

Greg Smith Responds to MY Review of His “Review” of *Mormon Stories*

(Revised 3/18/13)

by
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Greg Smith has responded to my review of his review of *Mormon Stories*. His response is dated 3/12/13 and can be found on his personal blog at this link:

<http://seesangelsinthearchitecture.wordpress.com/2013/03/12/rollo-review-introduction>

In his response, Smith admits to some mistakes and agrees to clarify other parts; however, he doesn't appear willing to update his essay with the new developments in Dehlin's life (such as Dehlin's current status in the Church) that, I believe, materially impact a good many of Smith's arguments and conclusions.

I will not reprint Smith's entire response here (it's just too long and is made up of 16 separate posts on his blog). What follows are my observations of his response, organized by his section headings to avoid confusion.

1. “Rollo Review – Introduction”

Smith graciously thanks me for the “constructive feedback” in my review. Smith's one jab in this section is to my use of “hit pieces” to describe the several FARMS essays targeting Grant Palmer. He lists several historians who authored some of the Palmer-related papers published by FARMS, declaring himself “to be in good company.”

2. “Claim #1: It is a Hit Piece on Dehlin, Not a Review of *Mormon Stories*”

In this section of his response, Smith accuses me of “mind-reading” by claiming that Smith's purpose in writing the essay was “to destroy Dehlin's reputation and whatever influence he has in the Mormon community.” But, as we know he is prone to do, Smith fails to give my whole statement, which is as follows (words in bold were omitted from Smith's quote):

It was my delving into the footnotes that convinced me of Smith's true purpose in writing the essay: to destroy Dehlin's reputation and whatever influence he has in the Mormon community.

As the full quote makes clear, it was "my delving into the footnotes" of Smith's essay that led to my discovery that many of Smith's quotes had been manipulated to mislead the reader as to what Dehlin actually said and/or meant. For me, this revealed Smith's purpose in writing the essay.

Smith's response goes on to recount the few *Mormon Stories* sources he did consult to write his essay, admitting that **Dehlin** was the focus because he's the "editorial voice" of *Mormon Stories*. Smith claims, however, that my review ignored "other non-Dehlin" speakers discussed in the essay. I'm not sure to whom Smith is referring, but even if "non-Dehlin" speakers are sprinkled throughout the essay, the focus invariably points to Dehlin.

Smith concludes this section of his response by suggesting that if he is guilty of improper motives in writing his Dehlin essay, then I [*i.e.*, Rollo] must harbor the same "suspected malign motives" in writing my review. I don't know how he arrived at this conclusion, because my review simply pointed out extreme examples where Smith manipulated quotes and omitted relevant context in order to paint a very negative picture of Dehlin.

3. "Claim #2: It's Out of Date"

I stated in my review that a "serious flaw" with Smith's essay was that it is very outdated. I based this statement on the fact that Smith's essay was **published for the first time** only *AFTER* Dehlin had announced his return to full Church activity and the cessation of *Mormon Stories* conferences. Smith's essay, however, fails to mention this (other than a passing reference to Dehlin's reported return to Church buried in a footnote). Thus, as written, Smith's

essay gives the **false** impression that it was up-to-date on Dehlin's current status in the Church as of the time of publication (*i.e.*, February 23, 2013).

Consequently, I stated my belief that Smith knowingly chose not to include these new developments because he knew they would significantly impact many of his essay's arguments and conclusions. Smith now responds as follows:

It's not my fault there was a delay in publication. If I'd have updated it, Rollo or others would be crying "it was changed!"
Nothing to see here.

This is ridiculous coming from a "scholar." All Smith had to do was attach an addendum to the end of his original essay addressing these new developments. The original would have thus remained unchanged and the reader informed of the current status of Dehlin and *Mormon Stories*.

This was absolutely Smith's fault. He allowed the *Interpreter* to release a paper that was neither in final form nor updated. This meant that the essay was essentially worthless the moment it was published.

Smith also tries to deflect blame by asserting that Dehlin's "current state of affairs has nothing to do" with anything in the essay. For Smith, "my review doesn't really care where John is right now – it's beyond the scope." WTF? What "scope"? Did Smith intend his essay as nothing more than an "historical" account of the John Dehlin and *Mormon Stories* of yesteryear? Obviously not. It was written to portray Dehlin as a **modern-day** "wolf in sheep's clothing" and try to stem the tide of Dehlin's **continuing and future** influence in the Mormon community.

4. **"Claim #3: I Baited Dehlin"**

Smith's response includes the denial that he used Trevor Holyoak and Ben McGuire to extract from Dehlin juicy quotes and material to be used in the essay. I'm willing to take Smith

at his word (he says he added a sentence about this to clarify, which should be helpful). I had only become suspicious when Smith wrote of an unidentified poster engaging Dehlin on FB, and then Smith using quotes from that conversation in the essay, and still later finding out that the unidentified poster was the same Holyoak that Smith expressly thanked for helping him with research on the essay (*i.e.*, transcribing the podcast interview between Dehlin and Coe).

If my suspicions were true, then it would appear that Smith was, via proxy, baiting Dehlin. If Smith didn't do this (and, again, I'll take him at his word), then great. Of course, the problem remains with the misimpressions created by Smith's grafting parts from two quotes into one (from the Dehlin/Holyoak FB conversation) and leaving out the relevant context.

5. **“Claim #4: Manipulation of Quotes”**

This section makes up the bulk of Smith's response to my review. I will address each issue in the order it appears in the response in “bullet” format:

- a. Smith graciously agrees to clarify that the Dehlin quotes lifted from the FB conversation with Holyoak, wherein Dehlin expressed his belief that *Mormon Think* is better/less biased than FAIR, were referring only to **online** resources.
- b. With respect to my pointing out that Dehlin's statement lashing out at FARMS and FAIR was based on an article published by DCP (which context was omitted by Smith in the essay), Smith responds: “I was not focusing on a single event, but on a pattern of repeated behavior over time.” This is fine, but that's not how Smith represented it in his essay. He relied solely on a Dehlin quote, which was only a partial quote, and entirely omitted the context (*i.e.*, Dehlin's anger over DCP's article). Using such a manipulated quote in order to brand Dehlin as “anti-apologetic,” was sloppy and lazy. As Smith well knows, Dehlin has hosted a number of LDS apologists on his podcast (*i.e.*, Bushman, Givens, Hales, etc.). Dehlin's beef is not with apologia in general, but with certain articles written by classic-FARMS and FAIR apologists that Dehlin found to be un-Christian. This is what Dehlin was saying about DCP's article (which Smith conveniently left out), not, as Smith misrepresented, a general disdain for all work from LDS apologists.
- c. With respect to Smith's use of Dehlin's “Creepy FBI” quote, Smith responds it was unintentionally misleading and he will clarify the essay; however, Smith then goes on to claim that I ignored Smith's real focus, which was that Dehlin “was giving two different versions of those conclusions to different audiences.” I don't know how this changes

anything with respect to Smith's misuse of Dehlin's "Creepy FBI" quote (which Smith now admits was misleading).

- d. With respect to Smith's heavy reliance on PowerPoint slides from the March 2011 *Mormon Stories* conference in NYC (see *Dubious Review* at 64-65), Smith's response does not indicate whether Smith ever listened to the actual podcast. I still get the impression that he has not. Nevertheless, Smith does state in his response that he has "clarified the footnote, but I [*i.e.*, Smith] just don't understand the logic whereby pre-prepared text gets a pass." I have never said that Dehlin's slides should "get a pass." What I point out is that if Smith is going to quote from the slides, he ought to *at least* place the slides in context with what Dehlin was saying in his speech, which, of course, Smith failed to do.

Smith also responds that I ignored Smith's claim "that Dehlin says that this uncorrelation is due to problems to 'credibility and integrity' [of the LDS Church]" Smith is right, I did not mention this in my review, but I didn't "ignore" it; this just isn't a big issue because Dehlin's reference to "credibility and integrity" was only to cite a reason expressed by former Mormons as to why they left the Church. Dehlin was not describing his personal feelings, but explaining the former Mormons' "mosaic" of issues that led them to conclude that official LDS history "did not pass the smell test." Smith would have known this had he listened to the podcast.

- e. Smith also takes issue with my review not addressing the following Dehlin FB quote used in the essay: "If only both [Jews and Mormons] had successful reform movements ... someday we'll have that in common too." (See *Dubious Review* at 66). From this one line, Smith argued in his essay that Dehlin "hopes for an alternative religion of some type" (*Id.*). Smith and I obviously disagree on what Dehlin meant. I understood Dehlin to be saying that the LDS Church (not some future splinter group, as Smith seems to think) is becoming more progressive, particularly with some social issues. Once again, Smith has used a very benign statement from Dehlin to jump to the extraordinary (and erroneous) conclusion that Dehlin wants to start a new church.
- f. Smith's response takes issue with my position that Smith improperly manipulated Dehlin's "we're gonna change the world" quote, to support Smith's warning of Dehlin's plan for some sort of new church. (See *Dubious Review* at 66). Smith stands by his argument that the "me/us" reference in the quote must have meant "Dehlin and his allies," rather than my suggestion that, alternatively, it could have meant "Dehlin and his family." I based this interpretation on the first part of the quote, which Smith omitted from his essay -- Dehlin: "[S]uccessfully submitted my Master's thesis today"

In his response, Smith doesn't explain why he omitted this part of the quote; instead, he suggests it doesn't matter because he was "more interested in the element of grandiosity which the claim implies – 'changing the world' is a tall order." If Dehlin is guilty of "grandiosity," then so is Smith. Here we have Smith lifting a benign partial quote entirely out of context to create his own "grandiose" (and absurd) claim that Dehlin intends to start a new church.

- g. With respect to the very long FB conversation between Dehlin and others about “good Internet resources to teach children morals and values,” Smith continues to assert this as evidence that Dehlin seeks “for an alternative way of formulating a moral framework” Of course, as I pointed out in my review, Dehlin never expressed anything of the sort in the FB conversation.
- h. In my review, as an aside, I mentioned a Dehlin FB post that appeared between the two FB posts from which Smith lifted quotes for his essay, and that this post revealed that Dehlin’s work had been positive and helped people stay in the LDS Church. Smith didn’t mention this post in his essay, even though Smith must have read it (the positive quote appeared precisely between the two posts that Smith quoted) but chose to ignore because it did not further his negative agenda. Smith responds that my point is “absurd” for two reasons. First, Smith argues that Dehlin’s post constituted “hearsay,” because Dehlin was recounting what someone else said to him. This made me laugh, because Smith doesn’t have a problem with using “hearsay” so long as it helps his attack on Dehlin. For example, Smith’s essay includes a very long quote of an account written by Ben McGuire about the latter’s “interaction” with Dehlin. (*See Dubious Review* at 48-49). Surely Smith must know that McGuire’s characterization of Dehlin’s actions and responses during their “interaction” was pure “hearsay.”

Here is Smith’s second reason for omitting the positive post about Dehlin helping members to stay in the Church:

I quote *extensively* from those who *directly* claim that Dehlin’s project is good, worthy, and helpful. There’s a whole section on Dehlin’s self-reported solicitation and use of these quotations to persuade his priesthood leaders.

I don’t know how Smith can claim from this that his essay includes positive evidence of Dehlin and his work, but I think he’s referring to that part of his essay entitled “Dehlin appeals to his audience for help.” (*See Dubious Review* at 44-46). This section hardly qualifies as Smith’s effort to provide a positive (and balanced) picture of Dehlin. Instead, Smith sums up Dehlin’s request to his readers with this very unflattering description:

Dehlin’s desired focus, then, was specific criticism regarding the failings or inadequacies of the Church and, presumably, how his efforts were filling those gaps. While he seems to at least tacitly acknowledge that he may not have helped everyone or that there might be criticisms more properly directed at *his* efforts rather than at the Church’s, such criticisms were clearly not what were requested. The point was to make Dehlin’s position “stronger” through “positive and constructive” remarks. “Maybe it would do his stake president and the church pause and make them reconsider their opinion about what to do to John,” mused one reader. “Imagine the power of literally thousands of letters on his behalf.” Dehlin later made it clear that this outpouring of support also had a

subtle, implied risk to it: “I think he [*i.e.*, Dehlin’s stake president] knew that it would be a non-trivial event if he were to take [disciplinary] action.”

Source: *Dubious Review* at 45 (italics in original).

If Smith considers the above to be “positive,” then Smith must be a very glum man, indeed. In any event, the ever stoic Smith seems to concede in his response that his essay was devoid of anything positive about Dehlin: “I am cheerfully willing to stipulate that many people have written glowing letters and fulsome praise of Dehlin’s efforts with *Mormon Stories*.” Apart from Smith’s dripping sarcasm, I think this is the best we’re gonna get from him – *ergo*, Smith’s essay will retain its essence as overwhelmingly negative toward anything and everything Dehlin.

6. **“Claim #5: Other Misquotes”**

In my review I noted that an essay posted on the *Mormon Matters* website, which Smith claimed was authored by Dehlin and criticized the “I’m a Mormon” PR campaign (*see Dubious Review* at 72), was actually attributed to “admin.” In response, Smith asserts that he has “citation material” to support his continued claim that it was actually authored by Dehlin. I guess we’ll have to wait for it.

7. **“Claim #5B: Boyd K. Packer’s ‘To Young Men Only’ Talk”**

The comments in my review about Boyd Packer’s infamous “To Young Men Only” talk merited their own section in Smith’s response. I had mentioned that a search at lds.org will not pull up the talk; Smith responds that this is because the talk was not published in the November 1976 Gen’l Conference issue of the *Ensign*; however, Smith admits the talk **was published** in the official *Conference Reports*. I think the fact that Packer’s talk was once published in the official *Conference Reports*, but today cannot be found anywhere on lds.org, strongly suggests that the Brethren are embarrassed by the talk (and have relegated the talk to pamphlet form that only a bishop may or may not pass out). It certainly is **not** referenced in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet (or any other publication that I know of).

Smith also responds that the change in the current *Handbook* concerning masturbation (*i.e.*, the most current *Handbook* was changed from the previous version to state expressly that masturbation is **not** a basis for holding a disciplinary council) does not mean that the Church's "stance is softening." As support, Smith states that "[o]ther items about which disciplinary councils are not to be held include non-payment of tithing, Word of Wisdom violations (is the Church softening its stance on tobacco or crack cocaine?), or pornography use, which can hardly be something about which Church leaders are winking." Smith has missed my point entirely.

I compared the *Handbook* versions from 2010 and 2006, respectively. I quoted the language from both to show (1) the 2006 *Handbook* was silent as to whether "masturbation" could be the basis for a disciplinary council, and (2) new language was added to the 2010 *Handbook* expressly stating that masturbation was **not** to serve as the basis for a disciplinary council. Smith's response that the 2006 *Handbook* already listed non-payment of tithing and Word of Wisdom violations as non-bases for a disciplinary council, is a red herring. As in the 2006 *Handbook*, non-payment of tithing and Word of Wisdom violations are listed in the 2010 *Handbook* as **non**-disciplinary issues. Nothing has changed there. What has changed between the two versions, which Smith apparently didn't know, is that masturbation and pornography were not on the list in the 2006 *Handbook*, but are on the list in the 2010 *Handbook*. Thus, during the 4-year interim between publications of the two *Handbooks*, the Brethren decided to add masturbation (along with pornography) to the non-disciplinary council list. To me, this absolutely indicates a softening of the Church's stance on masturbation, even more so than pornography (also new to the list), based on the many conference talks directed toward pornography while the issue of masturbation is virtually ignored. Even the *For Strength of Youth* pamphlet, cited as support by Smith, doesn't mention masturbation or "self-abuse." The quote

from the *For Strength of Youth* pamphlet used by Smith in his response, is very vague and makes no clear reference to masturbation.

8. “Claim #5C: *Victoria’s Secret* and *Dancing With The Stars*”

In this section of his response, Smith admits that he did not realize that in the *Mormon Stories* podcast discussing masturbation and erotica within marriage, the discussion about the LDS wife who feared her husband was looking at porn in the form of a *Victoria’s Secret* catalogue and the LDS wife who feared her husband had a porn problem because he watched the *Dancing With The Stars* (“DWTS”) television program, were talking about the same LDS wife. He says this mistake strengthens his argument, however. We shall see.

Smith agrees that *DWTS* is not porn and is probably “harmless entertainment.” However, in order to save his argument, Smith then assumes, without any evidence mentioned during the podcast, the following:

If the [LDS wife’s] husband is using *Dancing With The Stars* as a trigger for his sexual compulsion, one can easily see why she would term it “pornographic.”

I have listened to the podcast (Smith does not state whether he did), and there was absolutely **NO** mention or evidence of the husband’s “sexual compulsion.” NOTHING. Smith is just making this up in order to save his ill-perceived attack against Dehlin. If you actually listen to the podcast (which I don’t think Smith did), it is made abundantly clear that the LDS wife’s belief that *Victoria’s Secret* and *DWTS* are, *a priori*, “pornographic,” is based on her personal belief, and has nothing to do with the husband’s presumed personal proclivities. This is why the expert on the podcast stated that the LDS wife’s view was misguided and should be corrected.

Smith's response to this point is to give a very long anecdote entitled "The Blonde in the Beemer," as well as to propose two options based on the husband's assumed "compulsive sexual behavior." Nothing in the podcast supports Smith's jump to this analysis – instead, it appears Smith is using his active imagination to conjure up "dirty sex" scenarios to excuse the LDS wife's absurd view of what constitutes "pornography." And none of this is Dehlin's fault; the reality is there are many Mormon women who were raised with an unhealthy view of sex.

Smith's invented arguments lead him to respond "that this podcast is unreliable and takes a too-cavalier attitude toward a serious problem." In addition to taking on the role of Dehlin's bishop, Smith apparently considers himself qualified to act as a sex therapist. The podcast, of course, was an interview of a well-known psychologist/sex expert, Dr. Stephanie Buehler; I guess Smith thinks he knows better than she when it comes to sex.

9. "Claim #5D: Moderation and Restraint"

Continuing with the sex theme, Smith responds that, when it comes to sex in marriage, I dislike or criticize "moderation and restraint." I, of course, never wrote any such thing, but I will say that what one couple sees as "moderation and restraint," another couple may view very differently. Smith, ever in the "bishop" role, appears eager to decide for everyone.

Smith also responds that he, "a Mormon physician practicing in a predominately Mormon town with a large psychiatric practice . . .," is well aware of the Church's teachings about sex. In the role of "expert," Smith preaches that "[t]he Church opposes excess, lack of restraint, lack of consideration of spouse, masturbation, and pornography." It is unclear how Smith (or anyone else) defines the very vague terms "excess, lack of restraint, lack of consideration" in order to set actual parameters for married couples (it was much easier in the old days, when Joseph F. Smith used to preach no sex at all on Fast Day), but we've already seen that the Church has shied away

from telling couples what to do or not do in the marital bedroom (*i.e.*, withdrawing the directive that included oral sex within the interpretation of “impure and unholy practices,” leaving birth control decisions to the couple, and including new language in the *Handbook* stating that sex in marriage serves purposes other than just procreation). I guess Smith misses the old days, but here’s the bottom line: Smith’s repeated attacks against Dehlin and *Mormon Stories* concerning sexual issues are grossly exaggerated and misplaced.

10. “Claim #5E: Straw Man”

Not much to Smith’s response here. I had noted in my review that Smith’s essay propped up a “straw man” by asserting that the sex podcast failed to address “what medical science can reliably say about spiritual matters” (*Dubious Review* at 78). I pointed out that connecting medical science to spiritual matters was a silly argument, as Smith (a medical doctor) surely knows. Smith responds that it is *Mormon Stories* “that provides the straw man” because, according to Smith, the Church’s doctrine and teachings concerning sex and health (*i.e.*, the Word of Wisdom) have nothing to do with medical benefits (Smith apparently never noticed that the Brethren have long spouted statistics about how healthy Mormons are, thanks to the Word of Wisdom), but exist solely out of “*spiritual and scriptural concerns.*” (Italics in original). In contrast, the *Mormon Stories* podcast dealt with medical reasons for not worrying about masturbation, etc. More ‘hair-splitting’ by Smith. The podcast was an interview of a **non-Mormon expert**; the podcast was **not** the latest *Interpreter* “roundtable” discussing next week’s Sunday School lesson. Sorry, Dr. Smith, this “straw man” resides squarely in your garden.

11. “Claim #6: I ‘Attack’ Dehlin’s Work With Homosexuals”

I pointed out in my review (in Section 6) that Smith manufactured a Dehlin quote in order to make the huge leap from Dehlin’s public support of gay civil rights to Smith’s assertion that

Dehlin supports “homosexual acts.” (*See Dubious Review* at 68). Smith’s response is to admit that his “leap” was based on the assumption that “marriage also tends to involve sexual acts.” Smith further responds that Dehlin does not believe sexual relations within marriage (any marriage, gay or straight) is “sinful,” a position with which the LDS Church disagrees.

We know the Church endorses sex only within marriage, so I can understand why Dehlin and others might conclude that a couple married with all the “bells and whistles” of civil marriage (*i.e.*, benefits and rights) bestowed by the government, is free to act like any other married couple and have sexual relations. This makes perfect logical sense.

The problem here is with Smith’s undeviating focus on everything sexual, as well as his apparent attitude that, when it comes to sex, marriage is no more than instinctive copulation between mammals. Just because an LDS member (like me or Dehlin) favors gay civil rights and same-sex marriage, does **not** mean we also oppose the Law of Chastity. Even President Monson has pointed out that the Church has no problem with members who hold a position concerning same-sex marriage that differs from the Church’s position – he doesn’t condemn those members, so why does Smith?

12. “Claim #7: I Call Myself to Act as Dehlin’s Bishop”

Smith responds that his role-playing as Dehlin’s bishop was appropriate because “Dehlin is the one who repeatedly offers his temple recommend status as evidence.” Smith continues:

If he [*i.e.*, Dehlin] does not wish such data considered, he should not offer it. It is ironic that Dehlin is allowed (in Rollo’s view) to make the argument, but no one else is allowed to draw the transparently-obvious conclusion.

Wow. Smith has no qualms with taking up the mantle as Dehlin’s bishop and examining his worthiness. Incredible hubris.

I'm sorry, Bishop Smith, but Dehlin mentioning his TR does not entitle **anyone** to act as his bishop and analyze his temple worthiness . . . , well, anyone *other than* Dehlin's actual bishop, who has been called, sustained, and set apart to so act. If you don't like Dehlin mentioning his TR, then criticize him for talking about what no member should, but you have **NO** right, even hypothetically, to conduct a public worthiness interview of Dehlin. It's unseemly for any LDS member to do this, particularly one who currently serves as a bishop.

Oh, and by the way, Bishop Smith, your comparing that silly "Robins are Birds, Not Mammals" syllogism to one's temple worthiness is insulting to the Church and all members.

13. "Claim #7B: The Handbook"

In responding to that part of my review which addresses the passages from *Handbook 1* cited in his essay, Smith states up front that he did "not quote *any* of the first volume of the *Handbook* because the Church has not requested that we not do so." Actually, not true – *Handbook 1* only states that it "should not be duplicated or given to any other persons [*i.e.*, general and local Church officers]." (*Handbook 1* at vi (2010)). There is no prohibition against "quoting."

Smith next claims that I did not read all of Section 3.3.4 of *Handbook 1* because I failed to mention that a bishop may pry further in an interview with a member whose "close relatives belong to or sympathize with apostate groups." (*See Handbook 1*, § 3.3.4 (2010)). Such members "must demonstrate clearly that they repudiate these apostate religious teachings before they may be issued a recommend." (*Id.*). This historically referred to the situation where a member had family members involved in polygamy. I don't see how this is relevant to what Dehlin said to his listeners.

Smith corrects his original mistaken cite to Section 7.7.1 in *Handbook 1* (which does not exist) by replacing it with a new citation – Section 7.1.1. To justify his belief that this section allows a bishop to pry during a TR interview, Smith refers to this language: “The interviewer also makes sure the member understands the question being asked.” Using this instruction, Smith then explains how he can justifiably pry into a member’s answer to the second TR question (*i.e.*, “Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Christ and of His role as Savior and Redeemer?”). Smith opines that a bishop can “make sure” the member “understands” the second TR question by informing the member “that a testimony of Jesus’ role as savior and redeemer necessitates a belief in his divinity” Such prying, according to Smith, may be necessary to save those members who “have been taken in by Dehlin’s **sophistry** on this point.” (Emphasis added).

I honestly don’t know how Smith comes up with this rubbish, but it sure seems to me that he is adding new questions and/or requirements under the guise of “helping the member understand the original question.”

Of course, this discussion is completely academic, because, as I pointed out in Section 2 of my review, Dehlin’s current faith and beliefs (expressed during his Jan. 2013 podcast and utterly ignored in Smith’s essay) include, among other things, that the divinity of Jesus “is hoped for” (or, in other words, Dehlin has faith in Jesus’ divinity), and that Dehlin views Jesus as “our Savior.” Thus, even under Smith’s added requirements for the second TR question, Dehlin passes.

14. “Claim #8: The Coe Interview”

In this section of his response, Smith dismisses my review of his criticism of Dehlin’s podcast with Dr. Michael Coe. Smith claims he was focusing on Dehlin’s “rhetorical

techniques,” not specific issues raised by Dehlin in the podcast. Whatever Smith’s focus, his use of hair-splitting examples from the 3-hour podcast undercut any points he was trying to make.

I also pointed out in my review that Smith’s distinction between Dehlin’s use of “helmets” and the BofM’s use of “head-plates” was trivial at best. Smith concedes that Dehlin may think the same, but Smith believes “that the distinction is important if one wishes to assess the Book of Mormon as an ancient text.” In other words, this is not really a complaint against Dehlin or Coe, but simply what Smith thinks is important.

Smith also attacks my reference to Lucy Mack Smith’s eyewitness description of the metal breastplate found with the Gold Plates. Smith dismisses Mother Smith’s account out-of-hand, because “Lucy is not the Book of Mormon text.” Using this standard, I guess Smith doesn’t care much for Joseph’s First Vision account(s) (at least the part about the BofM), the respective testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses, or anything else non-textual dealing with the Book of Mormon, because they are “not the Book of Mormon text[,]” either.

In addition, Smith’s reference to D&C 17:1 to suggest that Lucy must have been referring to a Jaredite “breastplate” (instead of “Nephite”) because “the Urim and Thummim is of Jaredite origin[,]” is a real stretch. Here’s the entire verse from D&C 17:1 (emphasis added):

Behold, I say unto you, that you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the **breastplate**, the **sword of Laban**, the **Urim and Thummim**, which were given to **the brother of Jared** upon the mount when he talked with the Lord face to face, and the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness, on the borders of the Red Sea.

As we can see, there is no statement in this verse that the breastplate was of Jaredite origin. A reader will notice that between the reference to “breastplate” and “Urim and Thummim,” is the reference to “sword of Laban,” a Nephite (not Jaredite) weapon. Thus, if

anything, this verse suggests (consistent with Mother Smith's account) that the breastplate found by Joseph was of Nephite origin.

Smith's final criticism of Lucy's testimony is that the breastplate found by Joseph "tells us little about what armies of the same period used." This is nothing more than assumption on Smith's part. The BofM talks of Nephite "breastplates," and Joseph found a Nephite "breastplate" with the plates. Smith has absolutely **no** evidence on which to assume that these breastplates were somehow materially different.

Also in his response, Smith again attacks Dehlin's and Coe's mention of coins in the BofM. Another red herring. It was perfectly fine for Dehlin and Coe to use the **SAME** noun used by the Church up until just a couple of weeks ago (when certain headings were changed with respect to coinage). If Smith is going to criticize Dehlin and Coe about this, then he is also criticizing the LDS Church.

Smith's response does not alter his ill-conceived attack in his review about the Dehlin and Coe podcast. If anything, Smith's response highlights the hair-splitting that failed to lend credence to Smith's attack on the Coe podcast.

15. "Claim #9: The *Mormon Stories* Survey"

With respect to Dehlin's survey of former LDS members and their reasons for leaving, Smith continues to harp on the fact it was non-scientific. Well, duh, the survey itself plainly states it is non-scientific. But that doesn't mean it has no value or merit. I noted in my review (in Section 6) that, unlike Smith, the Brethren recognized that Dehlin's survey has value; if they didn't, then why did they hold a meeting to discuss the survey's findings? We all know that GA's are very busy men, and they don't hold a meeting unless there's an important reason.

Smith apparently cannot find it within himself to allow any praise for Dehlin, and he's not gonna start with this survey, even though the same survey caught the attention of Church leaders at the highest levels.

16. "Rollo's Review -- Conclusion"

Despite Smith's concession that he needs to correct several mistakes, he stands by his "main findings." Albeit not surprising, it is disheartening. I don't think there is any question that Smith intended his essay to attack and destroy Dehlin's reputation and whatever influence he yields in the Mormon community. Fortunately, the essay is so poorly written, along with quote manipulation and lack of context, that only the most jaded supporter of classic-FARMS will fail (or refuse) to see the essay for what it really is: an attack on Dehlin and his work. In the end, though, Dehlin comes out of this looking good (as does BYU and Maxwell Institute, since they were smart enough to avoid any and all association with this essay). As for Smith, he has now completed a trilogy of "hit pieces" – the first one aimed at Ron Meldrum and his BofM geography theories, the next against Laura Compton and *Mormons for Marriage*, and, finally, this essay against Dehlin and *Mormon Stories*. I can't help but wonder -- who will be his next target? Stay tuned ...