

By far the best critical study of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith is Leon Brodie's "No Man Knows" by History (1945; Knopf; 465 pp.)

The Mormons already had a very capable defense in the 7 - volume (1902-32) and 6 volume (1930) histories of their church by Brigham H. Roberts.

While such experts as Roberts and Brodie held the field, I preferred not to enter.

But my attention has repeatedly been drawn to a 62 page pamphlet against Brodie by Hugh Nibley called "No, Ma'am, That's Not History" (1946). When Brodie is mentioned to a Mormon, the instant reaction is: "Have you seen Nibley's work? That puts Brodie in her place." Since Nibley is now the last word both literally and figuratively on this subject, I venture to answer him, for he has lowered the plane of discussion to well within my reach.

I regret having to take up this topic, for I admire the prophet Joseph and think his cheerful approach to religion did some good in the world, and my skeptical viewpoint will not show him to best advantage. Nevertheless Mr. Nibley has forced the issue and, for the sake of preserving the integrity of historical method itself, I must answer his tirade.

Before beginning I must warn Mormon readers against confusing this Nibley with Preston Nibley, as they now sometimes do. Preston Nibley is a much more accurate and less explosive writer, author of a pallid full-length biography of the prophet (1944) so tame it doesn't even mention Joseph's plural wives. Hugh is a young Ph. D., barely back from World War II service when he wrote his "No, Ma'am." Hugh is Preston's nephew.

Hugh Nibley on his first page (which he grandly calls page 7) declares

the one rule for a biographer "must be...the law of parsimony," which means using only the simplest explanation for all controversial points. Having started off with that singular assumption, he proceeds: "Erodie takes an awful beating from the law of parsimony." The glib expression "awful beating" shows how confident he is of demolishing Erodie, even before he has presented any evidence.

Next page, Hibley describes Erodie's method: "Joseph Smith was a complete imposter, the New Light teaches, but he meant well. He was just an easy-going rustic with irresponsible ways and an over-active imagination. That takes care of everything." It of course does not take care of everything, for Joseph's native genius and his strong environmental influences both occupy justly large roles in Erodie's analysis. Aside from that, let us remove sarcastic and exaggerated items, to put Hibley's passage into semantically passable English. Thus we get: "Joseph Smith was an imposter, but he meant well. He was an easy-going farm-hand with irresponsible ways and an over-active imagination. That sums up his personality." That's a pretty fair statement of the Erodie portion, and there is much official Mormon evidence to bear it out.

But Hibley is sure "no blundering, dreaming, undisciplined, shallow and opportunistic fakir could have left behind what Joseph Smith did, both in men's hearts and on paper." Hibley is again assuming things. Actually Erodie does not rate Smith as "shallow" nor as often "blundering," and she does credit him with impressive good qualities. A "dreaming, undisciplined nature has been probably more often an asset than a liability to great men. And as to Hibley's key point here: that an "opportunistic fakir" couldn't deeply move mankind; how would Hibley explain Mohamed and many other prophets denied by the Mormons? They got results, yet according to Mormonism they had no genuine help from God.

On his third page Nibley says Erodie considered Joseph as "idiot". The dictionary defines idiot as "simpleton, dolt, blockhead, idiot." Erodie however always describes Joseph as a genius, the exact opposite. Nibley could not be more wrong.

Nibley's second introductory section begins on the next written page (p.11). He tells us Erodie "first makes up her mind about Joseph Smith and then proceeds to accept any and all evidence, from whatever source, that supports her theory." Nibley is mind-reading - something he later scolds Erodie for doing. Also he rules out of court the possibility that Erodie - who after all was raised within the church and had the facts thrust at her at an early age - may have learned the facts first and then concluded Joseph's character would be such as to fit them.

Nibley says Erodie rejects the affidavits of 51 neighbors against Joseph "because their testimony does not suit her idea of the prophet's character." Actually she rejects them - or rather their startling charge that Joseph was "destitute of moral character and addicted to vicious habits" - because no specific details nor outside evidence support that vague charge. Nibley nevertheless finds it inconsistent that Erodie later inclines to accept these same 51 neighbors on another charge. But on this latter charge the evidence is very specific. It concerns the use of a "seer stone" to search for buried gold. Since Joseph's own account mentions his use of a seer stone at a slightly later period, it is highly probable that he was already using one this early, as his neighbors claimed. Erodie points out no more than this probability; her caution here is advisable. Nibley tries to make the charge about the seer stone sound horrendously awful by calling it "the weirdest extravagances of local gossip"; actually in puritanical upstate New York the charge of "vicious habits" - i.e. brothel-going - was far more serious.

On page 12 Hibley becomes very specific. He accuses Erodie of saying "press accounts" whereas, he says, there was only one such "account." If you will look in Erodie however (p.109), you will find there were 2 such accounts; one in Palmyra "Register" for Feb.26,1831, the other in the same journal for June-July 1831. Hibley here reveals himself an appallingly sloppy fact-checker.

Indeed every single time Hibley accuses Erodie of a misstatement, it is he himself who is wrong - with one trivial exception (origin of "Kauvoo"). How anyone can read Hibley's pamphlet and retain any respect for it is a mystery to me. It is a wonderful proof of the power of religious faith to stifle completely the functions of reasoning and of simple, ordinary fact-checking to see who is right. Hibley's extraordinary assertions are simply accepted on faith, by his devout Mormon readers.

Hibley asks why Joseph's enemies didn't plainly accuse him of being a disciple of the charlatan Walters. He says their statement that Walters' "mantle fell upon your Joseph Smith" is "nothing but an extremely non-committal hint and veiled figures of speech." It is a figure of speech but scarcely non-committal. Anyway Erodie's appendix, duly referred to in her text, gives the full evidence and accusations (p.109), and there was no earthly reason why she should include all these specific accusations in the main text. Hibley accuses her of not mentioning them anywhere.

Hibley wonders what is "significant" about the press accounts of Walters' mantle falling on Joseph - beyond that "one scamp was succeeded by another" (well put, Mr. Hibley). What is significant is that Joseph used the precise techniques of Mr. Walters. That in itself would be pretty good circumstantial proof that Joseph learned from Walters. Of course the use of soper stones is nonsense, whether Joseph learned it from Walters' or

thought it up by himself. Joseph admitted this later on. It happens that young Joseph did start as a bit of scamp, and, unlike Mormons today, was a man enough later on to admit it.

Nible (still on p. 12) assures us Brodie accepts or rejects stories about the golden plates according to her own fancy. Regarding the mysteries of their being felt but unseen and then disappearing, he says, "Yes, how do you reconcile them? Here is Brodie's method:

" 'Exactly how Joseph Smith persuaded so many of the reality of the gold plates is neither so important nor so baffling as the effect of this success on Joseph himself.' "

That is a lie.. a bald, blunt, unmitigated lie. The passage he cites is of course no explanation at all. Brodie did give an explanation however, in the very preceding paragraph (p.80):

"Perhaps Joseph built some kind of makeshift deception...."

At the stage of the game Nibley is presumptuous enough to say "honesty and integrity should presumably count for something." Yes, indeed they should,

D.M. Nibley

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Nibley says Brodie, after that passage he cited, drops the questions of the golden plates for good. Of course she does, having explained it in the paragraph he didn't bother to mention. He then goes on to pan her for two more sentences for "side-stepping the issue" - which he himself had side-stopped after she hit it head on. He says "an explanation of those plates ... is not forthcoming from our oracle" - but she had given one, and a very palusible and likely one too. Perhaps he thinks that by repeating a lie 3 times, he can get people to believe it.

One gets the impression that Nibley either read Brodie's book very carelessly or else that he never saw it at all and was merely working-up the notes hastily compiled by someone else. Otherwise his thrice-repeated contention that Brodie has no explanation of the golden plates seems in-

credible. Nibley gives some indications of moderate intelligence (correct grammar, lively style) - but his power of observation here appear appallingly low. Of course he may be a deliberate, systematic liar - that is the conclusion indicated by his own "law of parsimony," which I am courteous enough to discredit.

Nibley on p. 14 ridicules Brodie for her use of "parallels" to discover the source of ideas in Joseph Smith's "Book of Mormon" in an earlier book by Ethan Smith. Nibley doesn't mention that Brodie got the idea of comparing these two books from the great Mormon historian Roberts himself. Brodie gives due credit to Roberts for pointing out this parallelism, and all her samples are taken from Robert's manuscript. Nibley can't criticize Roberts, naturally, because Roberts was the most outstanding historian of Nibley's own church. So he denounces Brodie for using the data that Roberts had collected.

I choose to say more about this. Since Roberts is dead and his manuscript was never published -- and since it is one of the most devastating things ever written against Joseph Smith - I would expect Nibley to deny such a manuscript ever existed, or else to claim it was a forgery. Yet Nibley does neither of these things! This leaves us to infer either that Nibley didn't care to check into its existence (which should have been easy for a person with his good connections within the church) or else that he knew it existed but hoped to distract attention from it.

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Indeed is not Nibley's whole pamphlet merely an attempt to draw a large red herring across the path of Mrs. Brodie's book, so Mormons will not read it and hence not discover such items in it as the reference to Roberts' unpublished manuscript comparing Elder Smith's "Views of the Hebrews" with Joseph Smith's "Book of Mormon"?

Nibley assures us "Oriental literature bristles with parallels to the Book of Mormon that are far more full and striking than anything that

can be found in the West." He does not at this point name a single one of these items of Oriental literature. He is fond of condemning without presenting definite evidence. Later on he does mention one far-fetched parallel from Oriental literature, taken from Al-'l-Ala.

He tries to show Brodie's parallels are far-fetched. He omits the one that obviously are not far-fetched, since he could not possibly hope to refute these. These are describing the American Indians as descended from the millennium; and referring to copper breastplates called Urim and Thummim (like the Bible's ones) in America (Brodie p.47). Having skipped all these decisive parallels, Nibley tackles some of the other ones. He says (p.15) Brodie wrongly claims a parallel between David and a herdsman of the Book of Mormon. He says, the latter killed "with a sword (not a sling)." But I took the trouble to check in the Book of Mormon. There in Alma 17:36 it is related that the herdsman Armon first "did sling stones amongst them; and then, when more foremen came at him, and thus he slew a certain number of them" and then, when more foremen came at him, "swole off their arms with a sword killing only on this time." Nibley doesn't know or read the Book of Mormon very carefully. Well, shucks, it's only the special holy book of the sect to which he happens to belong. His church should be ashamed of such a sloppy exegesis.

Next, Nibley decides the parallel with Noah because the Mayflower and other exploring ships have carried "whatever the personnel will need." But that's a lot less than Noah or the Book of Mormon's Jared carried. Did the Mayflower, the Chinese junk, the Viking ships, etcetera try to carry "every kind of fowl...fish...seed"? No, of course not. But Noah and Jared did. So the parallel is exact.

Nibley says Brodie mentions the atheist in the Book of Mormon to show there were atheists on the US frontier - which Nibley thinks is pretty

obvious. But Brodie doesn't mention the all for that silly reason. She points out this atheist in the Lock of states his case well, and her conclusion is that Joseph Smith had to present both sides of an argument to hold the support of both the devout and the skeptical.

So far I have answered every single point, large or small or even in parenthesis raised by the vaunted Hibley; covering his first "15" (actually 8) pages. Hereafter I pick out points at random.

According to Hibley, Brodie passes up Joseph Smith's presidential campaign speeches in "perfect silence." Far from it. She quotes from them on p.360-1, 362 and 365. This is one of Hibley's obvious lies.

Hibley says (p.45) the Mormon Church has had "no experts on matters of doctrine." This must be news to every other Mormon but himself. James Talmage made a great reputation interpreting Mormon doctrine with the Church's backing. So did Roberts in his earlier years. Celebrated too is Nephi Anderson's book of doctrinal explanation entitled "Added Upon."

Hibley says (p.40-1) Brodie nowhere mentions the precise name of the Mormon Church: "In all her long account...Brodie never once mentions the true name of the church...For if she lets out that church received its long title by revelation in 1838 her pictures...suffers eclipse." However she does tell its origin and shows virtually all the title antedates 1838 - making that particular revelation rather superfluous. One page 147 she tells how at Rigdon's suggestion the name was changed from Church of Christ to Church of Latter-Day Saints. All the revelation did was to combine the two names into Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Hibley says (p.59) Joseph wife Emma was "that apartment with the over-setted rake" described by Brodie. But she was Mormon historian Roberts (1930; II 106-7) gives an account of Emma's name when she heard of

Joseph's revelation that some men should have plural wives:

"Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger." Emma wanted to get hold of the written statement of that revelation, and finally "Emma had so teased, and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy it and she had done so."

She knew him, all right. Emma knew the rakish side of Joseph's nature and didn't like it. Joseph did manage to keep his actual conduct secret from her - excepting in the disgraceful Fanny Alger affair - but I should scarcely say his concealment of his plural marriages is particularly to his credit. The fact is, he simply couldn't stand up to his wife, nor do without her; so he took his extra wives on the sneak. Nibley should have avoided this whole distressing aspect of Joseph's life. There is no way of making it look pretty.

Nibley (p.22-3) derides Brodie for seeming to expect the general public to know of Joseph's childhood vision. But it was Joseph himself who claimed his vision was generally known; as Brodie properly says (p.23 in Brodie). Nibley here is unwittingly contending against his own prophet:

Nibley claims (p.28) Columbus' failure to find various animals brought to America by the Nephites according to the Book of Mormon would be because those species all died out. That seems unlikely, as climatic conditions were excellent for their survival, and animals don't just kill off their own species by the way the Book of Mormon's Jaredite humans were said to have done. I can give Nibley credit for a fairly nice try here, anyway.

Nibley considers it illogical (p.29) to assume an immoral person could found a society notable for moral strength. It is a paradox, yet by no means illogical. The immoral man is especially aware of the nature of
← immortality and eager to keep other free people on his preserves.

There is also the very well known tendency of nations and institutions to

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... especially in sexual morality, as they grew older. I admit Joseph did not in his personal life share this tendency, but his church eventually did.

Hibley takes Brodie to task (p.20) for observing Joseph Smith did not at first try "to displace Jesus Christ" - as though she thought he might later on. But later on Joseph practically did act as though displacing Jesus and boasted "God is my right hand man." So Brodie is simply justified in pointing out the contrast between Joseph's earlier humility and his later sublime confidence scarcely equaled by Jesus.

Hibley makes prolonged and desperate attempts to disprove Brodie's convention that Joseph's thinking developed and changed - though the evidence for development is overwhelming, and it is a slur on Joseph's intelligence to assume his views could remain stationary. A better mode of rebuttal would have been to claim Joseph did develop but that his main changes of view point all resulted from divine revelation.

Hibley (p.37) accuses Brodie of "dealing lightly with the Holy Writings," because she cites Paul's passage on marriage instead of Jesus' similar one. But why should she have to cite both passages, and what is wrong with citing Paul's? It is the clearer of the two, and is the one commonly cited by other people. Hibley says "it is not to Paul but to Jesus to whom the passage is attributed." This is incorrect. The passage is attributed to Paul, as well as to Jesus. Even in discussing the Bible, Hibley has to make a mistake. He is indeed a poor exeget. Theology can do with his bungling services.

Nevertheless his reward for this slovenly job has been a professorship at the leading Mormon college.

Hibley does get in one good kick. He notices (p.33) that Brodie is unable to account for the much-married Joseph's failure to have children by

most of his additional wives. I can only suggest the means - in the well-established jealousy of Mrs. Emma Smith. I can only suggest the means - contraceptives, which Francis Place's agitation had recently made widely known. This, by the way, may account for the absence of polygamy at the start of Mormonism; only after contraceptives were proven to be safe would Joseph dare to start taking extra wives despite the watchful eye of his devoted and possessive first spouse.

Nibley raises two extraordinary points. One is that Brodie doesn't mention Eduard Meyer's book on Mormonism, written in German after one year (1904), spent in Utah, and not available in Utah. Meyer is indeed a famous scholar (somewhat overrated: he certainly made a fool of himself trying to fix the date of Zoroaster), but this seems to be his least-known work. Nibley learned about it in Germany. From p 17 to p.47 Nibley makes frequent use of Meyer. But from him he gets only one really useful point: support for Joseph Smith's claim that the name of his capital, Nauvoo, is derived from a Hebrew word "nava" meaning "beautiful," which Brodie said it not in Hebrew dictionaries. However I easily found "nava" in Gesenius' Hebrew lexicon, in both the 1846 and 1850 editions, here in Salt Lake City. Nibley didn't need to go clear to Germany to prove this point.

Nibley's ace in the hole is his dazzling boast (p.46) for Mormonism that "of all the churches of the world only this one has not found it necessary to readjust any part of its doctrine in the last hundred years." Such a statement presupposes a stupendous knowledge of the recent doctrinal history not only of all Christian but also Buddhist, Moslem, and Hindu churches. If Nibley has such knowledge he is keeping it a deep, dark secret. The only church he specifically cites as having changed is the Catholic - a vast organization with problems far more varied than those of

the little, localized Mormon sect. To be fair he should anyway have contrasted Mormonism's first century with the first century of other churches.

Either way his claim is surely false. To disprove it, one needs only to cite a single church which had not changed. Since the Mormons are merely a sect of Christianity, other sects should count too. I doubt the little Hutterite Church has changed any belief in its whole 400 years. Likewise the Buddhist church of Tibet seems to have been remarkably static in dogma in the century before Wibley wrote. I think of many more possibilities.

Now as to the Mormon church itself - is it unchanged? The revelations which its leaders have continued to receive have at least modified existing doctrine. I refer to the renunciation of polygamy in 1890. Previously, leading Mormons had considered themselves "ordered by God" to take plural wives, in the very teeth of U. S. law; since then, Mormon doctrine has been to submit to the laws of man of the subject of marriage. I insist this is a "readjustment of doctrine." *to bring again to perfect order*

Also on two other important matters Mormon practice or belief have changed in a revolutionary manner - and indeed since these changes there has been little of the original "Mormonism" left. Mormons still believe the Book of Mormon is true history of the past, and believe in a future millennium when Jesus is to reign 1,000 years on Earth. But, for the present, Mormons are conformists, acting very much like everybody else, emphasizing only humdrum virtues as not smoking nor (unlike their prophet) drinking. A more prosaic approach to life could not easily be imagined. Their church lives largely on its splendid momentum from its glorious past. Now, the two points I was going to mention are: sharing of wealth - which was given up in 1881 and theologically explained away by Keshi Anderson's book in 1896; and belief the world would end in 1893 - which Joseph Smith

predicted on two separate occasions and with different Scriptural texts,
plus a revelation as his evidence.

I have now done with Hibley. I want you to read a somewhat superior
Mormon rebuttal to Brodie, try Widtsoe's in "Improvement Era," March 1946.

Testinus Chandler
July 11, 1952

The Controversy Over Joseph Smith - Part II

In addition to Hugh Nibley's informal pamphlet, the Mormon Church made two formal replies to Brodie's book.

The first is a short review in "Improvement Era" March 1946 by Widtsoe. Unlike Nibley, Widtsoe objects to Brodie's tone and calls hers a "venomous book." He says she many times cites passages out of context, and gives one example. His one specific case is well taken. Brodie had quoted Brigham Young saying of Joseph Smith:

"If he acts like a devil, he has brought forth a doctrine that will save us, if we abide by it. He may get drunk every day of his life, sleep with his neighbor's wife every night, run horses and gamble....But the doctrine he has produced will save you and me and the whole world."

It is true that Brodie just before that had defended Joseph against far milder charges, so that she probably didn't mean that quotation to be taken seriously, any more than Brigham Young did. Nevertheless when I read it in her book, I was first confused, and then did take it seriously. She should have pointed out Brigham had not met Joseph at that time and was merely quoting Joseph's enemies.

Except for this one point, Widtsoe's one-page review is notable only for its acid bitterness and elusive vagueness.

The main Mormon reply to Brodie is a long book review in the Church Section of "Deseret News" for May 11, 1946. This came from the Church Historian's Office, but is anonymous.

It begins with a long attack on a local Catholic priest named Lacy, who had praised Brodie's method. In a quite ungrammatical sentence, this anti-Catholic tirade goes clear back to the burning of Joan of Arc, in a slashing assault on Catholicism typical of Joseph Smith - but not of Brigham Young and more recent Mormons.

This whole anonymous review is written in a tone of utmost spleen. Anyone with such wonderful things to say in public, especially in defense of

a powerful organization against a single individual, should, I think, be man enough to sign his name. But vindictive wrath and cowardice go often together.

After much abusive general comment, on Catholics and then on Brodie, Mr. Anonymous does get around to specific points.

Brodie wrongly claimed Joseph's conviction in Chenango County was something "historians have overlooked" (she should have said "Morson historians have overlooked")

Also the court record of that trial doesn't exist. Brodie referred to it in the present tense. Francis Kirham later proved the reviewer right by going to Chenango County and learning it has kept no records back of 1850, publishing his finding in "Improvement Era" March 1947.

The reviewer also repeats the point already made in Widtsoe's review.

By this time Mr. Anon has scored 4 minor points against Brodie. They are minutiae of the most infinitesimal sort, such as any 400-page book is practically certain to contain. And they are all he is going to find.

He keeps on trying, however.

Our anonymous reviewer says Brodie's reason for rejecting Cowdery's statement that Joseph was acquitted in Chenango County is because "Cowdery says the trial occurred before 1827, whereas the trial occurred in 1826", in Anon's words. He is trying to make Brodie say the absurdly obvious and in an irrelevant connection. Actually Brodie was neither absurd nor irrelevant. She said: Cowdery states this trial took place before 1827. It should therefore not be confused with two later trials in the same area, where Joseph actually was acquitted." Her plain inference is that Cowdery's memory failed him because Joseph got tried so many times.

The reviewer says Brodie claimed "Joseph fabricated the whole story about the First Vision, 13 years after." She certainly doubts its early origin, but avoids any such outright assertion and mentions other people's visions during Joseph's youth, as though they might have led him to have some vision at that time. Considering that Joseph dated his first vision right at the age of puberty - a most impressionable time - I am more convinced than Brodie that Joseph did have some vision then. She may be right that he elaborated the details later on.

The reviewer takes Brodie to task for reporting Joseph as saying: "Whenever I see a pretty woman, I have to pray for grace." He says this is third-hand hearsay from Wyl. Brodie admitted as much (p.297). I must say she could have found first-hand statements quite as good. Thus in a letter to Cowdery, Joseph wrote: "I do not, nor never have pretended to be other than a man 'subject to passion'" (Roberts, 1902, p. 10). Similarly the statement in Joseph's 13th Article of Faith that "If anything is lovely, we seek after it" marked a revolution in Christian thinking, away from the grim austerity of Jesus, Paul, and Augustine, and toward the sensual. And Brodie elsewhere quotes part of Joseph's well-known statement: "Adam fell that man might be: and men are that they might have joy" - as beautiful a defence of sexual pleasure as is likely ever to be written.

The reviewer says Brodie "unqualifiedly asserts" that Mrs. Luell was uncertain if Joseph Smith fathered her son. He adds that the assertion "Turns out to rest on the hearsay report of a Mrs. Etta Smith." However Brodie rests her assertion on a good deal more than that: on Mrs. Prescindia Luell's presence near the prophet Joseph and her brief absence

and separation from the church while her son was born (which could have protected Joseph) and her becoming one of his wives later on, plus a revealing photograph of the son, which appears in the book. To say simply that her case rests on hearsay is as honest as to say a chair rests on 1 leg, out of its 4. Even worse in this case, for Brodie expressly rejects basing her case on the hearsay alone: "This statement I regarded with due reserve until I discovered a photograph of the son, Oliver Buell, which showed an unmistakable likeness to the other sons of Joseph, borne by Emma Smith."

The reviewer says Brodie trusted the unreliable Wyl and Etta Smith. We have already seen she does not trust Ettie Smith. We have also seen that her dependence on Wyl is vindicated by a passage from the prophet himself.

The reviewer says "One single, undisputed fact....is refutation sufficient of all the charges of debauchery. Joseph Smith excommunicated, and from the pulpit denounced men, regardless of their station or influence, for adultery." Alas, mister reviewer, you cannot get your toy off the hood that easily. Indeed, how naive can you get! Does accusing your enemies clear yourself? Joseph was all-powerful within his church and accused only his inferiors. So have Stalin and the Catholic Inquisition accused inferiors - without thereby proving any virtue on their own part. Such a code of ethics can lead only to a reign of terror; that, I gather from his tone of writing, would suit the anonymous reviewer just fine.

Furthermore would Joseph Smith consider it "debauchery" to have a child by a woman to whom he considered himself married? Is not the purpose of marriage usually to have children - to fulfill woman's nature rather than to deny it?

It is true Joseph publicly stated over that he was practicing polygamy. But this was to appease a very hostile, conservative non-Mormon public and to keep his own wife in the dark. The reviewer's inference that as Joseph took a consistent stand in public, therefore he must have done so also in private, is absurd - for we know by his own Mormon Church's claim that he had wives in private. If his public statements cannot be trusted about wives, why should they be trusted about children? Also he announced one revelation early in 1831 sanctifying monogamy exclusively and commanding loyalty to the one wife, yet later reported by revelation that he and others were ordered by God to live in polygamy. Consistency was not in his make-up, when he came to desire a change.

Our anonymous reviewer says Brodie makes Joseph see "so clearly...the future findings of science that by 'instinct' he ignores the 'Asiatic theory' of the origin of the American Indians." He is trying to make Brodie look silly. Of course if Joseph had foreseen the future theory, he would be inclined to use it, not ignore it. But Brodie doesn't claim he foresaw it at all. She pointed out Joseph's instinct would let him see that a theory of Indian origin relating to the Bible would have a wide appeal, whereas linking the Indians to Asia (as Columbus had done, amongst others) would be neither convincing nor appealing. And Joseph was sensationally correct. His Hebrew origin for early Americans is the most popular distinctive feature of his religion to this very day.

Unlike Hugh Hibley, the anonymous reviewer doesn't give page references to the passages he cites. This makes it hard for me to find some of them. However I dig them out as fast as I can. His omission of page references serves as an obstructive device like hiding his name. He is a most uncooperative opponent.

He says when Brodie talks of Joseph calling his son "Elizabeth and

stylistic beauty," Joseph was really editing the Bible. But Lewis E. (p. 118) was discussing Joseph's revision of the Bible, in particular some parts inserted by himself. The reviewer is thus wholly wrong here. Like Hugh Nibley he cannot touch the Bible without getting into trouble. The Bible seems to be too much for the current Mormon spokesmen. They would be safer to leave it alone.

The reviewer says: "She ignores, too, the appraisals of non-Mormon writers whose testimonials are...at complete variance with the vituperative enemies." That word "complete" is a joker, for when a non-Mormon became so enthusiastic for the Mormons as to disagree completely with their enemies, he usually joined the sect and so ceased to be a non-Mormon. Anyway the pro-Mormon evidence has been very well compiled by the Mormons themselves, especially by E.H. Roberts. So I don't see much need for her to seek pro-Mormon material in outside writers, unless the reviewer thinks the Mormons have done a sloppy job of gathering their own data. In any event, Brodie did cite M. R. Werner on p. 401 J. G. Bennett in five places, and Quincy in three. All these are non-Mormon writers who disagree completely with the vituperative enemies. Another thorough going error for the anonymous reviewer.

He says Brodie has Joseph influenced by revivals, and yet never attending them. Well, why not? A person can be influenced by something he never saw - the career of Jesus, for instance. Nor can I find any place where Brodie said he didn't attend them. On the contrary, she says on p. 13 he may have attended a revivalistic Shaker dance and on p. 99 that he had seen revivals at Palmyra.

The reviewer scolds Brodie for saying the Old Testament has no words beginning with "v." He says there are several. He has arbitrarily changed Brodie's "names" to "words." Brodie correctly said (p. 73) there

are in the Old Testament no more binding with "V." I said that reviewer should stay away from it. He just insists on getting his fingers burned.

But the Church section of the "Deseret News" is read only by devout Mormons. They can be depended upon to swallow anything that is handed out to them. The devout do not question authority nor investigate into things. They are truly "sheep."

The reviewer thinks Brodie stretched belief by claiming as many as persons could come under a spell like hypnotism that would give them beliefs lasting - even after a lapse - to the end of their lives. I grant that the laps makes the whole story of the famous 8 witnesses for Mormonism look fishy, from any standpoint. But when Mr. Anonymous says: "Never in all history has there been such an exhibition of mass hypnotism," he is presuming to a knowledge of the entire history of hypnosis, which is a rather large order. For an example to disprove his claim I suggest the Bible, where Jesus had not 8 but 11 disciples doubting yet adoring all the way - with even Judas repentant and believing at the end. How the Bible keeps getting in the reviewer's way!

The reviewer says: "Her fidelity to the textual matter of vitriolic anti-Mormon writers, and even manner of expression, is startling." It is indeed surprising how much anti-Mormon material Brodie included. But why did Mr. Anon have to insert that "and even manner of expression"? It isn't even grammatical; a "their" before "manner" could fix that. But the point is, its gist is absolutely wrong anyway. As Hugh Hibley correctly pointed out, Brodie's tone is mild, anything but vitriolic. The Mormons ought to get into a huddle before publishing accounts which so flagrantly contradict each other.

Now that I have discussed all the points of the anonymous reviewer and found him wrong on all but a few trivial ones, I think it is time to quote his

acid generalizations on Erodie, and to let readers decide whether they apply more accurately to her or to the face-baling reviewer himself. quote only part of his preposterously long sentence:

"Lifting excerpts out of their contexts, wrenching sentences out of their setting, picking one sentence out of a page and skipping over two or three pages to pick another out and coupling the two together without regard to what lies between (he gave no instance of this; nor have I found any; Erodie was careful to use the standard "...") to indicate gaps - TC), calling as witnesses the hyperbolic railings of disreputable characters whose self-confessed or known, and by her admitted, corruption and malicious extravagances render them unworthy of credence, accepting as established fact hearsay gossip - hearsay piled on top of hearsay, attributing motives and assigning purposes with all the licence of a novelist and by artful selectivity of episodes and strained correlations of them, bending circumstances, where the exigency of the case requires it, into support of her thesis, even by elliptical quotations, making purported quotations absolutely false."

For a man weak on facts, Mr. Anon is certainly long on generalities.

And look at the words he uses! - hyperbolic, malicious extravagances, exigency, elliptical, purported. His style seems indicated to bewilder and to convince by mere assertion, while tiring the reader so he won't bother to read clear to the end. You won't find droopy passages like that in the books of E. H. Roberts, who was really great Mormon historian.

The punch line at the end of that quotation, as well as much of the rest of it, seems to refer to the one unfairly-lifted passage in Erodie ^{and Mormon writers} detected by Widtsoe. This leads me to suspect Widtsoe may be our anonymous reviewer. Of course it could instead be some else enlarging on Widtsoe's material. If so, he worked himself up to an equal pitch of rage, for the tone and style of the two reviews are very similar - enough so to point the finger of suspicion in Widtsoe's direction. (I have since been told the probable author was the late Bowen.)

Anon does make one broad accusation of great significance. He says Erodie's method would rule out the validity of Christianity as a whole, as

* Erodie found and cited several instances of omission in Roberts's fine work.

well as the Bible. This is commonly known. The common sense method of skeptical evaluation would check over every "revealed" religion there is.

So we see Aton, speaking for the officials of his church, grasping for the support of the other Protestant churches. How unlike the courage of Joseph Smith, who said in his first revelation that all other churches were "all wrong...an abomination"! But there is no Joseph now, and the Mormons, especially the one too timid to sign his name, are glad to snuggle up to friends wherever they can find them.

Tertius Chandler
Sept. 1, 1952.