

# FERGUSON'S TWO FACES

## *Mormon Scholar's "Spoof" Lives on After His Death*

The word "spoof" was apparently coined by a British comedian by the name of Roberts around the middle of the 19th century. It is defined as a "hoax, joke, or deception." The following is the story of a man who felt he had been "spoofed" by the Mormon Church and, by his own admission, decided to "spoof a little back." Unfortunately, his "spoof" continued to live on after his death and will probably bring embarrassment to his family and associates for many years to come.

### A TRUE BELIEVER

Thomas Stuart Ferguson was born in "Pocatello, Idaho, on 21 May 1915" (*The Messiah in Ancient America*, 1987, p. 248). He "received degrees in political science and law from the University of California and practiced law in Orinda, California" (*Ibid.*). Mr. Ferguson also worked with the F.B.I., but his first love seemed to be trying to prove the Book of Mormon through the study of Mesoamerican archaeology. In 1983, J. Willard Marriott wrote a letter in which he commented concerning Ferguson's dedication to establishing an archaeological base for the Book of Mormon: "We spent several months together in Mexico looking at the ruins and studying the Book of Mormon archaeology. I have never known anyone who was more devoted to that kind of research



Thomas Stuart Ferguson

than was Tom. I remember when he was with the F.B.I., he would arise at 4:30 or 5:00 AM and read the Book of Mormon and information he could find pertaining to it" (*Ibid.*, p. 250). His wife, Ester, recalled that "during their courtship that she was sometimes piqued by his passion for the Book of Mormon and once complained to her mother, 'I think I'm going out with the Book of Mormon.' . . . Throughout their married life she staunchly supported her husband's efforts" (*Ibid.*, p. 250).

On page 251-252 of *The Messiah in Ancient America*, we read:

Tom Ferguson first approached the President of Brigham Young University, Howard S. McDonald, about establishing a Department of Archaeology. . . . Tom Ferguson was able to convince officials of BYU of the benefit to the University of having such a department. . . .

The new Department of Archaeology (now Anthropology) sponsored its first field trip in 1948 to western Campeche, a state in southeastern Mexico. . . . Tom Ferguson, . . . participated in that first of many expeditions . . .

### IMPORTANT NEW BOOK

In 1975 Thomas Stuart Ferguson wrote a very significant paper relating to Book of Mormon archaeology and geography. Although he was very careful in the wording he used, he later acknowledged that the "real implication of the paper" is that the Book of Mormon is "fictional." Because we felt that the manuscript is so important we published it under the title, ***Ferguson's Manuscript Unveiled***. The price is \$3.00 a copy (mail orders add \$1.00 minimum postage charge).

\*\*\* Extra Copies of This Issue Will Be Sent Free \*\*\*

Mr. Ferguson devoted a great deal of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon by archaeology and was considered by the Mormon people as a great defender of the faith. He wrote at least three books on the subject. His book, *One Fold and One Shepherd*, was recommended to one of the authors of this work (Jerald) as containing the ultimate case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. On the jacket of that book, we find this information about Ferguson:

Thomas Stuart Ferguson, 47, President of the New World Archaeological Foundation, is a distinguished student of the earliest high civilizations of the New World. He, with Dr. A. V. Kidder, dean of Central American archaeologists, first planned the New World Archaeological Foundation in 1952. . . . He raised \$225,000 for the field work, incorporated the Foundation (being an attorney), assisted in the initial explorations in Central America and Mexico and has actively directed the affairs of the Foundation since its inception.

Thomas Ferguson worked hard to get the Mormon Church interested in helping with the organization he envisioned. In a letter to Mormon President David O. McKay, dated December 14, 1951, Ferguson wrote: "If the anticipated evidences confirming the Book of Mormon are found, world-wide notice will be given to the restored gospel through the Book of Mormon. The artifacts will speak eloquently from the dust" (*The Messiah in Ancient America*, p. 257). Although church leaders claimed that they were interested in archaeological studies with regard to the Book of Mormon, they declined to provide any financial help. On January 12, 1952, Ferguson wrote again and promised the First Presidency that he would "take an active part in the Foundation to the end that the Church receives the full benefit of any discovered evidences relating to the Book of Mormon. I anticipate that many important artifacts will be discovered confirming the Book of Mormon" (*Ibid.*, p. 259). Joseph Anderson, secretary to the First Presidency, responded that "The Brethren feel that it may be that no discovery will be made which shall establish the historical value of the Book of Mormon. They incline to feel that the faith now required to accept the book is a very considerable factor in the faith of the Restored Gospel, belief in which is the result of faith therein." On April 9, 1953, Ferguson wrote a letter in which he again urged the Brethren to financially support the organization:

The source of our income and support for the work can be kept strictly confidential if it is desired. . . . the Church cannot afford to let all of the priceless artifacts of Book of Mormon people fall into other hands. We can

make wonderful use of them in missionary work and in letting all the world know of the Book of Mormon. (*Ibid.*, p. 263)

On pages 263-266 of the same book we find the following:

. . . Ferguson's persistence and persuasiveness paid off . . . Ferguson appealed to his good friend J. Willard Marriott for assistance. The following day Ferguson had an appointment with President McKay which Marriott had arranged. . . . President David O. McKay listened to Tom Ferguson's proposal and asked the specific amount he was requesting. Ferguson replied, "Only about the amount that it would take to build a chapel."

President McKay gave him a penetrating glance. "We build \$50,000 chapels and \$250,000 chapels. Which did you have in mind? Tom Ferguson promptly replied, "A \$250,000 chapel." That was the amount granted, sufficient to underwrite five years' work in a generous way (1955-1959). . . . It was during this period that Ferguson spent approximately half of his working time away from law, devoting this time to administering the affairs of the NWAFF, giving speeches, studying and writing about the archaeology and history of ancient America and their relationship to the Book of Mormon.

It was agreed that the New World Archaeology Foundation would not "discuss direct connections with the Book of Mormon, but rather to allow the work to stand exclusively on its scholarly merits" (*Ibid.*, p. 276). The church provided financial support for this organization for many years. It was eventually "attached to and administered through BYU."

In a paper entitled, "Thomas Stuart Ferguson, 1915-83," Fred W. Nelson wrote the following:

Thomas Ferguson has either directly or indirectly influenced thousands of people's thinking on archaeology. . . . He has had a great influence on professional archaeology through the Department of Archaeology at Brigham Young University, the Gates Collection, and the New World Archaeological Foundation. . . . Ferguson's legacy in the founding of the Archaeology Department at Brigham Young University, the obtaining of the Gates Collection, and as founder of the New World Archaeology Foundation stands as shining example to us all. (As cited in *The Messiah in Ancient America*, pp. 282-283)

From all that we can learn, Thomas Stuart Ferguson was a dedicated believer in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon at the time he founded the New World Archaeology Foundation. He really believed that archaeology would prove the Book of Mormon. In a letter dated April 23, 1952, Mr. Ferguson said "the archeological data now available is entirely inadequate"

for testing the Book of Mormon. He predicted, however, that the “next ten years of excavations in Mexico and Guatemala should enable us to make the archeological tests.” For a number of years he was very excited about the progress of the work and seemed certain that the Book of Mormon would be vindicated soon. In his book, *One Fold And One Shepherd*, page 263, he stated: “The important thing now is to continue the digging at an accelerated pace in order to find more inscriptions dating to Book-of-Mormon times. Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions . . . referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon.” In 1962 Mr. Ferguson said that “Powerful evidences sustaining the book are accumulating.”

### EVIDENCE NOT FOUND

Although many important archaeological discoveries were made, the evidence he had desired to find to support the Book of Mormon did not turn up. In response to a letter Hal Hougey wrote in 1972 which reminded him that he had predicted in 1961 that Book of Mormon cities would be found within 10 years, Mr. Ferguson sadly wrote:

Ten years have passed . . . I sincerely anticipated that Book-of-Mormon cities would be positively identified within 10 years—and time has proved me wrong in my anticipation. (Letter dated June 5, 1972)

At first it had all seemed so simple; since the Book of Mormon told when the Nephites were in Mesoamerica, all one had to do was find archaeological sites that dated to the period and the Book of Mormon would be established by the evidence. The fact that archaeological research failed to provide the confirmation which Mr. Ferguson expected to find must have weighed very heavily on his mind. The most serious blow to Ferguson’s faith, however, came just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This collection, which had been lost for many years, contained the very papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham is published in the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church.

After Mr. Ferguson obtained photographs of the papyrus fragments, he consulted Professors Lutz and Lesko of the University of California. Both these Egyptologists agreed that the papyrus Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality the Book of Breathings, an Egyptian funerary text made for a man by the name of Hor (Horus). Ferguson learned that

this papyrus had nothing at all to do with the patriarch Abraham or his religion. It was in its entirety a pagan text filled with the names of Egyptian gods and goddesses.

Thomas Stuart Ferguson was shaken to the core by this discovery. When the church’s noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, began defending the Book of Abraham, Ferguson wrote a letter to another member of the church in which he stated:

Nibley’s articles on the Book of Abraham aren’t worth a tinker—first, because he is not impartial, being the commissioned and paid defender of the faith. Second, because he could not, he dared not, he did not, face the true issue: “Could Joseph Smith translate Egyptian?” . . . By study of the GRAMMAR [Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar], the recovered papyrus, and the illustrations, it is perfectly obvious that we now have the original [*sic*] manuscript material used by Jos. Smith in working up the Book of Abraham. Prof. Klaus Baer of Univ. of Chicago, Prof. Lutz of U.C. (Berkeley), Prof. Lesko (U.C. Berkeley) and Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson, all agree that the original manuscript Egyptian text translates into the Breathing Permit of Hor (Egyptian God). . . . The work of the two UC professors was done at my request and is unpublished. All 4 agree with each other, and without having conferred or collaborated. (My UC men did not, and still do not, know that there is any relationship of the manuscript material to the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith, Book of Abraham—or whatever. . . .

Joseph Smith announced, in print (*History of the Church*, vol. II, page 236), that “one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt . . .” Since 4 scholars, who have established that they can read Egyptian, say that the manuscripts deal with neither Abraham nor Joseph—and since the 4 reputable men tell us exactly what the manuscripts do say—I must conclude that **Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics**. To my surprise, one of the **highest officials in the Mormon Church agreed with that conclusion** when I made that very statement to him on Dec. 4, 1970—privately in one-to-one [c]onversation. . . .

The attempts, including Nibley’s, to explain away and **dodge the trap into which Joseph Smith fell** when he had the audacity to translate the Chandler texts, and keep the original Egyptian texts around, **are absurd**, in my view. . . .

My views are not for publication or spreading abroad. I am like you—maintaining membership because of the many fine things the Church offers. But facts speak for themselves. I offered the data available to my Stake Pres. recently and he walked away without it—saying he didn’t want to read it. They can hardly excommunicate [*sic*] us when they won’t look at the evidence.

Of course the dodge as to the Book of Abraham must be: WE DON’T HAVE THE ORIGINAL

MANUSCRIPT FROM WHICH THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM WAS TRANSLATED.” I conclude that **we do have it and have translations of it.** (Letter by Thomas Stuart Ferguson, dated March 13, 1971)

## VISITS THE TANNERS

The first indication we had that Mr. Ferguson was losing his faith in Mormonism was just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered. In 1968 he wrote us a letter saying that we were “doing a great thing—getting out **some truth on the Book of Abraham.**” This was a significant statement since we were presenting evidence that the Book of Abraham was not a correct translation of the papyrus. Later we heard a rumor that he had given up Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, but this hardly prepared us for his visit on December 2, 1970. At that time, Mr. Ferguson told us frankly that he had not only given up the Book of Abraham, but that he had come to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that Mormonism was not true. Ferguson felt that our work was important and that it should be subsidized. He told us that he had spent twenty-five years trying to prove Mormonism, but had finally come to the conclusion that all his work in this regard had been in vain. He said that his training in law had taught him how to weigh evidence and that the case against Joseph Smith was absolutely devastating and could not be explained away.

Speaking of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, Ferguson commented that when Cheesman and *Brigham Young University Studies* published the strange accounts of the vision they completely destroyed his faith in it. He felt that instead of helping the cause, the Mormon scholars had shot the bird, plucked out all its feathers and left it “dead and naked on the ground.” He referred to Dr. Hugh Nibley’s defense of the Book of Abraham as “nonsense,” and told us that just before coming to visit us he had discussed the book of Abraham with Hugh B. Brown (Brown served as a member of the First Presidency under President David O. McKay). According to Mr. Ferguson, Apostle Brown had also come to the conclusion that the Book of Abraham was false and was in favor of the church giving it up. A few years later Hugh B. Brown said he could “not recall” making the statements Thomas Stuart Ferguson attributed to him. Ferguson, however, was apparently referring to the same incident in the letter of March 13, 1971, when he stated:

I must conclude that Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics. To my surprise one of the **highest officials** in the Mormon Church **agreed with that conclusion** . . . privately in one-to-one [c]onversation.

That Ferguson would have discussed the matter with Apostle Brown seems very likely since earlier in the letter Ferguson noted that he had received “enlarged photos” of the Joseph Smith Papyri “directly from Hugh B. Brown.” While there is always the possibility that Mr. Ferguson misunderstood Apostle Brown, we seriously doubt that this could have been the case. At any rate, when Ferguson visited with us he seemed to be absolutely convinced that Brown did not believe the Book of Abraham. He was very stirred up over this matter, and we felt that the conversation he had with Apostle Brown probably disturbed him to the point that he decided to make contact with us.

From what we know from other sources, Hugh B. Brown had a very difficult time accepting the anti-Black doctrine—i.e., the teaching that Blacks could not hold the Mormon priesthood. Since this doctrine was chiefly derived from Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, it is very possible that Brown acquired serious doubts about the book even before the papyri were rediscovered. Many people believe that when Brown was serving in the First Presidency he tried very hard to convince President David O. McKay to have a revelation which would allow Blacks to receive the priesthood. When Joseph Fielding Smith became president of the church in 1970, Hugh B. Brown no longer found himself in the First Presidency. It was not until 1978 that President Spencer W. Kimball claimed to receive a revelation which removed the curse off the blacks. At any rate, we have evidence to show that Thomas Stuart Ferguson continued to tell the story concerning his conversation with Hugh B. Brown up until the time of his death. Ferguson found himself faced with a dilemma, for the Mormon Church had just given him a large grant (\$100,000 or more) to carry on the archaeological research of the New World Archaeological Foundation. He felt, however, that this foundation was doing legitimate archaeological work, and therefore he intended to continue the research. He realized that the organization he had founded to establish the authenticity of the Book of Mormon was now actually disproving the Book of Mormon by its failure to turn up anything concerning a Christian culture existing in Mesoamerica prior to the time of Columbus. One matter which we discussed with Mr. Ferguson was the possibility that he might write something about his loss of faith in the Book of Mormon. He was deeply grieved by the fact that he had wasted twenty-five years of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon. We indicated to him, however, that this time would not be wasted if he would go public with what he had found. He could, in fact, prevent many others from wasting twenty-five years of their lives trying

to prove the Book of Mormon. He informed us that he had been thinking of writing a book about the matter and that it would be a real “bombshell.”

A few months after Thomas Stuart Ferguson revealed to us that he had come to the conclusion that the book of Mormon was a spurious production, he wrote us a letter in which he said: “I think I will be in SLC in June — and if so, I’ll call on you again. I enjoyed my visit with you. . . . **I certainly admire you for the battle you are waging**—virtually single handed” (Letter dated March 13, 1971). On a number of occasions when people wrote to him, Mr. Ferguson recommended that they read our publications on Mormonism.

Unfortunately, Thomas Stewart Ferguson seems to have had a very difficult time communicating his loss of faith to those he was close to. He told us, for instance, that he did not dare tell one of his sons the truth about the Book of Mormon because the shock would cause him too much emotional trauma. He felt that he may have to put the matter off until the situation changed. While he no longer believed in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he continued to attend the Mormon Church.

Joseph Smith claimed that Jesus Himself told him that he should “join none” of the churches which were in existence in his day, for “all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; . . .” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:19). This false concept has led many Mormons to believe that if the Mormon Church is not true, there is nowhere else to turn. Consequently, when they lose faith in Mormonism they are likely to completely lose Faith in the idea of a personal God. Unfortunately, this is what happened to Thomas Stuart Ferguson. In a letter to James Still, dated December 3, 1979, Mr. Ferguson Frankly stated: “I **lost faith** in Joseph Smith as one having a pipeline to deity—and have decided that there has never been a pipeline to deity—with any man.” Since he had many friends and members of his family in Mormonism and apparently felt comfortable there, he decided to remain in the church. In the same letter Ferguson stated that he still attended Mormon meetings, “sing in the choir and enjoy my friendships in the Church. In my opinion it is the **best fraternity** that has come to my attention . . .” With regard to the origin of the Book of Mormon, Mr. Ferguson wrote: “. . . I give Joseph Smith credit as an innovator and as a smart fellow. . . . I think that Joseph Smith may have had Ixtlilxochitl and View of the Hebrews **from which to work.**”

Even before our meeting with Mr. Ferguson in 1970, some Mormon scholars were beginning to face

the truth with regard to Book of Mormon archaeology. Dee F. Green, who had worked with Ferguson’s New World Archaeological Foundation, was one of the first to openly criticize “Book of Mormon archaeology.” His criticism is very significant because he was at one time deeply involved in archaeological work at the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University. In 1958-61 he served as editor of the *University Archaeological Society Newsletter*. In his article, published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Dee Green made it plain that archaeological evidence did not prove the Book of Mormon:

Having spent a considerable portion of the past ten years functioning as a scientist dealing with New World archaeology, I find that nothing in so-called Book of Mormon archaeology materially affects my religious commitment one way or the other, and I do not see that the **archaeological myths so common in our proselytizing program** enhance the process of true conversion. . . .

The **first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists**. Titles on books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettanti on the peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists. If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one can have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two **are not wed**. At least they are not wed in reality since **no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography**. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but **we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful** (nor any other location for that matter) **were or are**. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has **left us empty-handed**. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, pp. 76-78)

In 1975 Thomas Stuart Ferguson finally mustered up his courage and prepared a 29-page paper in response to papers written by Mormon apologists John Sorenson and Garth Norman. It was entitled, *Written Symposium on Book-of-Mormon Geography: Response of Thomas S. Ferguson to the Norman & Sorenson Papers*. In this response, p. 4, Mr. Ferguson wrote:

With all of these great efforts, **it cannot be established** factually that anyone, from Joseph Smith to the present day, has put his finger on **a single point of terrain that was a Book-of-Mormon geographical place**. And the hemisphere has been pretty well checked out by competent people. Thousands of sites have been excavated.

Ferguson pointed out in his paper that the text of the Book of Mormon makes it very clear that certain items should be found in archaeological excavations and that these items are not present in the sites proposed. He noted, for instance, that “Thousands of archeological holes in the area proposed have given us **not a fragment of evidence** of the presence of the plants mentioned in the Book of Mormon . . .” (p. 7). On page 29 he concluded by saying: “I’m afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is **no Book-of-Mormon geography**. I, for one, would be happy if Dee were wrong.”

In a letter to Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Lawrence, dated February 20, 1976, Thomas Stuart Ferguson made very plain the reason why there is “no Book-of-Mormon geography”:

Herewith is a copy of my recent (1975) paper on Book of Mormon matters. . . . It was one of several presented in a written symposium on Book of Mormon geography [*sic*]. (My thesis is that Book of Mormon geography involves a lot more than playing with topography and terrain.) The **real implication** of the paper is that you can’t set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere—**because it is fictional** and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology, I should say—what is in the ground **will never conform to what is in the book**.

We felt that Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s manuscript on Book of Mormon archaeology was so important that we published it under the title, *Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled*. It is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

## RESULTS OF SPOOFING

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

. . . Mormonism is probably the best conceived **myth-fraternity** to which one can belong. . . . Joseph Smith tried so hard he put himself out on a limb with the

Book of Abraham, and also with the Book of Mormon. He **can be refuted**—but why bother . . . It would be like wiping out placebos in medicine, and that would make no sense when they do lots of good. . . .

Why not say the right things and keep your membership in the great **fraternity**, enjoying the good things you like and discarding the ones you can’t swallow (and keeping your mouth shut)? Hypocritical? Maybe . . . **thousands of members have done, and are doing, what I suggest** you consider doing. Silence is golden—etc. . . . So why try to be heroic and fight the myths—the Mormon one or any other that does more good than ill?

Perhaps you and I have been **spoofed by Joseph Smith**. Now that we have **the inside dope—why not spoof a little back** and stay aboard? Please consider this letter confidential—for obvious reasons. I want to stay aboard the good ship, Mormonism—for various reasons that I think valid. First, **several of my dearly loved family members want desperately to believe** and do believe it and they each need it. It does them far more good than harm. Belonging, with **my eyes wide open** is actually fun, less expensive than formerly, and no strain at all. . . . **I never get up and bear testimony** . . . You might give my suggestions a trial run—and if you find you have to burn all the bridges between yourselves and the Church, then go ahead and ask for excommunication. (The day will probably come—but it is far off—when the leadership of the Church will change the excommunication rules and delete as grounds non-belief in the 2 books mentioned and in Joseph Smith as a prophet etc., but if you wait for that day, you probably will have died. It is a long way off—tithing would drop too much for one thing. . . .

I recently wrote a paper concerning the **big weak spots** in the Book of Mormon, from the archeological point of view and for \$5 will make a photocopy of it for you if you wish to read it.

Kindly do not quote this letter and please do not cite me.

If Mr. Ferguson could have seen the results of the “spoof” he played on his family, he might have had second thoughts about the wisdom of such a course. As it turned out, after his death his son, Larry S. Ferguson, was convinced that his father wanted his book *One Fold and One Shepherd* revised and republished to the world. He talked Bruce W. Warren, of Brigham Young University, into working on the revision, and in 1987 it was published under the title, *The Messiah in Ancient America*. In the Preface, p. xiii, Dr. Warren wrote the following:

The Ferguson family wanted the new book to be a tribute to Thomas Stuart Ferguson and **his abiding testimony of the Book of Mormon** and the divinity of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

On page xv, Dr. Warren commented: “Finally, the driving force behind the book was Larry Ferguson, with the initial financing for the project coming from his brother, Thomas A. Ferguson.” In the Forward, p. xii, Professor Paul R. Cheesman stated: “With the recent additions by Dr. Bruce W. Warren, this book should reinstate Thomas Stuart Ferguson as a source of enrichment in the fields of study concerning Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon.”

Larry Ferguson maintains that his father discussed the revision of his book before his death. Although we do not really know what Thomas Stuart Ferguson told his son before his death, it seems impossible to believe that he would have wanted it reprinted. While it is only a matter of speculation, it is possible that his son might have asked him why it was not reprinted and that he might have responded by saying it needed to be revised. If Thomas Stuart Ferguson had never leveled with his son concerning his true beliefs about the Book of Mormon, Larry Ferguson would naturally understand his father’s statement to mean that it needed some changes made to reflect archaeological studies that were made since it went out of print. The real meaning of such a statement, of course, would be that it needed to be revised to show that the Book of Mormon “is fictional . . . what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book” (Letter dated February 2, 1976).

In any case, the new book is seriously flawed because there is no mention of the fact that Ferguson was a complete unbeliever in the Book of Mormon during the last 12 or 13 years of his life. Bruce Warren was undoubtedly aware of Ferguson’s 29-page paper criticizing the Sorenson and Norman papers, but he did not even refer to this important research in the revised publication. If Ferguson were alive today, he would undoubtedly be shocked to find his name attached to a book which contains a map showing “Possible Book of Mormon Locations.” The reader will remember that Ferguson wrote that “there is no Book-of-Mormon geography.”

Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s *One Fold and One Shepherd*, contained a long list of “cultural elements common to both Bible lands and Mesoamerica” (pp. 57-72). Mormon archaeologist Dee Green felt that Ferguson’s “list of 298 traits . . . are at times so generalized that the list could just as well prove that Book of Mormon people **wound up in Southeast Asia**” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1969, p. 74). Ferguson, of course, later came to conclude that the items that were mentioned in the Book of Mormon which were not found by archaeologists far outweighed the cultural parallels. Bruce Warren and Larry Ferguson seem to have been

completely oblivious to Ferguson’s change of mind and have included his long list of cultural parallels in *The Messiah in Ancient America*, pages 214-228.

The fact that Thomas Stuart Ferguson was not forthright with members of his family with regard to the Book of Mormon has placed them in a very embarrassing position. They have published a book which will lead people to the conclusion that he was a true believer. The truth, of course, is that Ferguson believed that archaeology disproved the Book of Mormon. The appearance of the revised book with Ferguson’s name on it, has caused scholars to probe into the last years of his life. A great deal of documentary evidence has been discovered to show that from 1970 until his death in 1983 Mr. Ferguson was secretly undercutting the Book of Mormon. In fact, just two months before his death he was working on a project which he felt would show that the Book of Mormon was in reality a 19th century production. The evidence concerning this matter will appear in a forthcoming publication.

One of the authors of this newsletter (Jerald) tried to discuss these problems with Larry Ferguson on KTALK Radio on April 17, 1988. Mr. Ferguson would not admit that his father had lost faith in the Book of Mormon, and when he was presented with evidence, he responded: “If you want to kick my dead father, go ahead.” He maintained that in “February of ‘83” his father “kind of pulled me aside . . . [and] bore his testimony of the Book of Mormon to me.” He also referred to a statement which he said his father had prepared in “the latter part of 1982.” It also appears in *The Messiah in Ancient America*, page 283:

We have studied the Book of Mormon for 50 years. We can tell you that it follows only the New Testament as a written witness to the mission, divinity, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it seems to us that there is no message that is needed by man and mankind more than the message of Christ. Millions of people have come to accept Jesus as the Messiah because of reading the Book of Mormon in a quest for truth. The book is the cornerstone of the Mormon Church.

The greatest witness to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon is the book itself. But many are the external evidences that support it.

The introduction to this statement reads: “In 1982, the year before he died, he included a photo and testimony in several copies of the Books of Mormon that he distributed to non-Mormons” (*Ibid.*). While we do not know for certain when this statement was first distributed, on August 2, 1983, Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s widow sent a copy of it to Jerry Benson. In a letter which accompanied it, she wrote: “Tom was loyal and faithful



to the Church to his death.” The wording of the statement which Mr. Benson received is identical to that reproduced in the book. Below the statement, however, we find the names “Tom and Ester Ferguson.” These names are not handwritten but appear to have been typed on the same typewriter used for the statement itself. From this we can conclude that the statement could have been prepared by either Mr. or Mrs. Ferguson or they could have worked on it together. While it has the picture of the Fergusons which was mentioned above, it is undated.

During the radio program mentioned above, Larry Ferguson was asked about the matter. He replied: “Well, he [Thomas Stuart Ferguson] wrote it **in his own hand**. You can ask my mother if you want to.” H. Michael Marquardt did just that in a letter to Mrs. Ester Ferguson. She did not respond, but asked her son, Thomas A. Ferguson, to handle the matter. On May 19, 1988, he sent Mr. Marquardt a letter in which he stated: “The type of information you seek is **of a very personal nature**, and in our judgment it would be **inappropriate** for us to share it with you. We do not know you nor do we know anything about you. Therefore, we respectfully **decline**.”

We would prefer to believe that Mrs. Ferguson, who may not have known the truth about her husband’s loss of faith, was the one who prepared this testimony. If, however, there is any evidence that it came from her husband and that it was prepared in 1982, it would only show that he was willing to go to far greater lengths than we had supposed in playing his double game. The reader will remember that in the letter dated February 9, 1976, Mr. Ferguson commented: “I **never** get up and bear testimony . . .”

On the radio program of April 17, 1968, Larry Ferguson declared: “. . . if you ever knew my father, that’s one thing he was **not** was a hypocrite.” Mr. Ferguson now finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. If he concedes that the testimony he has published did not really come from his father, he will undermine the book he has spent years in preparing. If, on the other hand, he establishes that his father really wrote it, he will certainly have to give up the claim that his father was not “a hypocrite.” The reason for this is that on January 4, 1983, just after Thomas Stuart Ferguson was supposed to have written the statement, he acknowledged that he was, in fact, engaged in a project which he felt would prove that the Book of Mormon was not an ancient document. To accept the information which Larry Ferguson has put forth would force one to conclude that his father was a real chameleon, continually changing colors as he talked with Mormons and non-Mormons.

Whatever the case may be, we cannot help but sympathize with men like Thomas Stuart Ferguson and

B. H. Roberts (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 96D-96G) who labored for many years to prove the Book of Mormon true and then found out that their faith was based on erroneous assumptions. It would have been very difficult for these men to have made a public statement repudiating the Book of Mormon. They would have been considered traitors to the church who allowed themselves to come under the power of the Devil. Nevertheless, when we consider the consequences of remaining silent, we cannot help but feel that both these men made a drastic mistake when they failed to stand up for the truth.

## EVIDENCE COMPARED

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once boasted: “This generation have more than **one thousand times** the amount of evidence to demonstrate and forever establish the divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon than they have in favor of the Bible!” (*Orson Pratt’s Works*, “Evidences of the Book of Mormon and Bible Compared,” p. 64).

We feel that this statement is far from the truth. The only support for the existence of the gold plates is the testimony of eleven witnesses, and as we have already shown in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 50-63, there are a number of reasons to doubt their statements. A comparison of the archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon with the evidence for the Bible clearly shows the weakness of the Mormon position. This, of course, is not to imply that there are no problems connected with biblical archaeology, or that archaeological evidence alone can prove the Bible to be divinely inspired. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., of the Smithsonian Institute, commented in a letter written to Marvin Cowan on Jan. 24, 1963: “Archaeological discoveries in the Near East have verified some statements in the Bible referring to certain tribes, places, etc. On the other hand there is no way in which they could verify the narrative parts of the Bible such as the actions, words, deeds, etc. of particular individuals.” In the same letter he continued: “There is no evidence whatever of any migration from Israel to America, and likewise no evidence that pre-Columbian Indians had any knowledge of Christianity or the Bible.”

The noted Mormon apologist Dr. Hugh Nibley frankly admitted that no ancient inscription mentioning the Nephites has ever been found, and that “nothing short of an inscription which could be read and roughly dated would bridge the gap between what might be called a pre-actualistic archaeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization” (*Since Cumorah*, p. 243).



While the Nephites are never mentioned in any ancient inscription, the existence of the Israelites is verified by many inscriptions dating back hundreds of years before the time of Christ. The “earliest archaeological reference to the people of Israel” is a stele of the Egyptian ruler Merneptah, dated about 1220 B.C., which is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Information concerning this stele is given in *The Biblical World* (pp. 380-381). The following is a translation of a portion of the stele:

**Israel** is laid waste, his seed is not;  
Hurm (i.e. Syria) is become a widow for Egypt.

The noted Egyptologist John A. Wilson acknowledged that “an Egyptian scribe was conscious of a people known as Israel somewhere in Palestine or Transjordan” (*The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, 1965, p. 255).

Many ancient inscriptions mentioning the Israelites have been found, and some inscriptions even give the names of kings mentioned in the Bible. The New Testament mentions a number of rulers that are known to have lived around the time of Christ. For instance, the Bible tells us that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. That Pilate was an actual historical person was proved beyond all doubt in 1961 when “an inscription with the name Pontius Pilate was found in the theater excavations” at Caesarea (*The Biblical Archaeologist*, September 1964, p. 71).

The fact that the Jews were in Palestine at the time the Bible indicates is proven by hundreds of ancient Hebrew inscriptions that have been found on rocks, pieces of pottery and coins. Portions of every book of the Old Testament, except for the book of Esther, have also been found in the collection of manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition many inscriptions from other countries verify that the Jews were present in Palestine.

When we turn to the Book of Mormon, however, we are unable to find any evidence at all that the Nephites ever existed. We must agree with the Mormon archaeologist Dee F. Green whom we have already quoted as saying:

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. . . . Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for the matter) were or are.

### A SINKING SHIP

In 1973, Michael Coe, one of the best known authorities on archaeology of the New World, wrote an

article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. In this article he addressed the issue in a very forthright manner:

Mormon archaeologists over the years have almost unanimously accepted the Book of Mormon as an accurate, historical account of the New World peoples. . . . Let me now state uncategorically that as far as I know **there is not one professionally trained archaeologist**, who is not a Mormon, **who sees any scientific justification for believing the foregoing to be true**, and I would like to state that there are quite a few Mormon archaeologists who join this group. . . .

The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, **absolutely nothing**, has even shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1973, pp. 41, 42 & 46)

Since many Mormons have spread the rumor that the Smithsonian Institution uses the Book of Mormon in its archaeological research, the Institution has found it necessary to publish a statement denying this claim. In the four-page document we read as follows:

1. The Smithsonian Institution has **never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide**. Smithsonian archeologists see **no direct connection** between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book. (Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon, Spring 1986, p. 1)

In the 1972 edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 102-103, we told about Mr. Ferguson reaching the conclusion that the Book of Mormon was a spurious work. We noted that Mormon leaders gave ‘large appropriations’ to support Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s New World Archaeological Foundation. This organization also failed to find evidence to prove the Book of Mormon, and the man who organized it, hoping that it would prove Mormonism, ended up losing his faith in the Church.” When Moody Press reprinted this statement in our condensed work, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, Robert and Rosemary Brown tried to cause trouble by writing a note to our publisher stating that this was “NOT SO!” Since some of our readers had received letters from Mr. Ferguson telling of his loss of faith and had given us copies, we were able to easily convince Moody Press that our statement was correct. The Browns simply did not know the full story.

At the present time there is a Mormon scholar by the name of Stan Larson who is “writing a biography of Thomas Stuart Ferguson.” He is very interested in knowing the truth about this embarrassing period in

Ferguson's life and has recently published a appeal in the newsletter of the Mormon History Association for copies of any letters readers have which were written by Ferguson during the period 1968-83. If any of our readers had correspondence with Ferguson during this period and want to help Mr. Larson, they can mail it to us and we will see that it is sent to him.

The failure of Thomas Stuart Ferguson to deal with the truth he encountered is certainly a very sad story. He seems to have tried to rationalize his own behavior by the actions of Apostle Hugh B. Brown and others he observed. He maintained that "thousands of members have done, and are doing, what I suggest"—i.e., "spooof a little back" and stay "aboard the good ship, Mormonism." We feel that there are tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Mormons, who are currently playing this dangerous game. They would rather go down with the ship, taking their families with them, than stand up for the truth. Some of these people probably read this newsletter

and realize that God wants them to make a stand for the truth. We are aware of the fact that taking such a step can be very costly, but we feel that the eternal consequences are far too great to trifle with. In Luke 9:26 we find this warning given by Jesus Himself:

*For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*

We pray that many will step out in faith and turn their lives over to Jesus that He may reign as King of their hearts. We made the decision to come out of Mormonism and follow the Lord about thirty years ago and have never regretted it for a moment. The peace and joy we have received and the direction we have for our lives surpasses anything that this life has to offer.

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## CRI STATEMENT ENDS WITCHCRAFT DISPUTE

Most of our readers are aware of the fact that for a number of months we have been involved in a disagreement concerning the question of whether the Mormon temple ceremony came from witchcraft and Satanism. The conflict centered around William Schnoebelen, a man who participated in both witchcraft and satanic rites. Mr. Schnoebelen asserted that the Mormon temple ceremony had been taken from these rites. Those who supported Schnoebelen maintained that his works were a reliable guide in helping to determine the truth about the relationship between Mormonism and witchcraft/Satanism. While our research shows that William Schnoebelen actually participated in these evil ceremonies, we concluded that his major documents and evidence did not hold up under critical examination. We felt, in fact, that he had given such a distorted picture of the relationship between witchcraft and Mormonism that we had to take a public stand against his work.

After doing some careful research with regard to the matter, we published our findings in the booklet, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*. Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen responded to this publication in a paper entitled *The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality?* On page 4 of their rebuttal, Decker and Schnoebelen state that we are not qualified to deal with the temple ceremony, witchcraft or Masonry because we are "armchair scholars" who are "relatively ignorant of such things." In response we prepared a new and enlarged edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*. In this publication we presented evidence against the claims William Schnoebelen set forth in the booklet, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*. We demonstrated that modern witchcraft, Satanism and Mormonism have borrowed from Masonry, and therefore parallels which

Mr. Schnoebelen pointed out between Mormonism and witchcraft/Satanism only demonstrated that these three groups had borrowed from Masonry.

Although the great majority of people who have contacted us on the issue have shown support for our position, a small but vocal minority felt that we made a great mistake in bringing these matters to the attention of the public. Until just recently there seemed no way to settle this matter. Fortunately, as it turned out, Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen appealed to the Christian Research Institute for help. In a letter to us, dated December 7, 1987, Ed Decker wrote: "I have spoken to Dr. Walter Martin regarding the matter and he has agreed to let Christian Research Institute (CRI) arbitrate this matter for Saints Alive. CRI and Dr. Martin have an internationally accepted and well earned reputation . . . Whatever correction this ministry receives from them will be fully and immediately acted upon, to their satisfaction. I can also assume that whatever correction you might need will be just as quickly given. How you act upon any such correction is your own business. I am not asking for your permission in this matter." In another letter, Mr. Decker explained that he was not really speaking of arbitration: "The one error I made was to make reference to arbitration which is not what we were talking about. This was more in the form of bringing a brother with you when you couldn't resolve a difference. (Letter to Wesley P. Walters, dated February 9, 1988)

Since we were not consulted as to how or by whom the issue would be resolved, we could hardly be accused of controlling the outcome of the investigation. This was made very clear in a letter Ed Decker wrote to us on Jan. 28, 1988: "... we have the Christian right to bring in a third party, such

as DR. Martin and CRI. . . . Earlier in the letter, I reiterated our decision and need for an reputable organization such as CRI to act as intermediate in this serious matter dealing with our ethics and reputation. . . . We still stand firmly by this decision. . . .” Although we did not believe that Mr. Decker had a right to force us to submit to his own plan regarding a settlement of the dispute, we felt that he did have every right to put his own ministry under CRI’s authority. In any case, we were treated very well by people at CRI. Marian Bodine, for instance, was very kind and helpful to us. When we completed the 1988 enlarged and revised edition of the *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, we provided the Christian Research Institute with a copy. This booklet undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the decision which was finally reached.

At the time of the 1988 Capstone Conference we heard that the Christian Research Institute had decided to no longer sell the booklet *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*. We felt that this was a step in the right direction. This was soon followed by the release of a three-page statement by Walter Martin printed on the letterhead of the Christian Research Institute. The statement lamented the fact that there had been “needless misunderstandings, corresponding frustrations, and ‘less than charitable’ comments by persons involved in this issue towards those of a different opinion. This is a sad state of affair for the Church at any time, but especially with the Mormon Church watching us. The Scripture clearly demands that we steadfastly avoid sowing such discord among our brethren (Prov. 6:19).”

While the statement was written in a very tactful manner and noted that CRI did “not wish to either explicitly or implicitly impugn the character, motives, sincerity, or integrity of any one individual or the collective ministries that are primarily involved in this disagreement” it did not dodge the real issue. The statement made it very clear that William Schnoebelen’s work on the relationship between witchcraft and the Mormon temple ceremony must be rejected:

The following is an open letter regarding the Saints Alive in Jesus and Utah Lighthouse Ministry’s ongoing dialogue concerning issues stemming from the publication of the booklet, *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*. Herein is our position pertaining to some of the views advanced in the booklet.

First, it should be noted that the Christian Research Institute highly values the efforts and contributions that both of the above ministries have made in sharing the Gospel with those trapped in Mormonism. . . . We firmly believe that the above organizations are dedicated to sharing the Gospel with those who are lost, particularly Mormons. Thus, we shall not make pronouncements upon anyone’s motives, but only upon the validity of the major claim in question. In short, our only concern is with the overall accuracy of the claims put forth in the formerly mentioned booklet.

Second, we believe that this whole issue has been clouded by a lack of clarity and precision in writings and lectures on this topic. . . . we agree with Mr. Schnoebelen (and Utah Lighthouse Ministry for that matter), that there are similarities and parallels among Mormonism and some forms of modern Witchcraft and Satanism.

However, as Utah Lighthouse Ministry and others have correctly pointed out, what similarities there are stem not from Mormonism borrowing directly from Witchcraft or Satanism, but the commonality that all three have in being heavily influenced by Free Masonry through people who were quite conversant with it, such as Aleister Crowley, Jerald Gardner, Joseph Smith etc.

We understand how and why Mr. Schnoebelen arrived at his conclusion, especially if one grants the key premises to his arguments. We however cannot endorse his premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*. Unfortunately he appears to believe some of the theories put forth by many of those involved with Witchcraft and other types of occultism relating to their alleged longevity. But, these myths have been thoroughly refuted and denied by competent scholars and even many occultists themselves. . . .

In conclusion, we pray that all those who have been directly involved in this disagreement will endeavor to keep the bond of Christian unity by the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:3). Finally, let us keep in mind that irrespective of any truth or falsity of the claims espoused in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*, the preponderate weight of Scripture itself is sufficient in and of itself to deem Mormonism a non-Christian cult.

Those who wish to obtain the complete three-page statement can write to Christian Research Institute, PO Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693. A donation should be included to cover the cost of handling and mailing.

The CRI statement makes very clear the reason CRI decided to discontinue selling Mr. Schnoebelen’s book. It is summed up in one sentence: “We . . . **cannot endorse his premises, nor the overall conclusion** as represented in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*.” Fortunately, both Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen have agreed to go along with any decision made by CRI. In *The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality?* page 3, they wrote:

Ed spoke to Dr. Walter Martin, Director of Christian Research Institute. . . . **We fully submitted ourselves and this ministry to them in the matter. We agree to submit to their findings and take whatever action they deem necessary.** . . . It is our firm commitment to see this thing dealt with according to Christian principles. We pray that Mr. Tanner will be of the same mind.

We really count the statement by CRI and the agreement by Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen to abide by it as an answer to prayer, and we want to thank all those who joined with us in seeking the Lord about this matter. Although we have really felt the Lord’s help, this whole incident has not been easy on us. We would still appreciate prayer with regard to this matter that there will be complete unity and that tens of thousands of Mormons will come to know the Lord in the near future. We feel, however, that those who have taken an opposite position need a special amount of prayer. They have some very difficult decisions to make, and we should all pray that

they will not become discouraged and will deeply seek the Lord at this critical time.

Since this controversy appears to be over, we are now devoting our time to finishing a new book on Mormonism which we have been working on for some time.

In the new edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, which is four times as large as the first edition, we detail the errors which have greatly distorted the views of a number of Mormon critics. In addition, we answer the various charges that have been leveled against us during the recent disagreement.

Although it is not specifically mentioned in the CRI statement, both Decker's and Schnoebelen's work on Freemasonry is seriously marred by the inclusion of erroneous material on the subject. Wesley P. Walters has demonstrated that the most important quotation from Albert Pike "depended upon" by both Decker and Schnoebelen "to establish the Luciferian nature of Masonry" is a 19th century forgery. (We have printed an article by Pastor Walters concerning this subject in the new edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine* entitled, "A Curious Case of Fraud." This article presents evidence that the notorious Pike lecture containing the statement that "Lucifer is God," really came from an anti-Masonic hoax "that grew out of the mind of one Gabriel Antoine Jogand-Pages who had a vendetta both against the Masons and the Roman Catholic Church." This is truly an amazing story regarding "a gigantic hoax" which fooled the public for many years.)

Because we feel that the new edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine* is so important to those working with Mormons, we have decided to extend our special price until October 30, 1988. The regular price of this book will be \$4.00, but for those who order before the deadline, the price will be only \$3.00 a copy (on mail orders please add minimum shipping and handling charge of \$1.00).

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