

from Grant Affleck, now famous for the financial downfall of his company, AFCO Enterprises. Hundreds and possibly thousands of individuals and companies have lost millions just because they tried to squeeze too much juice out of an orange. As a bishop in Centerville I saw many families hurt financially when they became involved in a pyramid scheme using over-valued diamonds. As a financial planner and consultant, I see dozens of shaky investments fly through the valley with the hope of convincing gullible Mormons and others to invest.

All of this is to say that I am afraid of books which foster an inappropriate entrepreneurial spirit. I grew up with a father

who is an entrepreneur, but it meant eighty-to-ninety-hour work weeks and plenty of hard work every day. While it is interesting to read of the lives of some of the individuals mentioned in the book, I believe Nelson may possibly have had among his motives as an author the goal of trying to cash in on the Mormon market by writing a book aimed at our fellow brothers and sisters who enjoy chasing rainbows in their pastime. I question whether God really gave us the power to become wealthy as though it were some type of destiny for us to fulfill. It would be interesting to return in five years and see if all eleven individuals mentioned still have their fortunes.

## Responsible Apologetics

*Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, Noel B. Reynolds, ed., BYU Religious Studies Monograph Series (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft/ BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 244 pp., \$9.95.

Reviewed by Blake T. Ostler, graduate student in law and philosophy at the University of Utah.

AS THE TITLE INDICATES, *Book of Mormon Authorship* addresses the heart of LDS faith claims—the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Noel Reynolds has assembled studies ranging from computer wordprint analysis to source criticism of ancient documents, all concluding that the Book of Mormon is a verifiable, religious revelation. *Book of Mormon Authorship* is intended as evidence for the faithful, as a challenge to the skeptic, and as a thorn in the side of the detractor. Though the book achieves this purpose, it fails to deal adequately with the very issues it raises in a critical, objective manner.

*Book of Mormon Authorship* is comprised of essays which confront divergent theories that have emerged to explain the origin of the Book of Mormon. Richard

L. Anderson tacitly addresses the theory popular among detractors that Joseph Smith *knowingly* produced a pious fraud (pp. 213–37). Anderson provides evidence and insightful analysis demonstrating that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery sincerely believed the Book of Mormon was genuine. Indeed, the dominant impression gleaned from Joseph Smith's earliest holographs and now from Lucy Mack Smith's 1829 letter is that he was religiously committed to what he perceived as a divine calling. Fawn Brodie's theory that Joseph assumed his prophetic role only after the translation of the Book of Mormon thus appears to be erroneous.

However, Joseph's sincerity may not be the whole story. The possibility that Joseph was *unknowingly* self-deceived has received support from records surrounding an 1826 trial showing that Joseph had a sincere belief in his powers of divination through "stone gazing" and later of translation of the Book of Mormon by the same means. (See Marvin Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties" *BYU Studies* (Winter 1972): 222–32; Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker, "Joseph Smith: The Gift of See-

ing" *DIALOGUE* (Summer 1982): 49-68). This is one aspect of Joseph Smith's credibility that Anderson does not analyze or account for. Admittedly, the physical nature of the gold plates and numerous witnesses to their existence create problems with the theory that Joseph was unknowingly self-deceived; however, Joseph's belief and trust in quasi-magical means of translation are relevant to a study of his credibility because such beliefs are suspect in light of widely accepted naturalistic assumptions of modern science.

Richard L. Bushman contests the theory dominant among non-LDS and some LDS and RLDS scholars that Joseph Smith drew from his nineteenth-century environment to produce the Book of Mormon (pp. 190-211). Critics have pointed to a long list of Christian doctrines, King James Bible quotations, American political ideas, and anti-Masonic attitudes found in the Book of Mormon to support their view.

Bushman demonstrates persuasively that these critics have assumed too much. What they assume to be typical, early American, political rhetoric turns out on closer inspection to be not so typical and not so American. Bushman suggests that recondite Israelite practices such as refusal of kingship, authority vested in judges, and "divine deliverance" patterns may better explain the very practices critics uncritically Americanized. Yet Bushman may also assume too much because Joseph Smith's political views may not have been typical and because exodus typology was a favorite mode of Biblical exegesis among New England Puritans and early American preachers such as Jonathan Edwards. Bushman definitely demonstrates, however, the superficial treatment critics have given the Book of Mormon.

The wordprint analysis by Wayne Larson and Alvin Rencher questions once again the theory that Sidney Rigdon or Solomon Spaulding authored the Book of Mormon (pp. 158-88). This theory continues to surface, though thoroughly discredited, because of the suspicion that the

prodigious narrative, theological insight, and biblical knowledge manifest in the Book of Mormon were beyond Joseph's limited education and mental abilities. In computer studies of noncontextual word frequencies to measure unconscious language patterns, word groupings from nineteenth-century authors were clearly distinguishable from Book of Mormon word groupings. Further, the individual Book of Mormon prophets had distinct and contrasting styles from one another. Such decisive findings may give pause to even the most vehement critics of the Book of Mormon and put to rest once and for all the theory that either Sidney Rigdon or Solomon Spaulding authored it.

David D. Croft, a University of Utah statistician, has questioned the validity of Larsen and Rencher's major premise that an author-specific wordprint exists ("Book of Mormon Wordprint Examined" *Sunstone* [March-April 1981]: 15-21). Notwithstanding well over a dozen studies cited by Rencher and Larsen supporting this premise, Croft's skepticism is supported by studies on the works of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. According to Howard Hong, an expert on Kierkegaard's writings, computer studies demonstrate that the Danish philosopher could adjust his wordprint in relation to various pseudonyms he assumed in his works, though perhaps not as frequently or distinctively as those in the Book of Mormon.

Croft criticized the first version of the wordprint study printed in *BYU Studies* by asserting that a wordprint could not survive translation. This criticism is answered in the *Book of Mormon Authorship* version. Wordprints of twelve German novellas translated by a single translator demonstrated a statistically significant difference that was not altered by the translation (p. 177).

However, the issue of translation raises a problem of internal consistency in *Book of Mormon Authorship*. In order to make sense of applying a wordprint analysis, one must assume that the "translation process

was both direct and literal, and that each individual author's style was preserved" (p. 179). However, for B. H. Roberts to explain nineteenth-century anachronisms and King James Bible quotations he had to assume that "Joseph's vocabulary and grammar are as clearly imposed on the book as a fingerprint on a coin" (p. 13). If the expressions and ideas in the Book of Mormon are partly the result of Joseph's attempt to communicate the translation, then the nineteenth-century theological ideas and biblical quotations can be explained as a result inherent in the translation process. If these expansions are indeed Joseph's, however, then they should reflect his wordprint. To assume that Nephi had access to a King James Bible or that he was acquainted with nineteenth-century Arminian theology in the sixth century B.C. is beyond the bounds of competent scholarship. Yet this is precisely what must be assumed if the wordprint is to be taken seriously. Even given this criticism, however, the results of the wordprint study must be explained. Perhaps the wordprint analysis tells us more about computers than about the Book of Mormon.

While contesting rival theories, *Book of Mormon Authorship* seeks to establish the ancient origins of the Book of Mormon. An honest evaluation of the claims of the Book of Mormon must consider ancient literary devices such as *chiasmus* (inverted parallelism) and *parallelismus membrorum* (synonymic, antithetic, and synthetic parallelism), discovered by John Welch (pp. 34–52); the sophisticated narrative structure elucidated by Noel Reynolds (pp. 54–74); the accurate description of geographical details of Arabia shown by Eugene England (pp. 144–56); the Semitic nomenclature mirroring ancient Near Eastern usage; and the accurate description of religious, social, and political aspects of sixth-century Israel demonstrated by Hugh Nibley through the peephole provided in the Lachish letters (pp. 104–21).

Nibley also demonstrates the relationship between Christ's visit in 3 Nephi and

the Gospel of the XII Apostles. The Gospel of the XII Apostles is one of a number of early Christian texts like the Gospel of Thomas, the Apocryphon of James, the Acts of Thomas, the Epistle of the Apostles, the Odes of Solomon and other gnostic and patristic sources which describe Christ's post-resurrection activities. Although many of the parallels drawn by Nibley appear weak or may be explained by dependence on a common biblical motif, the wider religious significance can be appreciated in the historical context of the Gospel of the XII Apostles. The relation of these early documents to one another is unclear, but their organic unity suggests a common oral or ritual tradition. A synthesis of Christ's instructions in these sources would include a discourse on the "two ways" (evil and good, light and dark) constructed from ethical admonitions from the Sermon on the Mount, instructions on baptism and prayer, a communal meal sanctified by sacramental prayers, organization of ecclesiastical and communal orders, sealing and initiatory ordinances, and an eschatological discourse. The Didaché, a very early and authoritative Christian work, was actually such a synthesis of instructions of initiation into the Christian community and was dependent in part on the Serekh Scroll found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. 3 Nephi masterfully captures the teachings that the earliest Christians deemed to be the essence of Christ's post-resurrection message.

*Book of Mormon Authorship* has made a *prima facie* case for the ancient origins of the Book of Mormon. It fails, however, to respond to scholarly criticism in some crucial areas. For example, since Welch first published his study on chiasmus in 1969, it has been discovered that chiasmus also appears in the Doctrine and Covenants (see, for example, 88:34–38; 93:18–38; 132:19–26, 29–36), the Pearl of Great Price (Book of Abraham 3:16–19; 22–28), and other isolated nineteenth-century works. Thus, Welch's major premise that chiasmus is exclusively an ancient literary device is false. Indeed, the presence of

chiasmus in the Book of Mormon may be evidence of Joseph Smith's own literary style and genius. Perhaps Welch could have strengthened his premise by demonstrating that the parallel members in the Book of Mormon consist of Semitic word pairs, the basis of ancient Hebrew poetry. Without such a demonstration, both Welch's and Reynold's arguments from chiasmus are weak.

Wilfred Griggs's paper, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," is inconclusive (pp. 76-94). Griggs correctly observes that "the assumption that any parallels from the world of Joseph Smith, real or imagined, are sufficient to discredit the authenticity of the work is naive" (p. 76). However, he makes an equally naive assumption that any parallels from the ancient world are sufficient to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Even if the Book of Mormon were a well-established ancient document, the relationship between the Orphic plates Griggs studies and the Tree of Life motif in 1 Nephi would be questionable, given the distance between the two sources and universality of the motif. Pointing to such parallels is unpersuasive because accounts at least as close to those studied by Griggs from Greece and Egypt were available to Joseph Smith. On the other hand, the attempt of critics to prove the Book of Mormon is entirely a product of Joseph Smith's nineteenth-century environment by comparing Lehi's dream with Joseph Smith, Sr.'s, dream are also inconclusive precisely because the dream is archetypal and has ancient parallels. Despite its weaknesses, Griggs's study is a fine example of the historico-critical method and source criticism.

Perhaps B. H. Roberts's confrontation with the Book of Mormon recounted by Truman Madsen is the most valuable insight provided by *Book of Mormon Authorship* (pp. 7-32). Roberts was honest enough to realize that one must account for the presence of Semitic names as well as nineteenth-century Arminian theology, for

ancient literary and social patterns as well as modern anachronisms, and for powerful religious doctrines as well as quasi-magical origins of the Book of Mormon. Given Robert's view of the role of Joseph Smith as the explicator, refiner, translator, and expander of the Book of Mormon, he expected the book to have a split personality reflecting both the ancient and modern worlds. Roberts's approach to the Book of Mormon as an historical text was ingenious, foreshadowing modern developments in redaction criticism or study of editorial tendencies in the formation and transmission of ancient texts.

Indeed, many recent arguments denying the authenticity of the Book of Mormon based on nineteenth-century parallels or use of biblical texts presupposing developments of second Isaiah or the Sermon on the Mount can be answered once it is recognized that the book is an instance of pseud-epigraphic expansion and targumization. Pseudeigraphic expansion is the expansion of a text in the name of an earlier prophet, to answer the nagging problems of the day by providing unrestricted and authoritative commentary based on insights from the text, thereby imposing a modern worldview and theological understanding on that text. Targumization is the interpretive activity of transmitting scripture through scriptural commentary, thus imposing modern theological assumptions on that scripture. Perhaps this is what Joseph Smith had in mind when "translating," as evidenced by his inspired version of the Bible. Moreover, such tendencies to expand and interpret are evident throughout the Bible, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Pseudepigrapha. Though such expansion may compromise the historicity of the Book of Mormon, it does not abrogate its authenticity. In fact, the rabbis and early sectaries of Qumran felt that prophetic expansion of scripture enhanced its religious value. Of the theories proposed to explain the Book of Mormon, only this theory of pseud-epigraphic expansion has the ability to explain both its modern and ancient aspects.

In an unfortunate attempt to discredit the Book of Mormon, detractors stooped to dishonesty by removing Roberts's cover letter to his "Book of Mormon Study," which explained that this work represented possible objections to the historicity of the Book of Mormon but not his own views. There is a general consensus, even among the most vitriolic detractors, that Roberts wrote the most effective challenge to date of the Book of Mormon's historicity in search of answers to his own objections and questions. Unfortunately, the same care with justified objections has not been taken in *Book of Mormon Authorship*. Perhaps a more critical approach was avoided because the claims of the Book of Mormon are infrequently taken seriously by scholars and the authors wanted to state their case before it was diluted by criticism. Their case may ultimately be much weaker, however, precisely because they failed to confront criticism.

Nonetheless, *Book of Mormon Authorship* includes well-conceived studies by

competent scholars that a serious student must deal with in confronting the Book of Mormon. Almost without exception, critics of the Book of Mormon know very little about nineteenth-century America, even less about the ancient world in general and virtually nothing about sixth-century Israel. The authors of *Book of Mormon Authorship* represent a refreshing departure from unqualified conclusions by unqualified crusaders both pro and con. With the exception of Eugene England, the authors have applied the tools of their specialized fields of study and expertise. However, the tone of *Book of Mormon Authorship* is apologetic and not objective. Such responsible apologetics serve the valuable function of legitimizing religious claims and making such faith claims more responsive to reason, criticism, and historical fact. At the very least, *Book of Mormon Authorship* establishes that nothing short of genius must be imputed to Joseph Smith if he is to be considered the book's author and nothing short of inspiration if not.

## More Extraterrestrials

*Strategie der Götter, Das Achte Weltwunder* by Erich von Däniken (Dusseldorf: Econ, 1982), 320 pp., 32 Deutsche Mark.

Reviewed by Peter C. Nadig, a graphic design student at the Fachhochschule in Dusseldorf, West Germany. He is executive clerk in his Duisburg ward, and his interests include ancient and church history, traveling, and Middle East affairs.

WHEN I SAW THIS BOOK for the first time I ignored it as I have done with all of the other books by the popular nonfiction Swiss author and world traveler, Erich von Däniken. He is known as the leading proponent of the "Gods were astronauts" theory, and I could not make up my mind about him. Nevertheless, many Church members find some of his observations interesting and worthy of discussion.

My attention was first drawn to his recent book when an elderly member of my ward told me that von Däniken was writing a series about the golden plates for one of West Germany's popular TV journals. In previous European books dealing with pre-Columbian archeology, he briefly mentioned the Book of Mormon, but only to deny its claim as a historical record. It was discussed mainly in connection with the common theory of the lost tribes.

Von Däniken's books, which are widely read, mostly deal with archeological topics for which a scientific explanation remains uncertain and controversial. He is not fond of modern sciences which he claims have turned "dogmatic and intolerant" (p. 221). Since von Däniken searches rather indiscriminately for any kind of unclassified artifact to promote his observations of