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Mormon scientists do have competency on Book of Mormon DNA

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As I conclude my discussion about how critics have approached DNA and the Book of Mormon, I want to point out that while I'm personally not a geneticist, I rely on the writings of those who really are experts in the field.

Some critics have claimed that real scientists — by which, of course, they mean "non-Mormon scientists" — wouldn't agree with LDS scientists on their approach to the DNA issues. The quotes from non-LDS scholars in a previous installment [successfully refute this](#)

[accusation](#).

Ironically, few critics who have engaged the DNA issue have advanced degrees commensurate with this particular topic. I'm aware of only two such critics. One is a biologist with advanced training in plant genetics (and he admitted in his writings that DNA science wouldn't refute the Book of Mormon if we theorize a small incursion of people into a larger population); the other is an anthropologist. Conversely, there are several LDS scientists with training in DNA studies, particularly population genetics, who have weighed in on the topic. Here are just a few examples:

Evolutionary biologist Dr. Michael Whiting of BYU (Ph.D., Cornell University) is an associate professor of Integrative Biology at BYU and director of BYU's DNA Sequencing Center, the associate curator of insects at the M. L. Bean Museum, and a member of a scientific review panel for the Systematic Biology program for the National Science Foundation.

Biochemist Dr. John Butler (Ph.D., University of Virginia), is the Project Leader for the Human Identity DNA Technologies Group for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). His specialty is forensic DNA identification, and his group was responsible for identifying the DNA in human remains in the aftermath of the World Trade Center tragedy. His textbook on forensic DNA studies was given an award by the British Medical Association. Butler has been a guest editor for the Journal of Forensic Science and is a member of the FBI's Scientific Working Group of DNA Analysis

Methods, and the Department of Defense's Quality Assurance Oversight Committee on DNA Analysis (he helps compile the standards of DNA used in the courtroom). His publications on DNA studies are numerous, and he holds a patent on one of the major methodologies for genetic screening.

Dr. Scott Woodward was a Professor of Microbiology and faculty member of the Molecular Biology Program at Brigham Young University for 16 years. He is currently the head of the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation in Salt Lake City. In the past, he had been involved with several excavation teams in Seila, Egypt, where he directed the genetic and molecular analysis of Egyptian mummies, both from a commoners' cemetery and from Egyptian royal tombs. He was also a visiting professor at Hebrew University where he was involved in studying the DNA of the Dead Sea Scrolls. While completing his postdoctoral work in molecular genetics at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at the University of Utah, Woodward discovered a genetic marker used for the identification of carriers and the eventual discovery of the gene for cystic fibrosis. He was also involved with the identification of other gene markers for colon cancer and neurofibromatosis. His work has been featured both nationally and internationally on numerous programs including "Good Morning America" and both the Discovery and Learning channels.

Ryan Parr has a Ph.D. in biological anthropology from the University of Utah and is currently vice president of Research and Development at Genesis Genomics, a Canadian biotechnical company exploring the use of mitochondrial DNA as a "biosensor" for the early detection of prostate and breast cancer. He has authored and coauthored mitochondrial DNA studies of Native Americans, specializing in ancient DNA. One of his previous projects involved the DNA sequencing of Egyptian mummies found at the Dakhleh Oasis. Another major project was the use of mitochondrial DNA in the identification of the Unknown Child from the 1912 RMS Titanic disaster.

Lastly (and more names could be added to our list), we have Dr. Ugo Perego (Ph.D. University of Pavia), a population geneticist specialized in the origins of Native Americans who is currently working as one of the senior researchers for the non-profit Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation (SMGF). In 10 years with SMGF, Dr. Perego has supervised the worldwide collection of more than 110,000 DNA samples and corresponding genealogical records and produced nearly 150 lectures and numerous publications on DNA and how it relates to ancestry, history and population migrations. Perego has provided me with invaluable assistance in writing the DNA articles for Mormon Times, as well as the four-part Mormon Times article on DNA [found here](#).

I don't want to make this an argument from authority because even non-experts can make sound arguments, but the claim that Mormon scientists don't have the expertise to competently speak on this matter is completely without merit.

Michael R. Ash is on the management team for FAIR (the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research — FAIRLDS.org) and is the author of "[Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One's Testimony In the Face of Criticism and Doubt](#)" (ShakenFaithSyndrome.com) and "[Of Faith and Reason: 80 Evidences Supporting the Prophet Joseph Smith](#)" (OfFaithandReason.com). Michael's

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