

Tad Callister  
The Book of Mormon: Man-Made or God-Given

A rough Response to Tad Callisters BYU devotional. My personal opinions are in italics.

### **A personal note**

*I think honest sincerity and pure intention in a search for truth is defined as such: THE INTENTION TO UNDERSTAND RATHER THAN TO JUSTIFY YOURSELF OR YOUR BELIEFS.*

*Does this talk really demonstrate an intention to UNDERSTAND the issues at hand or does it demonstrate the intention to justify and rationalize? This is where honesty comes into play, and the truth can set us free from error. Is it more honest to seek to justify your beliefs, or to seek understanding?*

*Is Tad Callister really being honest with the members of the church in this talk?*

### **Tad Callister:**

-if the book of Mormon is false the church is false.

-the book of Mormon cannot be proven false because its true.

*What about anachronisms, complete lack of archeological evidence, plagiarisms from View of the Hebrews and King James Bible, DNA proof, change in text, racism, impossibility of gold plates being carried physically, doctrinal contradictions, etc. ?*

### **Argument 1: JS wrote the BOM**

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### **Argument 2: Someone Else Wrote it**

-Oliver Cowdery is accused of writing it. A major problem with this is that OC never claimed to have written the book.

*How is this a valid response? Since OC denied having written it, that rules out the possibility that he wrote it? Are you saying it's impossible for a person to lie about something? Is this what your placing the whole weight of this argument upon?*

-He never denied the truthfulness of the book of Mormon.

*This simply is not enough to prove that he didn't write it. The only way to be convinced by this fact is to put an enormous amount of blind trust (or faith) in OC that he isn't lying when an enormous amount of evidence is pointing to the fact that he did have a part in writing it. There easily is a financial motive there, (especially considering his mutual treasure hunting history with the smiths). Would a person involved in a massive fraud really confess to it? Maybe but probably not.*

-Sydney Rigdon wrote it. How could he have written a book that he was converted by? (mocking laughter).

*So its impossible that he could have written it if he said he didn't know about it until later? He couldn't have written it secretly and pretended to be converted by it? I'm not saying he did, I'm just saying its POSSIBLE. Saying it's impossible would be a lie.*

*Though this argument seems less likely than the Oliver Cowdery argument.*

-He said on his deathbed that it was true.

*Again, placing enormous weight on a mans words. He couldn't have been lying or delusional? Especially a man known for his extreme superstition and instability? I'm not saying he did, I'm just saying its POSSIBLE.*

### **Argument 3: The BOM was Plagiarized**

-Spalding Manuscript. Were found and there were no resemblance between the two  
-View of the Hebrews. Critics claim that this is the historical basis of the book of Mormon. Test this theory by comparing the two. BH Roberts listed the possible comparisons between the two books, but then reached this conclusion:

*"I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it."*

shortly before his death, BH Roberts also said:

*"Ethan Smith played no part in the formation of the Book of Mormon."*

-These two books have totally different objectives and writing styles. The BOM principle focus is to testify of Christ. The historical setting is not the focus. The focus of VOH is mainly focused on connecting the Indians with the Hebrews. Structural differences between narrative and series of quotes.

*Very weak response and misdirecting from the main problem. Really the main concern isn't that he copied the View of the Hebrews, but that it was a heavy influence in fabricating the book of Mormon (which is a very real possibility). He seems to be implying that since the VOH and the BOM have these differences that all other points in BH Roberts book "Studies of the Book of Mormon" are invalid.*

*He doesn't mention the very critical fact that the writer of the VOW was a preacher in the town where Oliver lived prior to moving to New York. He fails to mention the critical facts about the cowderys treasure-seeking history with the smiths in Vermont prior to moving to New York. He fails to address the implications that these facts suggest. These are the real issues with the View of the Hebrews, not weather the literary structure is different or the objectives are different.*

*This is where honesty comes into play. Can you really address these very real and serious problems? Or will you misdirect the attention to the less significant issues in order to dismiss the issue altogether?*

*-in the overall argument of Plagiarism he fails to address the blatant copying from the King James Bible in several places in the BOM including almost the entire book of 2 Nephi. He fails to address the possible heavy influence from contemporary Methodist rhetoric of the area. He fails to mention "The Wonders of Nature" and "The Late War"*

### **Argument 4: JS was mentally Ill**

-dementia praecox (schizophrenia).

*I agree this is a very weak argument. He was way to lucid and the BOM is way to coherent for him to have schizophrenia. There is however a very reasonable explanation for JS having some kind of mental/emotional disorder called "Pious Rationalization" or a "Pious Deceiver", meaning he could rationalize dishonest*

behavior as being for the greater good or for Gods will.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4lJaD2fks>

### **Argument 5: JS was a creative Genius**

-“This is circular logic simply because he was illiterate and uneducated. “

*Irrelevant. Look at the definition of Genius: “exceptional intellectual or creative power or other natural ability”. Genius doesn’t have anything to do with formal education, but rather is an indication of natural ability and creativity.*

Critics argue that JS gathered information from as many as 30 books available in the local area. In response to this here are some questions:

-Is there a single reference, just one, in Josephs journal or written correspondence suggesting he might have read or had conversations about any of these sources before translating the Book of Mormon? No

-is there any evidence he visited the libraries where these books are supposedly located? No

-did Emma Smith, who was married to him, ever comment that he referred to any of these books before the Book of Mormon was translated? No

-Is there any record he had any of these books present when he translated the Book of Mormon? No

-This is all pure speculation

*That’s great but what about Oliver Cowdery? Sidney Rigdon? What if JS just read them and kept them to himself? What if he didn’t write about his research in his journal? What if he didn’t tell his wife the complete truth. What if he learned about them by word of mouth? What if he just read some and not all 30 books? Its not just black and white. Its not realistic to assume that these sources either had complete influence or no influence at all. Its not just black and white like saying these points have no argument at all. What we do know is that those books were AVAILABLE to him. The fact that nobody mentioned these books as resources for the Book of Mormon, that he so called “translated”...In what universe is that valid evidence for your case?*

TC says:

“Do the critics expect us to believe that Joseph searched out and studied all these resources on Native American life (*not necessarily ALL the resources, but yes*); inhaled the related conversations on the topic (*why not?*); winnowed out the irrelevant(*why not?*); organized the remainder into an intricate story involving hundreds of characters, numerous locations, and detailed war strategies (*it’s a big task but its POSSIBLE*); and then dictated it with perfect recollection, without any notes whatsoever—no outline, no three-by-five cards, nothing (*your assuming that it was written in this manner*)—a fact acknowledged even among the critics?<sup>30</sup> And during it all, no one remembered him going to these libraries, bringing any such books home, having any conversations concerning this research, or making any diary entries to the same(*why would they mention this?*). Where, I ask you, is the hard evidence?”

*I can’t help but suspect manipulative tactics being used to justify the church and the book of Mormon. His argument is really convincing unless I slow down and actually*

*think about the arguments, and circular logic he is presenting. Omitting critical facts. Prematurely dismissing legitimate problems and building new supportive arguments based on these dismissals. Misdirecting the root problems with by focusing the attention on the surface problems. Ignoring the significant questions with the ones he would rather answer.*

*-Where did he get this doctrine?*

*Uh, he could have made it up using the available resources and his own ingenuity. Are you really claiming that it's impossible for someone to modify existing available doctrine? Have you ever heard of "the great apostasy"?*

### **Conclusion**

*-he doesn't mention that its possible that all of these arguments could ALL be simultaneously true in various degrees. Rather he goes through one by one and isolates them as if each method is an either/or basis of JS fabricating the BOM. For example:*

*He doesn't address the possibility that Joseph Smith could have written it with the help of people like Oliver Cowdery or Sidney Rigdon;*

*AND could have researched sources available to study up on the topic;*

*AND could have been influenced largely by resources like the View of the Hebrews, the King James Bible, and local Methodist preaching's;*

*AND could have had psychological issues such as pious rationalization, family turmoil, and strong beliefs in magic;*

*AND could have utilized his own ingenuity despite his lack of formal education, to use all these resources and people to fabricate a convincing and moving story.*

*The puzzle pieces fit, if you put them together. It appears as though he is attempting to break all the connections between these criticisms in order to rationalize, or even manipulate us into dismissing them. In effect, we then would throw away these crucial puzzle pieces and be left with a mystery that we could have solved.*

*The simple fact is:*

*Joseph Smith COULD have produced the Book of Mormon.*

*I'm not saying that he did, but I am saying it would be a lie to say he couldn't have produced it with the resources, people, and personal ingenuity available to him at that place and time.*

**References**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin\\_of\\_the\\_Book\\_of\\_Mormon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_of_the_Book_of_Mormon)

Wikipedia, though not totally reliable, has a coherent and comprehensive summary of the Origin of the Book of Mormon that can be a starting point in verifying the facts. If you are skeptical of Wikipedia's reliability, which you should be, than you can easily research and confirm the sources for yourself.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4lJJaD2fks>