Abbe Clavigero (1817, first published in English in 1787), contained among other things a challenge to several theses advanced by Robertson and enjoyed circulation similar to Robertson's. Clavigero's excellent annotated bibliography, footnotes and discussions are highly illuminating. One finds outlined Indian legends of an eclipse of the sun at a time supposedly corresponding to the time of the death of Christ, reference to the Indian calendar systems, pyramids, hieroglyphics, ship migrations to the west coast of the new world from Asia, pre-conquest use of iron and many other items which considerably expand our view of an important part of the information environment.

Clavigero's work serves to illustrate a methodological error which has plagued Book of Mormon apologetics. It has been all too easy to assume that if a particular work was first published after 1830 its contents would have been "obviously unavailable" to Joseph Smith or anyone else prior

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<sup>41</sup>Works here are cited to the edition which I was able to obtain and use, as in the case of the 1827 London edition of Robertson, rather than to the earliest (1771) edition. There was a considerable volume of transatlantic book trade, and after independence as much as before a large number of works held by American libraries had been published overseas. Therefore, where it exists, the first American edition of a given book may be noted but this is not an essential limit on the content of the information environment.

to being printed. Clavigero's citations of Ixtlilxochitl's unpublished manuscript appeared almost sixty years before that source was published. Ixtlilxochitl's contributions were common currency to students of American history long before Kingsborough published the complete texts.<sup>42</sup> (see Appendix 2)

*Researches Concerning the Institutions & Monuments of the Ancient Inhabitants of America...* by the Baron Von Humboldt (1814, the first English translation), which was discussed by B. H. Roberts, is a highly significant indication of what was known. Its discussion of volcanic eruptions, racial origins, the problem of elephants, ruins in Yucatan, and his "Index of Authors and Works Quoted" (which fills some fifteen pages) all broaden our understanding of the problem.

*The Ancient History of the Egyptians* by Charles Rollin (1815, first English printing 1730) had wide circulation in the U.S. Its eight volumes provide the basis for many of the comparisons which later were drawn between new and old world cultures. This work went through at least eight editions prior to 1789, and for many decades after it was the basic text in its field—it relied heavily on the classics as its own sources.

*Biblical Archaeology* by Johannes Jahn was published in its first American edition in the U.S. in 1823 (1823), and was reprinted a number of times subsequently. This work greatly expands our view of what was known and believed about the Old Testament world in 1830.

Jahn outlines that the Arabs dealt with two kinds of deserts, fertile mountains wildernesses and sandy sterile plains, that they feared a death dealing "Samoon" or desert windstorm, that they respected fountains of living waters, that the upper classes had both desert and city abodes, that the nomads practiced a double standard of morality which made desert travel particularly dangerous (protecting strangers received in one's tent but robbing others found in the wilds), and that a subtle olive culture was practiced in which the branches of wild olives were grafted into barren orchard tress to cause them to become fertile. He also mentions the use of lead, brass, stone, and tile for record keeping, and that metal plates were often bound together with rings through which a rod was slid to facilitate transporting the records. It is mentioned that desert cultures developed a special type of poetry stressing bold and unusual metaphors as parallelisms to exhort people to do good. Reference is made to the fact that while wooden bows were commonplace in the desert, metal bows (in this case brass) were not unprecedented. Pre-Christian baptism of converts to Judaism is discussed, along with this symbolism of rebirth as sons of Abraham. Also mentioned is the use of the Urim and Thummim (in this instance the drawing of sacred lots--divining sticks or arrows); the importance of oaths such as "as surely as God liveth" and many other similar concepts. It is difficult to conceive that any minister trained at the Andover Seminary, where Jahn's works was published, would not have been aware of this work after 1823.

While the following studies were less well known or widely circulated than the previously mentioned works, they nevertheless were a part of the more scholarly information environment.

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<sup>42</sup>Consider here Palmer (1976:106-107).

*A Description of the Ruins of an Ancient City, Discovered Near Palenque ... together with the Teatro Critico Americano; or A Critical Investigation and Research into the History of the Americas*, are two works that were published together by Captain Antonio Del Rio<sup>43</sup> and Dr. Paul Felix Cabrera respectively (1822, first English printing), on the basis of Del Rio's expedition in 1787 and Cabrera's library scholarship through 1794. Like Von Humboldt's *Researches*, which preceded them in print, this work combined field survey material with library scholarship. The ruins at Palenque are discussed extensively and several excellent illustrations (including an excellent reproduction [# 7] of the Cruz [cross] of Palenque) are to be found. Cabrera treats many familiar themes including parallels that are drawn between such figures as Votan and Osiris (using classical sources such as Diodoros).

*Mexican Illustrations* by Mark Beaufoy (1828, first printing), is a general description of the Mexican Republic in the period shortly after Independence. Beaufoy devoted Chapter XII, however, to the "Antiquities and Origins of the Mexicans." He cites Cabrera and other sources in his discussion of ethnic origins and makes the statement,

... the eastern migration to America may be conjectured to have taken place, during or very soon after, the reign of Nebuchadnezzar; corresponding nearly in time to the expedition of Hanno, 570 years B.C." (1828:218)

*Antiquities Mexicaines* by Captain Guillermo Dupaix (1831), though published shortly after the Book of Mormon, illustrates the degree of scholarly excellence which was attained at this time. The fine plates were made during Dupaix's expeditions of 1805-1807. The Dupaix volumes also include comparative studies of old and new world cultures, a discussion of the origin of the inhabitants of the Americas (including the mound-builders) and citations from the work of countless other scholars.

As was in fact the case with the works of Ixtlilxochitl, though Dupaix was not published until 1831, that in no way precluded the possibility that not only the text but the plates themselves were available to both scholars and in a limited degree to the public prior to the book's publication. Certainly reports of the expedition were circulating, however much detail might have been available. It is also appropriate to mention at this point that just as the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon was forged by a group of scholars in collusion cannot be dismissed out of hand (any more than can Joseph Smith's explanation), so too we must recognize that while a particular source may have been "only" available in Spanish, French, Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, that in no way would have prevented someone from using such material in the Burned-over District. Certainly a higher proportion of scholars at that time had facility in those languages than do today.

The foregoing references, while by no means an absolutely comprehensive listing of sources, serves to illustrate that the information environment of 1830 was highly saturated with some data relevant to the Book of Mormon. But Americans did more than just read books about Ancient America, they dug, talked, studied, wrote and published a great deal on the topic.

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<sup>43</sup>For an independent examination of the work of this information environment-relevant explorer, as well as Dupaix, Galindo, Waldek, Stephens and others, see Brunhouse (1973).

At the first anniversary meeting of the American Antiquarian Society, the Reverend William Jenks, Professor of Oriental Languages at Bowdoin College, gave a lecture which reviewed the progress of research on the history of the New World. Jenk's comments included the following scholarly course "correction":

...the misrepresentations ... made by De Paw and by Buffon, and from which not even Robertson is freed, have happily excited able replies, from mature examinations of facts; and in the *Notes on Virginia* [a later work by Robertson] as well as the Abbe Clavigero's extensive and elaborate *History of Mexico*, the assertions of those writers are found refuted. (American Antiquarian Society, 1912:34-35).

At the tenth anniversary meeting of the same society a Mr. T.M. Harris presented "A Dissertation on the First Peopling of America." (American Antiquarian Society, 1912:179-200.) But interest in these and related topics was not a phenomenon centered exclusively around Boston, nor was it strictly a commercial concern of printers like Isaiah Thomas (though the comparison of Thomas with, perhaps, Hubert Howe Bancroft is tantalizing). Included in the Dupaix volumes, for instance, is a catalog of artifacts found in the National Museum of Mexico, the production of which was underwritten by a grant from the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia.<sup>44</sup> The studies of constructive dilettantes and scholars alike percolated through the various popular media to the general population, as reflected in countless yet to be studied newspapers and other media.

### IN CONCLUSION

It has always been open season on the Book of Mormon, and it is still fair game to all comers. Far too many have chosen to hunt fair game with foul means, of course, but that does not license carelessness or deception in defense of the scriptures. Even if the information environment of the Burned-over District in 1830 had been minimally saturated, and however effectively it might have fooled supposedly uneducated and credulous yankees, the book carried no "for Yorkers only" label. While Alexander Campbell might have been unaware of the book's potential historicity, there were and are scholars who could evaluate it, if they would take the time. Joseph Smith or some other imagined author was not free to fable-ize unchecked. And it was precisely the correlation between what they knew and what the book said (and not resonance with some subliminal universal archetypes) that led to the conversion of educated individuals like Orson Spencer. It is a little late to be debating the basic accuracy of Book of Mormon texts. Volumes of very scholarly material have been produced that show it is astonishingly accurate on one historically, archaeologically, culturally, or literarily based point after another. At issue is not so much the validity of the record but rather the

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<sup>44</sup>Several sources which indicate the pervasiveness of interest in the archaeology and history of the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas in the early nineteenth century, include Walter Muir Whitehill's *Independent Historical Societies* (1962) and R.W.G. Vail's *Knickerbocker Birthday: A Sesqui-Centennial History of the New York Historical Society, 1804-1954* (1954). Such institutions, besides fostering research and publication, usually maintained museum collections and libraries which were quite impressive.



significance of that validity. In other words "O.K., even if it's a rather accurate translation of an ancient text, so what?"<sup>45</sup>

What was western New York, the Burned-over District, in 1830 as an information environment? The **significance** of the Book of Mormon is linked to a correct understanding of that environment just as the **validity** of its record is tied to the pre-Columbian Americas and the ancient Near East. Defining such relationships is no small task though. As Cross wrote, in an unusually humbled tone compared to pronouncements on Mormonism, regarding Shakerism in the Burned-over District:

... maps, seeds, and presumably other Shaker products found a market in western New York towns, but cultured exports are more difficult to trace. Any direct influences from Shakerism upon later relations in the region must apparently be assumed rather than proved (Cross, 1951:33, italics added).

Simply stated, even if something were a part of the information environment, even if it could be shown that Joseph Smith had owned or read this, that or another book, it would not, in and of itself, prove that he had used it to compose a Book of Mormon. This sort of "guilt by association" logic should rate a fail grade, even in "bonehead" freshman English. On the other hand, if parts of the book which are accurate in a historical sense were well known and available, those facts do not contribute to the significance of the book's validity—only to the validity of its representation of the past. Such data do, however, establish a general background against which critical tests can be made.

There are two types of critical tests which can be made on Book of Mormon data:

- 1) The first type involves subjects about which an information vacuum can be shown to have existed in 1830—and about which the Book of Mormon takes a position which can be compared to new data revealed by contemporary scholarship (textual comparison of the Book of Mormon with otherwise unparalleled Qumran and/or Nag Hammadi documents might fall in this category).
- 2) The second class of tests includes those cases in which the information environment of 1830 can be shown to have documented a particular position which the Book of Mormon took exception to—and these two conflicting ideas can be compared to current scholarly opinion. These are tests which the Book of Mormon can pass or fail—taking into consideration the

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<sup>45</sup>As had been cited previously "Mormon historians have gotten the jump on their antagonists ... toward proving the Book of Mormon authentic ancient history" (Bushman, 1966). This point, while some might debate it, is certainly reinforced by the obvious reluctance of serious critics to systematically test works such as Hugh Nibley's *Since Cumorah* (1988). Also, consider the recent study of Mormon apologetics by two evangelical Christians XXXX

open-ended dialogue which is true scholarship. These are tests to which it generally has not been subjected.<sup>46</sup>

The non-tests of the past, in which both pro-and anti-Mormon writers have too often simply asserted that this or that data was or was not available—and built their cases on such unevidenced assertions—are simply irrelevant to the validity of the book’s claims. For example, few bothered to check if there were precedents for the “Anthon transcript” characters in pre-1823 books? When that was done, a rather compelling argument emerged.<sup>47</sup> Greater understanding of the cultural/historical picture of the old and new world, better literary understanding of the Book of Mormon itself, and many other subjects of study are certainly essential, but such data will be significant in terms of the validity of the book’s claims only insofar as it is also shown that such data was not included in the information environment of 1830. As is the case with Biblical scholarship, such material will be of greatest use to the Mormon in terms of teaching and understanding the text—but that is a far cry from proving the book to be true.

Study of the social setting which produced the Book of Mormon translation is also important for the Mormon, the reason for this being that the environment of the Burned-over District determined in large part what a possible or available and appropriate “vocabulary of translation” could have consisted of, in terms of linguistic alternatives available to Joseph Smith and his readers—rather than being a study of where he might have “borrowed” his ideas.<sup>48</sup>

Attacking or defending the Book of Mormon is more, ultimately, than Samsonesque posturings waving a drawing of the jawbone of an ass. Before the book can be dealt with, the information environment of 1830 must be reckoned with and mastered. M. Wells Jakeman, in outlining his “historical archaeological” approach to the Book of Mormon asserted that study should concentrate on:

- (a) historical statements in early native and Spanish writings from Mexico and Central America not published or known until after 1830, the year of publication of the Book of Mormon and (b) archaeological findings which have resulted from excavations dating also

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<sup>46</sup>Anti-Mormon criticisms of the non-Biblical phrase “Land of Jerusalem” as it appears some 40 times in the Book of Mormon are a typical case in point (See **Appendix 3**).

<sup>47</sup>FARMS Staff, 1985.

<sup>48</sup>Joseph Smith’s choice of words (vocabulary of translation) is of not small import in understanding the Book of Mormon. As was illustrated in discussion of the word “illiterate” as it was used by the Prophet’s contemporaries, and in contrast to how it is understood today—language has evolved since 1830, and will continue to do so. Popular and preferred usages change, and to grasp the correct implications of many passages we should first go back to the sources of common usage in 1830, and assure ourselves that we know what a particular word meant at that time. In effect a process of translation much occur from the standard English on 1830 to the standard English of the present. The best starting point for this study is Noah Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), which is available in several reprinted editions.

after 1830. ... [and he goes on to say] there is no question of the correctness of this approach. (Jakeman, 1969:3)<sup>49</sup>

If we take Professor Jakeman seriously and become more acquainted with the information environment of 1830, many points will be seen as valid but their apologetic significance will be nil. Much that was supposed to be outside the scope of the "knowable" in western New York in 1830 turns out in potential to be more or less commonplace. Nothing significant will be accomplished along these lines unless the information environment is carefully studied, and then it will become increasingly apparent to all concerned that defending the Book of Mormon—if it needs to be defended with anything but testimony—will require mastering basic prerequisites: learning biblical languages, religion and culture, perhaps Syriac or Coptic; studying the new data coming out of the old world, or even settling down to more serious efforts in Mayan. All this is sheer grinding scholarship.

Ultimately, serious discussion of Mormonism must begin with the Book of Mormon. We also cannot disregard the views of outside scholars in this study. Comments such as the following must be dealt with.

Not simply communitarianism but almost all of Mormonism developed after 1830 in the midwest: its economics, theology, and social arrangements. Mormonism developed largely outside of the Book of Mormon in a series of over one hundred and thirty revelations ... These revelations are collected in the Doctrine and Covenants, a volume which is far more important than the Book of Mormon for understanding the rise and historical development of Mormon institutions and doctrines (De Pillis, 1968:60).<sup>50</sup>

In spite of this assertion, the fact is that Mormonism was no more Joseph Smith than was Islam simply Mohammed. Until polygamy was publicly taught in 1852, the issue was not so much Joseph Smith, nor was it the revelations and doctrines—it was the book. The Book of Mormon was the almost insurmountable obstacle to conversion, and served as a mechanism of "natural selection" for prospective converts—not some "body of doctrine" which evolved after Kirtland. It advanced the basic issues: revelation, authority, polygamy, communitarianism, temple ordinances—precedents for all these things have been with the Church since the book's publication. From 1830 onwards apologists have treated it in pamphlets, periodicals and books without a pause. It has always been the major hurdle **and** springboard for conversion. Early converts' first impressions and expectations of Mormonism came from it and not from other publications.<sup>51</sup> In spite of some students contortions

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<sup>49</sup>The crucial point of the "information environment" is precisely establishing what was knowable. The publication of a work, on the other hand, can be quite irrelevant to the discussion, as in the case of Clavigero's citation of Ixtlilxochitl long before Kingsborough's volumes appeared in print.

<sup>50</sup>"Contrary to an almost universal misconception among non-Mormons (including scholars), the Book of Mormon was less important for doctrines and polity than the Doctrine and Covenants" (see note 2, above, especially Marvin S. Hill's reply to this thesis. [1969:77]).

<sup>51</sup>It is not the intent here to set up an either/or between the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, but rather to assert the primacy of one over the other. Both works are significant but

to place Mormonism in a schema where a body of doctrine "evolves" after 1830, the fact is that the expectations of the new Church were in large part determined by what they read in the Book of Mormon. In the words of Joseph Smith:

I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding its precepts, than by any other book. (Smith: 1957: IV:461).

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the Book of Mormon is more basic to early development. Few would argue that the religious mind is anything but conservative. The book's position to the convert in terms of first exposure and the forming of expectations cannot be ignored. When a new program was instituted it would have to be justified in terms of the old. Indeed a case can be made for the fact that its psychological primacy was a cause of some fundamental tensions within the growing Church. Even sociological analysis of schisms in Mormonism would profit from a more careful analysis of the role of the Book of Mormon.

## Appendix 1

### THE DARTMOUTH COLLEGE LIBRARIES

As James Ranz was cited above, college students

... did not passively accept the meager course offerings and the inadequate libraries. In dissatisfaction and in protest there arose on most of the campuses an institution known as the "student society" ... To carry out their programs these societies customarily established their own libraries. Of the colleges in existence in 1830, fully 80 per cent had society libraries, half of which were larger than the college libraries. Since the collections in the student libraries were well selected and freely available they were frequently the only libraries used by the students (Ranz, 1964:19).

Dartmouth College had both a college library and society libraries quite early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. While Dartmouth's library was fairly large for a small college (but, contrast Harvard's three volume 1830 catalog), the two society libraries (United Fraternities' and Society of Friends') which merged with it in 1903 seem to have complemented each other rather nicely. A number of their catalogs survive in Dartmouth's Special Collections, which also contains an artistic commemoration of the libraries' history. I visited the library on May 22, 1990.

In the Treasure Room (Special Collections) of Baker Library at Dartmouth, a history of the Library system is given on the leaded glass windows. It asserts that Dr. Wheelock's academy in Connecticut held 75 folio volumes, 40 quartos, 112 large 8<sup>vos</sup> (octavos), 80 small 8<sup>vos</sup>, and had a total of "305" [my addition = 307] volumes. The library window makes note of the first Dartmouth published catalog of 1809 which lists 2,900 volumes, adding on a seemingly downbeat note that about 1,000 were duplicates. I examined all the holdings listed in the catalogs from Dartmouth for 1809, Nov. 1825; the Society of Friends' for 1810, 1824, Oct. 1831; and the United Fraternity's for June 1824. The quality and user-friendliness of the catalogs improve with time (was there competition between libraries, or just mimesis?), going from simple alphabetical listings to having subject referencing and cross-referencing.

Some surprising things emerge in comparing all these catalogs, such as the relatively thin holdings on Hebrew after the Dartmouth 1809 catalog, which held 57 copies of a "Hebrew Grammar of unspecified authorship" (Smith's?), and the explosion of esoteric and antiquarian materials in Dartmouth 1825. Obviously there either was a substantial bequest or purchase of 17<sup>th</sup> century and later scholarly works of a far different character that had been available in previous decades. I do not know the source of this change. What follows are selected lists of holdings dealing with representative subjects of interest to students of the information environment of 1830. This is not exhaustive. Note that books on the Americas, Swedenborg, Mosheim (*Eccl. Hist.*), etc., also appear in predictable quantities with the expected authors. Over time, a significant rise in the number of novels, plays, romances (e.g.: *Ivanhoe*), biographies, memoirs, etc., seems to develop, disproportionate to the growth of collections in other areas, but this remains to be carefully counted and tested statistically.

One last curiosity is the residence of the Joseph Smith Sr. family in the vicinity of Dartmouth for one year, the year that Joseph's leg was operated upon by a physician from the Medical College. There is, nevertheless, no question of the family having had any access to these libraries. Such access would have been unprecedented and, sadly, unthinkable in those days of restricted access to higher education.

## DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, SELECTED TITLES FROM LIBRARIES' HOLDINGS

*Dartmouth Catalog 1809*  
(C. & W.S. Spear, Printer) 24pp.

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE
Afiatic Refearches	8 <sup>vo</sup>	6	1
Conqueft of Mexico (2 fetts)	8 <sup>vo</sup>	4	4
Bryon's History of the Weft Indies	8 <sup>vo</sup>	4	
Hebrew Bible	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2	10
Hebrew Grammar	[?]	57	10
Hebrew Bible	Folio	1	11
Hebrew Lexicon	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2	11
Jofephus (Latin)	Folio	1	12
Jofephus (English)	Folio	2	12
" "	12 <sup>mo</sup>	6	12
Oriental Cuftoms	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	16
Perfian Dictionary	Folio	2	17
Polyglot Bible	Folio	6	17
Parkhurft's Lexicon (Hebrew)	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	17
Rollin's Ancient History (5 fetts)	12 <sup>mo</sup>	48	18
Rollin's Ancient History	8 <sup>vo</sup>	8	18

An *N.B.* on the last page of the catalog advises that books marked with an \* are not to be taken from the library.

*Catalog of the Books Belonging to the Society of Friends' Library*  
(C. & W.S. Spear, Printer, 1810) 16 pp.

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE
History of Mexico	-	3	7
Hebrew Grammar	-	1	7
Hindu Philofopher	-	1	8
Koran	-	2	9
Miranda's Expedition	-	1	11
Robertfon's America	-	3	13
Rollin's History (3 fetts)	-	24	13
Wars of the Jews	-	1	16

*Catalog of the Social Friends' Library 1824*

*Catalog of Books in the Social Friends' Library at Dartmouth College March 1824*

(Concord: Isaac Hill) 43pp. DC/HIST/Z/881/.H254/1824

[Titles here were alphabetized, very similar subject headings to United Fraternities' Library (listed below, by same printer), but far superior to 1810.]

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE
Jahn's Biblical Archaeology	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	5
History of the Jews (Hannah Adams)	12 <sup>mo</sup>	2	9
Rollin's Ancient History	8 <sup>vo</sup>	8	10
" (3 sets)	12 <sup>mo</sup>	24	10
Atlas to Rollin's Ancient History	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	10
Wars of the Jews	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	11
Hebrew Grammar	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2	37
" Psalter	12 <sup>mo</sup>	2	37
" Lexicon	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	37

[Books on Voyages and Travels, pp. 19-21.]

*Catalog of Books in the United Fraternity's Library at Dartmouth College*

(Concord, Isaac Hill, June 1824) 47pp. DC/HIST/Z/881/.H255/1812

[N.B.: 1812 and 1824 bound together. Divided by subject and alphabetically.]

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE
Alcoran	8 <sup>vo</sup>	4 / 1	1
Jahn's Biblical Archaeology	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1 / 1	5
Oriental Customs	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1 / 1	6
Josephus	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1 / 1	5
Rollin's	8 <sup>vo</sup>	50 / 3	
" (2 sets)	12 <sup>mo</sup>	55 / 18	13
<i>Grammatica Hebræa</i> (Thomæ Bennet)	12 <sup>mo</sup>	30 / 1	37
Smith's Hebrew Grammar	8 <sup>vo</sup>	28 / 1	38
Las Casas' Journal	8 <sup>vo</sup>	36 / 3	40

[Books on Voyages, Travels, and Topographies pp. 39-41.]

*Catalog of the Books in the Library of Dartmouth College*  
Published by Order of the Trustees  
(Concord: George Hough, Nov. 1825) 44pp. DC/HIST/Z/881/.H23/1825

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE	SHELF
Alcoran	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	4	22
<i>Biblia Hebraica Simonis</i>	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2	7	59
<i>Biblia Hebraica, cum Interpretatione Latine Montini 1619</i>	Folio	1	7	37
Bible in the North American Indian Tongue Translated by Elliot	4 <sup>to</sup>	1 (or 2?)	7	5
<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> ed. Manasseh Ben Israel 1635	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	7	80
Buxtorfii <i>Lib. de Abbrev. Hebra.</i> 1634	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	9	59
" " <i>Thesaurus Gramaticus</i> 1620	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	9	32/82 (?)
" " <i>Epitome Grammat. Hebraica</i>	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	10	64
" " <i>Epitome Radic. Hebraicorum</i>	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	10	64
" " <i>Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum</i>	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	10	24
Clark, Samuel Hebrew Bible with Annotations	Folio	1	12	43
Coleman's Discourse at the Baptism of Monis, A Jew	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	12	88
Diodatis's Annotations upon the Bible 1644	Folio	1	15	44
<i>Grammatia Hebraica</i>	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	20	82
Hebrew Grammar	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	22	64
<i>Israeli Biblia Hebraica</i>	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	24	50
<i>Josephi (Flavii) Antiquitatum Judaicum Libri XX</i>	Folio	1	25	55
" " trans. L'Estrage	Folio	1	25	"
" " Whiston	12 <sup>mo</sup>	6	25	"
Levi's Defence of the Old Testament in Letters to Tom Paine	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	27	83
Lowman's Dissertation on the Government of the Jews	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	28	11
" " on the Mosaic Ritual	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	28	46
Mather's [Samuel] Sermons on the Types of the Old Testament	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	29	68
Memoirs of Dr. Eleazar Wheelock	8 <sup>vo</sup>	10	29	63
<i>Mosis Maimonidre de Idolalria [sic] Liber</i>	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	31	63
New Testament in Bengalee	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	31	24
New Testament in Hindostanee trans. Henry Martyn	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	31	24



*Catalog of the Books in the Library of Dartmouth College (1825, cont.)*

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE	SHELF
Remarks on the Book of Daniel, and on the Revelation	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	35	40
Richardson's Persian, Arabic, and English Dictionary	Folio	2	35	1
" " Arabic Grammar	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	35	79
Robertson's Key to the Hebrew Bible	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	35	59
<i>Schickerd's Horologium Hebraicum</i>	12 <sup>mo</sup>	2	37	59
Septuagint	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	37	64
Smith's (Prof. John) New Hampshire Hebrew Grammar	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	38	65
Thomas' (Isaiah) History of Printing	4 <sup>to</sup>	1	39	27
Whiston's Essay on the Text of the Old Testament	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	43	52
Wilson's (Thomas [?]) Hebrew Grammar	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	43	48

*Catalog of the Books Belonging to the Social Friends' Library at Dartmouth College*  
(Hanover, N.H.: Thomas Mann, Printer, Oct. 1831) 64pp.

[alphabetized, cross referenced]

TITLE	SIZE	# COPIES	CATALOG PAGE	SHELF
Airs of Palestine	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	4	107
Hebrew Bible	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2	8	73
Burder's (Samuel) Oriental Customs	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	10	125
Conquest of Mexico by Irving	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2	15	34
(Grammar) Hebrew (by Smith)	8 <sup>vo</sup>	2 (+35?)	26	11
(Hebrew) Lexicon	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	28	135
(Hebrew) Psalter	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	28	19
History of the Jews, by H. Adams	12 <sup>mo</sup>	2	30	39
History of the Jews, by Milman (Family Library)	18 <sup>mo</sup>	3	30	12
Jahn's Biblical Archaeology	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	33	7
<i>Les Incas</i>	18 <sup>mo</sup>	3	36	89
Lexicon, Hebrew	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	36	2
M'Clure's Memoirs of Wheelock	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	40	185
Memoirs of President Wheelock	8 <sup>vo</sup>	1	42	185
Wars of the Jews	12 <sup>mo</sup>	1	62	

## Appendix 2

### A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO FALSIFICATION, OR, HOW I HOPE TO RESPOND IF SOMEONE, SOMEDAY, DESTROYS *MY MAGNUM OPUS*, WHATEVER THAT MAY BE

I never completed my BYU Masters project of a critical examination of apologetics for the Book of Mormon up through 1966, under the extremely thoughtful and professional direction of Hugh W. Nibley and Richard L. Anderson. (1966-1968. I subsequently did complete and A.M. at the University of California, Santa Barbara, 1973, and a Ph.D. at Cornell, 1987.) This was due to being a passenger in two major automobile accidents—several doctors concluded I had suffered a dozen normally fatal injuries—that I miraculously survived but which required extensive hospitalizations and surgeries. I did complete this study (presented at a Book of Mormon symposium in 1970), as well as preliminary histories of Book of Mormon apologetics from 1830-1839 and 1840-1851. In moving beyond those three studies, I tested out the major hypotheses undergirding a number of later nineteenth and twentieth century apologetic works—primarily examining their assumptions about the information environment as well as bringing to bear other criteria I had developed from readings in the philosophy of history and the philosophy of science. This was potentially, at times, politically rather explosive work. Unlike professors Anderson and Nibley, some academics were extremely defensive about their works being subject to such systematic evaluations. (This was decades prior to the creation of the F.A.R.M.S. *Review*, when *BYU Studies* with one very painful exception did not do critical reviews, as *Dialogue* was gaining enemies by doing.)

In one case, my research led me to the inescapable conclusion that the major hypothesis at the core of one work was completely falsified. I was able independently to reconstruct how the authors had inadvertently and quite innocently arrived at their very mistaken conclusion. They had not simply assumed that their hypothesis had been sustained. They used the evidence available to them. The problem was that this evidence was flawed on its—for their purposes—most essential dimension.

The work in question was *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* by Elder Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson (Kolob Book, 1950). In doing my study of it, I knew in advance from a friend, a daughter of Elder Hunter, that he considered this his *magnum opus* (personally, then and now, I remain convinced that his *Brigham Young the Colonizer*—based on his Ph.D. work at Berkeley—deserved that status). One need read no more than Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1972), to predict the usual reaction to pulling the rug out from what the average scholar considers his most important work. But I felt I owed it to him to explain my findings.

In the Spring of 1968 I drove up to Salt Lake City, parked and walked into the Church Office Building at 47 East South Temple. (I had been there a number of times before, when I had been set apart for my mission in 1960, and with Dr. Nibley—as his Research Assistant—reading the originals of Brigham Young's manuscript history which contained far more than the published materials that were available. But this is another story for later time.) Looking at the directory in the entry hall, I simply walked up the stairs and into his outer office. Introducing myself to the secretary, I stated that I

wished to speak to him about the Book of Mormon and *Ancient America* ...! A minute later I was doing just that!<sup>1</sup>

After introducing myself and explaining in general what and with whom I was studying, I jumped right in. This already was the age of Xerox, and I had made copies of all the essential documents, and had marked out the essentials in yellow highlighter. I first pointed out the book's *raison d'être*, as I understood it:

The purpose of this book is to correlate all of the principal sources which tell the story of ancient America. In many instances, the documents used, such as the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*, have never heretofore appeared in English. The writers have had those documents translated into that language in order that they might be utilized in contributing to this story. ...

This book is essentially a comparison of *The Book of Mormon* with an ancient Mexican history, known as the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*. ...

*The Book of Mormon* was the first to come from the press, being published eighteen years before the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*. (Hunter, 1950:2, italics added.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith had been dead for three years when Kingsborough's nine volumes [containing the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*] had all been published<sup>2</sup>; therefore, it can never be successfully maintained that he obtained the material for *The Book of Mormon* from the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*. (Hunter 1950:7)

The *Works of Ixtlilxochitl* still constitute the only documentary source, exclusive of *The Book of Mormon*, detailed enough and complete enough to have been of substantial assistance to anyone who might have attempted to write the history of the earliest [?] cultured colonizers of the ancient New World. Joseph Smith received no help from that source nor from any other documents published by Lord Kingsborough. They were not available [t]o him. Nor did Joseph Smith have access to the *Popul Vuh* or the *Titulo de los Señores de*

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<sup>1</sup>I realize that for recent converts and younger generations—at 57 I would tell my Cultural Geography students there are at least two, perhaps three generations below me, and some of my cohort are in fact now becoming great-grandparents—such access may seem incredible. That was a kinder-gentler age, before terrorists and murderous psychopaths made security necessary in even America's pre-schools, let alone in the offices of world-wide organizations like the contemporary Church. It was also before the impact was felt of the continuing not-quite exponential growth of the Church. This would necessitate not just seven presidents of Seventy presiding in Salt Lake over Seventies in each ward and branch in a Church that had just passed a membership milestone of one million. The day of multiple quorums of Seventy at the General Authority level, presiding over areas inhabited by some 11 million Saints was yet to come. Ah yes, at my age I can reflect on the old days, and they really were good!

<sup>2</sup>*Antiquities of Mexico ... In Nine Volumes*, Vol. IX, Lord Kingsborough, London, Henry Bohn, 1848. The elegant production, in small numbers, of these nine volumes bankrupted Lord Kingsborough.

*Totonacapan* or the other important native accounts of Guatemala. They were not available until after the death of the Prophet. In fact no reliable documentary sources were available in New York in 1830.

The only other time the *Obras Historicas de Ixtlilxochitl* have appeared in print was in 1891-92 in which years they were published in a two-volume edition in Mexico as an homage from Mexico to Columbus on the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. This edition was also [like Kingsborough's edition] in the Spanish language.<sup>3</sup> (Hunter, 1950:7-8)

Elder Hunter concurred that these passages captured the essence of the book's thesis. I then proceeded to show him why the essential argument—that Joseph Smith could not have been familiar with Ixtlilxochitl's writings—could not be sustained, and how their sources had misled them into making an untenable argument.

The first and most basic error—one almost everyone (perhaps Hugh Nibley is an exception) must commit at one time and in one language or another—was that neither of our authors was really competent in Spanish. When they became aware of the writings of Ixtlilxochitl and its possible relationship to the Book of Mormon they had a translation—not a bad one either—made for them from Spanish into English. Equally problematic but harder for a scholar to avoid was that they did not have access to Kingsborough's edition (even then only to be found in private collections and Rare Book rooms of the biggest libraries). As to finding Ixtlilxochitl's manuscript intact, let alone reading a sixteenth century Spanish hand ... "Primary sources!" is so very easy to say. What they had was the Chavero edition of Ixtlilxochitl, and they could not read Spanish. I had read the Kingsborough edition on microfilm, and had compared it to the Chavero edition of Kingsborough upon which they had to rely, in translation.

What Hunter and Ferguson could not have known, with either the Chavero edition or their translation, was that Chavero had begun his publication of the *Relaciones de Ixtlilxochitl* on page 321 and had omitted the all important "*Advertencia del Padre Colector*" (Kingsborough 1848:IX:319-320). This crucial but absent *Advertencia* (foreword) by the priest *Colector* (as in "collector of taxes"), supplies the missing key, albeit in a vocabulary and orthography (including "missing" and randomly occurring accents probably accounted for by English typesetters' lack of knowledge of Spanish) foreign to this century.<sup>4</sup> It is, at the same time, a history of the provenance of the manuscripts, a log of prominent previous users of *Ixtlilxochitl*, a hint of censorship, and a rationale for the editing and choice of the manuscript. Chavero's amputated edition deprived its readers of a critical tool in the practice of historiography. Here follow some crucial excerpts from the text, with those accents that exist in it, roughly translated, which Hunter and Ferguson never could have seen.

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<sup>3</sup>This latter is the edition by Alfred Chavero, *Obras Historicas de Ixtlilxochitl*, 2 volumes, Mexico, 1891-1892. It is crucial that the translation made for Hunter and Ferguson came, in fact, from the Chavero edition.

<sup>4</sup>I wonder at the potential ambiguities of meaning that lie concealed in the basically random use or omission of accents in the Kingsborough edition.

*Las Relaciones de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl merecen particular estimacion. ... Ellas grangearon á su autor las alabanzas de los Mexicanos estudiosos de las antigüedades de su patria... Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Gongora, Don Francisco Clavigero, y Don Mariano Veytia, han celebrado particularmente las obras de Ixtlilxochitl ...*

The *Relaciones* of Don Fernando **de Alva Ixtlilxochitl** deserve particular esteem. ... They gained for/brought to [?] their author the praises of [those] Mexicans studios of/about the antiquities of their country ... Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Gongora, Don Francisco Clavigero, and Don Mariano Veytia, particularly have celebrated the works of Ixtlilxochitl.

*Para sacar la siguiente copia de las obras historicas de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, hemos tenido presentes dos ejemplares MSS. El primero pertenece al archivo de este Convento Grande de Mexico de los Padres Franciscanos de la regular observancia: el segundo es el mismo que sirvió a Don Mariano de Echevarria y Veytia, que nos puso en las manos la poderosa solicitud del Excelentissimo Señor Conde de Revilla Gigedo.*

In order to extract/produce the following copy of the historical works of Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, we have had at hand two copies of the manuscript. The first belongs to the Great Franciscan Convent of Mexico of the regular order: the second is the same that served Don Mariano de Echevarria y Veytia, which was placed in our hands through the powerful solicitude of his Excelentissimo Señor Count de Revilla Gigedo.

*Deseosos pues de la mayor exactitude y buen orden de esta copia, que considerabamos perder en gran parte de la perfeccion del original, nos aplicamos seriamente á confrontar los dos ejemplares manuscritos, para dar la preferencia al que la mereciese por el mayor arreglo: despues de un prolixo examen preferimos el de Don Mariano Veytia. Observamos que en este ejemplar no está corrompida la escritura de las antiguas voces del idioma Mexicano, de que abunda la obra, antes bien se mantienen sin alteracion con el caracter propio de su origen: ventaja que desvanece muchas dificultades que pudieran interrumpir la inteligencia en el curso de la narracion. (Kingsborough, 1848:IX:319)*

Desirous then of the greatest exactness and good order of this copy, which we considered lacking in large part the perfection of the original, we applied ourselves seriously to confronting the two redactions of the manuscript, in order to give preference to the one which deserved it by its better arrangement: after a fastidious examination we preferred that of Don Mariano Veytia. We observed that in this recension the writing/transliteration of the ancient vocalizations the Mexican language are not corrupted, [these words] which are abundant in the work, better maintain without alteration the proper character of their originals: an advantage that dissipates many difficulties which could interrupt/disrupt the understanding/sense in the flow of the narration.

*Fuera de esto, nos animó á dar la preferencia á aquel ejemplar, el saber que es el propio que sirvió para la composicion de sus obras al celebre escritor Americano, Don Mariano Echevarria y Veytia, quien supo emplear su buen discernimiento y preciosa critica*

*en la eleccion de los antiguos manuscritos, que son el fondo de las importantes obras que hacen tanto honor á su ingenio é incansable aplicacion.*

Beyond this, we were motivated to give preference to that recension, [by] the knowledge that it is the same one that served for the composition of the works of the celebrated American writer, Don Mariano Echevarria y Veytia, who knew to employ his good discernment and precise criticism [critical skill] in the choice of the ancient manuscripts, that are the essence of the important works that make [result in] so much honor being given] to his creative and untiring efforts.

*La obra original del puño de Ixtlilxochitl estaba en la libreria del colegio maximo de los Padres ex-Jesuitas, como noticia Clavigero: el Caballero Boturini saco una copia de aquel original, y de la copia de Boturini trasladó Veytia el año de 1755 la que nos ha servido de original. Algunos borrones se encontrarán en esta obra; queremos decir, que en su contesto hay algunos parrafos y expresiones duras, odiosas y de mal sabor. Agitado el espiritu del autor de las occurriencias de aquel tiempo, dejó correr la pluma con inconsiderada libertad. (Kingsborough, 1848:IX:320)*

The original manuscript from the hand of Ixtlilxochitl was in the library of the former High College of the Jesuit priests, as is noted by Clavigero: the Caballero Boturini made a copy of that original, and from Boturini's copy Veytia transcribed in the year 1755 the one which has served us as original. Some deletions will be encountered in this work; we wish to say, that in his deposition there are some paragraphs and hard expressions, [that are] hateful and in bad taste. The spirit of the author was agitated [by] the events of that time, and he allowed his pen to run freely with ill-considered liberty.

Lacking the Who's Who of historians named in this foreword, it was inevitable that readers considered Chavero's edition of Ixtlilxochitl a landmark.<sup>5</sup> From this a sequence of well-intentioned mistakes occurred. Seeing some potential value in reports of the Ixtlilxochitl text, but not knowing Spanish, as amateurs rather than professional MesoAmericanist historians, Hunter and Ferguson had to rely on a commissioned translation. The translator, only having access to the later and incomplete Chavero edition of the Kingsborough, let alone earlier manuscripts, could only leave the impression that Ixtlilxochitl had never been known to historians in general or English readers in particular before 1848. Acting in good faith on this foundation, Hunter and Ferguson proceeded to study and report on Ixtlilxochitl in just that manner. But as can be seen in the previous annotated bibliography, many of the significant aspects of Ixtlilxochitl's narrative, cited by manuscript chapter and page in Clavigero, among other sources, were available in a rather widely circulated English edition in the U.S. by at least 1817. Availability of significant parts of Ixtlilxochitl as part of the information environment of pre-1830 America does not mean and cannot prove that Joseph Smith ever knew of them or used them. But neither can it be argued that Ixtlilxochitl was un-knowable. The work is useful for study of certain aspects of MesoAmerican history, and may offer valid insights into certain

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<sup>5</sup>Oddly enough, Chavero retained the "Advertencia del Padre Colector" that was attached to the *Historia Chichimeca* which he published in volume 2.

aspects of the Book of Mormon. But it cannot be used as a "proof" in the way that Hunter and Ferguson assumed.

After going through these materials and sharing xerox copies of pages from Clavigero and several other sources, I finished my presentation. Elder Hunter asked me a number of insightful questions and then requested if his secretary might make copies of my materials. I quite happily agreed for her to do so. He then spent a few moments mentioning how much of a pleasure it was for him to learn of his mistakes from someone whose object was not just to ram things down his throat. He clearly had been screamed at by career-apostates and others more than once. He enthused over my testimony of the Book of Mormon and the rigorous study to which it obviously had motivated me. We discussed several other areas of research and his Ph.D. came through as much as his testimony. And then, changing the subject, he inquired if I was married. I told him I was not. He then asked if I knew his daughter XXXX. She was, he said, very interested in the kind of work I was doing, and suggested we might get together some time down in Provo. I told him that in fact we were acquainted. I did not, however, say that I knew how he was concerned that she was as yet unmarried.

And that is the point of this Appendix! When a pet theory of one of Mark Hoffman's unindicted co-conspirators was blown away at a meeting he nearly went berserk. When I pointed out a rather well-known fact that absolutely demolished an unnamed BYU professor's pet theory/hobby horse I thought he would have a stroke. And when I was on a national grant review committee while at Cornell, and in a supposedly confidential evaluation was supposed to comment on one of my own professor's proposal to review textbooks in his field, I told the truth: that he and I knew he had for several semesters cooked the books to make his own textbook come out on top. My "confidential" evaluation was back to him in days, and he began a four year vendetta that almost cost me my Ph.D. Academic politics are simply politics. Nothing more. Step onto or threaten someone else's turf and you will have a turf-war. Threaten shifting let alone shattering a paradigm and you must be ready for revolution, with employment and tenure the weapons of preference by the rear guard. But in a quiet afternoon of demolishing the basic assumption underlying Elder Milton R. Hunter's at that time best loved piece of scholarship, his main reaction beyond clear enthusiasm at learning something new and having gained a new friend was to want to set me up with his daughter. I left Salt Lake that evening with a strong sense of the Christian love he embodied.

For those who would presume to be harsh critics of Elder Hunter and his co-author, I would point out that Victor Von Hagen, a prolific and long-respected writer on the ancient Americas, biographer of the Yucatan explorer John Lloyd Stephens, and sometimes critic of the Book of Mormon, whose books have been used in a number of college courses over the years made the very same sort of mistake in the same years, only worse, because he was the "expert" in the field.

It was a simple bibliographic fact in 1839 that there was no literature available to the American reader on the ancient American civilizations other than those [Kingsborough's *Antiquities of Mexico*, Volumes 1-6], recently published, which Stephens had read. ... The reports on the Maya, voluminous detailed investigations made by priests and soldiers, still lay unpublished in the Spanish archives, or if printed, had been issued in editions of such rarity that they were inaccessible to scholars in America. Actually, before one could attempt literary

research on these pre-Columbian civilizations, or the history of the Conquest, one would have to create an entire manuscript library. (Von Hagen, 1947:78, cited in Hunter, 1950:9)

When Von Hagen could make such a claim (and not just about the Maya, but even about the Conquest) despite Stephens' prolific citations to other sources, let alone both von Hagen's and Stephens' familiarity with Humboldt's author index, is it any surprise that non-specialists would quote him in the course of making a similar error?

DRAFT



### Appendix 3

#### THE "LAND OF JERUSALEM": A PHRASE FROM OUTSIDE THE 1830 INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

For over 160 years, beginning at least with the 1833 publication of Alexander Campbell's *Delusions*, countless critics have claimed that the Book of Mormon's use of the phrase "land of Jerusalem" as it appears, for example, in 1 Nephi 2:11 and Alma 7:10, was a major error and proof of the scripture's falsity.<sup>1</sup> The faultfinders were quite right in highlighting that, for the first fifty plus years, there was no precedent in the Bible, in Joseph Smith's or anyone else's "information environment" for using the expression "land of Jerusalem." In other words, in this instance the Book of Mormon supposedly was false precisely because the use of "land of Jerusalem" could *not* be explained away as part of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century milieu or pre-1830 context in which they assumed the book was written. From Alexander Campbell himself we find the beginnings of the general pattern of explaining everything in the Book of Mormon away as artifacts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He dismissed the scripture as containing no more than:

... every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. (Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District*, citing *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon*, 1950:145).

But "land of Jerusalem" did not fit this pattern. It had no currency at that time, and was as foreign to Joseph Smith as it was to everyone else. Nevertheless, it appears 40 times in the Book of Mormon (only one of those texts deals with a Lamanite city in the Americas, the rest all refer directly back to the Old World). Nor does the Apocrypha help since, as we see in its King James or Authorized version with which Joseph Smith was familiar, while the idiom "land of Judea" appears 20 times (one time in 1 Esdras and 19 times in the books of the Maccabees, as in "the Jews that be at Jerusalem and in the land of Judea" [2 Mac 1:1]), this gives no hint as to proper usage of the term "land of Jerusalem."

As is predictable, when there was as yet no source available on the subject and no environmental explanation could be given for it, critics assumed that it had to be a mistake on the part of Joseph Smith. This trap was built-into the assumption that only environmental explanations were necessary or appropriate in dealing with the book. Virtually all opponents of the book have to assume, *a priori*, that the text is a purely human 19<sup>th</sup> century document in order to justify their rejection of the text. In the case of "land of Jerusalem", adversaries mis-concluded from the absence of contemporary precedent that the text and Joseph Smith were wrong. Trying to prove a negative, they argued from silence and puffed this supposed error into what they believed was one of their highest polemical mountains of evidence against the Book of Mormon.

For a perspective on the danger of taking an absence of evidence as an adequate argument for negation of a proposition in history, consider how slowly testimony on a given subject may

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<sup>1</sup>For a thorough overview see Dan Peterson's essay in the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 1993:62-78, especially pp. 62-3, n. 124.

appear. Despite countless hundreds of thousands of hours of archaeological explorations in Israel for over a century, there was no known even near-contemporary monument attesting to the reign of the biblical King David until 1993 A.D., when excavations at Tel Dan in Israel uncovered an inscription, apparently from the reign of David's great-great-grandson Asa, that contains the phrases "King of Israel" and "House of David." Five generations away from King David may not seem very close for those who assume the biblical text to be a valid historical source, but it represents a dramatic reversal to those who have argued from the absence of contemporary extra-biblical evidence that David was only a mythic invention on a par with the Roman foundation myth of Romulus and Remus.

After the discovery of the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Amarna letters in 1887, texts that used "land of Jerusalem" were part of a restricted scholarly "information environment." For anyone honestly concerned with the Book of Mormon, there was little to argue about after Hugh Nibley showed in 1957 that one of the Amarna letters recounted that "a city of the land of Jerusalem, Bet-Ninib, has been captured".<sup>2</sup> At least one critic, not willing to give up what so many had imagined was such a potent weapon, countered that a 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. language precedent could not justify a supposedly 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. usage (by Lehi and those who followed him). To maintain their position, the enemies of the Book of Mormon, through the last century, studiously have ignored an enormous accumulating weight of scholarly evidence on the general use of expressions such as "land of Jerusalem" throughout the ancient Near East. A further exploration and confirmation of the general usage of this type of terminology in the Old World appeared as a F.A.R.M.S. update in 1984, but also predictably was ignored.<sup>3</sup>

Now, from the Dead Sea Scrolls comes an even more specific occurrence of "land of Jerusalem," insight into its usage, meaning, and the extension of its currency in the language from the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. writers of the Amarna letters all the way down to the biblically literate pre-Christian Jewish community at Qumran. Moreover, the phrase occurs in a text that directly links it to Jerusalem of Lehi's time. In Robert Eisenmann and Michael Wise's *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Penguin 1993), among some fifty texts, the authors discuss one document they have provisionally named "Pseudo-Jeremiah" (4Q385, which they suggest alternatively might be called "Pseudo-Ezekiel" [p. 72, note 9]). The beginning of the damaged text reads as follows:

... Jeremiah the Prophet before the Lord  
[... wh]o were taken captive from the land of Jerusalem (p.58)

In their discussion of this text the editors elaborate on the significance of "land of Jerusalem" [*'eres Yerusālayim*, the city/state of Jerusalem and its dependent towns and villages], as an equivalent for Judah [*Yehud*].

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<sup>2</sup>*An Approach to the Book of Mormon* [Nibley Collected Works volume 6] 1988:101; For a reference to Bethlehem as part of the land of Jerusalem see Peterson, pp. 67-68, and n. 136.

<sup>3</sup>See John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon [A Decade of New Research]: The F.A.R.M.S. Updates*, 1992:170-172.

Another interesting reference is to the 'land of Jerusalem' in Line 2 of Fragment 1. This greatly enhances the sense of historicity of the whole, since Judah or 'Yehud' (the name of the area on coins from the Persian period) by this time consisted of little more than Jerusalem and its immediate environs. (p.57)

Based on the evidence from Qumran, and in the words of Eisenmann and Wise, we can conclude that consistent usage of such specifically appropriate language among a people of Israel who fled to escape the Babylonian (Persian) captivity also "greatly enhances the sense of historicity" of the Book of Mormon. The continuity of usage of such a phrase despite such long gaps in the surviving textual record also is a strong witness of the strength of oral language, and one more of countless unquestionably other-than 19<sup>th</sup> century dimensions of the Book of Mormon.

Predictably true to form as they are, Book of Mormon detractors will undoubtedly proceed to denigrate the significance of what has been one of their highest (and most frequently used) polemical mountains of non-evidence (or negative argumentation) against the scriptures down to the status of an apologetic molehill. This is not surprising, because they were right in a way, after all. The appearance of the "land of Jerusalem" in the Book of Mormon could not have been predicted based on what Joseph Smith could have known. It precisely was unprecedented. No 19<sup>th</sup> century environmental explanation suffices to rationalize the repeated appearance of those words. So the significance of the expression must now be dismissed by adversaries of the Book of Mormon in the same way that they assume the significance and validity of negative environmental explanations, *a priori*. If previous behavior is any predictor, they certainly will not attempt to go back and correct the mis-impressions conveyed to their readers in the past, when "land of Jerusalem" was attacked as evidence of Joseph Smith's supposedly ignorant nonsense because it had no precedent in his time. By their rules, heads they win, tails the Book of Mormon loses.

As it increasingly has been shown that the Book of Mormon usage of "land of Jerusalem" and many other patterns were mirrored in and paralleled Old World patterns and texts Joseph Smith could never have known about, the critics correspondingly shift more of their focus to the few things that supposedly do correlate to the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D., conveniently ignoring the issue of whether such questions are unique to that time. In fact, since Campbell, the vast majority of both religious critics and secular scholars have continued to deal with the Book of Mormon only as an object of interest relating to American history in the years immediately proceeding 1830. Upon finding a possible parallel between the Book of Mormon and some bit of early American history, it is all too often assumed that the source for the idea has been found. Such a reductionist approach ignores the fact that where parallels occur they almost invariably relate to what are perennial questions—themes which recur in countless religious histories—and which are by no means unique to the Burned-over District in space or time. Now that its irrefutably ancient character is firmly established, the worn-out arguments against the "land of Jerusalem" quietly will be stuffed into the sophisticated evilspeakers' *genizeh* (a place where no longer usable texts were hidden) along with many other evidences of the book's antiquity, to be replaced by yet another set of unverifiable, circular, or irrelevant arguments. But every position they take will, with time, like the phrase "land of Jerusalem," burn up in their hands, for they are grasping at straws, and tinder-dry ones at that. For them, the less said about the ancient world, the better.

Finally, at a time when skeptics dismiss all religions and sacred texts (including the Bible), as predictable products of purely secular-historical/environmental forces, the Book of Mormon stands alone. The fact of the information environment's well defined character or contents in 1829—what could not have been known, places it apart from all other texts. Every point on which it has been shown not just to be plausible but historically testable—every point on which the information environment was resoundingly silent, forces us back to the problem of Moroni. If he, and his father's actual book did not exist, then neither Joseph Smith nor anyone else with only that information environment to draw upon could have produced the Book of Mormon.

## Appendix 4

### WHO USED TO READ?

The stereotype of literacy in the past being confined to a small priestly or clerical monopoly recurs periodically. The case of China and the difficult—for us—Chinese character-based system of literacy is a useful commentary on the question. Evelyn Rawski Sakakida's *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing [Qing] China* has long been a useful reference in contradicting the popular stereotypes about the illiterate peasantry. Recently I read Jonathan D. Spence's *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* and gained several more insights about the literacy of both the Chinese and Europeans in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China which add to ideas I developed regarding Southeast Asia (Thomasson, 1980). These insights come alongside Spence's main task, a revaluation of the Taiping rebellion in light of two Taiping revelatory texts—recently re-discovered—having been published in three volumes in Nanjing in the early 1860s. Religions based in the delivery of written texts are unusual enough, in the overall history of religions, to merit attention. And Spence's book is both fascinating in style and a good read. But I will here reproduce only a little of the "background" material he provides in setting the stage for the story of Hong Xiuquan ... a onetime village schoolteacher seemingly set on his millenarian path by Christian Bible translations and tracts (but that is Spence's story). Consider these tangents.

... In the 1810s and 1820s, when the East India Company was at its peak of power, there were a dozen or more young men from England studying Chinese in the Canton factories [entrepot/trading post/warehouses]. They translated Chinese novels and plays, and even the Chinese legal code, so they could assess the equity of the government's rules more carefully. ... in addition, they managed to accumulate a substantial library of four thousand books, many of them in Chinese, which they housed in their splendidly appointed *hong* [factory], with the company's senior physician doubling as the librarian. (Spence, 1996:7)

With the termination of the East India Company's monopoly in 1834 the library was broken up. Chinese books became, for the Europeans, more difficult but not impossible to obtain.

... Nor are there any established bookshops to be found in the foreigners' restricted zone of residence, for specific laws forbid the sale of Chinese books to foreigners, and even make it a crime to show them one of China's local histories or regional gazettes [to impede espionage]. Those who wish to search out books must walk some distance to the west [of the foreigners' quarter], where two bookshops on a side street (a street with gates locked and barred at night), will break the law to the extent of selling novels, romances, and "marvelous stories" to the foreigners, and sometimes arrange for purchases of other titles from the larger stores within the city [of Canton, from which Westerners were barred]. (Spence, 1996:7)

... A brilliant linguist, [Karl] Gutzlaff often traveled the coast of South China ... preaching in various Chinese dialects, and distributing Christian tracts in Chinese translation. (Spence, 1996:10)

A mainstay of missionary work, even among the lower classes, was the distribution of tracts in Chinese. Literacy was so widespread that this was in fact a rational strategy, depending perhaps on the quality of the translations involved.

... A traveling librarian, banging his rattle, his current stock of popular novels packed into boxes dangling from a bamboo pole across his shoulder, evades the rules that apply to bookshops by walking from door to door in search of customers among the Chinese clerks and coolies. He shows his wares to foreign questioners, and tells them he has no complaints. The three hundred volumes he is carrying—small, light, paperbound—are but those remaining from over a thousand he currently has out on loan. (Spence, 1996:12)

All this was in the 1830s! And while clerks may have been in the lower middle class, the coolies were definitely in the lower.

This was originally composed as an e-mail to members of "SHARP-L" (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing), 3-JUL-1996 14:23:38.29.

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<sup>1</sup>Most recently cited in Robert S. Wicks, *Money, Markets, and Trade in Early Southeast Asia: The Development of Indigenous Monetary Systems to AD 1400* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1992). A pre-publication version of "Beyond the *Barangay*" was cited in Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development in early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985):355, n. 150.

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