

YEA, YEA  NAY, NAY

IS A “PARADIGM SHIFT” IN BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES POSSIBLE?

By Dan Vogel

PRESENTLY, THE CONTROVERSY between Book of Mormon apologists and critics rages mainly because both are seeking the unconditional acquiescence of the other. At the center of the discussion is disagreement over the historicity of the Book of Mormon and an either/or dichotomy: either the Book of Mormon is real history and Joseph Smith is a real prophet, or, as apologist William J. Hamblin has insisted, the Book of Mormon is fiction and Joseph Smith is a false prophet.¹ Given this binary stance, it is little wonder the apologists for historicity are willing to go to extreme, even unconventional measures to fend off all attacks.

One of these extreme tactics has been to align themselves with philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn's discussion of paradigms, in his famous book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,² as an entry into postmodernist theories of the social construction of truth. Their motivation for so doing seems to be to create a space for their apologetic claims by arguing that if science is actually a subjective enterprise, then believing that the Book of Mormon is historical is neither more nor less “scientific” than not believing.

Although Kuhn's discussion of paradigms remains useful, various aspects of his thesis have been rejected by philosophers of science. Yet it is on these extremely controversial aspects that apologists have placed the most emphasis. They do so as a means to justify mixing religious values with scientific criteria, privileging positive over negative evidence, creating *ad hoc* question-begging responses to counter evidence and, ironically, resisting “paradigm shift.”

This essay examines the apologists' paradigm to show that their appropriation of Kuhn is not only highly questionable but at odds with his original thesis. Drawing on

Kuhn myself, I will suggest another paradigm, one that might actually be a paradigm shift—one, I believe, capable of creating common ground upon which the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith might be more fruitfully approached.

KUHN'S MIXED LEGACY

KUHN'S signature contribution to the philosophy of science lies in his contention that although science has indeed progressed, its advancement was not simply through a steady “accumulation of knowledge.” An “accumulation” model implies that with each experimental result, science moves toward a more accurate representation of reality. Kuhn argues instead that the historical progress of science is best understood as punctuated by mass conversions to new understandings, sudden “paradigm shifts.” Kuhn argues that new paradigms are often chosen for non-scientific reasons and that switching paradigms amounts to an act of “faith” because an older paradigm always has more evidence in its favor and fewer anomalies, although those anomalies are serious enough to cause a crisis and a search for a better paradigm.³ Thus, Kuhn explains that the term paradigm “stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community.”⁴

Though Kuhn is clearly right that science has undergone major revolutions—such as the shift from Aristotelian to Newtonian physics, and from Newtonian mechanics to Einsteinian relativity—such examples clearly do not support his non-cumulative theory of scientific progress. Physicist Steven Weinberg has observed that while the “soft” parts of a theory (our *ad hoc* explanations of why the

theory works), the “hard” parts (usually the equations) endure and are incorporated in succeeding theories. According to Weinberg,

Kuhn . . . took his idea of a paradigm shift from the shift from Aristotelian to Newtonian physics . . . which set a pattern into which he tried to shoehorn every other scientific revolution. . . . Revolutions in science seem to fit Kuhn's description only to the extent that they mark a shift in understanding some aspect of nature from pre-science to modern science. The birth of Newtonian physics was a mega-paradigm shift, but nothing that has happened in our understanding of motion since then—not the transition from Newtonian to Einsteinian mechanics, or from classical to quantum physics—fits Kuhn's description of a paradigm shift.⁵

Philosophers of science Ian G. Barbour and Larry Laudan have likewise questioned Kuhn's non-cumulative model of scientific progress. Barbour has argued that there is “more continuity across a revolution than Kuhn depicts; there may be changes in assumptions, instrumentation and data, but there are no total discontinuities,” and Laudan has asked: “Why need cumulativeness be a precondition for objective judgments of cognitive progress? . . . [W]hy should we confuse this arguably sufficient condition for scientific progress with a necessary condition?”⁶ Despite such epistemic difficulties, Kuhn's assertion that scientific paradigms are to some degree socially constructed views of reality creates an opening that has been exploited by apologists and proponents of dubious positions ever since.

Kuhn did not intend his new model of the scientific enterprise to be put to use in apologetics. Indeed, Kuhn himself often complained about the spurious ways in which his work was invoked to defend unscientific and irrational positions. He was particularly dismayed by postmodernist Paul Feyerabend's claim that his work was a defense of irrationality in science.⁷

Despite Kuhn's protestations, responsibility for some of the confusion must still be laid at his feet. Physicists Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont have written about the mess of contradictory statements Kuhn left as a legacy in his attempt to carve out a middle position between science as purely objective and science as subjective—between positivism on one hand, and relativism on the other. Sokal and Bricmont have even gone so



DAN VOGEL is the author of the award-winning biography *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), as well as many other articles and books on Mormon history. He is an independent researcher and currently lives in Westerville, Ohio, with his wife, Margie.

far as to observe that there are “two Kuhns—a moderate Kuhn and his immoderate brother.” The moderate “Kuhn admits that the scientific debates of the past were settled correctly, but emphasizes that the evidence available at the time was weaker than is generally thought and that non-scientific considerations played a role.” The less careful Kuhn makes it sound like “changes of paradigm are due principally to non-empirical factors and that, once accepted, they condition our perception of the world to such an extent that they can only be confirmed by our subsequent experiences.” In Sokal and Bricmont’s view, it is this latter Kuhn, the “immoderate brother,” that has made Kuhn, “perhaps involuntarily, one of the founding fathers of contemporary relativism.”⁸

It is on the questionable legacy of the immoderate Kuhn that religious apologists and fringe scientists have pounced, appropriating Kuhn with such regularity that some have dubbed their arguments the “fallacy from Kuhn.” Creationists are a prime offender. The general outline of the “fallacy from Kuhn” that creationists employ is as follows:

(1) Highlight perceived shortcomings of the neo-Darwinian paradigm—e.g., its inability to answer the questions and make the predictions which the creationists deem most important and significant.

(2) Explain how creationism is the only logical alternative.

(3) Appeal to Kuhn’s discussion of paradigm debates to explain why the scientific community resists a shift to the creationists’ paradigm.⁹

Philosopher and well-known skeptic Michael Shermer notes that “identification of

the Kuhnian paradigm and the call for a revolutionary shift to the believer’s radical idea is made by nearly every claimant who is out of the mainstream, from UFOlogists and psychic investigators to proponents of cold fusion and perpetual motion machines.”¹⁰

If those on the fringes of science find inspiration in Kuhn’s work, those in the dominant paradigm can also find justification for resisting new paradigms. Kuhn himself said: “If all members of a community responded to each anomaly as a source of crisis or embraced each new theory advanced by a colleague, science would cease.”¹¹

Indeed, this is the situation I contend Book of Mormon apologists are caught in. They operate in an orbit between the moon and the sun, resisting the pull of the reigning naturalistic paradigm of secular scholarship while at the same time holding at bay revisionists within the Mormon community who are tugging them to embrace an inspired-fiction model for understanding the Book of Mormon.

The main exploiter of Kuhn among Book of Mormon apologists is Kevin Christensen, who first began using Kuhn in his theoretical reflections on Book of Mormon debates in 1990 and has continued up to the present, including his “Paradigms Crossed” (1995), “Paradigms Regained” (2001), and his critique of my approach to the Book of Mormon published last year in the FARMS Review.¹² The following is an outline of Christensen’s strategy and basic arguments, which he has derived from Kuhn and repeated over the past fifteen years:

(1) Disagreements between Book of Mormon apologists and critics are best understood as an

unresolvable debate between competing paradigms—i.e., ancient vs. nineteenth-century origin.

(2) Paradigms are not chosen according to objective rules, but rather on subjectively assessed criteria—e.g., comprehensiveness, coherence, simplicity, fruitfulness.

(3) Paradigms are unverifiable and resist falsification.

(4) Both apologists and critics assess evidence in a way that is consistent with their particular paradigms.

(5) Both apologists and critics choose which questions are the most significant to have answered and leave others unanswered.

(6) Both apologists and critics use *ad hoc* rationalizations to explain away counter-evidence and anomalies.

(7) Criteria such as accuracy of key predictions, comprehensiveness, coherence, parsimony, and fruitfulness show the Book of Mormon apologists’ paradigm to be superior to the critics’ nineteenth-century paradigm.

While Christensen resists the suggestion that he is guilty of the “fallacy from Kuhn,”¹³ I contend that he uses Kuhn primarily in an effort to diminish the significance of counter-evidence to Book of Mormon historicity and to value otherwise weak and unpersuasive apologetic responses. At every turn, Christensen’s use of Kuhn is designed to close the apologists’ paradigm to evidence that would count against it. For instance, to devalue Deanne Matheny’s critique of John

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Sorenson's limited geography model,¹⁴ Christensen argues that "Matheny and Sorenson do not operate in the same paradigm. Their understandings of what constitutes a problem and what constitutes a solution are different."¹⁵

While both Matheny and Sorenson should be operating in a scientific paradigm, Christensen believes Kuhn's thesis gives Mormon scholars permission to corrupt the scientific method with religious values.¹⁶ This allows Christensen and Sorenson to arbitrarily assign greater significance to positive rather than negative evidence or to explain negatives away through *ad hoc* rationalizations. At the same time, Christensen criticizes Matheny because she "discusses only problems [and offers] no solutions." He also quotes Sorenson's complaint that in Matheny's "dominant concern with 'problems,'" she neglects "the sizable body of cultural information in the Book of Mormon which patently agrees with Mesoamerican culture."¹⁷

In this view, it is more important to emphasize what the Book of Mormon gets right than what it gets wrong. For example, the Book of Mormon correctly predicts the existence of cement in Mesoamerica but is wrong about the existence of metallurgy and steel; correct about domestication of animals but wrong about the existence of the horse; correct about advanced writing systems but wrong about the existence of Hebrew and Egyptian; correct about domestication of plants but wrong about a biological link to the Old World; correct about the high state of civilization but wrong about the builders having come from Israel.¹⁸

Another example of closing a paradigm to counter-evidence appears in Christensen's endorsement of Mormon Mesoamericanist Brant Gardner's methodology of "looking for Mesoamerica in the Book of Mormon" in-

stead of "looking for the Book of Mormon in Mesoamerica."¹⁹ This procedure has apologetic advantages because if one looks only for similarities in the text, instead of comparing the text as a whole against what is known about Mesoamerica, historical anachronisms become invisible to researchers and falsifiability becomes impossible. While Gardner's approach might lead to new ways of looking at the Book of Mormon, it cannot compensate for the fact that the Book of Mormon has made no significant contributions to our understanding of Mesoamerican history.

If questions about historical and literary anachronisms can't be asked, how can the apologists' theories be tested? If anachronisms and lack of evidence are not considered counter-evidence, what is? Isn't there a point at which resistance becomes unreasonable and irrational? While certain types of evidence are easier to resist than others, it is not at all inconceivable that hard evidence, such as a stele with several Book of Mormon names in a meaningful context, could create a climate in which resistance to Book of Mormon historicity would become increasingly irrational.

What is true about paradigm verification should also apply to falsification. Granted that a paradigm cannot be falsified in absolute terms because, in philosopher of science Ian Barbour's words, "any particular hypothesis can be maintained by rejecting or adjusting other auxiliary hypotheses."²⁰ Still, there is a point at which resistance becomes irrational and excuses wear thin. On this matter, philosophers Theodore Schick, Jr., and Lewis Vaughn have observed:

Although no amount of evidence logically compels us to reject a hypothesis, maintaining a hypothesis in the face of adverse evidence can be manifestly unreasonable. So even if we cannot conclusively say

that a hypothesis is false, we can often conclusively say that it's unreasonable.²¹

Even Barbour, who does not summarily dismiss the legitimacy of religious paradigms, acknowledges that "an accumulation of anomalies, or of *ad hoc* modifications having no independent experimental or theoretical basis, cannot be tolerated indefinitely."²²

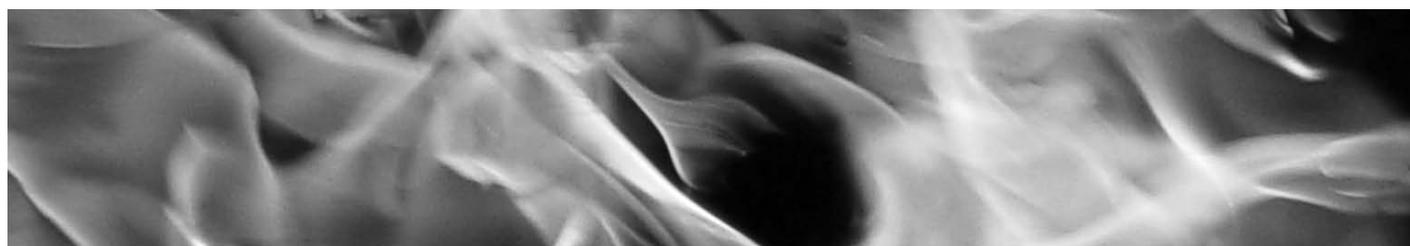
Given the difficulties of proving a negative, critics will never be able to prove the Nephites did not exist. What critics can do is demonstrate that the assertion is unsupported, perhaps even unreasonable and unscientific.

RESISTING PARADIGM SHIFT

AT several points in the foregoing, mention has been made of the term "*ad hoc*," as in "*ad hoc* rationalizations" and "*ad hoc* modifications." What characterizes something as an *ad hoc* hypothesis? According to Schick and Vaughn, it "is that it can't be verified independently of the phenomenon it's supposed to explain."²³ In other words, it is untestable and unfalsifiable. Additionally, beyond protecting a central hypothesis from negative evidence, an *ad hoc* hypothesis "has no other explanatory power, that is, no other testable consequences,"²⁴ or as Barbour said, "no independent experimental or theoretical basis."²⁵ A closer look at recent hypotheses employed by Book of Mormon apologists will show that they are not simple adjustments to theories to account for new data, but are in fact *ad hoc* rationalizations to explain counter-evidence and anomalies.

Limited Geography. In his article, "On Wagging the Dog," in the May 2004 issue of SUNSTONE, Kevin Christensen states that his "preference for the Sorenson model [of a lim-

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ited geography] simply says that I appreciate the problems that it solves, and I expect that further solutions and refinements will be forthcoming.²⁶ This statement is based on Kuhn's argument that "a theory must seem better than its competitors, but it need not, and in fact, it never does, explain all the facts with which it may be confronted."²⁷ But things are not as simple as Christensen makes them sound.

That a limited geography model seems to solve distance problems the Book of Mormon presents when viewed in traditional hemispheric terms is no justification for ignoring the model's serious flaws, namely, its uncomfortable fit with various Book of Mormon passages.²⁸ But no matter how long one waits, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec will never fit the Book of Mormon's description of a "small neck of land."²⁹ Christensen sidesteps problems such as this by simply asserting: "No single element of a detailed correlation is more fundamental than the overall conception that a correlation can be found."³⁰ But an anomaly is an anomaly, and as Barbour said, "an accumulation of anomalies cannot be ignored indefinitely."³¹

Whether or not Christensen sees Sorenson's notion of limited geography as a Kuhnian "paradigm shift," it is doubtful that Kuhn would agree. Sorenson is attempting to replace a paradigm that makes fewer assumptions with one that requires more. Traditional hemispheric geography fits comfortably with the Book of Mormon account with only one flaw—it's not realistic. On the other hand, the limited geography is deemed more realistic but requires specialized and tortuous interpretations to maintain. Chief among the untestable hypotheses is Sorenson's attempt to tilt the Mesoamerican map by "45 degrees or more" to the west, so

that Nephite north corresponds to present northwest. Otherwise the Gulf of Mexico and Pacific Ocean are north and south, instead of east and west as required by the Book of Mormon (e.g., Alma 22:32; 50:34). Such explanations have no explanatory power or testable consequences apart from making Sorenson's model work.³²

In this sense, the limited geography is not a new paradigm but is an *ad hoc* hypothesis that apologists invented to maintain for a while longer the old and crumbling paradigm of Book of Mormon historicity. For this reason, Kuhn would probably categorize both Christensen and Sorenson with the "hold-outs" who resist paradigm shift. Indeed, Kuhn's description of those "hold-outs" seems especially applicable to the new geographers: "The source of resistance is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides."³³

DNA Evidence. Apologetic responses to recent DNA evidence are also *ad hoc* rationalizations. For example, Michael Whiting, director of Brigham Young University's DNA Sequencing Center, admits that a "local colonization hypothesis," one in which Lehi's colony plays a minor and insignificant role in Mesoamerican history, "makes no specific predictions that can be refuted or corroborated."³⁴ Not only does such an explanation have no explanatory power or testable consequences apart from salvaging a belief in Book of Mormon historicity, but it begs the question since it assumes what it attempts to prove, namely, that the Nephites occupied a small geographic region and played a minor role in Mesoamerican history. But, as Brent Metcalfe has discussed, without clear refer-

ence in the Book of Mormon to what would amount to a dominant non-Israelite population in Mesoamerica, apologists strain to escape conflicting passages and try to find support for this local colonization hypothesis in vaguely worded passages.³⁵ The minor subcultural role apologists wish to assign to the Nephites is exactly the opposite of what is described in the Book of Mormon.

GOING BETWEEN THE HORNS

IS it wise for Mormons to put all their spiritual eggs into the historicity basket? If anomalies such as travel distances and population sizes have caused apologists to change to positions their predecessors never imagined, could it happen again? If apologists find anomalies too difficult to overcome and discover themselves in a paradigmatic crisis, is the only alternative to abandon faith? I think not. As Barbour points out:

Tradition is dynamic and developing, not an unchanging legacy from the past. Like a living organism, it is historically continuous and yet always growing. A community can understand its exemplars and its historic origins in new ways and can adapt to new circumstances and new problems.³⁶

Hence, I must ask: Is a "Book of Mormon as inspired fiction" paradigm out of the question?

To some apologists, Joseph Smith cannot be a true prophet if the Book of Mormon is not real history, for God and prophets do not engage in deception. Hamblin emphatically states:

The issue is: if the Book of Mormon is fiction, then Joseph Smith could not be a true prophet, a point tac-

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itly accepted by most of those who reject historicity, since all of their accounts include serious equivocation or redefinition of the key concepts revelation, inspiration, and prophet.³⁷

I do not accept Hamblin's either/or dichotomy. Although it presently fuels disagreement over Book of Mormon historicity, Hamblin's dichotomy is false because there is a third and viable alternative: the Book of Mormon as inspired fiction. Ultimately, Hamblin's argument rests on a question-begging definition of "prophet."

Scholars cannot answer questions such as: "Was Joseph Smith a true prophet?" and "Is the Book of Mormon inspired?" The truth claims of a religion are beyond the scope of scholarship, but the historical status of the Book of Mormon is another matter. Historians are free to conclude the Book of Mormon is not historical and, consequently, to revise Joseph Smith's biography. Despite Hamblin's insistence on ontological or metaphysical definitions, a more fruitful and relevant line of questioning for scholars would be: What was Joseph Smith's definition of prophet? Did he believe God sometimes inspires deception? What was his definition of inspiration? And finally, is a non-historical Book of Mormon consistent with Joseph Smith's definition of prophet and inspiration? I believe the answer to this last question is yes.³⁸

When Moroni exhorts readers to "ask God . . . if these things are not true" and promises that "he will manifest the truth of it unto you" (Moroni 10:4), the text points to a specific kind of truth. Previously, Moroni represented God as saying: "Because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good. And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good" (Ether 4:11–12). Similarly, Mormon

said: "I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God" (Moroni 7:16). In other words, since all good comes from God, and the Book of Mormon tries to persuade humankind to be righteous and believe in Christ, it is consistent with this line of reasoning that the Book of Mormon is true and inspired independent of whether, in the final analysis, it is considered historical.

This concept of inspiration ties in well with Joseph Smith's self-perception as a prophet. In a letter published in the *Elders' Journal* in July 1838, Joseph Smith responded to the question: "Do you believe Joseph Smith, Jr., to be a prophet?" His answer was: "Yes, and every other man who has the testimony of Jesus. 'For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' Rev. 19:10."³⁹ This definition also appears in Alma: "And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church . . . according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins. . ." (Alma 6:8). And on the Book of Mormon title page: "Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation."

To return to Hamblin's definition, I hypothesize that Joseph Smith sincerely believed himself to be an inspired prophet—but not in the way that he encouraged his followers to believe. Why is it impossible to believe that a prophet would engage in deception? It's certainly not without biblical precedent: Abraham and Isaac both lied about the marital status of their wives (Genesis 12:11–13; 20:13; 26:7); Abraham lied to Isaac about the true object of the sacrifice they were preparing (Genesis 22:7–8); Jacob deceived Isaac to obtain the firstborn's blessing owed to Esau (Genesis

27); Moses lied to Pharaoh (Exodus 3:18); one prophet lied to another (1 Kings 13); and Jehu pretended to worship Baal (2 Kings 10).

Unlike Hamblin, Christensen calls the inspired fiction model (which he labels the "mythic approach")⁴⁰ to Book of Mormon historicity "valid," but regards it as "suicidal" for the "faith community" and predicts that its adoption would cause the community of believers to "fall apart." Similar predictions were once given by the orthodox who felt threatened by Galileo and Copernicus—and by fundamentalists today who fear Darwinism. I believe Christensen underestimates the resiliency of faith and the hazards of becoming an anachronism to future generations of Mormons who will no doubt tire of holding to the untenable scientific and historical positions of their ancestors. ☞

NOTES

1. See William J. Hamblin, "There Really Is a God, and He Dwells in the Temporal Parietal Lobe of Joseph Smith's Brain," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 81.

2. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

3. *Ibid.*, 157–58.

4. *Ibid.*, 175.

5. Steven Weinberg, *Facing Up: Science and Its Cultural Adversaries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 198–99, 204–05.

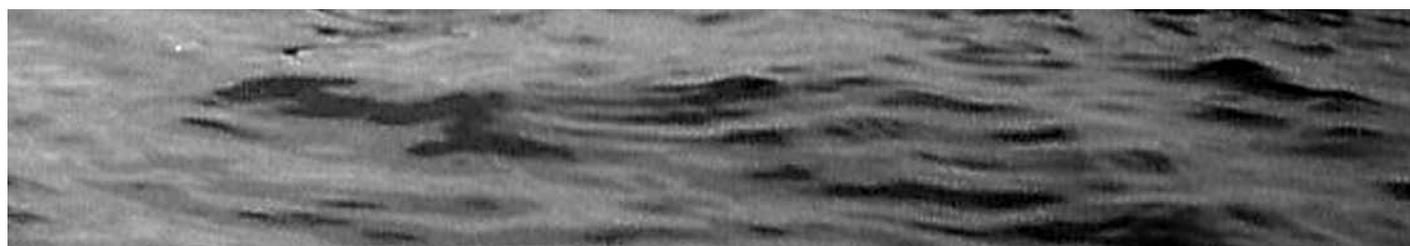
6. Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 107; Larry Laudan, *Beyond Positivism and Relativism: Theory, Method, and Evidence* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 22.

7. Weinberg, 193.

8. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 75, summarizing the observations of Tim Maudlin, "Kuhn Defanged: Incommensurability and Theory-Choice," translated by Jean-Pierre Deschepper and Michel Ghins in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 94 (1966): 428–46.

9. For examples, see Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), esp. 28, 97, 215; William

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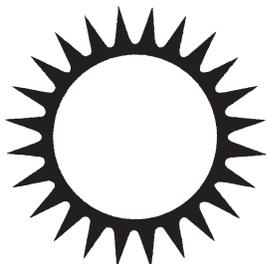


A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), esp. 119, 216.

10. See Michael Shermer, *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, and Other Confusions of Our Time*, 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 311–12.

11. Kuhn, 186.

12. The following is a sample of essays in which Kevin Christensen draws on Kuhn for apologetic purposes:



SPRING COMES TO THE MING TOMBS

The persimmons are gone,
those soft suns with
astringent skins and sweet
slippery meat that held
summer past first frost.

The trees are still bare,
though sparrows and finches—
singers of early green—
keep chorus there.

Along the road
peasants sell Chinese pears,
sallow skinned from cellars
dark as tombs.

Beyond the vermilion walls
acacias scatter buds,
and the forsythia blossoms
in tiny yellow butterflies.

Here where royalty once rode
in golden coaches, stone
horses and elephants keep vigil.

In their winter caves
the emperors and empresses
sleep on.

—ROBERT REES

Review of Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), in *FARMS Review* 2, no. 1 (1990): 214–57; “Paradigms Crossed,” *FARMS Review* 7, no. 2 (1995): 144–218; “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies,” *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001); Kevin Christensen, “Truth and Method: Reflections on Dan Vogel’s Approach to the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review* 16, no. 1 (2004): 287–354.

13. Christensen, “Truth and Method,” 298.

14. See Deanne G. Matheny, “Does the Shoe Fit? A Critique of the Limited Tehuantepec Geography,” in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent D. Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 269–328; and John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo: FARMS, 1985).

15. Christensen, “Paradigms Crossed,” 172.

16. Responding to my criticism that his amalgam of faith and science goes beyond Kuhn’s intentions, Christensen argued that philosopher of science Ian G. Barbour “supplies the theoretical justification that I use to apply Kuhn’s model to religion” (Christensen, “Paradigms Crossed,” 294; Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms*). However, Barbour did not advocate a mixing of science and religion but was comparing similar features of different paradigms. Indeed, he was clear about keeping science and religion separate: “There can be complementary models within a paradigm, but paradigms are evidently not complementary; a person can fully share the outlook of only one tradition at a time” (147). And he insisted that the notion of complementarity “cannot be used to avoid dealing with inconsistencies” (77). This means that when examining Book of Mormon historicity, one cannot resort or retreat to a religious paradigm to escape counter-evidence. I would therefore argue that Christensen needs to keep his paradigms separate, because when he attempts to discuss Book of Mormon historicity, he has tacitly agreed to work within a scientific and scholarly paradigm.

17. Christensen, “Paradigms Crossed,” 172.

18. Sorenson more or less concedes these points when, in his response to Matheny, he argues that despite the lack of evidence for metallurgy in Mesoamerica before about 900 CE, there is no absolute guarantee that scholars are correct on this matter, and he questions what is meant by “steel.” See John Sorenson, “Viva Zapato! Hurray for the Shoe!” *FARMS Review* 6, no. 1 (1994): 319–28. In another instance, Sorenson argues that “Joseph Smith may not have translated every term ‘correctly,’” and tries to replace “horse” with “deer” (*Ibid.*, 344–48). In yet another, he argues that it is false to assume that the seeds brought by the Jaredites and Lehiters “flourished” in the new environment, questions the meaning of “wheat” and “barley,” and tries to substitute “amaranth” and “corn” (*Ibid.*, 335–42). In another instance, Sorenson suggests that a link has not been made between Mesoamerican writing systems and Hebrew and Egyptian, because “nobody has made a serious attempt to demonstrate any link” (*Ibid.*, 358). Elsewhere, Sorenson concedes that the major civilizations of Central America are of Asiatic origin predating the arrival of the Lehiters, and speculates that the Book of Mormon is not a national history but rather an account of a specific “lineage” that lived among Asiatic populations (Sorenson, *An Ancient*

American Setting, 50–56).

19. Kevin Christensen, “On Wagging the Dog,” *SUNSTONE*, May 2004, 9; also Christensen, “Truth and Method,” 309.

20. Barbour, 99.

21. Theodore Schick, Jr., and Lewis Vaughn, *How to Think about Weird Things: Critical Thinking for a New Age* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1999), 156–57.

22. Barbour, 114.

23. Schick and Vaughn, 157.

24. Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), 453.

25. Barbour, 114.

26. Christensen, “On Wagging the Dog,” 9.

27. Kuhn, 17–18.

28. See, for instance, Earl M. Wunderli, “Critique of a Limited Geography for Book of Mormon Events,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35 (Fall 2002): 161–97. Brant Gardner’s response to Wunderli’s critique, in my opinion, is simply more of the same convoluted and question-begging interpretations. See Brant Gardner, “An Exploration in Critical Methodology: Critiquing a Critique,” *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004): 173–223.

29. See Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, eds., *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), ix–xiii.

30. Christensen, “Truth and Method,” 317.

31. Barbour, 9.

32. On orientation, see Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting*, 39–42. Sorenson admits his limited geography model is only “plausible” and that it can’t be “scientifically tested” (xviii–xx).

33. Kuhn, 152, 159.

34. Michael Whiting, “DNA and the Book of Mormon: A Phylogenetic Perspective,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 31. Nevertheless, this does not stop him from postulating the loss of Israelite DNA through the “founder effect,” which according to molecular geneticist Rich Deem “would require the simultaneous mutation of at least 5 polymorphic Alu insertions in Lehi’s sons and wives.” Deem contends this theory is not only untestable, it’s “scientifically ludicrous.” Deem’s statements are found in Thomas W. Murphy, “Simply Implausible: DNA and a Mesoamerican Setting for the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36 (Winter 2003): 120n41.

35. Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Reinventing Lamanite Identity,” *SUNSTONE*, March 2004, 20–25. John Tvedtnes attempts a partial response to Metcalfe but, in my opinion, resorts to more convoluted and strained interpretation. See John A. Tvedtnes, “Reinventing the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004): 91–106.

36. Barbour, 149.

37. Hamblin, 81.

38. I have explored these questions in “The Prophet Puzzle’ Revisited,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31 (Fall 1998): 125–40, reprinted in *The Prophet Puzzle*, ed. Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 49–67; and in Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).

39. *Elders’ Journal* 1 (July 1838): 43; cf. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948), 3:28; see also 3:389.

40. Christensen, “On Wagging the Dog,” 9.

