

# Toward an Introduction to a Psychobiography of Joseph Smith

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## BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

WERE A MORMON PSYCHOTHERAPIST TO ATTEMPT a psychobiography of Joseph Smith, I believe the first decision should be identifying his or her theological assumptions. These assumptions not only determine audience, but in turn are determined by whether the author takes a professional position or writes as a believing member of the LDS church. The writer's stance necessarily leads to certain conclusions and eliminates others.

Nowhere is this more true than in the area of spiritual claims. An extreme example of this demonstrates the changing assumptions of our own culture. During the witch-craze of Western Europe from about 1350 to 1650 A.D. thousands of people, mostly women, were condemned to death for confessing under torture to actions now considered impossible. These included flying through the air on forked sticks or animals, meeting in "covens" during "Sabbats" where they sacrificed infants, brewed storms, created plagues, illnesses, impotency, or infertility, and engaged in sexual relations with demons, called incubus (male) and succubus (female).

Some 350 years after these events, historian Joseph Hansen wrote a naturalistic approach to the witch-craze. He believed confessions were the result of coercion, usually torture, and witch/demonic interactions did not occur. Two years later Catholic Jesuit scholar Robert Schwickerath responded to Hansen's work, commenting that the "one-sided *a priori* treatment of the [sixteenth-century Catholic] scholastics was fatal; and it would be well if the book were studied by Professors of Philosophy and Theology." He added quotes by other Catholic leaders: "[W]e

now know how much is purely natural which even the most enlightened men of their age formerly account supernatural." Schwickerath acknowledged that "belief in incubus and succubus which played a most important part in the witch trials, are now rejected . . . by the best Catholic theologians." Nevertheless, he stated that Hansen's book was "based on a false supposition in denying the existence of evil spirits, and consequently leads to wrong conclusions."<sup>1</sup>

What credence in a psychobiographical study of a Mormon—in this case, the first Mormon—concerning the supernatural should be allowed? Let us move along a sliding scale, from totally supernatural to totally natural explanations. In the process, my own position will become clear.

To many believing Mormons, virtually all that Joseph Smith did was a result of commandments from God. This was the position of the LDS church during its first 100 years, and continues to surface in many church manuals and sermons. As recently as 1976 Mormon apostle Ezra Taft Benson criticized two Mormon historians for suggesting that environmental factors—such as the temperance movement of the 1830s—may partly explain the background of Joseph Smith's 1833 health-related revelation on the Word of Wisdom.<sup>2</sup> According to this view, external secular influences should be largely discarded. Smith thus is not so much a man of his time, nor a result of his own psychology, but a product of the influence of the Holy Ghost. Outside the Mormon church, Jesuit scholar H. Becher takes basically the same position in his biography of the sixteenth-century founder of his priesthood order, *Ignatius of Loyola*<sup>3</sup>: "Even a lack of psychological analysis may be admissible as long as one sees and correctly portrays the workings of God in the Saint."

In this position, there is virtually nothing important about Joseph Smith to understand psychologically, and no significant psychobiography can be

1. Joseph Hansen, *Zauberwahn, Inquisition and Hexenprozess im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1900). The response by Robert Schwickerath, S.J., is in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 27 (1902): 475-516, entitled "Attitude of the Jesuits in the Trials for Witchcraft." For a brief overview of the witch trials, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 90-192; R. H. Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965); and R. D. Anderson, "The History of Witchcraft: A Review with Some Psychiatric Comments," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 126 (June 1970): 1727-35.

2. Benson, Ezra Taft: *The Gospel Teacher and His Message* (Salt Lake City: Church Educational System, 1976), 11-12, quoted by D. Michael Quinn, "On Being a Mormon Historian (and Its Aftermath)," in George D. Smith, ed.: *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 69-111.

3. H. Becher, S.J., "Ignatius as Seen by His Contemporaries," in *Ignatius of Loyola: His Personality and Spiritual Heritage, 1556-1956*, ed. F. Wulf, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 69-96, at 70. Also in W. W. Meissner, S.J., "Psychoanalytic Hagiography: The Case of Ignatius of Loyola," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 3-33.

attempted. Such histories of Smith simply reiterate his story, along with experiences from his mother, other acquaintances, friends, and enemies, without close scrutiny or analysis. They continue to be found in church books and manuals. Most non-Mormon historians consider them of limited value at best.<sup>4</sup>

The next step along this continuum is acknowledging Joseph Smith's statement that "a prophet is a prophet only when he is acting as such."<sup>5</sup> Here Smith's supernatural acts of translation and revelation are still largely exempt from psychological and environmental inquiry, but in his daily life he can be understood as a man of the nineteenth-century American frontier as well as of some limited psychological forces. This is the position of most present-day academic Mormon historians, who expect that psychological forces result in a view of Smith as mostly healthy and his underlying motivations as fundamentally charitable.

Yet comments here by most Mormon historians seem timid. In the words of one writer: "there has been little effort to uncover the background modes of thought, the controlling categories and assumptions, of Joseph Smith himself."<sup>6</sup> Even if one suspects that some aspects of Smith's daily life contained psychological conflict, there is immediate challenge. Mormon Jungian psychoanalyst C. Jess Groesbeck has proposed Smith may have had an unresolved "split" in his personality, an internal conflict between two contending systems of morality:

[Joseph Smith] basically could not unite these two aspects of himself[. . .] that side which believed in a single relationship to his wife . . . versus that side that believed in multiple plural relationships to other women. . . . In my opinion Joseph sensed he was not going to be able to heal the split in his life . . . [H]ad Joseph lived his life longer, he might have united the opposites . . . and the split . . . within him.

Groesbeck was soon countered by another Mormon psychiatrist: "There is great danger in interpreting manifest dream content without access to the latent dream material. There is even greater danger in interpreting the dreams of a prophet. . . . Prophets dream dreams of things past, present, and future." Thus even day-to-day mundane mental functions of a prophet escape psychological evaluation.

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4. Lawrence Foster, "New Perspectives on the Mormon Past: Reflections of a Non-Mormon Historian," in Smith, *Faithful History*, 113.

5. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols., ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951), 5:265.

6. Gary F. Novak, "Naturalistic Assumptions and the Book of Mormon," *Brigham Young University Studies* 30 (Summer 1990): 23-40.

7. C. Jess Groesbeck, "Joseph Smith and His Path of Individuation: A Psychoanalytical

If Smith's motives have been little examined, his revelations remain completely exempt from psychological interpretation. This approach contains two essential elements: (1) the acts of a prophet—when "acting as such"—contain no psychological influence, (2) and God does not work through the psyche of a prophet but is external to it. Such a man is little more than a tool or machine worked by God. In fact, this is how Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon has been described.<sup>8</sup>

The next move toward a secular approach is controversial and calls for closer examination. At this level God might work through the psyche of a saint or prophet, whose conflicts appear not only in his ordinary living but constitute an important element in his visions and spiritual calling. Here the essential ingredient is not only acknowledging psychological forces—healthy or pathological—but their fusion with spiritual forces that use these psychological struggles to express the will of God.

I know of no published work in orthodox Mormonism that represents such a view, but at least two authors imply such in their writings about the Book of Mormon. One believes that the core of the book is authentic history but that Smith added elements from his own life and time to it.<sup>9</sup> The other believes there is no historical basis for the book but nonetheless subscribes to its spiritual value,<sup>10</sup> a position also held by some members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.<sup>11</sup> Aside from this, Smith's revelations remain exempt from psychological or environmental influence. Outside the Mormon church, this fused approach is best represented by the work of Jesuit psychoanalyst William W. Meissner on the life of Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>12</sup>

Exploration in Mormonism," Aug. 1986, privately circulated; tape-recorded version with response by James Morgan available on tape through Sunstone Foundation, Salt Lake City.

8. James E. Lancaster, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon," in Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 97-112; Dean C. Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 29-39, esp. 35-36.

9. Blake T. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Spring 1987): 66-123.

10. Mark Thomas, "Lehi's Doctrine of Opposition in Its Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Contexts," *Sunstone* 13 (Jan. 1989): 52; and his "The Meaning of Revival Language in The Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 8 (May-June 1983): 19-25. See also his "Rhetorical Approach to The Book of Mormon," 1992, privately circulated.

11. William D. Russell, "A Further Inquiry into the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 7 (Sept.-Oct. 1982): 20-24.

12. William W. Meissner, S.J., *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 346-58.

The term "Jesuit psychoanalyst" deserves some discussion. Sigmund Freud, an atheist, referred to himself as "The Godless Jew" and believed that religion was an illusion.

This, I propose, is the next step for Mormon psychohistorians.

All of the above approaches assume that God, supernatural forces, and spiritual experiences exist, but in the last approach they are not of interest to the psychobiographer. In the words of Meissner:

If the theologian allows that Ignatius was the recipient of great mystical graces and that the miraculous course of his inspired saintly career was the work of God's grace guiding and inspiring him at every step of the way, on this subject the psychoanalyst can say neither yea nor nay. The interpretation lies beyond the scope of his methodology and theory. The psychoanalyst is concerned with only those aspects of his subject that reflect basically human motivation and the connections of psychic meaning—whether or not the patterns of behavior have religious or spiritual meaning. . . .

His method and his perspective do not include the theological nor the spiritual. If he is wise he will leave those considerations to theologians and spiritual writers. The psychoanalyst is in no position to deny or exclude any actions, effects, or purposes of God. He is simply not interested in them since his approach has nothing to say about them.<sup>13</sup>

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Toward the end of his life he wrote his "warcry against religion," entitled "The Future of an Illusion" (*Standard Edition*, vol. 21 [London: Hogarth Press, 1961]). Freud believed that the therapeutic effects of psychoanalysis resulted from the successful disintegration of the Oedipal conflict. Religion was an adult form of this conflict and would be abandoned when the conflict dissolved. However, this was not his followers' subsequent experience, who instead watched their patients' conflicts alter into more refined and adaptive behaviors. Today the therapeutic effects of psychoanalysis are understood to come not from interpretation but the internalization of the patient-doctor relationship which lays down added unconscious psychic structures through which conflict is modified. Even toward the end of successful analysis, unusual stress might bring back symptoms of insomnia, anxiety, depression, etc., albeit in brief and less intense forms. Note how this changes things: involvement in religion might be one form of a refined cultural adaptation. The question then turns, not on religious participation, but on the adaptive and flexible forms of religion and their coordination with reality. Fundamental religions, holding firm beliefs in opposition to new knowledge, do not fare well in this view.

Meissner, with 200 papers and nine books, is a leader at the interface between psychiatry and religion. In 1961 he published the *Annotated Bibliography in Religion and Psychology* (New York: Academy of Religion and Mental Health), and in 1984 his *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press) proposed that religion is an adult form—mature and immature—of transitional object. In his "The Pathology of Belief Systems" (*Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 15 [2]: 99-128), he distinguishes between the verifiable validity of a religion and the measurement of its pathology. In his "The Cult Phenomenon and the Paranoid Process" (*The Psychoanalytic Study of Society* 12:69-95) he finds similarity in the mental underpinnings of both processes, whether in the first or nineteenth century after Jesus Christ.

On a personal note, he is a man of wide humanity that has no flavor of fundamentalism. His critique of some of my preliminary writings has been very useful.

13. This quote is a composite from Meissner's large biography of Ignatius and his

There is considerable difference between assuming God and the supernatural while ignoring them and refusing either to assume or deny such sources for visionary, prophetic, inspired translations, statements, and acts. The existence of God lies not only beyond the psychoanalyst's interest but, as a scientist, beyond his or her knowledge. This does not deny the possibility; it simply insists that from a position of science and history, miracles have not been established as fact and cannot be assumed. I am among the first to acknowledge Meissner's contributions which, while scientific, are not science, as well as those of historians writing as believing Mormons or Christians who, while enlightening, do not write academic history.

One can acknowledge that the scientist or historian—or anyone, for that matter—may miss vital elements by refusing to acknowledge the spiritual. Perhaps such subjective experiences will forever be outside scientific replication, and science and history may forever miss ultimate causality. Nevertheless, as a psychiatrist within the field of medicine, I have only one possible response when such supernatural claims are admitted for consideration: I must respond by saying that I have no psychiatric experience mixed with collective knowledge in the professional literature to evaluate such happenings, including the effect of such phenomena on personality. I do not deny the possibility, nor do I deny my interest. I simply insist that supernatural experiences lie beyond scientific knowledge, and from a position of science they cannot be assumed. At the same time, if I as a person of science wished to write as a religious believer, I would have an obligation to inform my audience that I am stepping outside my professional role and to provide for them the suppositions with which I begin—or am attempting to support—that color my work.

If I maintain my position as scientist, my approach has two other consequences probably even less appealing to believers. First, it allows that all religious belief and experience may be naturalistic and therefore subject to unrestrained psychological examination. In the case of St. Ignatius, instead of excluding religious and theological considerations from scrutiny, the psychobiographer asks, "Can his visions and religious life be explained by natural means?" If we attempted a psychobiography of Joseph Smith, we would be expected to do the same. Second, such a consideration may ask if claims of obedience to God are being used not only to excuse but justify behavior no matter how flagrant. Belief in supernatural influences can become an escape from possibilities that are otherwise difficult. This same consideration applies to

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earlier work reference in n12. However, the critical second sentence of the second paragraph has been removed from the later, larger work.

others, such as Ignatius. But even if one believes that the visions, spiritual and mystical experiences—as well as leadership qualities—of Ignatius resulted only from natural abilities, childhood trauma, and psychopathological responses to adult stress, in the eyes of Catholics he is still admirable. His simple life was characterized by vows of chastity and poverty. Many Mormons, on the other hand, would probably believe that the supernatural claims of Joseph Smith must be preserved at all costs. Otherwise, what are we to do, for example, with Smith's polygamy, including his attempts to marry pubescent girls, as well as his sexual activities with these girls and with already-married women?<sup>14</sup> Eliminate the supernatural and we are left with what appears to be emotional rape. Perhaps this is why, despite the twenty-year-old challenge by non-Mormon historian Jan Shipps to find a solution to "The Prophet Puzzle,"<sup>15</sup> relatively nothing has been done.

We are now at the center of a growing conflict, and the literature here is massive. Some Mormons insist that all historical accounts are subjective in the sense of being interpretations only; so a believer's interpretation is as valid as a non-believer's, both representing interpretations based on mutually incompatible but non-verifiable premises. But some historical issues are testable facts not subject to interpretation. To believe contrary to the evidence that something in the past happened the way that tradition says it happened "is not a matter of justified subjectivity but simply of incoherent commitment to the irrational."<sup>16</sup>

Repeatedly non-believing historians have debated this position with devout historians.<sup>17</sup> Neither denying nor assuming spiritual experience, they must of necessity exclude the hand of God in events:

The reason for this aspect of academic history is both clear and persuasive. What sense data exist to reveal God's hand? If such data existed, whose God would it reveal? Because God is not sensible, data dealing with him is nonsense and speculative. Were historians to admit such nonsense data, they would lose much of their shared universe of discourse which allows them to evaluate theories. Personal, inspired speculation with no data

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14. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippets Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith; Prophet's Wife, "Elect Lady," Polygamy's Foe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 65, 100-101, 146-47.

15. Jan Shipps, "The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 3-20.

16. Richard Sherlock, "The Gospel Beyond Time: Thoughts on the Relation of Faith and Historical Knowledge," in Smith, *Faithful History*, 53n.

17. Articles may be found in many volumes of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, as well as in *Sunstone*. Many of the best of these arguments have been gathered together in Smith, *Faithful History*.

would become as valid as hard documents, and chaos would replace orderly criticism.

. . . [A]cademic history, like science, has limited its universe of discourse to sense data. God and his action, in history, being non-sensible, therefore, do not fall within the bounds of that universe of discourse. . . . [B]ehind this limitation of subject matter was an attempt to facilitate communication among historians. . . . Were historians to accept revelations and other metaphysical data, communication would be greatly hindered because individuals from different religious traditions could not agree on which revelations were to be accepted or rejected.

. . . Should [the believer] seek evidence of God's action in history, let him turn to his faith, for academic history can never provide proof for something which its methodology excludes.<sup>18</sup>

And again some refuse to hear this required position. They continue to insist that subjective non-reproducible, non-observable spiritual experiences must be accepted as fact or possible fact, not just as an unknown that has not been proven and cannot be assumed.

The historian or scientist may personally believe in miracles but must exclude them from his or her professional products. Historian Michael Grant, in his biography of Jesus, understands this position: "It is true that words ascribed to the risen Christ are beyond the purview of the historian since the resurrection belongs to a different order of thinking. . . . Accordingly, therefore, to the cold standard of humdrum fact, the standard to which the student of history is obliged to limit himself, these nature-reversing miracles did *not* happen."<sup>19</sup>

In fact, this position is stronger than "clear and persuasive"; I believe it is necessary if we are to talk with anyone outside our own circles. The usual arguments against this are that all history requires interpretation and that the secular historian's position is, like everyone else's, personal opinion colored by predetermined and unconscious prejudice. This denies two countering considerations. (1) Some history is simple documentation and does not require interpretation; and (2) some historians are capable of rising above themselves, altering previously-accepted beliefs and accepting unpleasant truths. This is one of the distinguishing contrasts between science or academic history and religious fundamentalism. In addition, the belief that "faith and revelation" (which are above rational evaluation) lead to the "one true perspective" fails

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18. This quote is a composite from two letters from Michael T. Walton in *Sunstone* 8 (Nov.-Dec. 1983): 2, and 11 (Jan. 1987): 6.

19. Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's View of the Gospels* (New York: Collier Books, 1977), 13, 39.



to acknowledge . . . that nearly 21,000 other sectarian perspectives would thus be above rational evaluation too, and all other denominations would be as true as theirs, which of course they cannot accept. In other words, historians of Mormonism must accept Mormon Truth claims. In like manner, historians of Catholicism must accept Catholic Truth claims and the Catholic Holy Spirit as a reliable indicator of those claims, which of course would automatically nullify Mormon Truth claims. The same must obtain of historians of eastern Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, and the remainder of the almost 21,000 Christian denominations. Since it would not be possible for historians of religion to write about other religions or denominations without accepting *their* Truth claims, no historian of one perspective could critically analyze another perspective with any validity because he or she would have to accept the latter's Truth perspective. Historiographers would be turned back into pre-Enlightenment "story-tellers" or "defenders of the faith" called by the church "to summon events from the past" and write "faith-promoting history."<sup>20</sup>

Thus such a position leads to the conclusion that one must accept not only God and the supernatural, but Mormon truth claims about God and the supernatural. The argument is circular, and concludes where it begins, with accepting the claims of Joseph Smith.

This then is the predicament: take a position from science and you exclude the supernatural; take a position from religion and your conclusions support your assumptions. The way we solve such problems in our ordinary lives is to follow the instructions Galileo attempted to teach the Catholic church 350 years ago: coordinate your assumptions with external objective reality; emotional certainty by itself is not enough. We cannot and will not find objective evidence for the visions of Joseph Smith, but his ability to translate ancient records is another matter. A scientist or academic historian will take a close look at the Book of Mormon when archaeology says he or she should.

To summarize: I believe we can attempt no truly satisfactory psychobiography of Joseph Smith if we consider his motivations and behavior the result of supernatural experiences only. Nor can we fully understand his life if we consider both naturalistic and supernatural events because difficulties in his psychological makeup which result in questionable behavior will be attributed to obedience to God, not to underlying psychological reasons. Such a psychobiography when it appears will be by believers for believers and be understood as "faith-promoting." Few outside historians will take it seriously because the author will have abandoned the common ground of naturalistic assumption—daily "humdrum fact"—required of

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20. Edward H. Ashment, "Historiography of the Canon," in Smith, *Faithful History*, 292.

his or her position in the world of science.

A true psychobiography of Joseph Smith can be done only if naturalistic assumptions are made and if all of Smith's writings—including canonized scripture—and interactions are considered psychologically. (Again, this position does not deny the possibility of the supernatural, but acknowledges that supernatural experiences are not established as scientific fact and must be ignored for heuristic reasons.) This would be difficult if we relied solely on Smith's reputed autobiography—*The History of the Church*—for two reasons: (1) as Fawn Brodie has stated, Smith wrote it with the public in mind, not as an uncensored confession; and (2) it has been so compromised by past Mormon historians that it is of little value as autobiography. Source material does exist in his mother's preliminary biography, in acquaintances' accounts of Joseph and the Smith family during Joseph's teenage years, in early courtroom testimonies, in affidavits from New York, and in testimonies from his wife's neighborhood. These, together with the Book of Mormon, which as his first artistic creation would likely be the most revealing of his personality, give us some evidence of underlying motives and unconscious thought processes.

#### METHODOLOGY

Psychiatry is that branch of medicine dealing with the diagnosis and treatment of mental dysfunction, and the term "psychiatrist" is reserved for physicians—graduates of medical school—who have taken added specialty training in psychiatry. That area of psychiatry focusing on the mental forces and maneuvers of a person to modify these forces into successful social adaptation is referred to generally as "(psycho)dynamic psychiatry." Its most intense form is psychoanalysis, a subspecialty of psychiatry that is a collection of knowledge and a body of theory, as well as a specific form of treatment for certain patients.

Psychoanalysis began with Sigmund Freud around 1900 and for sixty years dominated psychiatry. In the absence of other theories, it over-extended itself into the treatment of severe psychotic mental illnesses, now known to be partly, or largely, genetically determined. In the last thirty years the leadership role of psychoanalysis has been replaced with technical laboratory methods and their results in the burgeoning fields of neurophysiology and psychopharmacology. This has allowed psychiatrists to modify, but not cure, severe forms of mental illness by medication. The next fifty years hold promise that the study of mental forces will unite with technical studies of brain chemistry, and we will be able to explain in neurophysiologic terms why the loss of a mother when a child is two years old will probably result in certain types of adult mental disturbance. Freud

anticipated this,<sup>21</sup> and today some “psychoanalysts” are active in laboratory research in those areas.

The term “psychoanalyst” is not legally regulated throughout most of the United States, and the title frequently may be claimed by anyone, including the uneducated and charlatan. Within the profession, it is usually reserved for the 10 percent of psychiatrists who have completed four to six or more years of advanced training in the thirty-five or so psychoanalytic institutes accredited by the American Psychoanalytic Association. Others who use the term “psychoanalyst” are expected (but not required) to explain that their use of the term is not the usual or standard definition.

The American Psychoanalytic Association and its psychoanalysts continue to exercise major influence on all areas of treatment of the mentally ill. Their training courses welcome psychiatrists, psychologists, registered nurses, and social workers; and the body of knowledge they have accumulated over the last ninety years has filtered not only into the practices of mental health professionals but into our whole lives. For example, every modern government has “think tanks” of professionals using psychoanalytic knowledge in trying to understand the actions of other governments and in evaluating their leaders. Psychoanalytic knowledge is imparted in high schools and has become universal. Both Hollywood and Madison Avenue have people knowledgeable in psychodynamic understanding and manipulation who use these techniques successfully and without moral compunction. Psychoanalytic treatment has been modified and some of its methods help in treating all mentally disturbed patients. Its most extreme form of treatment, using a couch and “free association” in frequent sessions extending over years, continues to be the treatment of choice for a smaller but carefully selected percentage of patients.

That segment of psychoanalytic thinking that does not deal with development of theory or treatment of patients, but instead focuses on culture,

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21. “We have found it necessary to hold aloof from biological considerations during our psycho-analytic work and to refrain from using them for heuristic purposes,” Freud wrote, “so that we may not be misled in our impartial judgement of the analytic work we shall have to find a point of contact with biology; and we may rightly feel glad if that contact is already assured at one important point or another” (“The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest. Part II (C)” [1913], in *Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* [London: Hogarth Press, 1955], 13:181-82 [hereafter *Standard Edition*]). “Biology is truly a land of unlimited possibilities,” he added. “We may expect it to give us the most surprising information and we cannot guess what answers it will return in a few dozen years to the questions we have put to it. They may be of a kind which will blow away the whole of our artificial structure of hypotheses” (“Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” *Standard Edition*, 18:7-64). Finally, “We may look forward to a day when paths of knowledge and, let us hope, of influence will be opened up leading from organic biology and chemistry to the field of neurotic phenomena. That day still seems a distant one [in 1926]” (“The Question of Lay Analysis,” *Standard Edition*, 20:231).

art, history, politics, and literature is referred to as applied psychoanalysis. Attempts to enhance our understanding of individuals by their writings or known life is termed psychobiography. It began early in the psychoanalytic movement. Freud's first attempts to apply psychoanalytic concepts outside of psychoanalysis proper were in 1897. Three years later in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) he again referred to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*.<sup>22</sup> In 1907 he wrote on Jensen's *Gravida*,<sup>23</sup> then on *Leonardo da Vinci* (1910),<sup>24</sup> and on the paranoid process of Schreber (1911).<sup>25</sup> Since then the psychobiographical literature has greatly expanded. Classic works include Ernst Kris's *Explorations in Art* (1952), Phyllis Greenacre's *Swift and Carroll* (1955), Richard and Editha Sterba's *Beethoven and His Nephew* (1954), and of course Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (1958) and *Gandhi's Truth* (1970).

One division of applied psychoanalysis attempts to study personalities and interactions of fictional people in literature without necessarily using this material to understand the author. This approach has aided our appreciation of some of the greatest works such as the writings of Shakespeare. A collection of thirty-three such papers was made by M. D. Faber in 1970.<sup>26</sup>

These studies, which open the door to understanding the *unconscious* processes and interplay among *fictional* people, fit into the object-relations theory of development which presently dominates psychoanalytic discussions. Bruno Bettelheim's writings on the meaning behind fairy tales are related.<sup>27</sup> The cultural phenomena of belief in witches, vampires, devils, and nightmares were studied by Ernst Jones<sup>28</sup> in a work which reflected early psychoanalytic preoccupation with sexual frustration.

However, the greatest contributions of psychobiography have been to expand our ideas about the personality of authors.<sup>29</sup> Difficulties in such

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22. See Freud, Letter #71 (17 Oct. 1897), *Standard Edition*, 1:265-66; Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," *Standard Edition*, 4:263-66.

23. Freud, "Delusion and Dreams in Jensen's *Gravida*," *Standard Edition*, 9:3-95.

24. Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood," *Standard Edition*, 11:59-137.

25. Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia," *Standard Edition*, 12:9-82.

26. M. D. Faber, *The Design Within: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Shakespeare* (New York: Science House, 1970).

27. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).

28. Ernst Jones, *On the Nightmare* (New York: Liveright, 1951).

29. See Gary James Bergera, "Toward 'Psychologically Informed' Mormon History and Biography," *Sunstone* 15 (Dec. 1991): 27-31. I consider this excellent review an expansion on the ideas in this section.

endeavors are carefully reviewed in important papers by Heinz Kohut<sup>30</sup> and John Mack. Mack adds the provocative thought that applied analysis will provide in coming generations the greatest legacy of psychoanalysis.<sup>31</sup>

Harry Trosman<sup>32</sup> identifies various cultural and humanistic sources of Freud's pursuits and then discusses art and literature. This work, along with the small book by Fritz Schmidl,<sup>33</sup> provides extensive bibliographies. These lists demonstrate progress from fumbings and errors to more precise, careful work. Other studies are speculative in the extreme, and two works by Freud are now considered unfortunate setbacks.<sup>34</sup>

Alliances between psychoanalysis and history have been encouraged in the past. In 1958 William Langer, president of the American Historical Association, challenged colleagues to seek deeper psychological meaning in their studies.<sup>35</sup> The response has varied from mixed to hostile. Historians emphasize that there is no such thing as objective history, but they do live in a world where there are historical facts and documentations. This, happily, allows them to keep their feet on the ground. In contrast, the world of psychodynamic psychiatry is far more a world of feelings, thoughts, misrememberings, forgettings, fantasy, analogy, allegory, and metaphor. No wonder some historians give little credence to attempts to make sense of ephemeral mental material which does not seem to be connected. Freud knew this: "[In the use of applied psychoanalysis] we should have to be very cautious and not forget that, after all, we are only dealing with analogies and that it is dangerous, not only with men but also with concepts, to tear them from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved."<sup>36</sup> Analogy is not a good way to establish historical fact, and history cannot be reduced to psychological explanation. Western historian Bernard DeVoto understood this: "Psycho-analysis has no value whatever as a method of arriving at facts in biography. . . . [The first condition of biography must be] absolute, unvarying, unremitted accuracy."<sup>37</sup> But psy-

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30. Heinz Kohut, "Beyond the Bounds of the Basic Rule," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 19 (1960): 143-79.

31. John E. Mack, "Psychoanalysis and Historical Biography," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 19 (1971), 1:143-49.

32. Harry Trosman, *Freud and the Imaginative World* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1985).

33. F. Schmidl, *Applied Psychoanalysis* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1981).

34. Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci," and W. D. Bullitt and Freud, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

35. W. D. Langer, "The Next Assignment," *American Historical Review* 63 (1958): 283-304.

36. Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents," *Standard Edition*, 21:144.

37. Bernard DeVoto, "The Skeptical Biographer," *Harper's Magazine* 166 (1933): 181-92 (1933).

choanalytic application and attention to factual detail are compatible, and psychoanalytic interpretation and understanding may add texture to the historical picture, fill in aspects of personal meaning and motive, and provide continuity to a history that has gaps. DeVoto found little value in applied psychoanalysis except as a plaything. Consequently, his conclusions concerning the Book of Mormon lacked comprehension: "a yeasty fermentation, formless, aimless and inconceivable absurd . . . a disintegration."<sup>38</sup>

When psychiatrists enter the world of history, they are strangers in a strange land. They are trained to interact with a live and reactive patient not someone distant or dead for 150 years. Interaction between therapist and patient is the central focus and the means for, if not a cure, then improvement. Clarification, confrontation, interpretation, and repeatedly working through an issue describes the observable process. It is speculative work, which only gains assurance over time and in the interaction. Every dynamic psychiatrist has had the experience of making a painful interpretation he or she felt was accurate, only to have the patient exclaim, "No!" then break into sobs and correct the therapist with an even more painful truth, newly discovered by the therapist's near-miss. It is this dynamic interplay that we do not have in an applied psychoanalytic approach to a dead man or woman.

Add to this the fact that a person not only reflects his or her own personal, familial development but his or her time and place. It is difficult to shift spheres of influence, much less gain insight by guesswork in the inner wellsprings of a person's emotions and thinkings. Time veils many things and there will be aspects of anyone's life that will never be understood, even with the full cooperation of a live patient. These difficulties tempt a psychohistorian to become reductionistic instead of reductive in finding certain conclusions where only incomplete information and partial solutions are available:

Reductionism, the "nothing but" fallacy, which attempts to reduce complex psychological and creative processes to roots in the unconscious, is the most dangerous tendency. . . . Closely related to this is "the origiological fallacy," the invoking of antecedent experiences or early drives to explain the subject's later behavior. I would add to these "the critical period fallacy," which attempts to build a study of a man's life around a certain "key" period of development, and "eventism," the discovery in some important episode in a man's life of not only the prototype of his behavior

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38. Bernard DeVoto, "The Centennial of Mormonism," *American Mercury*, Jan. 1930, 1, in Francis W. Kirkham, ed., *A New Witness for Christ in America* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing Press, 1951), 1:352.

but *the* turning point in his life from which all subsequent events and work are derived. Both these oversimplifications lend artistic grace to a biographical study, but also impose unnatural order, shape, and direction to the often rather amorphous nature and fitful course of a human life, even that of a great man.<sup>39</sup>

The above emphasizes the necessary tension and balance between the historical and the psychological. If this latter view becomes too strong, then "psychopathology becomes a substitute for the psychohistorical interface. . . . the psychopathological idiom for individual development . . . [replaces] the idiom for history, or psychohistory. When this happens there is, once more, no history."<sup>40</sup>

If a balance is maintained, then looking at symptomatic or general behaviors can be productive. From our psychodynamic perspective and experience, there is reason to believe that all of us derive part of our motives and uniqueness from psychologically meaningful events in our past, most strongly and enduringly in our childhood. Might this be true also for a prophet? At the least, such considerations add depth to understanding. The concern is that the subject might be reduced to a stilted figurine to fit a psychodynamic model, while the full richness of his or her life is left unexplained. No live patient fits any mold and sooner or later will emotionally bristle when he or she senses the therapist's attempt to do so. Some of this will happen with psychobiography because live interaction, corrections, modifications, and elaborations by the patient are not available to us. The patient is not there to challenge, correct, and change our tendency to simplify. It will also happen because no one has direct first-hand experience with a culture from the past.

Some now believe that the greatest impediment to good psychobiography is the author's own emotional relationship to his or her subject. These "countertransferences" may "distort the [biographers'] material so that their discussion may actually reveal more about themselves than about their subjects."<sup>41</sup> Psychobiographers are not limited to writing about people they admire or love, but also those considered profoundly destructive, and this can bend their studies into attempts at debunking. No one can write completely free of bias, but it is important to know where one's prejudices lie. This may be especially true of religious figures. For this reason, clarifying the underlying theological assumptions, as discussed earlier, is necessary. Some readers will find the scientific position untenable. The goal of

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39. Mack, 156.

40. Robert J. Lifton, "On Psychohistory," in *Explorations in Psychohistory: The Wellfleet Papers*, eds. R. J. Lifton and E. Olson (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 25.

41. Bergera, 28.

psychobiography is explanation and understanding, but sometimes such explanation and understanding may be unattractive. Describing a personality that rationalizes, changes his or her story, deceives, and abuses others is unavoidable in any honest study, while mislabeling or avoiding these qualities results in incomplete or even censored history. The best psychobiographers, like the best psychotherapists, use their emotional reactions to their subjects and patients as stepping stones to further understanding of the unconscious.<sup>42</sup>

What psychobiography does have, despite the absence of a live patient, are two areas of collective knowledge and known experience. Techniques used in applied psychoanalytic investigation are adapted from techniques of psychoanalytic treatment. If Joseph Smith were in dynamic psychotherapy, he would have the right to begin the sessions anywhere, under the guide of free association—to say anything and everything that comes to mind with preferably no editing at all—and our job would be to follow, understand, decipher, confront, and clarify. Where will he take us?

Patients tell their life story and emphasize problem areas repeatedly in treatment. But some areas of conflict are too painful to discuss and feel directly, so patients use a number of methods, both conscious and unconscious, to modify their pain. They may talk about a friend with similar problems or discuss a movie or book that contains problems similar to their own. They may divide their history into two or more parts, discussing some segments one day and filling in the remaining segments on other days. The more painful the incident, the more repetitious the patient will be in “working through” the problem. If the pain of sadness is too much on one day, they may reverse it into an inappropriate euphoria which will break down in the next days or weeks. Their dreams will repeat their life stories and conflicts, disguised by exaggeration, displacement, reversal, projection onto others, condensing and combining stories, and so forth. Their mental fantasies will repeat their problem and frequently show dramatic wished-for solutions and compensations, some reasonable and some impossible.

Over time the psychotherapist begins to know the life story well and becomes acquainted with the psychological “defenses” the patient uses to repeat yet half-avoid facing pain. The patient will speak in metaphor, simile, allegory, fantasy. We can expect that the mental maneuvers, styles, and defenses of the author will be represented in his or her work. This is most true if the work was his or her first or early work and if the work was “spontaneous” and close to the therapeutic process of “free association,” as perhaps was Joseph Smith’s dictation of the Book of Mormon.

The therapist may learn the patient’s methods so well that he or she

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42. Mack, 155.



can anticipate the next session's content—only to find him- or herself surprised on occasion when the patient demonstrates a new technique. What becomes increasingly important is not the life story but its modifications which the patient brings to treatment. These modifications—exaggerations, similarities, aversions, combinings, reversals, eliminations, projections, forgettings, denials, imagined compensations, division of the story into two or more parts, etc.—are what help us understand the patient and assist him or her to face pain and more successfully adapt to life. What we wait to see are patterns. Meissner states:

The data of analytic investigation are subtle, hidden, and masked behind the veil of manifest content. . . . The causal links are nowhere immediate or evident. The proof rests on a welter of facts, opinions, reactions, behaviors in various contexts, comments in letters and other writings. No single fact or connection will validate the hypothesis, but it begins to take on meaning and consistency in the light of the total complex of facts, data, and their integrating interpretations.<sup>43</sup>

The second principle is overdetermination.

The problem of determinism in psycho-analysis is a point that bothers unsympathetic critics of psycho-analysis. Freud insisted that strict determinism prevailed in respect of psychic acts; there are no "accidents." For example, "free associations," the basis of dream analysis and of therapy, is "free" only in the sense that it is not hampered by the censorship of "logical," "rational" thought and *mores*. It is not, however, undetermined.<sup>44</sup>

This also depends on the amount of material extant, and if no pertinent material exists there can be no psychobiography. But we do have material with Joseph Smith—from himself, his mother, outsiders—and we can theorize his mental productions in the Book of Mormon. Overdetermination comes in two forms: the fact that the same word or symbol refers to many elements in the unconscious thought process, and that a single unconscious drive or pattern of behavior will manifest itself in numerous different conscious manifestations. This makes the evidence abundant and self-confirming. If one adds this to outside observations—by family, friends, enemies—it seems possible to complete the historian's task of reconciling, interpreting, and confirming evidence, as well as the psycho-historian's task of explaining.

Let us take as an example from Joseph Smith's life: his first known run-in with the law. Shortly after he turned twenty years old—four years

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43. Meissner, xiv.

44. Bruce Mazlish, "Clio on the Couch," *Encounter*, Sept. 1968.

before the Book of Mormon was published—he was arrested as a “disorderly person and imposter.” He spent one night in jail, was found “guilty” in a “trial” (probably a type of preliminary hearing or examination) that received some local attention, and was encouraged to leave the area to avoid further punishment.<sup>45</sup> Mormon historian Marvin Hill says that Smith “experienced shame . . . in 1826 when he was brought to trial. . . . It is significant that Joseph Smith never mentioned this trial in any of his writings.”<sup>46</sup> Hill’s statement is half correct, for seven years later Smith assisted his close friend, Oliver Cowdery, in writing about this trial: “some very officious person complained of him [Joseph Smith] as a disorderly person, and brought him before the authorities of the country; but there being no cause of action he was honorably acquitted.”<sup>47</sup>

Joseph’s subsequent avoidance in discussing this trial suggests that he did experience shame and humiliation. If the principle of overdetermination applies, then this trial might appear in the Book of Mormon in unconscious representation. Smith’s emotional upheaval might appear in a dream of a volcanic explosion or perhaps transformed into physical assault and injury. Or the trial might be represented as just that: a literal court trial. Or perhaps it will show as a judgment from God, or persecution by evil men. If this trial appears, we will want to place it into continuity: other aspects of Smith’s life before and after it should be represented in metaphor and allegory but in proper sequence in the Book of Mormon. If the trial was a profound emotional experience, we could expect that it would appear more than once, again expecting it to be in proper sequence with the rest of his life. Like we do with live patients, we listen until it becomes clear we are hearing allegorically, metaphorically, and in fantasy a repetition of major incidents. However once again of even greater interest to us is to see how Smith changes his real-life trial into Book of Mormon incidents, for when we begin to see such patterns we begin to understand him and his motives. We wait to see an internally consistent chronological pattern and repetitive psychological style.

This then is one challenge: to what extent, if any, can the Book of Mormon be understood as an autobiography of Joseph Smith? Such a psychobiography would be both interpretive essay and psychological de-

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45. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971); Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Money Digging* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1970); Wesley P. Walters, “Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 36 (Winter 1974): 123-55; and Wesley P. Walters, “From Occult to Cult with Joseph Smith, Jr.,” *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 1 (Summer 1977): 121-13.

46. Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 11, 193n62.

47. *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (Oct. 1835): 200-201.

tective story. But if this inquiry is successful, can repeated psychological patterns in Smith's alteration of his dramatic life into Book of Mormon stories be discerned? If so, then this level of writing can be advanced to another and allow an expanded question: Can such observations contribute to a psychological understanding of Smith, and with this information, alongside his mother's biography and other outside information, can we develop a reasonably complete psychoanalytic profile of Joseph Smith?

From the beginning with Joseph Smith there has been not only an alternate story to the official version, but a contradictory one. Depending on one's outlook, this has been curse, burden, challenge, opportunity, or blessing. Some alternate stories were plausible but with inadequate documentation; others failed as contradictory evidence was discovered. With each failure, some Mormons felt reassured that Smith's original stories were confirmed. However, this is no longer true. Recent historical discoveries not only add to the alternate version but are incompatible with the canonized story. This has created something of a "crisis in Mormon historiography" and divided many Mormons into "traditionalists" and "New Mormon Historians."<sup>48</sup> The problem has become intense because church leaders have reacted with a degree of defensiveness that suggests the threat they feel. They have typically sided with "traditionalists" and their response to those grappling with historical documentation has oscillated between uncharitable and cruel.<sup>49</sup> A naturalistic psychobiography of

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48. These articles may be found in issues of *Sunstone* and *Dialogue*, as well as in *Faithful History*.

49. See Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Spring 1993); and also Quinn, "On Being a Mormon Historian (and Its Aftermath)," in Smith, *Faithful History*, 69-112.

Intellectuals in the Mormon church are becoming symbolic martyrs in a twentieth-century struggle against a sixteenth-century mentality. Mormon writer Linda King Newell summarized the conflict best when she described at the 1992 Pacific Northwest Sunstone Symposium events that followed release of *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, which she co-authored with Valeen T. Avery. Within months of publication, her award-winning biography of Joseph Smith's first wife was censored by Mormon church officials and she and Avery were forbidden to speak in church meetings, teach classes, or speak about their research. With her husband and their stake president, Newell met with Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Neal A. Maxwell, authors of the ban, on 21 July 1985. Oaks, a former Utah Supreme Court Justice and past president of Brigham Young University, did not believe the ban would be lifted. He recognized that "many members consider him an intellectual given his academic background in professional history, but he doesn't want us or anyone else to be mislead." He said: "My duty as a member of the Council of the Twelve is to protect what is most unique about the LDS church, namely the authority of the priesthood, testimony regarding the restoration of the gospel, and the divine mission of the Savior. Everything else may be sacrificed in order to maintain the integrity of those essential facts. Thus, if *Mormon Enigma* reveals information that is detrimental to the reputation of

Joseph Smith, if successful in demonstrating repeated styles of psychological defense and patterns of thinking—even within the Book of Mormon—that parallel his life, would provide explanations and motivations for Smith's behavior as well as possibly fill in gaps in recent discoveries. It would add more challenges to the traditional story of the founding of Mormonism and enlarge the present controversy.

#### ADDENDUM

In the winter 1993 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* non-Mormon historian Lawrence Foster, following Mormon Jungian psychoanalyst C. Jess Groesbeck, attempts a psychological explanation of Joseph Smith. Foster's review of the basic literature on religious leaders and previous psychological writings on Smith show his usual care and insight, but I believe the direction of manic-depressive illness as a basis to help explain Smith's personality is so filled with problems that it deserves some scrutiny.

The necessary symptom for a diagnosis of manic-depressive illness, now called Bipolar Affective Disorder, is a discrete episode of mania with or without episodes of depression. Usually beginning in the late teens or early twenties, the first episode(s) is likely precipitated by stress such as birth, death, loss of employment, or divorce. As the illness unfolds it takes on a life of its own with episodes occurring independent of the stresses of life. But the illness may create havoc in the patient's life. It is a periodic illness with recurrence throughout one's life. As is the case with all psychiatric diagnoses, the illness is determined by clumpings of symptoms ("syndromes") seen in a patient in a clinical setting.

In the early and mid-1970s lesser manic episodes not severe enough to warrant hospitalizations were split off from full mania and termed "Bipolar Affective Disorder [type II]." This questionable distinction was supported by statistical studies of patients who were younger than more severe "Bipolar I" patients at onset, tended to be female with greater chronicity to the illness, had families which had relatives with a similar degree of mania, etc. Some were "rapid cyclers" or the episodes seemed connected to seasonal affective disorder or premenstrual syndrome. Some patients experi-

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Joseph Smith, then it is necessary to try to limit its influence and that of its authors."

In his statement Oaks sacrificed the search for truth to the support of dogma. The names of similarly motivated men that come to mind include Jakob Sprenger, Jean Bodin, Henri Boguet, Peter Binsfeld, Nicholas Remy, M. A. Del Rio, and Dietrich Flade. However, unlike Oaks, they were not restrained by a Constitution and Bill of Rights and are not seen in a favorable light today. The last named, the most decent of them all, attempted to resist zealous actions that overrode the search for truth, was caught, and destroyed.

enced the onset of the illness when prescribed standard antidepressant medication.

Researchers continued to divide Bipolar II patients into lifelong forms of even lesser intensity, termed cyclothymia and hyperthymia. Both of these "unofficial" illnesses require the occurrence of hypomania—a distinct period of at least a few days of mild elevation of mood, positive thinking, and increased activity level, but without the severe impairment of full manic episodes. It is not easy to distinguish "hypomania" from simple happiness except perhaps by its inappropriate timing, and it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish these illnesses from other mental health problems or even normal everyday variations. Even with interviews with a live patient and family members, the symptoms are termed "subsyndromal" or "subclinical," suggesting uncertainty. Some may have intermittent mild depression ("cyclothymics"), but some, these researchers suggest, have hypomania woven habitually into their personality. One researcher proposes these characteristics for this "hyperthymic" temperament: cheerful, overoptimistic, or exuberant; warm, people-seeking, and extroverted; overtalkative and jocular; overconfident, self-assured, boastful, or grandiose; habitual short sleeper, including weekends; high energy level, full of plans and improvident activities; overly involved and meddlesome; uninhibited, stimulation-seeking, or promiscuous. But where is the necessary episodic nature of the illness required for the diagnosis?

These last descriptions put us over the line from episodic illness into general personality types, and the closest present official description to this type is "narcissistic personality disorder" as these researchers acknowledge. In addition, these researchers suggest the possibility that some patients with the turbulent "borderline personality disorder" may in fact have a disguised form of "cyclothymia." These are ideas rich for research, but such diagnoses are difficult to delineate in a live patient, and impossible to discern from a distance of more than 150 years. I agree that Bipolar Affective Disorder may appear in a myriad of subtle forms and believe these suggestions hold promise, but almost anything can be put into such categories, and we are obligated to follow the descriptions of illness that have some reasonable clarity.

Researchers in these studies focus on neurobiology and pay little attention to psychology. These illnesses are seen as a result of the body's internal clock going awry to its own independent drumbeat, but possibly affected by how much light hits the retina of the eye, or menstrual-cycle biochemistry. These lesser subdivisions of "Bipolar Affective Disorder, type II" (types III, IV, V, VI?) are speculative, and I believe we should stay at the first level of theorizing by trying to fit Joseph Smith into known and clearly distinguishable categories or combinations of distinguishable categories of illness. Trying to place him into a speculative form of Bipolar

Affective Disorder that is actually a description of a personality type, or deciding that he has one of the subtle atypical forms of the illness, difficult to discern even in a real live patient, only stirs an already muddy pool. If this is allowed, then almost anything can be permitted.

These lesser forms of Bipolar Affective Disorder—type II and the unofficial so-called cyclothymic and hyperthymic individuals—assuming both are bipolar illnesses—may demonstrate artistic creativity. The introversion and self-doubt of mild depression contributes to insights and reflection on the human condition, and then hypomania provides the energy for the creative work.

It seems to me Foster/Groesbeck must demonstrate repeated episodes of illness in Joseph Smith that reversed his usual temperament and were minimally or not at all precipitated by external factors. Where is such a description of periodicity from his friends or enemies? Without this periodicity of reversal, there can be no real diagnosis of any form of Bipolar Affective Disorder. I do not doubt that he had periods of depression especially toward the end of his life, but these seem to have been in response to his environment. He was steadily being entrapped by his enemies in retaliation for his own doings. He may indeed have had periods of elation following narrow escapes, imprisonment, conquests, etc. Foster's quote from Smith that excitement had become his essence of life suggests a chronic steady condition, not an episodic one. Does Foster know of a period in Smith's life when he was not making grandiose claims?

How does any form of Bipolar Affective Disorder explain the Book or Mormon, Smith's revelations, or the Book of Abraham? At best, it only provides Smith with thoughtful introspection when depressed and energy when hypomanic. It contributes little to the explanation for these "miracles." Foster, as a non-Mormon, must yet provide further naturalistic—psychological—explanations for these texts. Groesbeck, on the other hand, as a believer in the miraculous source for the Book of Mormon, escapes this problem. But with no objective evidence for the Book of Mormon as actual history, all thoughtful outsiders (as well as some insiders) see it as a product of early nineteenth-century America. Groesbeck must be certain that he sees nothing significant in the Book of Mormon that reflects Smith's personal life, his readings, his local religious experiences, or the national scene. Groesbeck must also explain how Smith's revelations and translations escaped contaminations from Bipolar Affective Disorder such as overstatement or grandiosity; or at the other end of bipolarity, exaggerated despair and condemnation.

Here are some of the issues that the diagnosis of Bipolar Affective Disorder does not address: the results of an unstable and deprived childhood with many moves and periods of near-starvation; the results of a

traumatic childhood surgery; the effects of being raised in a family with an alcoholic father, a mother predisposed to depression, and repeated failures and minimal esteem in the community; and the effect of being raised in a subculture of magical delusion, requiring deceit of self and others. I agree that Smith demonstrated grandiosity, but I see it as a progressive development going out of control toward the end of his life. It may be that he suffered from an atypical, strange form of Bipolar Affective Disorder in addition, but I do not believe he fits into established categories of the illness. The strongest evidence for this diagnosis is probably his family history, but family members had an incomprehensible burden of conflict to carry. (This could lead to suicide. Schizophrenia is not one of the bipolar spectrum of illnesses.)

Five years ago, paying attention to the recurrent depressive episodes in Joseph's mother and the life-long mental illness of his son, I seriously considered Bipolar II but abandoned it for the reasons given. Frankly I was sorry, for I would have liked to find an explanation for Smith's later excesses that was outside of his control. Other intellectuals in the Mormon world would understand this wish.

If Foster/Groesbeck are trying to observe a periodic illness so minimal or atypical that it looks like a general personality type, why avoid the obvious and not investigate personality types? (This would still allow normal everyday ups and downs and episodes of euphoria and temporary hypomania in response to conquests and successes.) The main writers on personality types are psychoanalysts, not family statisticians. Here the writings are so voluminous that one hardly knows where to begin, for the study of the "narcissistic personality" has preoccupied them for thirty years, along with their intense investigation of the first three years of life and the consequent development of "Object Relations" metapsychology which continues to dominate any theoretical discussion. Even so, I do not think any single personality type will adequately explain Joseph Smith. Finally, I would encourage the idea that explaining Joseph Smith requires looking beyond just his genetic makeup, internal conflicts, or personality, but also to interactions between him and his followers, for they contributed to his creation as a prophet. Here the nidal point is easy to see, for it was described by the unsophisticated farmer and wagon master, Peter Ingersoll, and published in 1834. Any explanation should encompass that description. This description, like so much else in his life, nudges the diagnosis toward psychology and away from the organic/genetic.

Let me open this discussion to further dialogue by asking if the following striking example of hypomania in the Book of Mormon is the result of Bipolar Affective Disorder in Joseph Smith or a result of psychological defensiveness. The specific example occurred during a war between the Lamanites and Nephites, and also between the Lamanites and their former

brothers, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. In the middle of these slaughters the heroic missionary-swordsman Ammon breaks forth into a cry of joy, his heart brimming over for the salvation of the victims in the Kingdom of God (Alma 26). He sets aside the carnage, mayhem, dislocations, devastation, deaths, rapes, dismemberings, torturings, burnings, and grievings that would have resulted from these continuing hand-to-hand combats with savages driven by hatred.

If the hypomania of Ammon, as an alter-ego for Joseph Smith, cannot be connected to specific incidents in the latter's life, then the diagnosis is likely Bipolar Affective Disorder. But if this hypomania can be connected to some devastating humiliation in Joseph Smith's life, then I believe it supports understanding this hypomanic episode as a *psychological defense of compensating reaction-formation*. The clues are probably be found in the chapters before and after Ammon's curious Ode to Joy.<sup>50</sup>

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50. In the above I summarized the following books and papers: F. K. Goodwin and K. R. Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13-55, 75-151, 281-315, 332-66, 541-70; J. S. Akiskal, "New Diagnostic Concepts of Depression—The 'Soft' Bipolar Spectrum," *Masters in Psychiatry*, July 1993, 9-13; H. S. Akiskal and K. Akiskal, "Reassessing the Prevalence of Bipolar Disorders: Clinical Significance and Artistic Creativity," *Psychiatry and Psychobiology* 3 (1988): 29s-36s; H. S. Akiskal, "The Bipolar Spectrum: New Concepts in Classification and Diagnosis," in L. Grinspoon, ed., *Psychiatry Update: The American Psychiatric Association Annual Review* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1983), 271-92; G. B. Cassano et al., "Proposed Subtypes of Bipolar II and Related Disorders: With Hypomanic Episodes (or Cyclothymia) and with Hyperthymic Temperament," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 26 (1992): 127-40; R. H. Howland and M. E. Thase, "A Comprehensive Review of Cyclothymic Disorder," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 181 (1993): 485-93; G. L. Klerman, "The Classification of Bipolar Disorders," *Psychiatric Annals* 17 (Jan. 1987); and D. L. Dunner, "A Review of the Diagnostic Status of 'Bipolar II.' For the DSM-IV Work Group on Mood Disorders," *Depression* 1 (1993): 2-10. Peter Ingersoll's testimony is in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painsville, OH: the Author, 1834), 323-37. For an introduction to the development of the grandiose self as part of the narcissistic personality, see Otto Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1975), 16-18, 227-314.