Type: Book Chapter

Book of Mormon Concerns

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Source: *Bamboozled by the CES Letter*
Published: Self-Published, 2015
Pages: 21-40

Chapter 2
Book of Mormon Concerns

1) The 1769 King James Version [KJV] edition of the Bible contains some errors of translation that were not included in later editions of the KJV. Joseph owned a copy of the 1769 edition and we find some of the 1769 errors in the Book of Mormon. Why?

Answer: I'm glad that this question comes up first in the CES Letter because it draws our attention to a very important point on how God communicates with His children. In D&C 1:24 Heavenly Father says: "Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding."

What this means is that God communicates to *all* people (and that includes prophets) through *their* own language—and *language* is not only the words we speak or write, but the context (including cultural context) in which those words are understood (what non-LDS theologians often refer to as *God's accommodation*). Our ability to comprehend God and His directives is limited. God must descend to our level and speak our language in order for us to comprehend. Those of us who are parents do the same thing when we speak to our children. At early ages they are unable to understand all of our words or concepts so we have to speak in words, phrases, and concepts that mean something *to them*.

We have a great example of *accommodation* in the Book of Mormon—utilizing the "language" of the audience to understand a new message. When Ammon, one of the sons of Mosiah, went to teach the Lamanites, he was captured, brought before King Lamoni, and eventually was assigned to guard the king's flocks. Ammon proved to be a kind of Nephite-ninja and after saving the king's flocks from some wannabe-thieves, Ammon was brought again to the king—this time to explain why he was so tough. As Ammon began his explanation he asked King Lamoni, "Believest thou that there is a God?" to which Lamoni answered, "I do not know what that meaneth."

And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?
And he said, Yea.
And Ammon said: This is God (Alma 18:26-28).

Now critics have tried to use this passage to say, "*See, the Book of Mormon teaches that God is a Spirit!*" They completely miss the point of the Ammon/Lamoni exchange, however. Ammon was trying to explain who God was by teaching in concepts which Lamoni understood. Ammon *accommodated* his discourse so that it made sense to Lamoni. According to how Lamoni understood God—which was a great spirit—Ammon's power came from that same being—the Great Spirit, God. The details could be explained later. The initial purpose was for Ammon to explain some basic principles.

As our children mature, the language we choose as parents matures as well—accommodating to their increased level of vocabulary and understanding. We've all heard the "milk before meat" and "line upon line" idioms, but for some reason a number of members and critics seem to think that prophets have a USB port in the back of their spiritual heads through which God should be able to download all advanced spiritual knowledge. These robo-prophets should then be able to dispense pure doctrine to their followers in words that make perfect sense to all those who listen to their voice or read their words, regardless of native language, culture, or period in which they live.

Such a belief is not only wrong, it's not feasible or logical. There's a reason why, in school, we first learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division before moving on to algebra. Suppose Lord Greystoke's Tarzan was found by a group of *National Geographic* explorers in the jungles of Africa. After bringing him to civilization it's discovered that he's very intelligent and a quick learner. He's taught English as well as modern hygiene and cultural etiquette. His first introduction into math, however, is algebra. His instructor refuses to teach him basic math first, and demands that he learn algebraic equations from the get go. How far do you think this would fly?

The same method works with all of us when we have to teach foreign or advanced concepts. We use the language of the hearer and then build on concepts by adding additional light.

So to engage the first CES Letter issue regarding the KJV Bible and the Book of Mormon we need to initially understand that the scriptural language of Joseph's day was the King James English (it's still, in fact, the scriptural language for many Americans and is the reason why other ancient religious texts—including some of what was included in the Dead Sea Scrolls—have been translated into King James English as well).

The main critique in the first accusation, however, is that Joseph borrowed not only the King James language when he dictated the Book of Mormon but he even included KJV errors that were unique to the Bible of Joseph Smith's environment. This suggests that Joseph simply copied the Bible for those parts that are found in the Book of Mormon.

My response is twofold: First: So what if he did? What would that really mean? It certainly could be interpreted (see my discussion on differing interpretations in #1) that the Book of Mormon is merely a fictional hodgepodge of information that Joseph threw into a wordsmith stew, but that's far from the only interpretation of this information. Let me try another interpretation—within a framework that accepts both the scriptural authenticity of the Book of Mormon as well as the possibility (unproven) that Joseph copied the KJV for those passages that appear in the Book of Mormon.

Let's suppose, first of all, that the critics are right—Joseph copied the KJV passages directly from his Bible. How might this have happened? Here's one scenario: Joseph Smith is translating the Book of Mormon and comes across passages that were also recorded in the Bible. Joseph realizes this either on his own, or through inspiration, or from a voice on high.

Hey, I know this part, Joseph might have said to Oliver. *Hand me the Bible.* As he looks over the Biblical verses he says to his scribe: *Well, we know that the Bible is the Word of God, so let's stick with the way it's expressed in the scriptures to make sure I get this right.*

Why in the world would this be problematic? At this point in Joseph Smith's prophetic career he hadn't yet realized that the future would lead him to seek inspiration for correcting some of the Bible passages with the Joseph Smith Translation.

The critics of course would see this as vindication of their theories. *Aha! Gotcha! This means that the Book of Mormon contains mistakes—mistakes known to exist in the Bible!*

As Yogi Berra reportedly said, "I wish I had an answer to that because I'm tired of answering that question." Latter-day Saints *don't believe in inerrant scripture*. We don't believe in the need for perfectly translated or dictated scripture to accept the text as the Word of God (and from a scholarly perspective, we don't believe that there *is such a thing* as a perfectly translated or dictated text). Any errors copied from the KJV into the same passages of the Book of Mormon *have no bearing* on the spiritual importance of the passages. In D&C 128, for example, Joseph Smith quotes Malachi 4:5–6 exactly as it is quoted in the King James Version of the Bible. In verse 7 the prophet Joseph added: "I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands."

So even if, for sake of argument, we agree that Joseph Smith copied the KJV into the Book of Mormon, this information *should have* exactly zip, nada, zero impact on the belief that the Book of Mormon was translated from an authentic ancient document. It might be *interpreted* as evidence against the Book of Mormon, but such an interpretation is not *required* by the data.

Before we are so quick to give in to something that ultimately has little value to a critic, however, it should be noted that there are problems to this theory—the primary one being that those who witnessed the translation process claimed that Joseph expressly *did not* use the Bible when translating.[3] Some were even asked point blank if he had used the Bible or other materials and they replied that he had not.

Assuming that the witnesses weren't lying and assuming they remembered correctly what had happened, I can see at least three ways that we can account for the *absence* of a Bible while still acknowledging that KJV passages appear in the Bible. All three theories would accept the position that Joseph Smith *saw* KJV text in the seer stone.

1) Joseph Smith saw the KJV because that's what the "gift and power of God" showed him—God knew that the Bible was both scripture and imperfect but that the Bible and Book of Mormon support one another. Giving Joseph Smith a KJV translated text simply strengthened the bond between the two books.

2) Joseph Smith had an incredible memory and was able to remember precisely what the Bible said at the right places. While that's technically possible, it's extremely doubtful. Not only would Joseph have to memorize long passages of KJV scripture, but he would have to remember

which words were italicized and which were not (because studies show that he specifically interacted with the italicized words in the KJV).

There is some indication that Joseph Smith had a pretty good memory, but the evidence also shows that sometimes his memory was not so good. He forgot at times, for example, where he was at in the Bible when he was doing the Joseph Smith Translation. On at least a few occasions he retranslated the text for results that yielded the same meaning but with slightly different wording—which again supports the claim that there is no "perfect" translation and that the same concept can be explained in different ways

Another argument against this position is the one dubbed the idiot-savant proposition by Dr. William Hamblin. Joseph was smart enough to remember exact lengthy phrases from the Bible but apparently forgot (or didn't know, as the critics argue) that Jesus was born in Bethlehem not Jerusalem (as is supposedly claimed in the Book of Mormon—another argument for another time—or you could just read about it here). Overall, the incredible memory theory has too many holes in my opinion, but remains a possibility.

3) Joseph Smith had an incredible memory when the Lord *wanted* him to have an incredible memory. In other words, when Joseph Smith came to text that was already included in the Bible, God gave Joseph Smith the power to recall what he had read in the KJV and was then able to insert those passages into the Book of Mormon text. This is more reasonable, but still has a problem in the fact that, according to Joseph's mother Lucy, Joseph hadn't read through the entire Bible by the time he was translating the Book of Mormon. Hard to recall what you haven't read. But maybe reading the Bible wasn't as necessary as having viewed the Bible pages.

It's possible that at some point Joseph had seen those Biblical pages which would later become related to the Book of Mormon passages and God caused Joseph Smith to recall the images of those pages—almost like pulling up a scanned pdf file today. You don't have to read pages before you scan them. You can read them later when the scan is retrieved. According to witnesses, Joseph seemed to see and read text from his seer stone.

Brant Gardner, in his award-winning book, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, suggests the possibility that after Joseph's mind converted revelatory thoughts into English, a mental image of a page appeared in his sight (which, of course, takes place in the brain rather than the eyes). The text for D&C 7, for instance, was shown to Joseph by way of revelation, but according to David Whitmer, what Joseph saw in the seer stone was "an oblong piece of parchment, on which hieroglyphs would appear and also the translation in the English language, all appearing in luminous letters."[4]

The data tells us that A) There are undeniable connections between the Book of Mormon and the KJV, and B) The witnesses to the translation process claim that Joseph Smith was not utilizing the KJV during the translation process. Critics will claim that the witnesses were wrong or lying, while believers will claim that the witnesses may have been wrong (although the same claim is repeated by multiple witnesses) or that it's one way God chose to help Joseph Smith see the KJV translation.

If you don't believe in God or miracles, then this latter explanation carries no weight. For those of us who believe in miracles, however, it doesn't seem less miraculous for Joseph to see KJV text when translating the Nephite record than it does to believe in healings, revelation, or the Resurrection. Ultimately, it comes down to faith and your default position regarding an acceptance or rejection of the existence of the divine as well as the possibility of divine intervention.

So that was a long answer for a brief accusation (which, by the way, demonstrates how much ink is spilled to reply to an accusation in comparison to how much ink is used to make an accusation), but some of the details in this response will be used to support subsequent responses.

2) The KJV italicized English words were added to the Bible to make it more readable. Why does the Book of Mormon include those italicized words?

Answer: The italicized words in the KJV indicate where the translators inserted English words (not literally translated from the original documents) in order to make the KJV read more smoothly in English. Critics complain when the Book of Mormon copies the italicized words and then they complain when Joseph Smith changed those words which were italicized. It's a no-win situation.

Joseph may have known that the italicized words were translator additions to the text and may have felt the need to change them when so moved, or to leave them alone when so moved. Ultimately, his goal was to convey, as accurately as his language would allow, what was recorded on the Book of Mormon plates. Borrowing or modifying words as he went, were merely tools to see this to fruition (see query #1 above).

3) The Book of Mormon includes mistranslated biblical passages that were later changed in the Joseph Smith Translation [JST] of the Bible. These Book of Mormon verses should match the inspired JST version instead of the incorrect KJV version that Joseph later fixed.

Answer: This is already answered in query #1. Now do you see how helpful it was to respond in length to query #1? To add just a bit more: Brigham Young once said:

> Should the Lord Almighty send an angel to re-write the Bible, it would in many places be very different from what it now is. And I will even venture to say that if the Book of Mormon were now to be re-written, in many instances it would materially differ from the present translation. According as people are willing to receive the things of God, so the heavens send forth their blessings.[5]

Translation is filtered through a human messenger who writes or dictates according to the knowledge and understanding he has at the time when the words are committed into writing.

4) DNA analysis has concluded that Native Americans do not originate from the Middle East or from Israelites but rather from Asia.

Answer: The leading LDS and non-LDS DNA scientists who have studied the issue all agree that if the Lehites intermingled with larger pre-existing New World populations, it's likely that their DNA markers would have disappeared. The DNA argument may sound like a solid scientific argument against the Book of Mormon, but in reality it has no teeth. The smartest critics are painfully aware of this fact. To add teeth (more like dentures) to their charge, the critics hitch their arguments to statements made by 19th century church leaders who believed that the descendants of Book of Mormon people account for all or most all of the ancient Americans. Unfortunately for the critics, Latter-day Saints don't believe that an LDS prophet suddenly becomes a robot who is unable to have his own thoughts and opinions (even if those opinions are wrong).

Scholarly studies clearly indicate that the Book of Mormon peoples were a small clan who migrated into the larger population of existing ancient American cultures. Under such conditions (and this is even admitted by the critics), their DNA markers would likely disappear.

For some odd reason a number of critics (and the CES Letter tries to include every single point or argument that can make the Church look false) seem to be bothered by the fact that in 2006 the LDS Church changed the introduction to the Book of Mormon from: a record of "the Lamanites… [who] are *the principal* ancestors of the American Indians," to "the Lamanites… [who] are *among the* ancestors of the American Indians."

Does this change have any bearing on whether or not Joseph Smith was a prophet? It doesn't. The "principal ancestors" intro was first included in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. It wasn't in the original text translated by Joseph Smith and it wasn't claimed to be part of the revealed text. It was included in the 1981 header because—according to the logical, human-framed thinking of the day—it made sense and was a good way to introduce the Book of Mormon.

Better education overthrows false assumptions (thank goodness) and with a closer reading of the Book of Mormon in light of what we know about the history of the Americas, we can see that the Lamanites could only have been "among" the ancestors of the American Indians. Why do critics get their knickers in a knot whenever the Church tries *to fix* past errors? You'd think that those same critics who claim foul—that the Church has lied to us, deceives us, and isn't transparent—would be *happy* when errors are corrected.

Why aren't they happy? Because they *want there to be problems*. They're not interested in truth, they're interested in destroying Mormonism. They are not interested in the fact that very few things spoken by LDS leaders carry the same weight as what we find in the Standard Works, they are interested in making prophets and Church leaders look bad. And when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

5) Horses, cattle, oxen, sheep, swine, goats, elephants, wheels, chariots, wheat, silk, steel, and iron did not exist in pre-Columbian America during Book of Mormon times. Why are these things mentioned in the Book of Mormon as being made available in the Americas between 2200 BC - 421 AD?

Answer: The contents of this one issue could be answered with a book-length response. I (and others) have written on this topic in depth elsewhere (I address this at length in *Shaken Faith Syndrome*) so I'll try to sum up the most important points.

An anachronism is something that doesn't fit the time period in which it supposedly exists. A cell phone in the hands of Abraham Lincoln would be an anachronism. According to critics, the Book of Mormon contains a number of anachronisms—from plants to animals, from technology to weapons. In each case it is claimed (and supposedly supported by scholarship) that those things mentioned in the Book of Mormon did not exist in the ancient Americas.

The Book of Mormon, for example, mentions horses. While ancient miniature horses existed many tens of thousands of years ago in the Americas, by the time the Lehites arrived the horses would have become extinct—at least that's what current science tells us. The Book of Mormon also mentions the use of swords, whereas scientists tell us that ancient Americans (during Book of Mormon times) did not have the technology to make metal swords.

I won't go through the details of every supposed Book of Mormon anachronism, because interested readers can consult the sources I listed earlier. The critics' list includes many more items than horses and swords, but we'll just pick on those two topics in order to keep this part of the booklet to a minimum. In virtually all instances regarding Book of Mormon anachronisms the problem can typically be attributed to 1 of 2 problems.

1) Ancient examples of some of these items haven't yet been discovered but might be discovered some day. While this may sound like a cop-out, it *does* regrettably describe the state of archaeology—especially Mesoamerican archaeology. In the humid jungles of Central America most things tend to rot or become overgrown. Cloth rots, metal rots, and even bones can rot. Lack of funding often delays (by years or decades) the excavation of known or newly discovered sites (which are often looted by the time archaeologists get there).

It's a simple fact that most things disappear or return to the dust. It is an unavoidable fact that we don't know if the anachronistic items mentioned in the Book of Mormon were prevalent in the location and times they were mentioned, or if they were anomalies even back in their day.

Archaeology is a journal of discoveries that have uprooted previous assumptions. The bones of animals once thought not to exist in some locations have been found; cultural characteristics thought to be unknown to some cultures have been discovered. The door is never shut. New findings regularly emerge. It's important to point out, for instance, that in Joseph Smith's day only about 13% of the items mentioned in the Book of Mormon were known to have existed in ancient Mesoamerica. Today about 75% of those things mentioned in the Book of Mormon have some degree of confirmative support from Mesoamerican archaeology during Book of Mormon times.

2) Assumptions often stand as the gatekeepers to Book of Mormon anachronisms. Who says that Nephite swords were all made of metal? (You'll notice the *all* in this query, because it's certainly possible that in addition to Laban's sword—which came from the Old World—there may have been some early Nephite metal swords.) The belief that swords have to be made of metal is an *assumption* and something *we* read into the text—it's an interpretation of the data. The Aztecs, for example, had wooden clubs laced with bone-cutting obsidian. Know what the Spaniards called these weapons? "Swords."

Animal categories in the ancient world were different from animal categories in our modern world. In the Bible, there were often single Hebrew words for a variety of different animals. In the Bible the Hebrew word for "horse" is sus and means "leaping," but it can also refer to the rapid flight of swallows and cranes. Typically our English Bibles translate the word "sus" as "horse," but twice it is translated as "crane," and twice as "horseback"–referring to a rider.

As noted earlier, our brains like patterns, so we tend to group lots of things into similar patterns. This happens when we first encounter unfamiliar items such as plants and animals. While modern societies may not do this as frequently, past societies did. When the Greeks first encountered a large, unfamiliar animal in the Nile, for example, they named it hippopotamus or "river horse." Likewise, when the conquistadors arrived in the New World both the natives and the Spaniards had problems classifying new animals. When the Spaniards encountered the coatamundi they described the animal as active, as large as a small dog, but with a snout like a pig. One common Spanish name for this animal was tejon, but tejon is also the Spanish name for the badger as well as the raccoon. The Aztecs called it pisote, which means glutton, but the same term is also applied to peccaries or wild pigs.

This could be the solution to the problem with some seemingly anachronistic animals or plants in the Book of Mormon. When the Aztecs first saw the European horses, they called them "deer." Does this mean that the Mayans, the Europeans, or the horse didn't really exist? Three codex-style painted vases from the late-classic period of Mayan culture (pre-Columbian) appear to depict Mayans riding saddled deer.[6]

It's also possible that the Book of Mormon "horse" referred to the Mesoamerican Tapir (of the large variety). They are actually very similar to horses. Guess to which animal(s) the Mayan term *tzimin* referred? "Tapir" or….(here it comes)… "horse."

We are narrow-minded thinkers. And by that I mean you, not me. No, of course, me too. *All* people are narrow-minded thinkers. We can't help it; it's part of being human. It's tough to think outside of the box and to realize that not everyone comprehends, labels, or sees things like we do. The fact is that every supposed Book of Mormon anachronism can be explained by understanding how different labels worked in antiquity as compared to what those same labels refer to in our own day.

The critics, of course, cry foul. As the author of the CES Letter complained:

> I was amazed to learn that, according to these unofficial apologists, translate doesn't really mean translate, horses aren't really horses (they're tapirs), chariots aren't

really chariots….

Unfortunately, this is a common complaint made by numerous critics. It shows a vacuous understanding of real world scholarship. The complaint implies that there is a single definition for every word and that this single definition should fit every place and time in which it is expressed. What then, pray tell, does the word "gay" mean—and remember, you can only give a single unambiguous definition that spans all generations. Does it mean "happy," or does it refer to same-gender attraction?

What about the simple word "fast"? Most people probably think of something moving quickly. But if you "hold fast" to your position, you are not moving at all. How about a keyboard? Is this something on which you type or play Chopsticks? How about a mouse? Do you put your hand on it while you are at your computer, or are you afraid it will bite? Is a soap something with which you wash, or something you watch on TV? The word "chariot" in our King James Version Bibles (which, critics are quick to remind us, is the underlying language used in the Book of Mormon) refers not only to wheeled chariots but also to palanquins (or human-borne sedans).

When apologists argue that Book of Mormon words—such as "horse," "chariot," or "swords"—might mean something different than what we 21st century Americans envision, the alternatives are not selected at random; there is no suggestion that "horse" actually means "toenail," or that "chariot," means "running shoe." The possible alternative definitions are selected from real-world examples wherein those words have been used (or could have been used) to refer to something else. *This* is how language works in the real world.

6) Absolutely no archaeological evidence has ever been discovered to directly support the Book of Mormon or the millions of Book of Mormon peoples who lived in the New World.

Answer: Although this relates to concern #5 above, more can be said. The biggest problem is, once again, a matter of assumptions. In the arid deserts of the ancient Near East, papyrus scrolls survived for many centuries, but in Mesoamerica, good luck trying to find much of anything that wasn't already hard as rock and tough as nails when it was first created. Most of the things found by Mesoamerican archaeologists are things that don't normally deteriorate with time and humidity—things like pieces of clay pots, or art on stone (or carved stone).

How do you suppose archaeologists should distinguish between a Nephite potsherd and a Mayan potsherd? Maybe you could tell a Nephite potsherd by recognizing Nephite art? How, pray tell, would someone recognize Nephite art? What would we expect it to look like? Would Nephite art automatically have pictures of the Savior? And how would we know it was pictures of the Savior unless the Nephite artist graduated from a Greco-Roman art school?

Without texts, it's often impossible to distinguish between cultures that live in proximity of one another, or especially between those who live in the same village or city. Not saying it's impossible, but the task becomes extremely difficult. Biblical scholars struggle with the same dilemma when they try to distinguish ancient Israelite structures from those of their neighbors. They typically look the same. Without textual support archaeologists are generally unable to distinguish between the two.

One of the big problems with New World archaeological discoveries is the extremely small sampling of readable texts that have been discovered in lands and times which match with areas and periods where/when the Book of Mormon peoples would have lived. As with the ancient Israelites, it becomes impossible to distinguish—without textual evidence—who were Nephites and who were non-Nephites.

Critics seem to think (and unfortunately some members fall into the same trap) that we should be able to find a mural of Moroni riding a horse, brandishing a metal sword and either wearing a name-badge that says "Captain Moroni" or captioned with text on the mural which says: "Moroni—yes, the Moroni mentioned in the Book of Mormon—rides into battle."

But is that what we really could expect? How about if we just found an ancient inscription that said, "This clay pot belongs to Gadianton who stole it from Helaman." But of course this wouldn't be written in English, it would be written in some ancient American language, or hieroglyphs, or memes. It would have to be *translated* into English.

Do we suppose that Gadianton (with all of our 9 Roman letters) automatically has a one-for-one letter equivalent (both graphically and phonetically) in all other foreign languages? Do all other languages use consonants and vowels in the same manner that they are used in modern English? Hebrew doesn't. Ancient Hebrew script had no vowels. What kind of vowel/consonant word syntax would we find in ancient Nephite language?

Take the name *Alexander* for example. In Czech the equivalent is Alda, in German Alec, and in Italian it's Alessandro. Now if the name Alexander were a unique Book of Mormon name and if Alessandro were really an ancient American name discovered on a tomb, critics would think that the Mormons were trying to pull a fast one by claiming that the two names were equivalent—in fact critics have tried very hard to make that very argument when Mormons have shown them that the ancient Arabian location of NHM is a solid match for the Book of Mormon's Nahom (but that's another story for another time).

The "no archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon" argument is really nothing more than a flimsy accusation thrown out by typically uninformed critics (and, on a rare occasion by should-know-better critics) who take a naïve and unrealistic approach to what archaeology could possibly say about the Book of Mormon.

7) LDS apologists [defenders of the faith] typically claim that the real Hill Cumorah was somewhere in Mesoamerica. This contradicts the teachings of Joseph Smith and the Church—there's a Hill Cumorah Pageant in Palmyra every year for crying out loud!

Answer: Joseph wasn't the first to call the hill which entombed the plates "Cumorah" and even if he was, there is no evidence that a revelation was given designating the hill as Cumorah. Some early Mormon (probably one of the Pratt brothers) seems to have been the first to dub the Palmyra hill "Cumorah" for the likely reason that he thought it made sense. There is no denying that early Latter-day Saints typically understood their local vicinity as having been the home to Book of Mormon events. Heck, there were all kinds of bones scattered in and under the earth—surely this is where the Book of Mormon took place.

Using the best logic, intuition, and evidence of the day, it *did* make sense. This is once again, however, a human approach—a scientific approach, if you will. Scientists and laypersons alike see patterns and formulate hypotheses based on initial indicators and evidence. In rigorous modern academic research, scientists and scholars dig deep to verify or falsify a theory. In math and physics ("hard sciences") this is typically easier to do than in the humanities ("soft sciences").

2+2=6; it's easy to check the accuracy of this conclusion. The claim that the first humans arrived in the New World 13,000 years ago is not so easily proven and may be open to debate. The "13,000 years ago" would be the current *earliest* date for which we can provide evidence. If no bones are ever found to dispute this claim, that doesn't mean that our timeline is settled—bones aren't always found. What it means is that the latest theory on the first American populations is based on the best evidence currently available.

So, if I haven't lost you on this one yet—back to Cumorah in New York. Without revelation on the matter, the early brethren—including Joseph Smith—were free to use their own logic, reasoning, and acceptance or rejection of evidence to formulate their own theories and opinions. Based on the best evidence of the day, the bones on the Midwestern plains seemed to match pretty well with stories from the Book of Mormon. They knew that Mormon had buried plates in the hill Cumorah and that Joseph Smith dug the golden plates out of a nearby hill, so it just made sense that this hill was the Hill Cumorah of the Book of Mormon.

Interestingly enough, it should be noted that as new evidence emerged on the early inhabitants of Mesoamerica, Joseph Smith apparently rethought his views about Book of Mormon geography and might have favored the Central American region for Book of Mormon events. Just like those who study science and scholarship, Joseph Smith changed his views based on better evidence (*not revelation, better evidence*).

From the view of current scholarship, a Hill Cumorah in Palmyra New York isn't feasible. Reading the Book of Mormon with a more discerning eye reveals that Mormon buried all of the plates *except* the golden plates in the Hill Cumorah. So wherever the plates were buried, the one place we know they *weren't buried* was in the Hill Cumorah. In other words, Moroni might have buried the plates in a hill he called "Harvey's Hill," or any other name *save Cumorah* (unless, of course, he decided to dub this new New York hill "Cumorah" in the same way we find the city of "Paris" in Idaho).

8) The New World Archaeological Foundation (NWAF) was created in the 1950s & 60s by the Church in order to find evidence for the Book of Mormon.

Answer: Baloney. It was created to study Mesoamerica and was mostly populated (and lead) by top non-LDS Mesoamerican scholars. Thomas Stuart Ferguson, a sharp businessman who helped get the NWAF off the ground, is quoted in the CES Letter as saying that the Book of Mormon doesn't fit what is found in Mesoamerica. That's interesting. I also wonder what President David O. McKay's barber thought about the location of the Book of Mormon.

First, Ferguson was not a professional archaeologist—he was a lawyer who had a passionate interest in archaeology. Lots of Latter-day Saints today on the blogosphere have a passionate interest in Book of Mormon archaeology—should we take their (often conflicting) geographies as authoritative because of their interest? What a mess of a map that would create! Or, instead, should we evaluate their arguments based on the strength of the evidence they present?

Secondly, even if Ferguson were a professional archaeologist, what would that prove other than that an archaeologist in the 1960s didn't think the Book of Mormon fit Mesoamerica? Yikes! That's it; throw in the towel and close up shop. No other LDS scholar should even bother examining the issue; the matter is settled. Based on the logic of the CES Letter we (and critics) should *automatically* accept the view of modern LDS archaeologists, like Mark Wright or John Clark, because—as bona fide Mesoamerican archaeologists—they *do* believe that the geography fits the ancient Mesoamerican landscape. I personally agree with Clark and Wright because they have produced some interesting correlations between the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerica. I value their understanding of the data and interpretation of the evidence because of their expertise, but I accept their views because of the strength of their arguments.

9) The Book of Mormon contains proper nouns (people and place names) that are strikingly similar to city names found in Joseph Smith's environment.

Answer: "Real tomato ketchup, Eddie?" (Clark Griswold to Cousin Eddie, *Vacation*). This is one of those claims that would be humorously ironic if not for the fact that it has caused some members' testimonies to stumble. Critics who throw up their hands and reject the *much stronger* evidence of Arabia's Nahom (which is in the right place, and the right time, and marks a direction where an ancient trail turns at the right time and leads to a second location that supports another Book of Mormon geographical marker at the right place at the right time with the right resources) jump with excitement at the supposed similarities between some of the names in Joseph Smith's vicinity and proper nouns in the Book of Mormon.

Critics know (or maybe they don't—see the whaler's Camora tale below) that their argument lacks punch unless they can show that the proper nouns were readily accessible to Joseph Smith—thereby giving the illusion that they were names he sponged from his environment.

There are at least four major problems with the critics' theory that Joseph pilfered names from his environment when writing the Book of Mormon: 1) Many of the cities on the list aren't even close to what we find in the Book of Mormon; 2) Some of the cities were not even known by their current names in Joseph Smith's day; 3) The locations of the cities don't match what we should expect for a map of Book of Mormon geography; and 4) If you draw a large enough circle over any group of cities, you'll find a bunch of coincidental similarities.

The size of the circle which critics include for Book of Mormon names is almost 200,000 square miles in area. LDS researchers have shown that the same Gee-this-looks-like-a-Book-of-Mormon-name game can be played by drawing a circle around Virginia or Hawaii—areas smaller than the critics' map—with even greater success. This is known as the "sharp shooter's fallacy."

Jimbo claims he is an expert marksman. To prove his point he shows you the side of a barn with 10 bullet holes all confined inside of chalk-drawn circle. After Jimbo walks away with a smile, Linda-Kay tells you that Jimbo was shooting at the knot-hole on one of the wood slats on the barn's wall. Not one bullet hit the knot-hole—didn't even come close. But *after* finishing his 10 shots, he drew a circle around the bullet holes making it appear that his aim was the circle instead of the knot-hole.

In the critics' scenario, Joseph is a clever conman who—while dictating text with his eyes obscured from light and sight (more on this later)—could create a long textually cohesive and consistent story involving many characters with progeny, wars, detailed and interlocking geographic details (all without having previous passages read back), while simultaneously fabricating on-the-fly complex chiastic structures (a form of Hebrew poetry), moving and theologically rich speeches, as well as seemingly unique character names that parallel real old world counter parts. Somehow, however, as his creative juices were pouring out to his scribe, Joseph was unable to think up fake city names so he plagiarized from names in his environment (a 200,000 square mile area of environment).

If we would apply the critics' theory to Joseph Smith's dictation process we might end up with something like this: Nearly every time Joseph needed to plug a city name into the Book of Mormon (the fictional creation of which proved too overwhelming for his meager intellect) he would pull one from his fabulous memory of city names scattered in the northeastern part of the United States and Canada.

Inside the critics' version of Joseph Smith's mind:

Hellam, Mantua, Lehigh, Rama, Oneida, Kishkiminetas—they sound like great names that I can tweak a bit and read off to Oliver Cowdery, passing them off as real Book of Mormon city and people names. I can't use the original un-tweaked names because then Oliver would know that I'm borrowing the names from our environment. Alma, Boaz, Jordan, Shiloh—I really like these names as well but can't, for the life of me, figure out how to tweak them so Oliver won't recognize that I just cribbed them from cities just a few thousand miles away. Darn! If only I could figure out how to tweak these difficult names, or if I were only smart enough and creative enough to come up with my own city names then I wouldn't have to worry about Oliver spotting my con.

And, of course, according to the critics, the ruse worked. Neither Oliver, nor Sidney Rigdon, nor the brightest believer (nor critic) ever noticed, until 1983, that a big chunk of the names in the Book of Mormon felt perfectly at home in Joseph's own backyard (he had a big backyard which must have been a bummer to mow). How dumb people must have been back then. Here they lived in the midst of these city names, but never noticed the parallels. It wasn't until someone could look at a really big map (a map that could cover around 200,000 miles) before the obvious became apparent—Joseph stole some of these names outright, and others he tweaked to fit his fictional creation.

The one exception to the *local* city-sponged names is the island of Camora near

Madagascar. Since this is a long way from Joseph's backyard, the young lad must have heard it—assure the critics—from the many whalers who traveled through Palmyra and mentioned the city in their whale tales (literally, "whale tales") as well as from treasure digging stories of Captain Kidd who was rumored to have buried treasure on the island.

First, there is no evidence that stories of "Camora" were being circulated in Joseph's vicinity (or that it was mentioned in any Captain Kidd stories in his day). Second, we have to ask some questions about Joseph's supposed use of Camora as well as all the other cities which he supposedly lifted from his more local environment: Why? What in the world would be Joseph's reason?

Trying to understand this from a critic's point of view—based on the theory above (the one in Joseph Smith's backyard)—it seems that Joseph really liked the name Camora. And what luck; he had found a city name he could sponge from a foreign land because not a single local town's name would work. Why? Why wouldn't a local name work when they supposedly worked for other Book of Mormon cities? The critics don't tell us.

Can't use a local name again, Joseph must have thought, *or I'll get busted. Nineteen plagiarized local names is the limit—twenty, too much. This time I'd better choose a name from a faraway land.*

But, there was that pesky problem again of it being recognized by more educated citizens than himself. After all *everybody* in town had heard the whaler and treasure digging stories about Camora.

All I have to do is change a couple of letters. I'll change the first "a" to a "u" and stick an "h" on the end and no will notice! Camora/Cumorah! They probably sound the same—but boy they look different. Maybe DC Comic Books stole Joseph Smith's way of fooling people when they created the Clark Kent/Superman characters—just stick on some glasses and voila! They may sound the same (voices) but they look completely different—unrecognizable to even the most brilliant cops and criminals.

Once again, the ruse (according to the critics' theory) obviously worked. No one—not anyone from Joseph's family or town or any of the local whalers, ministers, scholars, treasure diggers, believers, or critics—noticed that Joseph simply cloaked Camora in a fancy new dress.

10) View of the Hebrews *(first published in 1823) tells a story remarkably similar to the one told in the Book of Mormon (published in 1830).*

Answer: The first European settlers in America wondered about the origin of the Native Americans. Considering the fact that nearly all New Englanders believed in the Flood, the early Americans *had* to have come from the Old World in *some* fashion. The dispersion of the 10 lost tribes offered a convenient explanation—which would mean that the Native Americans might have retained former Hebrew-like characteristics or customs. Ethan Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) published *View of the Hebrews* to highlight the Hebrew/Native American connection.

Latter-day Saints, of course, don't believe that the Book of Mormon came to the New World as part of the 10 tribe dispersion, and most academic members believe that the Americas were originally populated (at least in large part) by migrations over 10,000 years ago through what is now referred to as the Bering Strait. Any similarities between the Book of Mormon and *View of the Hebrews* are coincidental and superficial (see the "sharp shooter's fallacy" in #9). There are far more dissimilarities than there are similarities. In fact, many of the things which *View of the Hebrews* presents as strong evidence for the Hebrew origin of the Native Americans are completely missing from the Book of Mormon.

A number of the parallels between the two books are really not parallels at all. Both books mention the destruction of Jerusalem, for example, but *View of the Hebrews* refers to the Roman attack in AD 70 while the Book of Mormon refers to the Babylonian attack in 586 B.C. Both claim that Hebrew speaking people came to the Americas but *View of the Hebrews* claims they came by land—over the Bering Strait—while the Book of Mormon tells us they came by boat. There are a number of other such "unparallels" between the two works.

While some critics today theorize that Joseph Smith stole many of the elements from *View of the Hebrews* to incorporate into the Book of Mormon, this apparently went unnoticed by the critics in Joseph Smith's own day. Critics claim that since Ethan Smith (the author of *View of the Hebrews*) was Oliver Cowdery's pastor (in 1823) that Oliver (who later became Joseph's scribe) was instrumental in getting Joseph Smith to borrow details from *View of the Hebrews*. Interesting how none of Oliver's other parishioners pointed this out.

> *Hey, wait a minute. Aren't you the same Oliver Cowdery that once sat next to me at Church taking notes of the all the cool Hebrew-Indian connections that reverend Ethan Smith used to tell us in Church? And now you put some of those same characteristics in the Golden Bible?! Come on, who are trying to fool?*

The only early Mormon-related reference to *View of the Hebrews* (of which I'm aware) comes from Joseph Smith himself who, in a *Time and Seasons* article (the LDS newspaper of the day), briefly quotes from *View of the Hebrews* in support of the Book of Mormon. Yeah—a very con-man-like thing to do.

> *I stole the material from View of the Hebrews and now I'll quote the same book in support for my own creative work.*

What makes this all the more interesting is that Joseph Smith actually missed some of the really good stuff contained in *View of the Hebrews*—supposed evidences that really tied the Native Americans to the Hebrews. According to Ethan, the Native Americans had an imitation Ark of the Covenant, practiced circumcision, and observed the Passover—none of which are mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Ethan claimed that the early Native Americans utilized a large number of temple-related symbols and rituals such as robes of the High Priest (including the Ephod), ritual purification, and washings. Never mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith missed some of the coolest parallels and instead settled for parallels that are tenuous at best. Why even bother borrowing from a book that supplies so little fodder? In 1996 BYU republished *View of the Hebrews* so anyone can make their own comparison and see for

themselves just how dissimilar they are.

11) Critics like to claim that Elder B.H. Roberts (a member of the Quorum of the Seventy in the late 1800s) faltered in his testimony, in part, because of a study he wrote detailing supposed parallels between the Book of Mormon and View of the Hebrews.

Answer: First, it should be understood that even if the critics are right, it would be sad but not in any way detrimental to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Each person lives ultimately by faith and must come to their own conclusion regarding the truthfulness of spiritual things. While it hasn't happened in many years, we know that some past Church leaders of high-standing fell into apostasy. These individual episodes of apostasy speak about *their* beliefs and/or actions; they do not reveal anything about the nature of the truth of the Church.

Second, the actual evidence (and when I say "evidence" I mean the overwhelming majority of all the things we have that were written or said by Roberts) demonstrates that he was a faithful, believing member until his death. So why the preoccupation with *View of the Hebrews*? It's really not so peculiar—Roberts was an intellectual and understood that to really show the strength of a position, you often have to focus on any potential weaknesses. Roberts played devil's advocate. Only by gathering together all the possible arguments that might suggest that the Book of Mormon was a 19th century fictional creation could one really argue that the book was not a product of its time.

12) The Late War Between the United States and Great Britain *was an 1819 textbook written in KJV style language for New York state school children including, possibly, Joseph Smith. The book uses similar language to what is found in the Book of Mormon—including phrases like "it came to pass," "rod of iron," "curious workmanship," and a "stripling" soldier.*

Answer: The fact that the book was written in KJV English means, of course, that the book sounds not only like the Bible (the KJV Bible) but also the Book of Mormon (which, as noted in #1 was also dictated into KJV English). This, however, is really where the similarities between the two books end. There are going to be a handful of words or phrases that are similar or even identical—you can pull any two modern English books off the shelf and find similar words or phrases as well.

The "stripling" soldier in the *Late War*, for example, is a single soldier. In the Book of Mormon, the word is used to describe an army of 2000 young men. Webster's 1828 dictionary tells us that a stripling was simply a tall slender youth and we find the use of the term "stripling" throughout Joseph Smith's world (part of his "language") and frequently find it used in connection with soldiering.

We have, for example, the 1836 drama, "The Stripling: A Tragedy by Joanne Baillie." Novelist Miss Ellen Pickering refers to striplings (often in combat) in her 1845 novel *The Squire*,[7] as well as *Prince and the Peddler*,[8] and again in the *Merchant's Daughter*.[9] A "stripling soldier" is mentioned in Mary R. T. McAboy's poem, "Comrade, Is My Mother Coming?" published in 1884.[10] An 1840 military guide which detailed the regulations for dealing with new recruits refers

to "stripling soldiers" as young new recruits.[11] "The Siege of Rhodes," a short story by Bertrand De La Croix (published in 1831), mentions a "stripling soldier"[12] as well. The list could go on. Does the fact that these publications were all printed *after* the Book of Mormon mean that they *sponged from* Joseph's translation?

If, in revelation, Joseph Smith saw that he needed an English expression to designated young adult male warriors—and he necessarily had to draw upon the language of his day—the term "stripling soldiers" would have perfectly met that intent. "Stripling" and "soldier" are not words invented by Joseph Smith. They are words chosen from his language to convey ideas.

The CES Letter claims that the *Late War's* use of "curious workmanship" in connection to weapons is one of the evidences which tie it to the Book of Mormon. While the Book of Mormon's Book of Ether uses the phrase in connection with weapons of war, other passages in the Book of Mormon use the phrase to describe the Liahona as well as ship building. Is the phrase unique to the Book of Mormon and the *Late War*? Well, *no*. A little searching demonstrates that an 1834 edition of the *North American Magazine* describes Indian armor "of curious workmanship" in a collection in a London museum.[13]

We can sleep better at night, however, knowing that the magazine's editor didn't steal the phrase from Joseph Smith. Apparently this weirdly unique phrase—"curious workmanship"—that somehow ties every usage to the Book of Mormon, was mentioned in an 1820 book entitled *Scraps for the Curious*. In this book a hawk was given to a foreign statesman, and the hawk was wearing a golden collar of "curious workmanship."[14]

You see, like the words "the" and "it," the phrase "curious workmanship" was part of Joseph's English language. We find, for example, the 1822 use of the phrase to describe an Egyptian ram's head in a book of universal geography.[15] Similarly we find that an 1854 book about Ireland describes chessboards, swords and shields of "curious workmanship."[16]

As far as I can tell, the phrase "curious workmanship" was used in Joseph's day to describe something not only unusual, but often foreign. Two of the three times the phrase is used in the Book of Mormon are in passages that suggest something foreign or unusual. The Liahona appears at Lehi's tent (1 Nephi 16:10); and the Lehites build a ship in a foreign land with building instructions received by God (1 Nephi 18:1).

In Ether 10:27 the phrase is appended to Moroni's translation of the various things going on with the Jaredites under the leadership of King Lib. These things included working with ore, cloth, agricultural tools, and weapons. These things may have sounded unusual or foreign to Moroni (who added the phrase which Joseph Smith translated as "curious workmanship"). Five verses prior to the phrase "curious workmanship" we read that the Jaredites "did buy and sell and traffic one with another, that they might get gain" (v.22) which certainly could refer to trading and bartering with *foreigners* in the land and hence the possible use of "curious workmanship" to refer to some of the foreign items of trade.

So when Joseph Smith needed an English phrase to describe something unusual or foreign he chose one from his language which described what he was trying to convey. How utterly

presumptuous of Joseph to use English language idioms to translate a foreign text into… the English language. The nerve!

Lastly (at least on this topic—sorry to get your hopes up that this book was almost done; you were probably wondering what was on the rest of the pages—doodles?) it should be pointed out that stylometric studies (word prints) show that the Book of Mormon and the *Late War* are very far apart in their use of King James writing styles, and therefore it is extremely unlikely that the Book of Mormon copied or borrowed from the *Late War*.

13) The First Book of Napoleon, The Tyrant of the Earth *(1809) has similar language to that found in the Book of Mormon.*

Answer: The similarities between the Book of Mormon and the *The First Book of Napoleon* don't extend beyond the fact that both use language that is similar to the King James Bible. Stylometric studies show (like they do with the *Late War*) that the Book of Mormon and *The First Book of Napoleon* are very far apart in their use of King James writing styles. It's extremely unlikely that the Book of Mormon copied or borrowed from the *The First Book of Napoleon*.

The CES Letter highlights a number of supposed parallel word usages between the Book of Mormon and *The First Book of Napoleon* that seem to support a borrowing. In one example, the CES Letter pulls selected text from the Book of Mormon and compares it with text taken from *The First Book of Napoleon*. This is how it appears in the CES Letter:

> *The First Book of Napoleon*:
> Condemn not the (writing)…an account…the First Book of Napoleon…upon the face of the earth…it came to pass…the land…their inheritances their gold and silver and…the commandments of the Lord…the foolish imaginations of their hearts…small in stature…Jerusalem…because of the perverse wickedness of the people.

> *Book of Mormon*:
> Condemn not the (writing)…an account…the First Book of Nephi…upon the face of the earth…it came to pass…the land…his inheritance and his gold and his silver and…the commandments of the Lord…the foolish imaginations of his heart…large in stature…Jerusalem…because of the wickedness of the people.

Looks pretty impressive. This is where it might be handy to recall "Operation Mincemeat" and Major William Martin's cadaver with the handcuffed attaché case. The "evidences" were real items. Real dead-guy, real briefcase, real photos. The pieces-parts were all real, but the picture they painted was false. So let's take a closer look at the CES Letter's Napoleon/Book of Mormon comparison.

While the two comparisons appear to be comparisons between paragraphs from the two books this is not what we find upon a detailed inspection. Instead, we discover that the parallels were constructed by way of the creative use of ellipses. Technically, ellipses indicate missing

words. While they can correctly be used to indicate missing sentences or even pages, the CES Letter gives the impression (intentionally in my opinion) that the material quoted in the text comes from words grouped fairly close together—maybe within a single paragraph or page.

Caveat Lector, or reader beware! Here is the Book of Mormon section with indicators for the original source of each component separated by ellipses:

> Condemn not the (writing) [Title Page] …an account [Title Page] … the First Book of Nephi…upon the face of the earth [1 Nephi 1:11]… it came to pass [1 Nephi 1:5]… the land [1 Nephi 2:11]… his inheritance and his gold and his silver and [1 Nephi 2:11]… the commandments of the Lord [1 Nephi 2:10]… the foolish imaginations of his heart [1 Nephi 2:11]… large in stature [1 Nephi 2:16]… Jerusalem [1 Nephi 2:13]… because of the wickedness of the people [1 Nephi 3:17].

You'll notice that the Book of Mormon material was collected from pages spanning the Book of Mormon Title page and *three chapters*! But wait, there's more (as the TV pitchman would say). The *Napoleon* "parallel" material was taken from a span of 25 pages. This looks like a game that's fun for the whole family. Can I play?

> "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:26).

> "...and…who... lives and …believes in [me] ...shall never... die.... Believe… you… this?" (Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*).

> "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

> "then… spoke… [God]… to them... saying... I am the… light of... the world[:]… he… that… follows… me... will not… walk… in... the dark… but will… have the… light of… life" (Richard Dawkins, again *The Selfish Gene*).

Who knew that Richard Dawkins was a closet Christian?

While my "parallels" from Dawkins' book spanned many pages, I must admit to being a bit lazy in choosing my un-ellipsed verses (if "un-ellipsed" can be considered a word) from individual verses taken from the New Testament book of John. The author(s) of the CES Letter were much more industrious. Their Book of Mormon parallel was culled from a span of 7 pages— providing them, just as with the "sharp shooter's fallacy," a larger area from which to select a bullseye.

LDS scholar Jeff Lindsay[17] has shown that there are a number of striking parallels between the Book of Mormon and Walt Whitman's *The Leaves of Grass*. Why doesn't the CES Letter include *The Leaves of Grass* in addition to the *Late War* and *The First Book of Napoleon* in its list of books from which Joseph plagiarized? Because *The Leaves of Grass* was published in 1855— 25 years *after* the Book of Mormon.

14) The Book of Mormon teaches a Trinitarian God (3 in 1 God) instead of a God as three separate personages as taught by the LDS Church today.

Answer: First, so what if it did? Assuming that the official 1838 First Vision account is truthful and accurate (which I do), why would Joseph Smith hold a Trinitarian view of the Godhead if he personally saw God the Father and Jesus Christ as separate and embodied beings a few years earlier in the Sacred Grove? Just because he saw them as separate beings doesn't mean he immediately understood the significance and implications regarding a new view of the Godhead. In the book of Acts 7:55 Stephen saw Jesus sitting on the right hand of God, yet a large number of Christians (who all accept the Bible as "true") believe that this vision still fits in line with their belief in a Godhead that consists in three manifestations of a single divine being.

Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that we agreed with the claim that the Book of Mormon taught a Trinitarian Godhead. Would that make the Nephite record less true? Would it negate the claim that Christ's Church was restored in modern times? Why would we expect that the Nephites understood the Godhead to the fuller extent that we understand it today? I'm pretty sure we're going to learn a lot more about the Godhead in the hereafter, does this mean that we don't know anything about the Godhead today?

For some reason at least a few critics (and, unfortunately, a number of members) seem to the think that Alma's church was just like a modern LDS sacrament meeting—minus the organ and cheerios. Alma's home teachers probably approached Alma on the last Sunday of the month hoping to pop by after Church; the 12 year-old Nephite boys probably passed the sacrament in hand-woven baskets after the teachers had torn the brown edges off of the ancient Mesoamerican tortillas; and the bishop's second counselor was trying to keep his eyes open in the heat while fanning off the flies.

As noted in #1 God doesn't download the entire theo-cosmological textbook to every prophet. He speaks to us—all of us—in our language.

Having said this, however, I *don't agree* that the Book of Mormon does teach a Trinitarian Godhead. First, as LDS scholars have pointed out, the Book of Mormon's view of the Godhead is actually very much in line with early Israelite views—which were *not* found in the Trinitarian views of Joseph Smith's day.[18]

Second, a thorough reading of the Book of Mormon shows that while some verses are ambiguous and might be interpreted to support a Trinitarian God, a large portion of the verses are less ambiguous and denote that Jesus and the Father are two separate beings. After the initial printing of the Book of Mormon Joseph went through the book and changed the more ambiguous verses to clarify the differences between the Father and the Son.[19]

The critics' argument is, once again, based on a superficial reading of the text with the end goal of mining the book to find the parallels they want to see rather than the more complex parallels that really exist with real old world beliefs.