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**Title** “Had for Good and Evil”: 19th-Century Literary Treatments of the Book of Mormon

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**Reference** *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/2 (2003): 4-19, 110-11.

**ISSN** 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

**Abstract** Moroni prophesied on 21 September 1823 that Joseph’s “name,” and by implication the book he would eventually translate and publish, “should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.” Many current criticisms of the Book of Mormon trace their roots to the antagonistic critiques by 19th-century authors, beginning with Abner Cole, Alexander Campbell, and E. D. Howe. Campbell in particular was responsible for introducing the “environmental” theory: that Joseph Smith introduced 19th-century elements into his story. Travelers to Salt Lake City published their exposés, which were mostly critical of the Latter-day Saints and their book of sacred scripture. Mark Twain’s dismissive treatment of the book forged lasting popular misconceptions of the book. Fiction writers of the 19th century contributed to suspicion of and ignorance about Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. In more recent times, Fawn M. Brodie, Thomas O’Dea, and Robert V. Remini perpetuated environmental claims about the book. Recent Latter-day Saint scholars—Hugh Nibley, Richard Bushman, and Terryl Givens—represent those who speak “good” of the book and try to correct misperceptions about it.



“Had for  
GOOD and  
EVIL”

19th-Century  
Literary Treatments  
of the Book of  
Mormon

RICHARD H. CRACROFT



Moroni Visits Joseph, by Liz Lemon Swindle

**F**ROM THE MOMENT of its publication in April 1830, the Book of Mormon encountered intense opposition and fierce criticism. Almost immediately, the angel Moroni's prophecy to Joseph Smith on September 21, 1823, was fulfilled: that Joseph's "name," and by implication the church he would found and the book he would eventually translate and publish, "should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both

good and evil spoken of among all people."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, while millions of men and women have wholeheartedly embraced Joseph Smith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Book of Mormon, other millions, if they have any opinion at all about the Book of Mormon, consider it to be a "strange," even evil deception "of infamous and blasphemous character"<sup>2</sup> and a fraud, "garbled," wrote Abner Cole, of Palmyra, New York, in 1831, "from the Old and New Testaments."<sup>3</sup>

Although the Book of Mormon has gained such repute as to be listed in *Book* magazine as one of the “20 Books That Changed America,”<sup>4</sup> false and negative perceptions of the Book of Mormon persist. In 1991 cultural pundit Paul Fussell asked, in *BAD: The Dumbing of America*, a book about the demise of American taste and sensibility, “When did the dumbing of America begin?” and answered (dumbly):

Some rude skeptics might want to locate the origins of “creeping nincompopism” . . . in the 1830s, when Joseph Smith took from dictation a number of miserably written narratives and injunctions conveyed to him by the angel Moroni and then persuaded a number of hicks to begin a new religion.<sup>5</sup>

Antagonists of the Book of Mormon have always considered the book fair game for easy cheap shots, slurs, and slipshod generalizations—most of which reveal, like Fussell’s comment, a basic ignorance of the book’s origins and contents. Indeed,

*“Much of the responsibility for the prevailing ignorance and misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon in 19th-century, 20th-century, or turn-of-the-millennium American and world popular culture can be laid at the feet of the 19th-century authors who promulgated the persistent negative and mistaken image of the Book of Mormon as a literarily unsophisticated, clumsy, tedious, and unreadable fraud written by Joseph Smith, an unlettered country boy—or somebody else.”*

historian Thomas O’Dea correctly asserts that “the *Book of Mormon*<sup>6</sup> has not been universally considered by its critics as one of those books that must be read in order to have an opinion of it.”<sup>7</sup> Nearly 175 years of easy and groundless dismissal of the Book

of Mormon by a variety of authors—the shapers of popular opinion—as a clumsily written, fraudulent imposture have fostered a negative, even repelling perception of the book among potential American and international readers and surrounded the book with a distracting and undeserved aura of mystery, misunderstanding, and ignorance. Thus, as late as 1921 the prestigious *Cambridge History of American Literature* was able to get away with describing the Book of Mormon as the account of “the hegira of an adventurous folk moving by successive stages from the East to the Salt Lake Valley”!<sup>8</sup> And in 1969, a half century later, a sixth-grade elementary school class in Little Rock, Arkansas, could include in their classroom compilation, “A New History of America (sort of),” the following humorously skewed “facts” about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon:

Joseph Smith started it all. He always wanted to be a good guy and do right. One day J. S. saw this angle coming down on him from the sky. The heavenly body said his name was Macaroni and he showed Joseph Smith where a bunch of golden plates was (not the kind you eat off of). This turned out to be The Book of Mormons, about a profit named Mormons who is to them sorta like Mosses is to us.<sup>9</sup>

As the Book of Mormon nears its second centenary, it seems important, then, to take a closer look at how such a book, revered by millions as holy writ yet by other millions as a fraud, came to be so widely misunderstood, reviled, and misjudged while remaining largely unread. As we shall see, much of the responsibility for the prevailing ignorance and misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon in 19th-century, 20th-century, or turn-of-the-millennium American and world popular culture can be laid at the feet of the 19th-century authors who promulgated the persistent negative and mistaken image of the Book of Mormon as a literarily unsophisticated, clumsy, tedious, and unreadable fraud written by Joseph Smith, an unlettered country boy—or somebody else. Their treatments of the Book of Mormon as a volume whose claims of divine origin may be readily dismissed have made an impression upon the public perception of the book that still reverberates at the beginning of the 21st century. What follows, then, are commentaries on the Book of Mormon by some of the most influential authors of the 19th century. Their assessments became the sources of

mistaken impressions of the Book of Mormon in the popular imagination, the points of departure for continuing critical attacks on the Book of Mormon throughout the 20th century, and, since the 1950s, the impetus for Latter-day Saint scholars' increasingly effective defense of the Book of Mormon as the history of an actual people and a record of the acts of God and Jesus Christ in ancient America.

## The Beginnings of Antagonistic Criticism of the Book of Mormon

### Launching the Critical Attack: Abner Cole

The shaping of the public's negative perception of the Book of Mormon began as soon as Joseph Smith's Palmyra neighbors learned of his claims to have miraculously obtained an ancient record at the hands of an angel sent by God. The publication of the book and its distribution throughout the region by Samuel Smith and other missionaries excited a great deal of interest. Abner Cole, "more than anyone else," claims Richard L. Bushman, "tried to characterize the Book of Mormon for the public in the first few months after publication" by treating the new book "scornfully and humorously"<sup>10</sup> in several clumsy attempts at satire.

Beginning in January 1831, concerned over the success of Mormon missionaries in Ohio in gaining converts to the new church, Cole undertook to discredit Joseph Smith and his book in a six-part "Gold Bible" newspaper series, written under the pseudonym of Dogberry. Rejecting Joseph Smith's attribution of authorship and editorship of the book to Mormon, Cole proclaimed the book a fraud, launched ad hominem attacks on Joseph and the Smith family, and suggested that Smith's whole design was to make money. Cole became the first to assert in print the short-lived theory that Joseph Smith was the book's author and that he had lifted its contents "almost entirely . . . from the Bible," its stories being "chiefly garbled from the Old and New Testaments."<sup>11</sup> Cole suggested that the inspiration for the book was probably Walters the Magician, a "vagabond fortune-teller" who sometime earlier had duped locals with a Latin copy of Cicero's *Orations*, which he claimed to be "a record of the former inhabitants of America" that revealed where they had hidden their treasures.<sup>12</sup> Although others voiced their criticism in letters, sermons, and newspaper

articles,<sup>13</sup> it was Abner Cole, asserts Terryl L. Givens in *By the Hand of Mormon*, who "did as much to inflame and shape public reaction to the Book of Mormon as any (hostile) person of his generation."<sup>14</sup>

### Establishing the Critical Attack: Alexander Campbell and E. D. Howe

Others soon entered the fray. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ and an eminent American theologian, published the first important critique of the Book of Mormon in February 1831 in his newspaper, the *Millennial Harbinger*.<sup>15</sup> Campbell insisted that Joseph Smith, "as ignorant and as impudent a knave as ever wrote a book," was the book's sole author "as certainly . . . as Satan is the father of lies."<sup>16</sup> Setting a pattern that would be followed ever after by Book of Mormon critics and eager to prove Smith's authorship, Campbell downplayed the book's similarities to the Bible, ignored the book's complex plot and cast of characters, dismissed its contents as "romance," and focused his attack on Smith's purported authorial errors—"Smithisms," he called them—which he claimed were evinced in the book's anachronisms, especially the worship of Jesus Christ in the Western Hemisphere centuries before his birth.

Campbell's most significant—and enduring—contribution to future Book of Mormon criticism, however, is the "environmental" theory: that Joseph Smith introduced 19th-century elements into his story, incorporating "every error and almost every truth discussed in N. York for the last ten years."<sup>17</sup> By 1844, the year of Joseph Smith's death, however, Campbell had changed his mind about Smith's sole authorship of the book—the claim simply had not stood up—and accepted the Spalding<sup>18</sup>-Rigdon hypothesis for the book's authorship, despite the contradiction of his earlier arguments that the hypothesis raised. In 1833 Eber D. Howe, publisher of the *Painesville (OH) Telegraph* and the Book of Mormon's most dedicated early critic, teamed up with excommunicated Mormon Philastus Hurlbut to advance the thesis, in *Mormonism Unveiled*, that Solomon Spalding's unpublished novel manuscript had been acquired and religionized by Sidney Rigdon as the Book of Mormon and that Rigdon was "the Iago, the prime mover of the whole conspiracy."<sup>19</sup> The Howe-Hurlbut hypothesis was never accepted by citizens of Palmyra as likely, notes Bushman, but nevertheless "remained the standard

explanation of non-Mormon critics well into the twentieth century,” until Woodbridge Riley, a non-Mormon, published a refutation of the Spalding-Rigdon hypothesis in *The Founder of Mormonism: A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr.* (1902).<sup>20</sup>

### 19th-Century Travelers Discover the Book of Mormon

The impact of these early critics’ disputations of Joseph Smith’s claims about the authorship and provenance of the Book of Mormon is reflected in the views of a number of popular writers of the era, many of whom traveled to Salt Lake City from the United States and Europe<sup>21</sup> to beard the Mormon prophet Brigham Young in his lair and publish their sensational exposés to a curious world. Their reports were, with few exceptions, antagonistic to the Latter-day Saints. Roberts Bartholow, assistant surgeon of the U.S. Army, typified contemporary sensational anti-Mormon sentiments in his “objective” report to the U.S. Surgeon General, as cited in a report to the New Orleans Academy of Sciences meeting in 1861, that Mormon polygamy in Utah Territory had produced a degenerate “new racial type”:

Whether owing to the practice of a purely sensual and material religion, to the premature development of the passions, or to isolation, there is, nevertheless, an expression of countenance and a style of feature, which may be styled the Mormon expression and style; an expression compounded of sensuality, cunning, suspicion, and a smirking self-conceit. The yellow, sunken, cadaverous visage; the greenish-colored eyes; the thick, protuberant lips; the low forehead, the light, yellowish hair, and the lank, angular person, constitute an appearance so characteristic of the new race, the production of polygamy, as to distinguish them at a glance.<sup>22</sup>

Travel writers, focusing primarily on “the Mormon menace” of polygamy, the national *cause célèbre* during much of the second half of the 19th century, seldom got around to looking at the Book of Mormon itself, which retained its mysterious aura. As we shall see, with very few exceptions, those who made a pretense of examining the book made light of it and presented contemporary read-

ers and posterity with an enduring, indelible tonal sneer and dismissal of the book, repeatedly reinforced ever since in the minds of many unsuspecting and indiscriminating new readers. In readers’ minds, the universal ill repute of Mormonism was coupled with the mysterious and similarly named Book of Mormon. And woe be unto the reputation of the writer who deigned to write sympathetically of the Mormons or their book.

### Francis Parkman, American Historian

Even young Francis Parkman, soon to earn international renown as the premier historian of French settlement in the New World, allowed his usually clear historical vision to become clouded when it came to matters Mormon. In *The Oregon Trail* (1849), Parkman’s widely read account of his 1847 trip along the Oregon Trail, he describes his encounter with a party of the “much-dreaded Mormons”<sup>23</sup> at their temporary settlement at Pueblo. After hearing them “discuss points of theology, complain of the ill-usage they had received from the ‘Gentiles,’ and sound a lamentation over the loss of their great temple of Nauvoo,” the astute historian of the early American West rode away from history in the making, “happy,” he records, in a tone accepted as standard in describing Mormons, “that the settlements had been delivered from the presence of such blind and desperate fanatics.”<sup>24</sup>

### John Muir, American Naturalist

More objective than Parkman, John Muir, the famous naturalist, listened in 1877 to Brigham Young speak in the Mormon tabernacle just weeks before his death and was pleasantly impressed.<sup>25</sup> Muir makes no reference to the Book of Mormon, but in letters sent to a newspaper and later collected in *Steeple Trails* (1918), he expresses his surprise on seeing “little Latter-day boys and girls” (whom he calls “Little Latter Days”) who “seem remarkably bright and promising” and positively illustrate his Mormon hosts’ assertion that the children are “Utah’s best crop.”<sup>26</sup> Ever the naturalist, Muir describes Mormon women in strikingly (and amusingly) botanical terms:

Liliaceous women . . . are rare among the Mormons. They have seen too much hard, repressive toil to admit to the development of lily

beauty either in form or color. In general they are thickset, with large feet and hands, and with sun-browned faces, often curiously freckled like the petals of *Fritillaria atropurpurea*. They are fruit rather than flower—good brown bread.<sup>27</sup>

### **George Frederick Ruxton, British Soldier-Adventurer**

Whether or not he had read the Book of Mormon, another well-known world traveler, George Frederick Ruxton, contributed significantly—and negatively—to the popular image of the Book of Mormon, which in 1848, when he wrote about it, was still generally unavailable to the public and thus all the more mysterious. Ruxton's discussion of the Book of Mormon in chapter 9 of his landmark mountain man narrative, *Life in the Far West* (1848),<sup>28</sup> was for many readers in mid-century Great Britain and the United States their introduction to the Book of Mormon and the Latter-day Saints. Ruxton, a British soldier and adventurer, traversed the Rocky Mountains alone in the winter of 1846–47. He wintered in Pueblo with mountain men, where he encountered a party of western Latter-day Saints, from which arose his short, slanted history of the Mormons, “which sect flourishes,” he sneers, like Parkman, “wherever Anglo-Saxon gulls are found in sufficient numbers to swallow the egregious nonsense of fanatic humbugs who fatten upon their credulity.”<sup>29</sup>

Ruxton's tone and amusing skewing of facts in describing the Book of Mormon's origins are indicative of the general reception and reputation of Mormons and the Book of Mormon in 1847, even as the harassed Latter-day Saints were trekking west to the valleys of the Wasatch Mountains:

Joe, better known as the “Prophet Joe,” was taking his siesta one fine day, upon a hill in one of the New England States, when an angel suddenly appeared to him, and made known the locality of a new Bible or Testament, which contained the history of the lost tribes of Israel; that these tribes were no other than the Indian nations which possessed the continent of America at the time of its discovery, and the remains of which still existed in their savage stage; that, through the agency of Joe, these were to be reclaimed, collected into the bosom

of a church to be there established, according to principles which would be found in the wonderful book. . . . After a certain probation, Joe was led in body and spirit to the mountain by the angel who first appeared to him, was pointed out the position of the wonderful book, which was covered by a flat stone, in which would be found two round pebbles, called Urim and Thummim and through the agency of which the mystic characters inscribed on the pages of the book were to be deciphered and translated. Joe found the spot indicated without any difficulty, cleared

*“In readers’ minds, the universal ill repute of Mormonism was coupled with the mysterious and similarly named Book of Mormon. And woe be unto the reputation of the writer who deigned to write sympathetically of the Mormons or their book.”*

away the earth, and discovered a hollow place formed by four flat stones; on removing the topmost one of which sundry plates of brass presented themselves, covered with quaint and antique carving; on the top lay Urim and Thummim (commonly known to the Mormons as Mummum and Thummum, the pebbles of wonderful virtue), through which the miracle of reading the plates of brass was to be performed.

Joe Smith, on whom the mantle of Moses had so suddenly fallen, carefully removed the plates and hid them, burying himself in woods and mountains whilst engaged in the work of translation. However, he made no secret of the important task imposed upon him, nor of the great work to which he had been called. Numbers at once believed him, but not a few were deaf to belief, and openly derided him. . . . Joe . . . packed his plates in a sack of beans, bundled them into a Jersey waggon, and made tracks for the West. Here he completed the great work of translation, and not long after gave to

the world the “Book of Mormon,” a work as bulky as the Bible, and called “of Mormon,” for so was the prophet named by whose hand the history of the lost tribes had been handed down in the plates of brass thus miraculously preserved for thousands of years, and brought to light through the agency of Joseph Smith.<sup>30</sup>

Ruxton describes with some amusement famous mountain man Rube Herring’s short-lived “conversion” to Mormonism. Herring, who also wintered in Pueblo among the Mormons, apparently aspired to be hired to guide the Saints from Pueblo to the Great Basin. He “was never without the book of Mormon in his hand,” writes Ruxton, “and his sonorous voice might be heard, at all hours of the day and night, reading passages from its wonderful pages.” But when Rube found out he was not going to be hired,

a wonderful change came over his mind. He was, as usual, book of Mormon in hand, when brother Brown announced the change in their plans, at which the book was cast into the Arkansa [River], and Rube exclaimed “Cuss your darned Mummum and Thummum! Thar’s not one among you knows ‘fat cow’ from ‘poor bull,’ and you may go to h— for me.” And turning away, old Rube spat out a quid of tobacco and his Mormonism together.<sup>31</sup>

### **Richard F. Burton, British World Traveler-Anthropologist**

Richard F. Burton’s treatment of the Book of Mormon and the Latter-day Saints is exceptional among the accounts of 19th-century travelers. His three-week visit among the Latter-day Saints in Utah in August 1860 led to his remarkable book, *The City of the Saints* (1861), which editor Fawn M. Brodie rightly calls “the best book on the Mormons published during the nineteenth century.”<sup>32</sup> Recoiling at the “venomous” and “thoroughly untrustworthy” accounts of Mormon life,<sup>33</sup> Burton, an experienced world traveler and student of exotic peoples and practices, defied popular sentiment (as was his wont) to present a thorough and favorable study of Mormons in their Great Basin kingdom.

Burton’s refreshingly objective description of the contents of the Book of Mormon begins with a



Captain Richard F. Burton, an English explorer and Orientalist, wrote a firsthand account of the Mormons and their sacred book that was uniquely well-informed and favorable. Photo by Ernest Edwards. © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS.

brief and accurate summary of publication data and includes a reproduction of the title page, a summary of the testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses, an outline of the contents of each of the books of the Book of Mormon, and an appendix containing a still-useful (borrowed) “Chronology of the Most Important Events Recorded in the Book of Mormon.”<sup>34</sup>

Although Burton’s nonjudgmental and objective treatment of the Mormons and their sacred book was found in “the century’s most widely read travel book” about the Mormons,<sup>35</sup> the book’s author—and thus the book—were often discounted by Victorian readers because of Burton’s reputation for his sensational, exotic (and erotic) interests, which he cultivated in his far-flung travels and described in his several books. Thus his admiration of Mormon theology and society was largely dismissed by readers who preferred the many often lurid and sensational popular accounts of Mormon life. Burton’s descriptions of the Saints and the Book of Mormon would not find a larger audience until his rediscovery by scholars and historians late in the 20th century.

### **Jules Remy, French Botanist-Traveler**

In another widely read account, also told with the authority of “seeing with my own eyes”<sup>36</sup> dur-

ing his one-month stay in Salt Lake City in the fall of 1855, French botanist Jules Remy and his scholar-companion Julius Brenchley, M.A., published Remy's *Voyage au Pays du Mormons* (1860) and Remy and Brenchley's two-volume *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, with a Sketch of the History, Religion, and Customs of the Mormons, and an Introduction on The Religious Movement in the United States* (1861). Despite his conclusion that Joseph Smith is "a cheat and impostor" and that Mormonism is "nothing more than the product of calculation, or . . . speculation," Remy professes that Mormonism "seemed to me to have a character completely special, and to bear no resemblance to any other among the phenomena of the same class in recorded history."<sup>37</sup>

Remy undertakes to place Mormonism in the context of American religious thought, particularly that of American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and William Ellery Channing. After carefully reporting Joseph Smith's first vision—mainly in Joseph's own (1838) words—Remy accurately describes the translation of the Book of Mormon, reproduces the facsimiles of the characters from the plates, reprints the title page, and recounts the story of Martin Harris's visit to Professor Charles Anthon. He follows a (borrowed) outline of the book's table of contents with an accurate, "succinct analysis"<sup>38</sup> of the contents of the Book of Mormon (also borrowed).

Remy then sheds his objective guise with his sudden assertion that the Book of Mormon is a mixture of Solomon Spalding's unpublished fictional story, which "fell into the hands of Joseph Smith. This fact is not proved," he adds, "but neither is it impossible"; he claims that Smith mixed Spalding's fiction with biblical narratives to produce the Book of Mormon, which is "nothing but a jumble of bad imitations of Scripture, anachronisms, contradictions, and bad grammar."<sup>39</sup> Remy obviates the account of the gold plates by telling of the Kinderhook Plates (a hoax perpetrated by Robert Wiley in 1843 in an apparent attempt to discredit Joseph Smith) and suggesting that Joseph Smith, the "money-digger," could have found similar plates.

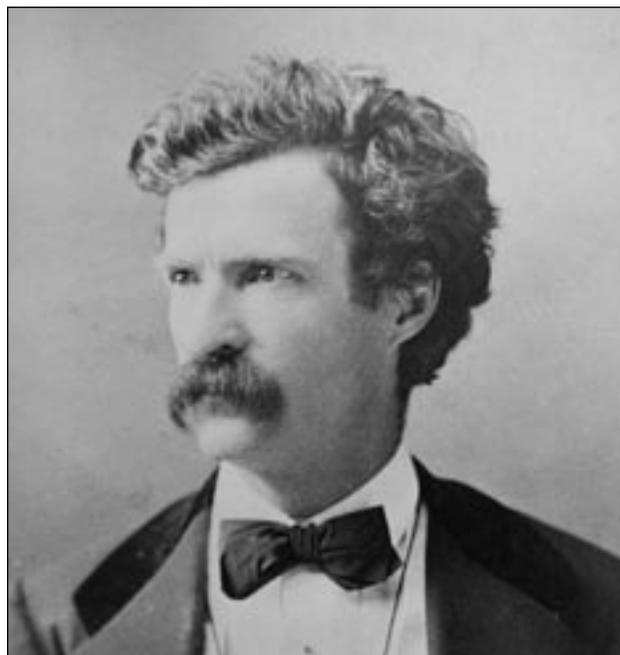
After presenting a lengthy, albeit typically distorted, history of the Latter-day Saints from Joseph's first vision through the Missouri period, the establishment of Nauvoo, the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the trek west, and the

founding of Great Salt Lake City, Remy concludes volume 1 with the assertions that Mormonism is a fascinating American religious phenomenon and that Joseph Smith was "no ordinary man" and was "undoubtedly, a superior man," who, though "an impostor," was, "when the mask was raised, . . . still a man at heart, and it is not often we can say as much of all of these who had misled mankind."<sup>40</sup>

In volume 2 of *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, Remy examines the particulars of Mormon theology, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and modes of worship, and he discloses in detail the Latter-day Saint temple endowment as then practiced. He devotes chapter 2 to what may well be the most thorough non-Latter-day Saint discussion of polygamy in the 19th century.<sup>41</sup> Many contemporary non-Latter-day Saint readers must have considered Remy's treatment of Mormonism as definitive and concluded that the new religion posed some formidable danger to be reckoned with in the future.

#### Mark Twain, American Humorist

Unquestionably, however, it is Mark Twain's treatment of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon in his best-selling travel narrative, *Roughing It* (1872), that has become the most important single factor in forging the popular perception of the Book of



Mark Twain's dismissive treatment of the Book of Mormon helped forge lasting popular misconceptions of the book. Photograph by Jeremiah Gurney. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Mormon in the 19th century—or, for that matter, the 20th century. *Roughing It*, which also sold well in Great Britain and Germany, provided the literate world with its first popular critique of the book and, unfortunately for the book's reputation, remains the best-known and most widely cited non-Mormon treatment of the Book of Mormon.

While Artemus Ward was Mark Twain's comic mentor in the matter of polygamy,<sup>42</sup> Twain had no peer or precedent in taking on the Book of Mormon as a subject for comedy. His successful burlesque of polygamy in *Roughing It* was offset, however, by his strained and less successful attempts at humor in treating the Book of Mormon; nevertheless, Twain set the standard for the next century for dealing with both topics—much to the chagrin and discomfiture of the Latter-day Saints.

In chapters 13 through 16 of *Roughing It*, Twain presents a comic, fictionalized account of his (and his brother Orion's) 1861 visit to Salt Lake City and Brigham Young.<sup>43</sup> For his "facts" about the Latter-day Saints, Twain relies upon Catherine V. Waite's currently popular work, *The Mormon Prophet and His Harem, or, An Authentic History of Brigham Young, His Numerous Wives and Children*, published in 1868.<sup>44</sup> Twain also provides his readers with two long appendices, "A Brief Sketch of Mormon History" and "The Mountain Meadows Massacre," which, together with chapters 13 through 16, still constitute, for many readers in the 21st century, their indelible and comic, if often erroneous and misleading, introduction to Mormonism and the Book of Mormon.

Writing humorously about the Book of Mormon posed a considerable challenge. As I have noted elsewhere, "Twain's unfamiliarity with the Book of Mormon, his audience's unfamiliarity with the book, and his obvious strain in groping for humor in the book's content" awkwardly compelled him, "first, to educate his audience as to the nature of the book" before he could "make fun of the material he had just introduced."<sup>45</sup> He found himself, in other words, in a literary jokester's nightmare.

Nevertheless, Twain launches chapter 16 of *Roughing It* with a shotgun blast of dismissive comments about the Book of Mormon that have since become better known to his legions of readers than the Book of Mormon itself:

All men have heard of the Mormon Bible, but few except the "elect" have seen it, or, at least, taken the trouble to read it. I brought away a copy from Salt Lake. The book is a curiosity to me, it is such a pretentious affair, and yet so "slow," so sleepy, such an insipid mess of inspiration. It is chloroform in print. If Joseph Smith composed this book, the act was a miracle—keeping awake while he did it was, at any rate. If he . . . merely translated it from certain ancient and mysteriously-engraved plates of copper, which he declares he found under a stone, in an out-of-the-way locality, the work of translating was equally a miracle, for the same reason.<sup>46</sup>

Twain then undertakes a ten-page analysis of the Book of Mormon,<sup>47</sup> devoting four pages to discussion of the title page, whose grammar and diction he derides. He reproduces "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" and lamely mocks the witnesses' testimony that an angel appeared to them and showed them the plates: "and saw him see them, and probably took his receipt for it." Such testimony, he deadpans, certainly sets him well on the way to believing, "even if I do not know the name of the angel, or his nationality either." He reproduces "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," and after pointing out, mockingly perplexed, that four of the eight witnesses are Whitmers and three are Smiths, he reassures the reader, tongue in cheek, that "I could not feel more satisfied and at rest if the entire Whitmer family had testified."<sup>48</sup>

Twain's error-laden analysis of the contents of parts of 1 Nephi, 3 Nephi, and Ether is prefaced by his mock-authoritative, funny, and seemingly deathless observations that

The book seems to be merely a prosy detail of imaginary history, with the Old Testament for a model, followed by a tedious plagiarism of the New Testament. The author labored to give his words and phrases the quaint, old-fashioned sound and structure of our King James's translation of the Scriptures; and the result is a mongrel. . . . Whenever he found his speech growing too modern—which was about every sentence or two—he ladled in a few such Scriptural phrases as "exceeding sore," "and it came to pass," etc., and made things satisfactory again. "And it came to pass" was his pet. If he

had left that out, his Bible would have been only a pamphlet.<sup>49</sup>

Twain concludes his enormously influential treatment of the Book of Mormon patronizingly and damningly: “The Mormon Bible is rather stupid and tiresome to read, but there is nothing vicious in its teachings. Its code of morals is unobjectionable—it is ‘smouched’ from the New Testament and no credit given.”<sup>50</sup> (In a final trivialization, Twain asterisks “smouched” and in a footnote comically attributes the word to “Milton.”) Uneven and stumbling as it is, Mark Twain’s comic handling of the Mormon scripture has given generations of readers an authoritative reason to slight the Book of Mormon, dismiss its claims, and ignore its message. (As one of my students, a returned Latter-day Saint missionary, said after reading the Mormon chapters of *Roughing It*: “He’ll roast in hell for this!”—I assume he means a Calvinist hell and not the Latter-day Saint telestial kingdom, which promises a more congenial climate.)

### **Eduard Meyer, German Historian**

As the new century got under way, despite the end of polygamy (1890), Utah statehood (1896), and Latter-day Saint efforts to become loyal Americans and a mainstream religion, the popular image of the Mormon people and popular misconceptions about the Book of Mormon remained fixed and unassailed. In 1912 Professor Eduard Meyer, internationally renowned ancient historian, returned to Germany after spending a year among the Mormons in Utah to surprise his colleagues with the publication of a book unrelated to ancient history, a book about Mormonism: *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen, mit Exkursen über die Anfänge des Islám und des Christentums* (*The Origin and History of the Mormons, with Reflections on the Beginnings of Islam and Christianity*).<sup>51</sup> While Meyer acknowledged that “Mormonism . . . is not just another of countless sects, but a new revealed religion,” and urged that “the origin and history of Mormonism possesses great and unusual value for the student of religious history,”<sup>52</sup> his examination of the Book of Mormon is remarkably superficial and disappointing.

After his astonishing admission that he had “not been able to read the complete *Book of Mormon*” and that many primary and secondary sources were unavailable to him, Meyer excuses



Renowned ancient historian Eduard Meyer did not even bother to read the entire Book of Mormon before forming—and publishing—a low opinion of it. From ZÁS 66 (1931): opp. 72, courtesy Akademie Verlag.

himself by asserting that “no human except a believer could find the strength to read the whole thing.” He declares himself, nevertheless, “sufficiently well-informed about the most important facts to be allowed to risk an independent treatment of the subject.”<sup>53</sup> Professor Meyer confirmed the public’s misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon by concluding that the book is as “clumsy, monotonous in the extreme, repetitious, . . . [and] incoherent as one would expect it from a totally uneducated man who dictated it in a state of half-sleep.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The Book of Mormon and 19th-Century Fiction Writers**

The general suspicion of and ignorance about Mormonism and the Book of Mormon was reflected in 19th-century fiction, which became at once a shaper, reporter, and reflector of the image of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon in the

popular mind. Only one work of anti-Mormon prose fiction appeared during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–1844): *The Travels and Adventures of Monsieur R. Violet in California, Sonora, and Western Texas*, by Frederick Marryat (1843).<sup>55</sup> *Der Prophet*, by Amalie Schoppe, appeared in 1846. Typically, neither book does more than allude to the Book of Mormon. The first full-length American novel about Mormonism, John Russell's *The Mormoness; or, the Trials of Mary Maverick*, appeared in 1853 and was followed before the turn of the century by 50 more anti-Mormon tales,<sup>56</sup> including *John Brent* (1861), by Theodore Winthrop, a work that literary critic Carl Van Doren called "the first really fine novel of the West."<sup>57</sup> In fact, the Book of Mormon was pretty bland reading when stacked against titillating accounts of abductions of beautiful Gentile women, exotic harems, and thrilling tales of eluding the mysterious Danites and thus played virtually no role in anti-Mormon fiction, or pro-Mormon fiction, for that matter.

#### Herman Melville, American Novelist

The Book of Mormon cropped up unexpectedly in two novels by Herman Melville, the author of *Moby Dick* (1851). In his novel *Mardi and a Voyage Thither* (1849), Melville follows the journeys of the elusive and mysterious "Alma," an "illustrious prophet and teacher divine." Robert A. Rees suggests several interesting parallels between Melville's Alma and the Book of Mormon prophets Alma the Elder (ca. 173–91 BC) and his son Alma the Younger (ca. 135–73 BC) and concludes: "That Melville could have used *The Book of Mormon* in writing *Mardi* is apparent."<sup>58</sup> Melville's only mention of the Book of Mormon by name occurs in his novel *Pierre, or, The Ambiguities* (1852), wherein the book is listed among five mysterious and mystical books rejected



Early artwork exploited the aura of mystery surrounding Mormon origins through exaggeration, inaccuracy, and mockery, as seen in this 1867 engraving from Pomeroy Tucker's *Origin, Rise and Progress of Mormonism*.

by Plotinus Plinlimmon, the mad transcendentalist,<sup>59</sup> as threats to his mad-transcendentalist worldview.

#### Arthur Conan Doyle, British Author

Another notable exception to fiction writers' general shunning of the Book of Mormon as subject matter is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), an early case of Sherlock Holmes, Doyle's popular sleuth.<sup>60</sup> In assisting Jefferson Hope, a targeted victim of "the Holy Four"—leaders of the sinister, vengeance-seeking Mormon Danites from Utah—Holmes and Dr. Watson trace Hope's fate to his unsuccessful attempt

to save his beloved Lucy from a polygamous marriage in Utah. Although he is too late to save Lucy from her fate worse than death, he angers the terrifying Danites, who seek vengeance. Early in the story, John Ferrier and his young ward Lucy are saved from death in the desert by Mormons, who introduce themselves as "the persecuted children of God—the chosen of the Angel Merona [*sic*]," who "believe in those sacred writings, drawn in Egyptian letters on plates of beaten gold, which were handed unto the holy Joseph Smith at Palmyra." When the ill-fated Ferrier and Lucy meet Brigham Young himself, they find him reading like a sorcerer researching magic potions from "a brown-backed volume—the Book of Mormon."<sup>61</sup>

Michael Austin, in his study of the enduring influence of early Mormon stereotypes on contemporary detective fiction, notes that "*A Study in Scarlet* has been one of two classic works of genre fiction (along with Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*) responsible for keeping nineteenth-century stereotypes of Mormons in continuous circulation among readers and writers of popular fiction."<sup>62</sup> While Zane Grey's perennially popular *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) portrays the "creed-bound," "creed-mad" Mormon men as "unnaturally cruel"

and willing to “do absolutely any deed to go on building up the power and wealth of their church, their empire,” he blessedly makes no mention of the Book of Mormon.<sup>63</sup>

### Mormons in the Dime Novel

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the enormous popularity of the weekly pulp magazine and the dime novel continued the demonization of Mormons but did nothing to lift the aura of mystery from the Book of Mormon. At least by 1897, Frank Merriwell, hero of Gilbert Patten’s “Frank Merriwell Among the Mormons or The Lost Tribe of Israel,” which appeared in *Tip Top Weekly*, attempts to balance the largely negative image of Mormons in the popular mind. On the cover, Elder Asaph Holdfast, an old Mormon, is pictured rejecting Frank’s “evil” modern mode of transportation, the bicycle, exclaiming, “Remove from my sight those inventions of Satan!” In the story, Frank and chums save a young Mormon maiden from entering a forced marriage. But the story heralds a sea change in popular attitudes about the Mormons: After helping Tom Whitcomb, who represents a new type of enlightened Mormon, Frank says to his friends:

I am getting a different opinion of the Mormons than I once had . . . ; the Mormons I have seen seem like other people. . . . The Mormons are not what they were, Jack. They have changed in recent years, and the younger Mormons are all right. They still hold to their religion, but they have cast aside polygamy, and I believe no man has a right to say how another shall worship God.<sup>64</sup>

### Causes and Effects: The Book of Mormon in the 20th and 21st Centuries

If, at the dawn of a new century and millennium, the Book of Mormon continues to hover on the edge of respectability as vague, mysterious, and foreboding, and as a fraudulent imposture that does not merit looking into, it is principally because of the misperceptions, misunderstandings, and slanted reporting first foisted on the American public by the 19th-century writers whose commentary we have sampled. Eighty-two years (1830–1912) of this kind of dismissive nose-thumbing by

respected and widely read authors took a toll on the reputation, perception, and reception of the Book of Mormon by the American—and international—reader (during the last half of the century the book was at least as well known in Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia as it was in the United States).

### The Lingering Influence of the 19th Century: Brodie, O’Dea, Rimini

The anti-Book of Mormon criticism of the 19th-century writers we have reviewed found new life among the book’s 20th-century critics. Doggedly following Alexander Campbell’s 1832 “environmental” claims, critics such as Fawn M. Brodie, Thomas O’Dea, and recently Robert V. Remini, among a handful of others,<sup>65</sup> also viewed the book either as sacred fiction or as a grab bag of American 19th-century influences clumsily mixed with scripture-like phrasing and pieced together by Joseph Smith, or somebody else—but never by the editorial hands of Mormon and Moroni, as Joseph Smith claimed.

Thus Fawn McKay Brodie, in her influential 1945 biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*,<sup>66</sup> reiterates Campbell’s claims of 19th-century influences to be found in the book and repeats Mark Twain’s nostrums about the book’s dreariness but, like her predecessors, fails to come to grips with the contents of the book in any fresh or insightful way. Likewise, Thomas O’Dea, in his otherwise excellent chapter on the Book of Mormon—the most insightful non-Mormon discussion of the book to date—in his 1957 study, *The Mormons*,<sup>67</sup> delves perceptively into the content and themes of the book only to vitiate his findings by reverting to Campbell’s environmental argument that the book’s contents reflect 19th-century American themes and issues.

And the legacy continues in Robert V. Remini’s 2002 biography, *Joseph Smith*.<sup>68</sup> Remini presents an accurate history of the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, as well as a brief but satisfactory summary of its contents, and concludes that the book is complex and “extraordinary”—an unusual admission for a non-Latter-day Saint critic. Then, scholar of Jacksonian America that he is, Remini ignores the contents of the book, turns his back on Joseph Smith’s claims for the book’s “vertical,” or

spiritual, ancient origins and—shades of Alexander Campbell *cum* Fawn M. Brodie—claims that the book is “an American work of the early nineteenth century. It has a distinctly American character,” he insists, and—Campbell redux—“addresses all the great religious questions and controversies that raged within the Burned-Over District” in the 1820s. Remini asserts, but fails to demonstrate, that the book “radiates revivalist passion, frontier culture and folklore, popular concepts about Indians, and the democratic impulses and political movements of its time.” He then repeats the equally weary charge that the book contains “long stretches . . . [that] are deadly dull” and reprises Mark Twain’s now-standard quip that the book is “chloroform in print.”<sup>69</sup>

### Latter-day Saint Scholars Respond

#### Hugh W. Nibley, Mormon Studies Pioneer

Ironically, it was, among other flaws, Brodie’s use of Alexander Campbell’s arguments in her biography of Joseph Smith that provoked the Latter-day Saints’ ire and stirred their scholarly response to criticism of the Book of Mormon. The belated counterattack began with Francis Kirkham’s *A*

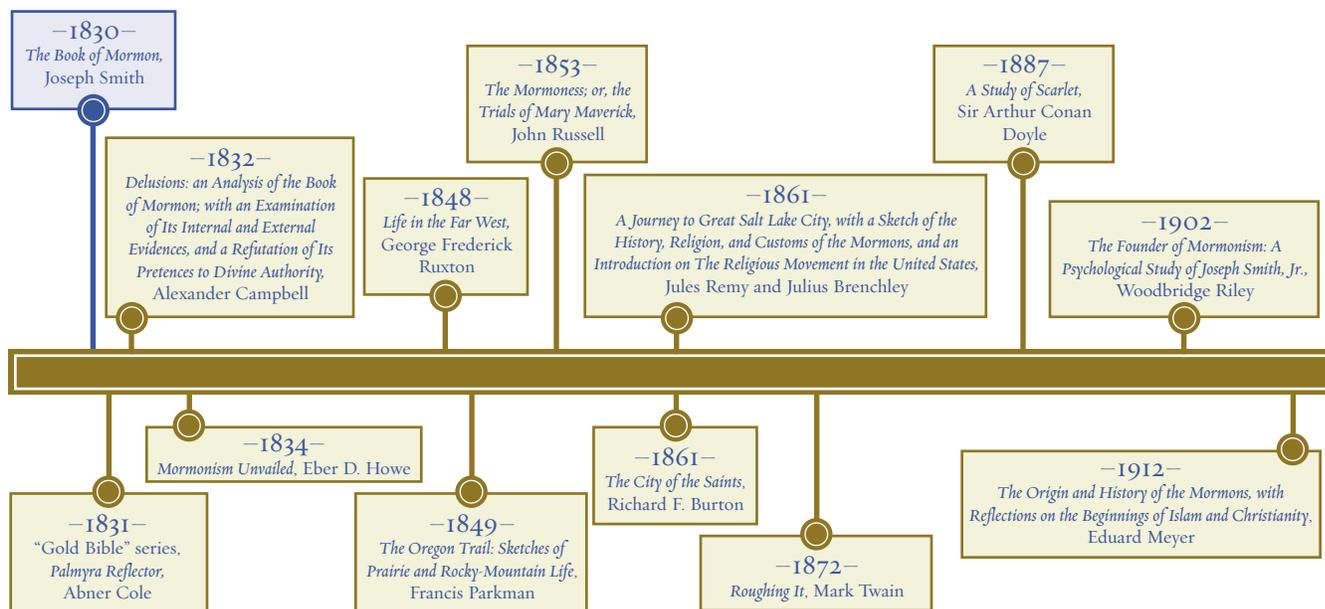
*New Witness for Christ in America* (1942),<sup>70</sup> published in anticipation of Brodie’s long-expected book, and Hugh Nibley’s withering rebuttal to Brodie’s book: *No, Ma’am, That’s Not History* (1946).<sup>71</sup>

In 1952 Nibley published *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites*, his groundbreaking study of the Book of Mormon as a cultural product of the ancient Middle East. He extended his methodology to the entire book in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (1957), which became the Melchizedek Priesthood lesson manual for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints<sup>72</sup> and revived Latter-day Saint interest in the Book of Mormon. Indeed, Nibley, with his vigorous and authoritative nose-thumbing of Book of Mormon crit-



Hugh W. Nibley

## LITERARY TREATMENTS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON: 1830–2004



ics of the 19th and 20th centuries and his numerous articles and scholarly treatises on the ancient origins of Latter-day Saint scripture and temple rites, “has done more than any Mormon of his era to further the intellectual credibility of the Book of Mormon” and Mormonism.<sup>73</sup>

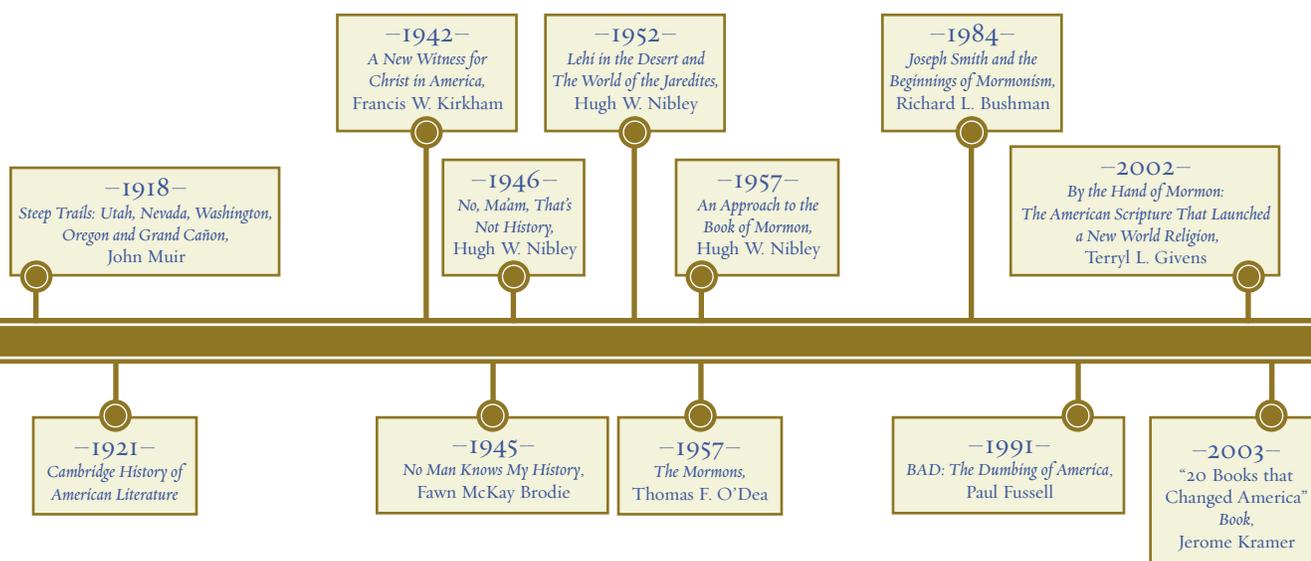
**FARMS (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies)**

Nibley’s unprecedented contributions to Mormon studies have led to the establishment of serious Mormon scholarship in ancient studies and have influenced a whole generation of Latter-day Saint scholars. In 1979, John Welch, BYU professor of law and classical scholar, established the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), now part of Brigham Young University’s Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. Welch’s own interest in Book of Mormon studies began in 1967, when, as a missionary in Germany, he connected the substance of a lecture on “introverted parallelism,” or “chiasmus,” in the Old Testament with his discovery of numerous instances of the Hebrew literary device in the Book of Mormon.<sup>74</sup> Working under Hugh Nibley’s premise that the Book of Mormon is an ancient historical record, Welch and his FARMS col-

*“Indeed, Nibley, with his vigorous and authoritative nose-thumbing of Book of Mormon critics of the 19th and 20th centuries and his numerous articles and scholarly treatises on the ancient origins of Latter-day Saint scripture and temple rites, ‘has done more than any Mormon of his era to further the intellectual credibility of the Book of Mormon’ and Mormonism.”*

leagues maintain that “the Book of Mormon should be studied with literary, linguistic, historical, religious, political, military, legal, social, economic, and just basic textual concerns in mind.”<sup>75</sup>

Under the aegis of FARMS, a cadre of well-trained LDS scholars are conducting an ongoing examination of the book, combing its text for reflections of ancient culture, language, law, and history. In addition to publishing the *Collected Works*



of *Hugh Nibley*, FARMS has published a number of books on Book of Mormon themes.<sup>76</sup> Although such scholarship strengthens Latter-day Saint faith in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the revelatory books of Moses and Abraham, and the temple rites, much of this effort so far has had little influence beyond Mormon readership in correcting earlier mistaken impressions of the Book of Mormon. It is Brodie's (and the 19th-century writers') horizontal, or naturalistic, explanations of Book of Mormon origins, and not the vertical, or revelatory, explanations of Latter-day Saint scholars, that have prevailed in the popular perception of the book.

But change is under way. In the 21st century the old, long-held horizontal perceptions of the Book of Mormon are being undermined and replaced by vertical truths founded in the actual contents of the book. In addition to the work of FARMS scholars, two recent books authored by nationally respected scholars who also happen to be faithful Latter-day Saints and published by prestigious publishing houses have recently reached beyond Mormon readership to a general audience and are aiding in correcting the inaccurate and negative impressions of the Book of Mormon promulgated by earlier writers.

#### **Richard L. Bushman, American Historian**

Richard L. Bushman, whose biography of Joseph Smith is expected to appear in 2005, is now emeritus professor of history at Columbia University and is a former Latter-day Saint bishop and stake president. In *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (1984), published by the University of Illinois Press, Bushman heralds a new era of Book of Mormon scholarship by summarizing, then refuting, one by one, the arguments of Abner Cole, Alexander Campbell, and E. D. Howe. Bushman points out that they failed to ground their views in the actual contents of the Book of Mormon, ignored the work's complexity, and thus reached "unstable, even ephemeral"<sup>77</sup> conclusions.

His close examination of the various theories of the origins and authorship of the book concludes, on the basis of internal literary analysis, that "only limited portions" of the events in the book "were intelligible as expressions of American culture," and he demonstrates that the methods of such history hunters as Brodie, O'Dea, and, I add, Remini "necessarily obscured differences between American and



Richard L. Bushman

Book of Mormon culture"<sup>78</sup> in order to make their theories plausible. Likewise, Bushman's close comparison of Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (which critics claim to be a possible source used by Joseph Smith in writing the Book of Mormon) with the Book of Mormon text

shows that "almost everything Ethan Smith" undertook to prove in his book "the Book of Mormon disproved or disregarded."<sup>79</sup> Bushman's refutation of the cherished theories of 19th- and 20th-century disparagers of the Book of Mormon must in the future be dealt with by any scholar entering the arena. His landmark study heralds a *fin-de-siècle* shift in serious Book of Mormon scholarship that reaches beyond Mormon readership and bodes well for future Book of Mormon studies and an eventual change in the popular perception of the book.

#### **Terryl L. Givens, Scholarly Apologist**

Terryl L. Givens, professor of English at the University of Richmond, Virginia, and a Latter-day Saint bishop, dramatically underscored that shift in *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (2002), published by Oxford University Press. In this handbook to the Book of Mormon, Givens has written what reviewer Jana Riess calls an "eloquent, . . . balanced and gentle apologia for the Book of Mormon as an ancient document."<sup>80</sup> Accepting at face value the spiritual claims of the book, Givens carefully studies, examines, explains, clarifies, and convincingly binds into this important volume virtually every idea, thread, and concern of non-Mormon and Mormon scholars regarding the Book of Mormon.

*By the Hand of Mormon* looks at the reception of the book in the 19th century, undertakes a close literary analysis of the book, reviews and refutes (following Bushman) claims of 19th-century cul-

tural influences on the book, considers other theories critical of the book, and provides the best history to date of the search for archaeological and anthropological evidences of Book of Mormon peoples and cultures. Perhaps his most important contribution to public perception of the Book of Mormon



Terryl L. Givens

is his study, in chapter 8, of the role and nature of revelation as depicted in the book. Labeling as “dialogic revelation” the communication between God and man via inquiry and answer—the form of revelation most often found in the book—Givens asserts that the great contribution of the Book of Mormon to religious thought is “the insistent message that

revelation is the province of every man.”<sup>81</sup> While “the redemptive role of Jesus Christ is the central tenet of which the Book of Mormon testifies,” and while the book “was a template for early church organization,” the Book of Mormon’s greatest continuing appeal is that it vividly illustrates and teaches the reality of personal revelation. By paying as “much attention to the mode as to the object of revelation,” the book becomes “a model for the how, who, and what of revelation.”<sup>82</sup>

*By the Hand of Mormon* must become for any future scholars the point of entry into Book of Mormon studies. While leading Book of Mormon scholarship into the 21st century, Givens’s book will go far toward putting to rest the mistaken theories about the book’s authorship; correcting misleading impressions of the Book of Mormon that have become embedded in the popular imagination by 19th-century and later writers; and, at last, balancing Moroni’s prophecy to Joseph Smith that his name, the church he restored, and the Book of Mormon “should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.” Evil has had its day; it is high time for the Good! ❏

## ENDNOTES

**“Had for Good and Evil”: 19th-Century Literary Treatments of the Book of Mormon**  
Richard H. Cracroft

- Joseph Smith—History 1:33–34.
- Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1984), 121.
- [Abner Cole], “Palmyra Residents to Painesville (OH) Telegraph, 12 March 1831,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000), 3:9–10.
- Jerome Kramer, “20 Books That Changed America,” *Book* (Barnes-Noble), July–August, 2003, 58–61.
- Paul Fussell, *BAD: The Dumbing of America* (New York: Summit, 1991), 197.
- Critics of the Book of Mormon variously style the book’s title in italic or roman type; the title is not normally italicized because the book is a sacred text. In this paper I will follow, without notice, the various practices of the individual authors when quoting them but will otherwise style the title in roman type.
- Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 26.
- Cambridge History of American Literature* (1921), 3:522.
- Bill Lawrence, *Then Some Other Stuff Happened: A New History of America (sort of)* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 60.
- Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1984), 120.
- Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 124–25.
- Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 124.
- See Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, and Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, for discussions of other early critics.
- Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 94.
- See the *Millennial Harbinger* (7 February 1831); the critique was published later as *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon, with an Examination of Its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretences to Divine Authority* (Boston, 1832).
- Campbell, *Delusions*, 11, 15; compare Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 125.
- Campbell, *Delusions*, 15.
- The name is often spelled “Spaulding”; I am following Bushman’s spelling.
- Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: the author, 1834), 289–90.
- See also Fawn McKay Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (1945; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1995). Brodie rejected the Spalding-Rigdon theory, which still reasserts itself. The definitive discussion of the Spalding hypothesis is by Lester E. Bush Jr., “The Spalding Theory Then and Now,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10 (Autumn 1977): 40–69.
- See Wilfred Decoo, “The Image of Mormonism in French Literature, Part 1,” *BYU Studies* 14/2 (1974): 157–75; Part 2, 16/2 (1976): 265–76.
- Surgeon General’s Office, *Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States . . . From January, 1855 to January, 1860* (Washington, D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860); quoted in Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 136–37.
- Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky-Mountain Life* (1849; reprint, New York: Library of America/Viking Press, 1991), 87.
- Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 275. Time did not gentle Parkman’s harsh judgment of Mormons. In his preface to the fourth edition, published in 1872, the now-famous author of *Pioneers of France in the New World* (1865), *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (1867), and *Discovery of the Great West* (1869) can only comment: “We knew [in 1847] that a few fanatical outcasts were groping their way across the plains to seek an asylum from Gentile persecution; but we did not imagine that the polygamous hordes of Mormon would rear a swarming Jerusalem in the bosom of solitude itself” (938).
- Thurman Wilkins, *John Muir: Apostle of Nature* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 128–29. I thank Terry B. Ball, professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, for reminding me of Muir’s Utah visit.
- John Muir, *Steep Trails, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, the Grand Cañon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 912.
- Muir, *Steep Trails*, 920.
- George Frederick Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1951). According to mountain man historian LeRoy R. Hafen, *Life in the Far West* “is not a reliable historical chronicle, but it is factual” (preface to *Life in the Far West*, xvi). The book appeared serially in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* during the summer of 1848. Ruxton died on a return trip to the United States, in August 1848, at St. Louis, of injuries sustained on his 1846–47 trip through the Rocky Mountains. See Richard H. Cracroft, “George Frederick Ruxton,” *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 186, *Nineteenth-Century American Western Writers*, ed. Robert L. Gale (Detroit: Brucoli-Clark-Layman/Gale Research, 1997), 327–35.
- Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, 195.
- Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, 195–99.
- Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, 207.
- Richard F. Burton, *City of the Saints and across the Rocky Mountains to California*, ed. Fawn M. Brodie (1861; reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), vii.
- Burton, *City of the Saints*, 224.
- Burton, *City of the Saints*, 223, 409, 410–15, 458–65.
- James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 319.
- Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, with a Sketch of the History, Religion, and Customs of the Mormons, and an Introduction on The Religious Movement in the United States* (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), 1:v.
- Remy and Brenchley, *Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, 1:xxx, xxxi, x.
- Remy and Brenchley, *Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, 1:244, 256–57, 257–63.
- Remy and Brenchley, *Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, 1:264, 265.
- Remy and Brenchley, *Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, 1:401, 403, 406.
- Remy and Brenchley, *Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, 2:3–82, 66–76, 83–172.
- Artemus Ward (Charles Farrer Browne) devotes 10 chapters to the Mormons in *Artemus Ward (His Travels) Among the Mormons, Artemus Ward: His Lecture, and Artemus Ward: His Book* (1860), the latter containing his uproarious “A Visit to Brigham Young,” who “loved not wisely—but two hundred well. He is dreadfully married” (Richard H. Cracroft, “‘Ten Wives is All You Need’: Artemus Twain and the Mormons—Again,” *Western Humanities Review* 38/3 [1984]: 203). Twain borrowed a number of Ward’s ideas for making merry about the Latter-day Saints.
- The entry in Brigham Young’s journal for 7 August 1861, reads: “Mr. Clements [*sic*], Secy of the Territory of Nevada, who was on his way to Carson, accompanied by his Brother [Samuel L. Clemens] and one other gentleman” (Brigham Young’s Secretaries’ Journal, 1857–1863 [LDS Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah]). Orion was appointed by Abraham Lincoln as secretary to the newly appointed governor of the newly established Territory of Nevada, headquartered at Carson City. Samuel L. Clemens deserted from the Confederate infantry to accompany Orion as his secretary but left that position very soon after arriving in Carson City.
- In *The Mormon Prophet and His Harem*, “a typical anti-Mormon ‘history’ of the period, Mrs. Waite charges Brigham Young with ordering, among other atrocities, the infamous Mountain Meadow Massacre of 1857” (Richard H. Cracroft, “The Gentle Blasphemer Mark Twain, Holy Scripture, and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 11 (Winter 1971): 131. In *Roughing It* (1872; Berkeley:

- Univ. of California Press, 1993), appendix A, "Brief Sketch of Mormon History," Twain takes on Brigham Young, who, in the "steady progress of his official grandeur, . . . modestly . . . proclaimed himself a God!" (p. 547); in appendix B, "The Mountain Meadows Massacre," Twain admits his heavy reliance on "Mrs. C. V. Waite's entertaining book, 'The Mormon Prophet'" (p. 550).
45. Cracroft, "Gentle Blasphemer," 132.
  46. Twain, *Roughing It*, 107.
  47. Jeffrey R. Holland (now an LDS apostle) looks closely at Twain's treatment of the Book of Mormon in his Yale Ph.D. dissertation, "Mark Twain's Religious Sense: The Viable Years—1835–1883" (1973).
  48. Twain, *Roughing It*, 108–9.
  49. Twain, *Roughing It*, 107.
  50. Twain, *Roughing It*, 115.
  51. Eduard Meyer, *The Origin and History of the Mormons, with Reflections on the Beginnings of Islam and Christianity*, trans. Heinz F. Rahde and Eugene Seach (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 1961).
  52. Quoted in Hugh Nibley, "Joseph Smith and the Critics," in *Abraham in Egypt*, ed. Gary P. Gillum (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1981), 137.
  53. James K. Lyon, "Mormon and Islam through the Eyes of a 'Universal Historian' [Eduard Meyer]," *BYU Studies* 40/4 (2001): 226.
  54. Lyon, "Universal Historian," 229–30.
  55. The Mormon sections of *Monsieur Violet* are "almost identical to sections in John C. Bennett's *History of the Saints* (New York, 1842)," which is a reprint of *Mormonism Portrayed* (1841), allegedly written by Thomas Sharp, a bitter anti-Mormon (Leonard J. Arrington, "Mormonism: Views from Without and Within," *BYU Studies* 14/2 [1974]: 141).
  56. See Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 109–10.
  57. Quoted in Arrington, "Views," 145.
  58. Robert A. Rees, "Melville's Alma and *The Book of Mormon*," *Emerson Society Quarterly*, no. 43 (circa 1971), 45.
  59. See Rees, "Melville's Alma," 41–42.
  60. Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, in *Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing, 1927).
  61. Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, 53. Doyle, after visiting Utah in 1922, "freely admitted that his earlier portrayal of Mormonism had given an 'overcoloured picture' of the Latter-day Saints" (quoted in Michael Austin, "Troped by the Mormons: The Persistence of 19th-Century Mormon Stereotypes in Contemporary Detective Fiction," *Sunstone*, August 1998, 5).
  62. Austin, "Troped by the Mormons," 51.
  63. Gary Topping, "Zane Grey in Zion: An Examination of His Supposed Anti-Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 18/4 (1978): 8, 13, 10.
  64. Quoted in Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834–1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations* (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 1983), 58–59.
  65. See Jan Shipp, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1985); Shipp, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2000); Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); Bloom, *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996); Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999); Gutjahr, "The Golden Bible in the Bible's Golden Age: *The Book of Mormon* and Antebellum Print Culture," *ATQ: 19th C. American Literature and Culture*, n.s., 12/4 (1998): 275–93; Gutjahr, "The State of the Discipline: Sacred Texts in the United States," in *Book History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2001), 4:335–70; and Mark Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).
  66. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*.
  67. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957).
  68. Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2002).
  69. Remini, *Joseph Smith*, 71, 72–73, 74.
  70. Kirkham's *A New Witness for Christ in America*, vol. 2 (1952), was written in direct response to Brodie's book.
  71. No, *Ma'am, That's Not History*, reprinted in *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), has become "the most famous of all Mormon Church-sanctioned publications refuting Brodie's biography" (Newell G. Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life* [Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999], 111).
  72. See also, among others, Nibley's *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967); Nibley on *the Timely and the Timeless* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978); "Joseph Smith and the Critics," in *Abraham in Egypt*, ed. Gary P. Gillum (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1981), 127–62; John W. Welch, ed., *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989); and Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals*.
  73. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 124.
  74. See John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10/1 (1969): 69–84; see also his *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (1981; reprint, Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1999), which compares Book of Mormon chiasmus with chiasmus in a range of ancient literatures.
  75. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 126.
  76. FARMS has published, among other books, Donald W. Parry, Jeannette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne, eds., *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* (1996); John L. Sorenson's *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985); Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2 vols. (1990, 1996); Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (1998); John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (1990); Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"* (1998); and Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (1997).
  77. Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 128.
  78. Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 131.
  79. Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 136.
  80. Jana Riess, "Book of Mormon Stories" (reviews of Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, and Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah*), *Dialogue* 35/3 (2002): 242.
  81. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 221.
  82. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 226, 224.

#### Irony in the Book of Mormon

Robert A. Rees

1. Robert A. Rees, "Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35/3 (2002): 83–112. This article is a slightly revised version of a paper that I originally presented at the 1999 California and Salt Lake Sunstone symposia.
2. The quotations of Burke and Booth both come from Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), xvi, 1.
3. Marcus Bach, *Faith and My Friends* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951), 255.
4. Rees, "Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance," 91, 107.
5. Jedediah Purdy, *For Common Things: Irony, Trust, and Commitment in America Today* (New York: Knopf, 1999).
6. M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), s.v. "irony"; and Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), s.v. "irony."
7. D. J. Enright, *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 7.
8. D. C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen & Co., 1969), 1.
9. Chris Baldick, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 130.
10. Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), 40.
11. *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 635.
12. Karl A. Plank, *Paul and the Irony of Affliction* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 37.