

Theodore Schroeder



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Book of Mormon

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AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Psychologic Tests of W. F. Prince
Critically Reviewed

BY
THEODORE SCHROEDER

14 West 12th Street
New York City

To which is now added a bibliography of
Schroeder on Mormonism

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“AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF MORMON”

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The above title is given by Walter F. Prince to an essay published in the *American Journal of Psychology* for July, 1917, vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 373-389. The first paragraph suggests some assurance that his essay is going to be “the application of rigorous psychological tests” to determine the authorship of the Book of Mormon. I judge that Mr. Prince conceives himself to be using the methods of the analytic psychologists. His conclusion is that “prolonged analysis and comparison *** make it incredible that Spaulding had any connection with the book, doubtful that Rigdon was implicated, certain that Joseph Smith’s hand is perceptible in every part, and probable that he was the sole author, the edifice of whose imagination echoed to reminiscences which he was far from recognizing.” Also that “all the assignable data point to him [Joseph Smith] and *him alone* as the author.” This conclusion he says, “is maintained by a few scholars [himself and I. Woodbridge Riley. Any one else?] mostly within the last 15 years.”

I am of a contrary opinion, even after reading Mr. Riley as well as Mr. Prince’s “rigorous psychologic tests.” I believe that the main features of the literary plot for the Book of Mormon and many of the names of its characters and places were supplied by the Rev. Solomon Spaulding. That this was revised, mostly by Rev. Sidney Rigdon. It was again rewritten or revised between Sept. 22, 1827, and June 11, 1829. This last revision was a collaboration, I believe, of Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdry, and perhaps Emma Smith, Hyrum Smith and Joseph Smith. In this work I believe the Smiths were the least potent factors. The historical evidences by which I justify these conclusions have been published and will not be repeated.¹ In short I conceive Joseph Smith to have been an ignorant conscious fraud, at first a mere tool used by more cunning schemers.

Here I desire to discuss only the intellectual processes in-

¹ See: Origin of the Book of Mormon, in Amer. Historical Magazine, Sept., 1906, to May, 1907; Republished in Salt Lake Tribune, three Sunday issues in Nov. and Dec., 1907; Also in pamphlet form. Additional corroborative matter can be found scattered through my other essays on Mormonism.

volved in Dr. Prince's "rigorous psychologic tests." To me they seem not at all rigorous nor a valid test of anything, and not even an important contribution to any problem except perhaps to the psychology of Dr. Prince. From my viewpoint it appears that Dr. Prince is exhibiting in marked degree such defective psychologic processes as I have on rare occasions observed in some Freudians. By dealing so constantly with those archaic modes of thinking which dominate hysterical patients and primitive peoples some analysts, like the victims of archaic mental processes, tend to lose sight of the fact that there are intellectual methods different from those of the average adolescents or even of average human adults. Psychoanalysts become very expert in unraveling and consciously imitating the archaic mental processes of their patients. If not clearly conscious of the difference between archaic and mature modern intellectual processes, then analytic psychologists tend to become so obsessed with this unique skill of theirs that they forget to lay it aside for the use of more scientific procedure when dealing with problems other than the immediate therapeutic measures. Thus they sometimes tend to become the victims of their own subconscious love of conscious archaic modes of thinking and in consequence they misapply it. This I conceive to be the immediate cause of the evident fallacies of Dr. Prince.

Assume, if you please, that some psychologist obsessed by an emotional conflict over masonry, or other secret societies, had undertaken "the application of rigorous psychological tests" to the problem of the authorship of the Book of Mormon. In all probability his tests would have failed in their rigor. Finding that the content of the Book of Mormon had quite certainly been influenced by the Masonic conflicts of the time, his own compulsive archaic mode of reacting would tend to play him a trick according to well known hysterical procedure. That is to say: his unconscious compulsion toward archaic modes of thinking in relation to secret societies would probably compel him to project his own complex into Smith, only to rediscover it where he had placed it. Then it would compel him to justify his "discovery" by a special plea based upon specially selected material accompanied by the ignoring of all evidence which tends to contradict his obsession. Thus he would prove to his own satisfaction and that of others similarly obsessed, that Smith was dominated as he himself is being unconsciously controlled. But how does this hypothetical procedure differ in its visible factors from Dr. Walter Prince's application of rigorous psychologic tests? We shall see that there is no difference.

Let us now assume another type of psychologist, one who has no subconsciously working obsessions to read into the situation; one who uses mature intellectual methods instead of the archaic ones. How would such a person proceed with "the application of rigorous psychologic tests" to this problem. First he would do a little reading to discover all the historic factors of the problem. Among the seven persons who might possibly have contributed to the contents of the Book of Mormon, he would never arbitrarily choose one as its author, and then justify his choice by a pettifogging special plea. On the contrary his "rigorous psychologic tests" would have been applied with equal rigor to *all possible authors* to discover with whom rests the preponderance of evidence. This would be a better means of determining the choice between the possible authors instead of using mystical psychologic procedure to justify a choice, perhaps determined by unconscious subjective conditions, existing in the psychologist.

It seems to me that Dr. W. F. Prince weaves a large fabric of theory, using as his woof partially selected material from the Book of Mormon, and as his warp a succession of assumptions, for which we find an adequate explanation only in the psychoanalytic study of Dr. Prince himself.

His argument is constructed mainly from the selection of names appearing in the Book of Mormon. These he finds possessed of certain clang associations, largely with anti-masonry and Morgan. His assumption is that Smith is the coiner of these names. The historic evidence is that some of the names in the Book of Mormon were coined by Spaulding. Upon this and other evidence the claim of Smith's plagiarism from Spaulding is founded. Manifestly it is therefore absurd to think that this plagiarism can be disapproved by psychologic tests which assume the very thing to be proven, namely: that the Book of Mormon names *are* of Smith's coinage.

Dr. Walter F. Prince appears to assume without one particle of evidence, except that in the absence of thorough investigation it might possibly seem to have been so, that a Masonry-Morgan "ruling complex" existed in the author of the Book of Mormon and that clang association is the only mental process by which it could be made effective, and that among the seven possible collaborators Smith only was afflicted with such an obsession.

A person with different predisposition might have found some evidence that Smith went into the Mormon scheme purely from a desire to get a little easy money. A person eager to justify such a theory by "rigorous psychologic tests" might not choose the Masonic-Morgan complex to explain the

frequency of the name Mormon and numerous others of the similar component sounds. From the money-complex point of view it might look like MORE MONEY. It seems just as likely that this explains the fact that out of the forty names beginning with M, 25 begin with Mor. If one is going to solve this problem by one's own archaic modes of thinking, and thus read oneself into the situation, it is perhaps possible to find several plausible explanations for the choice of the names selected by Dr. Prince. If the explanations to which we are predisposed cannot be proven from the names of the book probably they can be found in its other factors. Perhaps among these one might consider of much significance the choice of numerous Bible quotations which are incorporated in the Book of Mormon.

One who is more zealous as to the use of the scientific method would not *assume* without discussion that the secret society contents of the Book of Mormon were due to *unconscious* processes. It is certainly possible that Smith and his co-conspirators very consciously, and on a thorough consideration of the objective factors of their problem, decided that an anti-secret-society attitude would add to the book's popularity and to the financial returns of their fraud. It requires evidentiary facts, and not mere assumption to destroy that possible explanation for the anti-Masonic references in the Book of Mormon.

One who is more rigorous than Dr. Prince in his psychologic tests and yet had no broader aim than by psychologic methods merely to determine how much evidence could be found to support the claim of Smith's authorship of the Book of Mormon would proceed very differently. Such a person might begin with a study of Doctrine and Covenants, a volume of "revelations" for which Smith frankly assumed responsibility and where no question of plagiarism is involved, and which has much internal evidence of being dominated at least in thought by Smith's personal conscious motives. From this volume one could probably learn something of Smith's complexes. There one could find evidence also to support the theory of a dominant money-complex. Then his authorship of the Book of Mormon might to some extent be tested out, by seeing if these dominant complexes otherwise discovered to exist in him, find equal predominance in the contents of the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Prince reverses this procedure. He finds in the Book of Mormon much that evidently reflects the Masonic controversy of the time. He assumes that this must be the product of the unconscious processes of the author's complexes. Then

he assumes that Joseph Smith is the author. Next he argues that therefore, Smith must be obsessed by an anti-Masonry complex. Finally he manufactures history to acquire a seeming confirmation to his theory.

Dr. Prince admits that in the large volume of Smith's "revelations" he finds only three circumstances to support his theory of a dominant obsession revealed by clang associations. Instead of allowing this to create a doubt as to the correctness of his theory he invents an explanation without evidence when he says it is so, "probably because the 'psychic censor' having the models so closely at hand took alarm and rejected similar sound combinations." In other words, when the Book of Mormon was finished, Smith's "obsession" suddenly and permanently disappears without any other explanation, and Joseph Smith himself became a mason, in spite of this anti-masonic obsession. Not long after its organization the Mormon church as a whole became a secret society and later was admittedly a "bastard masonry." At the time of writing the Book of Mormon,² Hyrum Smith a brother and co-conspirator of Joseph Smith was already a mason, as also were Heber Kimball and others of the neighborhood who became leading Mormons. It requires more evidence than Dr. Prince has produced to prove that Joseph Smith had an anti-masonic obsession, working subconsciously.

But let us examine the one evidence of anti-masonic obsession which is adduced by Dr. Prince as being operative after 1829. He says that "the one Morgan-Anti-Masonic complex *** in after years subconsciously influenced Joseph Smith to call his fiscal institution on the wild cat bills which it issued an 'Anti-Banking Company.'" But is it true? Again we have mere assumption both as to the nature of the complex and of the subconsciousness of the determinant of this choice.

The fact is that Smith had organized the "Kirtland Safety Society" without well defined purpose in its articles of agreement. Under this charter he attempted to do a banking business and issued "wild cat" notes in the usual form as emanating from a Kirtland Safety Society Bank. This, I suspect, was done in violation of the banking laws of the State and Smith became apprehensive of arrest. In this situation Smith's problem was one of evading the banking laws without seriously lowering the efficiency of his fraud. Smith solved his problem in this fashion. The company was reorganized under the title of "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company" whose articles of agreement did not specifically authorize the doing of banking business. The capital stock was fixed at

² Masonic Standard. April 7, Sept. 1, 1906; also: Salt Lake Tribune, June 24, 1917.

“not less than” \$4,000,000 and the articles of association authorized the officers to do unlimited borrowing. The bank notes already existing were again run through a printing press and the prefix “anti” and the suffix “ing” and “Company” were printed before and after the word “Bank.” It was doubtless believed that this would furnish a sufficient technical legal defence against a charge of falsely and fraudulently pretending to conduct a bank in conformity with the modest safe-guards of the banking statutes. At the same time the prefix “anti” and the other additions were printed in such small type relative to the word “Bank,” that careless observers would still be effectively deceived, and yet perhaps the penalties of the law would be technically evaded. In the light of the facts objective to Smith, what need or excuse is there for assuming without even the least evidence that this use of the prefix “anti” was “subconsciously influenced” by a dominant “Morgan-Anti-Masonic complex?” Is Dr. Prince again revealing the subconscious influence of his own anti-secret society complex?

Why should one assume that Smith more than Rigdon or Cowdry had read and been influenced by anti-masonry literature when that is the very issue to be decided by “rigorous psychologic tests?” Rigdon, Pratt and Cowdry at least could read and write. Smith was so illiterate that he could not even write his own manuscripts. Oliver Cowdry was his chief but not his only amanuensis.

Again Dr. Prince says truly that the author of the Book of Mormon “was familiar with some book giving a meagre account of the first voyage to America.” Why familiar with only “meagre account?” Spaulding we are informed had a considerable knowledge of fact and speculation in relation to this subject. Why assume that such knowledge influenced the illiterate Smith and that such knowledge did not come through Spaulding, the Amherst graduate?

Only for the sake of the argument, let us assume with Dr. Prince that the name Olihah in the Book of Mormon could not possibly have had any other origin than as a subconscious variation of Oliver. Yet why also assume without evidence that Smith and not his scribe and fellow conspirator Oliver Cowdry is responsible for the choice?

Again let me assume without evidence as does Dr. Prince that the word “tahhanes” in the Book of Mormon could have no other origin than as a subconscious variation of “tannery.” How does this prove that Smith had a tannery complex? I remember no evidence that Smith ever saw a tannery. I do know of evidence that Sidney Rigdon worked in a tannery. This would tend to confirm my theory as to Rigdon’s revision

of Spaulding's manuscript, rather than to prove Smith's authorship.

Dr. Prince makes much of names in his argument. Thus true to his own psychologic predisposition he cannot allow any other origin for the name Maroni except that same old anti-masonry-Morgan complex. In the light of the historical evidence of the plagiarism of the Book of Mormon from Spaulding's "Manuscript Found" another possible explanation suggests itself. Spaulding was a clergyman with two degrees from Amherst College. He must have known something of history and Latin and the use of reference books. If such a person had been seeking for the names of persons which were to be used in fiction as emigrants to prehistoric America he might have easily found and appropriated the name "Morone or Moroni" from the Italian where it distinguishes several prominent citizens. One of the persons who made the name of Moroni famous was a Romanist cardinal who suffered imprisonment for heresy under Pope Paul IV. It is quite possible that Spaulding, the heretical backsliding clergyman found something attractive in the life of Cardinal Morone or Moroni, and that this induced him to select that name for some of the characters of his story, and particularly as the name of an angel who showed where the ancient record of Mormon was buried, on the basis of which Spaulding thought (according to preserved evidence) to establish a new religion, to show the absurdity of all religions. Of course I do not know that this is the true explanation of the use of that name. But I will say that in the light of the historic evidence of Spaulding's contribution to the contents of the Book of Mormon this seems to me a better supported explanation than that Smith coined the name in consequence of a subconscious Morgan-Anti-Masonic complex. Other names in the Book of Mormon can be similarly explained. Furthermore it seems to me that the special character of the variations used in similar Mormon names find at least plausible explanation in Spaulding's study of Latin. That I must not discuss at this time.

I believe that even this brief criticism of Dr. Prince's "application of rigorous psychologic tests" to the problem of authorship of the Book of Mormon shows his method to be so defective as to leave his conclusions wholly valueless. He reasons around in a circle, in a fine mystical or archaic fashion. Perhaps he should secure the services of a psychoanalyst for his self understanding before he attempts to use psychology as a tool to explain others. Then he will not be tempted to construct special pleas in support of personal whims.

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Associated Press dispatch written by Theodore Schroeder during the hearings for the exclusion of Elder B. H. Roberts from the House of Representatives. Signed A. T. Schroeder and several others. Also published in the Kinsman (Salt Lake City, Utah) for Dec. 1899, p. 44-47.

Reply to the defense of Mormons and an attack upon the Ministerial Association of Utah. [n. p.] N. Y. 1905. 11p.

Reprinted from the Truth Seeker (N. Y.) 32:802-3; Dec. 23, 1905. The original letter was headed: "Schroeder against Peet;" and defends the Protestant clergy of Utah as less offensive from the secularist viewpoint than the Mormon priesthood. Second ed. of pamphlet has postscript added.

Review of the defense of Roberts and polygamy. Kinsman (Salt Lake City, Utah) n. s. 2 (no. 16) :33-44, Dec. 1899.

This is an answer to an article in the Arena, N. Y. for June, 1899, entitled: "A word for the Mormon," by T. W. Curtis, Mr. Roberts' brother-in-law. Enlarged from: Some facts about Mormonism.

Roberts' defense met by facts. New York Herald, no. 23100:3; Nov. 20, 1899.

Dictated by Theodore Schroeder to Dr. George H. Hepworth who signed the article, and mentioned Schroeder as collaborator in the opening paragraph.

Roberts' gentile support. Lucifer's Lantern (no. 7) :123-6; Sept. 1898.

Contends that the fact that Roberts in his candidacy for member of Congress received non-Mormon support was due to the fact that his opponent, though a monogamist, had been one of the church's blood-atoners.

Reprinted from the Kinsman (Salt Lake City, Utah) n. s. 1:302-4; Aug. 1899.

Sanctified lust. Lucifer's Lantern (Salt Lake City, Utah) (no. 4) :61-5; Feb. 1899.

Deals with alleged divine sanction for polygamy.

Schroeder against Peet on the Mormon question. Truth Seeker, N. Y. 32:802-3; Dec. 23, 1905.

Answered by V. S. Peet, a "jack-Mormon" in the Truth Seeker 33:38; Jan. 20, 1906. This article published in pamphlet form under title: "A reply to the defense of Mormons."

Sex-determinant in Mormon theology; a study in the erotogenesis of religion. Alienist and Neurologist (St. Louis, Mo.) 29:208-22; May, 1908.

This article is abstracted in the Psychoanalytic Review 3:223-30; Apr. 1916, and is translated in Imago (Leipzig u. Wien) April, 1914, but with references omitted and slightly abridged. Repub. abr. in Truth Seeker (N. Y.) July 15, 1916. See: The Mormon's heaven.

Sexuelle Anteil an der Theologie der Mormonen. Imago (Leipzig u. Wien) 3:197-204; April, 1914.

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Special committee to investigate the eligibility of Brigham H. Roberts, of Utah, to a seat in the House of Representatives. (245p. Wash. D. C. 1890.)

In this hearing T. S. appeared as attorney against Mr. Roberts. The book contains the proceedings from day to day, the arguments of Roberts and Schroeder and reports of the committee.

Some facts about Mormonism; a review of the article: "A word for the Mormons," by T. W. Curtis. [This latter had been published in the Arena, June, 1899.] Missionary Review of the World 12 (no. 11) :809-17; Nov. 1899.

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Some facts concerning polygamy. [Salt Lake City, Utah] n. t. p. 24p. 1898.

Reprinted from the Kinsman (Salt Lake City, Utah) May and June, 1898, and: Lucifer's Lantern, no. 1, where it has title: "Polygamy and inspired lies." In Americana 10:608, June 1915, Elder Brigham H. Roberts reports this article as marking the beginning of that "very remarkable arousalment" which resulted in his exclusion from the House of Representatives. This article was answered by Charles Ellis in Deseret [daily] News (Salt Lake City, Utah) June 10, 1898. Deseret Weekly (Salt Lake City, Utah) July 2, 1898. T. S.'s article published in Swedish: Siens Stjärnan, Salt Lake City, Aug. to Nov. 1898. See: Mormonen Månggiftets.

Statement of the Thatcher case. Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City, Utah) Dec. 11, 1896.

Deals with troubles of Moses Thatcher the apostle who was unfrocked for defending his political freedom against ecclesiastical dictation.

Thoughts on the Mormon problem. Lucifer's Lantern (Salt Lake City, Utah) (no. 8):155-79; May, 1900.

Deals with the solution of the Mormon problem and advocates secular educational methods as against missionary and legal methods.

Thoughts suggested by a study of Mormonism. Lucifer's Lantern (Salt Lake City, Utah) (no. 7):127-47; Sept. 1898.

A lecture: First printed as a pamphlet, with title: "Mormonism considered;" later enlarged and published in the Truth Seeker, N. Y. Dec. 17-31, 1894 under title: "Joe Smith, his revelation."

Utah's advanced woman. Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City, Utah) Feb. 24, 1900.

Republished from N. Y. Tribune. no. 19450:7; Feb. 15, 1900. Deals with woman's suffrage in Utah.

Was Joseph Smith, "the prophet," an abortionist? Lucifer's Lantern (Salt Lake City, Utah) (no. 9):184-9. [1900]

An attempt to prove that he was. For publishing this the Mormons vainly attempted to have the author indicted.

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS ON MORMONISM

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Free Public Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, Masonic Collection. Harvard University Library, Cambridge, Mass., Pierce Collection.

New York Public Library, New York, N. Y., Berrian Collection. See: List of works in the library relating to the Mormons. N. Y., 1909.

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lamoni, Iowa. The "Josephite" or non-polygamous branch of Mormons.

Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisc. Schroeder Collection.

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