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The Book of Mormon and the Charge "The Product of One Man of Mediocre Ability" - Part 2

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Abstract: An apologetic work responding to claims that the Book of Mormon is the product of one man of mediocre ability. The author reports the finds of an analysis comparing the styles of different Book of Mormon writers and concludes that the different writers each have different styles. This supports Joseph Smith's claim that he translated the work.

The Book of Mormon

AND THE CHARGE ‘THE PRODUCT OF ONE MAN OF MEDIOCRE ABILITY’

PART **2** *The material in the chart which appeared in the January Era applies to this month's installment as well.*

While attending one of our western universities, the writer approached a professor of ancient civilization with the intention of having an intellectual discussion about Book of Mormon characteristics. Before the discussion could get underway, the professor said in substance, "We all know that Joseph Smith was extremely brilliant, but it is quite evident that he was a great deceiver." I then asked if he had examined the Book of Mormon and he replied, "No, I'm not interested in it." This same pattern, of concluding before examining, characterized most of the criticisms mentioned in Part I of this article. A majority of Book of Mormon criticisms are made with no facts and very few observations to back them up. Such was found to be true, for example, in the criticism of the minister quoted at the first of this article: ". . . 'And it came to pass,' occurred hundreds of times in the Book of Mormon, although the first and the last writers were separated by many centuries of time. . . ." These words by the reverend minister inspired the author to keep a tabulation of "Behold" and "And it came to pass." The results quickly indicated that the minister, like so many other critics of the Book of Mormon spoke without having analyzed the book he was criticizing. The average frequency per 1,000 words of material was:

Behold:

Nephi	Jacob	Mormon	Moroni
4	4	6	8

And it came to pass:

Nephi	Jacob	Mormon	Moroni
6	4	1	1

To return to the analysis of rhetoric in the Book of Mormon, the following observations give evidence of more than one author:

Personification.—The striking figure called "personification" is a vivid embellishment which seems to change a plain message into a panorama of action. In personification, inanimate things are made to appear alive. The earth "groans" (1 Nephi 19:12), "the blood of the Saints cries unto the Lord." (Mormon 8:27.)

Nephi used this type of embellishment slightly more than the other writers but notice the fine quality of Jacob's figures: ". . . and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God. . .", "the hand of providence hath smiled upon you. . .", and ". . . many hearts died, . . ." (Jacob 2:13; 2:35.)

The writings of Mormon were conspicuous with no use of personification in his discourses.

Parallelism.—The antithetical parallelisms of Moroni exceeded the number of the other writers five to one. An example of this type of parallel is:

". . . ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted." (Mormon 8:37.)

Another of the big differences which typified the style of Moroni was the abundant use of logical argument. He used parallelisms to display it in this way:

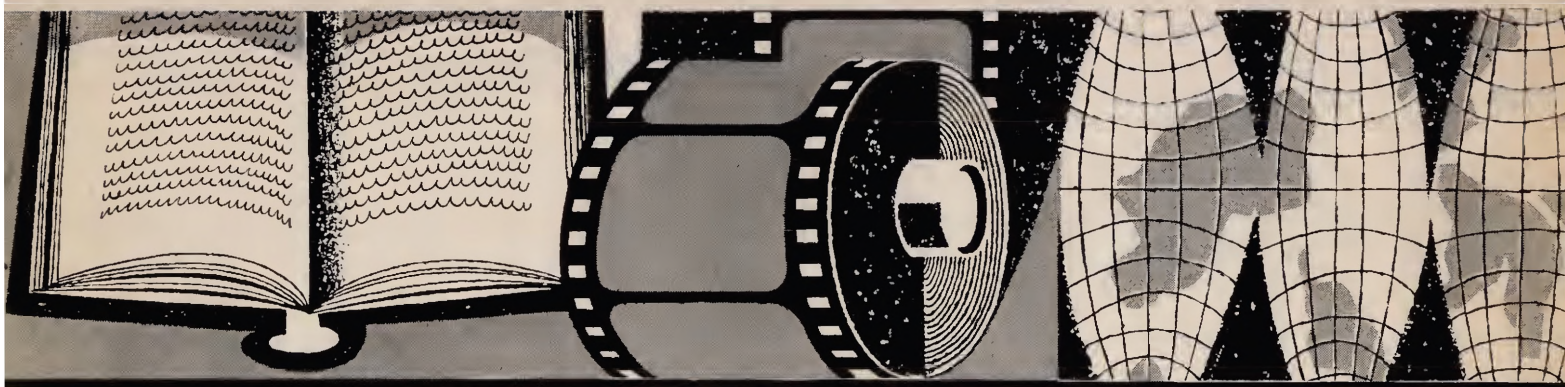
"Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

"And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.

"And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.

"And Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me." (Moroni 10:20-23.)

Rhetorical Question.—The writings of Moroni were



also abundant in the use of question-answer way of teaching, such as:

“. . . when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?

“Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of your guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?” (Moroni 9:2-3.)

The average use of the question type delivery per 100 sentences was:

Nephi	Jacob	Mormon	Moroni
7.5	9.0	3.0	12.0

Exclamation.—Exclamation among the writings of the Book of Mormon seemed to echo the very soul-stirring emotions of the writers: “O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love. . . .” (Jacob 3:2); “O the pain and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people!” (2 Nephi 26:7.) Slightly more exclamation was found in the works of Jacob compared with the others.

Nephi	Jacob	Mormon	Moroni
4	6	4	3

Dialogue.—A striking difference was noticed in the average use of dialogue (making the characters speak) per 100 verses. The writings of Nephi were abundant in dialogue while it was practically lacking in the writings of Mormon:

Nephi	Jacob	Mormon	Moroni
37	17	8	12

Sentence Complexities.—Many times one has heard the prospective Book of Mormon reader exclaim, “I have started the Book of Mormon several times, but I never get past the first few chapters.” We all recognize that “Biblical” styled sentences are at first tedious to follow but in the first pages of the Book of Mormon

an additional difficulty presents itself—a complexity of sentence structure which makes a few sentences extremely “bad English.” In many of his long sentences, the author of Nephi interjected a clause in the middle of another clause when (to our way of thinking) it should not have been there. Or, the author reversed this process and put a subordinate clause or phrase at the end of the sentence rather than by the word it was to modify. Here are some examples:

“And I, Nephi, said unto them: Behold they were manifest unto the prophet by the voice of the Spirit; for by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets, which shall come upon the children of men. . . .” (1 Nephi 22:2.)

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; . . .” (*Ibid.*, 17:11.)

“But ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, who were the armies of the Pharaoh.” (*Ibid.*, 17:27.)

Sudden change of thought (2 Nephi 26:4), a thought started but never finished (1 Nephi 22:6), interjection of subordinate clauses at will (2 Nephi 25:20); and other types of poor sentence structure, are typical of the writings of Nephi. The beauty of these writings, however, is preserved by the choice of figures, embellishments, and the interesting subject matter.

Offhand it would seem that complexities in Nephi are simply the faults of the translator. Glancing at the writings of Mormon and Moroni, the reader does see an improvement which he should expect if he figures that the translator’s ability would improve with experience. But as soon as the reader leaves the writings of Nephi and begins the writings of Jacob he is suddenly aware of a simple, short, clear sentence style which is not duplicated in the other four sections. Not only are Jacob’s sentences shorter and more clear but another personal characteristic appears—the frequent reversal of subject and direct object: “Wherefore, a commandment (Continued on page 134)

of their group or race. This has been done through persuasion, discussions with leaders of the industry, and through other "informal" (rather than legal) channels. Thus it would seem not inappropriate for majority groups to approach also film leaders and engage in discussions on how material particularly offensive to Christian and other religious groups might be eliminated or at least treated in better taste than at present.

When the question is raised as to what parents can do specifically to protect their children from adverse kinds of motion picture and television fare the following suggestions are recommended: Under no circumstances allow your children (including teen-agers) to see motion pictures and TV indiscriminately. Some movies with apparently innocuous titles are frequently the most obscene and/or traumatizing.

If you attend a motion picture or see a television show which you feel to be highly objectionable you might, as you leave the theatre, ask to see the manager and express your feelings to him (or call the TV station). Also, at the next meeting of your civic, service, church, or P-TA group you might suggest that a committee be formed for the purpose of protecting children from being exposed to objectionable, disturbing, and traumatizing motion pictures and TV shows. This committee will have far more weight than you as an individual in approaching the theater manager, TV station, writing your Congressman, etc. You could, in addition, write a letter to your local newspaper expressing your sentiments. Though if it is to be published, it would be best not to give the name of the specific show because this gives it free publicity and will tend to attract curiosity seekers to view it. Writing a letter to one's Congressman (both Senate as well as House representative) expressing your views is often most helpful. Or another course would be to write directly to the Motion Picture Association of America, 8480 Beverly Blvd., Hollywood 48, California (either to Mr. Eric Johnston or Mr. Geoffrey Shurlock). And finally, if a particular theater continues to show offensive films, refuse to patronize them at any time.

Presiding Bishopric's Page

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details of administrative duties that we neglect the spiritual requirements.

What a wonderful practice it was when the prophets of old ascended to the top of the mountains and spent the whole day in supplication. Great strength can accrue to the person who pours out his soul to our Father in heaven, whether in his closet, in the top of the mountains, or in any other secluded place. This soul-searching isn't always convenient, but it is the most profound medication that can be applied.

"We ask for strength and God gives us difficulties which make us strong. We pray for wisdom and God sends us problems, the solution of which develops wisdom. We plead for prosperity and God gives us brain and brawn to work with. We plead for courage and God gives us dangers to overcome. We ask for favors—God gives us opportunities. This is the answer." (*Pamphlets Doctrinal*, Prayer, Hugh B. Brown, p. 16.)

The following is a true case history which shows the need for the bishop to befriend his boys.

Jimmy was fourteen years old, active in his Aaronic Priesthood work, a good athlete, and loved baseball. Since both of his parents and older brother were working, he spent each day during the summer trying to alleviate the burdens of boredom and idleness. Day after day it was the same routine—sleeping late, a bowl of corn flakes for breakfast, watching TV, and playing catch with himself against the side of the house.

Toward the end of the summer, Bill, a new friend, moved into the neighborhood. Bill had no interest in the Church and kept referring to it as a sissy activity. He and Jimmy spent more and more time together, coming home late each night. No one worried about Jimmy because each knew he was a good, clean, active boy; and his conduct was never questioned. However, it seemed to Jimmy that no one was interested in what he was doing. Then a tragedy occurred—Jim was brought home one evening by a policeman. He had been involved in the theft of an automobile. The causes of Jim's involvement

are obvious. He needed not only love and attention, but also someone who cared enough to listen to his problems—someone he trusted. He thought of his bishop, but the bishop always seemed too busy. Fortunately, there is much that the Church can do to give a boy like Jimmy help.

This help must come from you, the bishop. Do not wait until you have troubled waters before be-friending the youth of your ward. As the fisherman of the boys, wrap the net of the gospel around their hearts when all is calm. It is the reaching out and the grasping of the opportunities with patience and love that will fill your boat to overflowing.

The Book of Mormon

(Continued from page 109)

I give you, . . ." (Jacob 3:9),

"And now, this commandment they observed to keep; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 3:6.), ". . . and concubines ye shall have none, . . ." (*Ibid.*, 2:27), or, putting a prepositional phrase used as an adverb at the front: "Now in this thing we do rejoice; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 4:3, 4, and others.)

Jacob also seemed to be an artist in the use of climax:

"But behold, hearken ye unto me, and know that by the help of the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth I can tell you concerning your thoughts, how that ye are beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very abominable unto me, yea, and abominable unto God." (*Ibid.*, 2:5.)

The proof.—Here in the form of the Book of Mormon is a physical, examinable object which can be a means of confirming the actuality of Joseph Smith's experience and the reality of God. The sceptic must agree that if the Book is what Joseph Smith claimed it to be, it is a document which gives the world a transcendent witness to the reality of Jesus Christ as the son of God and the purpose of his mission; it gives much insight on the nature of God and Christ and of the eternal nature of the human individual; it offers light on the mysteries of faith, revelation, suffering, grace, baptism, acquisition of the knowledge of the truth of things, repentance, atonement, destiny, and many other questions which plague the mind for answers; it verifies Old and New

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Testament doctrines and clarifies many debatable and obscure meanings; it offers to a sick world a key to new vistas in living in joy and peace, here and now and into the eternities. The Book of Mormon is extremely important. A witness of the truthfulness of its concepts is paramount. Are all the "Book of Mormon evidence" articles trying to bring about this witness?

The evidences presented here and in the research of the scholars mentioned can demonstrate that the book was not invented by Joseph Smith. But, these articles cannot give the final, motivating answer that the Book of Mormon is inspired of God. If the articles increase trust, and most important, encourage reading the Book of Mormon, they have certainly achieved their purpose. But the "scientific method" is not the whole answer regarding how to know things for sure nor to know the divinity of a thing. Jesus told his disciples that they could be forgiven for denying after seeing and believing. But, if the Holy Ghost gave them knowledge, they could never be forgiven if they denied. (Matt. 12:31.) On another occasion, Jesus told his hearers that they could know if his doctrines were of God by doing the thing the doctrines suggested. (John 7:17.) Both of these principles are combined in Alma 32:27-43, and a real experiment is described by which a reader can come to a testimony of the message of the Book of Mormon.

The motivating proof of the divine nature of the Book of Mormon—the sure, personal evidence that the book is what it purports to be—remains in the reading of it and the personal experience the reader has with its message. By unbiased, methodical examination, one can find ample indication that neither Joseph Smith nor his colleagues could have concocted the Book of Mormon. By prayerful reading, one can feel the power of the book and gain a spiritual witness of its truth. By trying the book's concepts, one can come to a knowledge of their verity. In the Book of Mormon lie means of determining the reality of God and the actuality of Joseph Smith's claims just as surely as one can know the difference between hot and cold, or black and white. The experiment is there, waiting to be tried by the diligent seeker.

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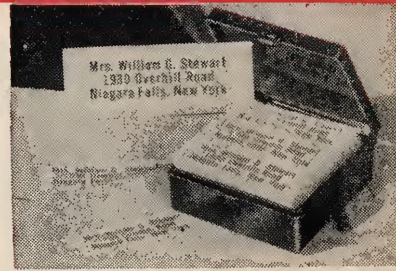
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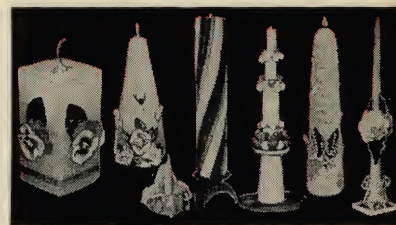
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