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Quotations from Sacred History

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2D. Quotations from Sacred History

(1) A Brief Discussion

Quotations can be considered as a parallel line form, even though they match scriptural passages from another book. Short parallel scriptural phrasings can also be considered as Hebraisms. In his exhaustive 1898 *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated*, E. W. Bullinger listed quotations as one of his figures, and said the following:

The subject of scriptural quotations in the Bible is a large subject and many volumes have been written upon it, both in ancient and in recent times. . . . It is a fact that there are variations between the quotations and the Text quoted from. . . . Sometimes they are direct quotations; at other times, they are composite quotations of several passages joined in one; while others are mere allusions. Consequently, it is difficult for anyone to make a list or table of such quotations which shall agree with those made by others.

The general fact seems to be that there are 189 separate passages quoted (the Lord Jesus Himself referred to 22 out of our 39 Old Testament books). In Matthew, there are references to 88 passages in 10 Old Testament books. In Mark to 37 passages in 10 books. In Luke to 58 passages in 8 books. In John to 40 passages in 6 books.

Deuteronomy and Isaiah, the two books most assailed by the Higher Critics, are referred to more often than any other Old Testament books.

In Romans, there are 74 references. Corinthians, 54. Galatians, 16. Ephesians, 10. Hebrews, 85.

In all, out of 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are 832 quotations, or references, or allusions to the Old Testament Scriptures.

Every Old Testament book is referred to with the exception of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Canticles.

(Source: Bullinger 1898/1968:778-779)

Quotations are numerous in the Book of Mormon. Indeed, as Hugh Nibley wrote in the Church News in 1961 (July 29, pp. 10, 15):

Any biblical scholar knows that it would be extremely suspicious if a book purporting to be the product of a society of pious emigrants from Jerusalem in ancient times did not quote the Bible. No lengthy religious writing of the Hebrews could conceivably be genuine if it was not full of scriptural quotations.

But why does the wording of these quotations match the KJV Bible? Nibley writes:

(Quotations)

As to the "passages lifted bodily from the King James Version," we first ask, "How else does one quote scripture if not bodily?" And why should anyone quoting the Bible to American readers of 1830 not follow the only version of the Bible known to them?

Actually, the Bible passages quoted in the Book of Mormon often differ from the King James Version, but where the latter is correct there is every reason why it should be followed. When Jesus and the Apostles and, for that matter, the Angel Gabriel quote the scriptures in the New Testament, do they recite from some mysterious Urtext? Do they quote the prophets of old in the ultimate original? Do they give their own inspired translations? No, they do not. They quote the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament prepared in the third century B.C. Why so? Because that happened to be the received standard version of the Bible accepted by the readers of the Greek New Testament. When "holy men of God" quote the scriptures, it is always in the received standard version of the people they are addressing.

We do not claim the King James Version of the Septuagint to be the original scriptures—in fact, nobody on earth today knows where the original scriptures are or what they say. Inspired men in every age have been content to accept the received version of the people among whom they labored, with the Spirit giving correction where correction was necessary.

Since the Book of Mormon is a translation, "with all its faults," into English for English-speaking people whose fathers for generations had known no other scriptures but the standard English Bible, it would be both pointless and confusing to present the scriptures to them in any other form, so far as their teachings were correct. (*The Prophetic Book of Mormon: The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Volume 8 The Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, and Provo: FARMS, 1989, p. 215)

Since the time of Bullinger (1898) and Nibley (1961), and as the computer age has moved forward, many more of these "intertextual" passages have come to light. We not only should expect this increased awareness, but in keeping with their role as figures of speech, we should also expect that these parallelisms add to the message of both the Book of Mormon and the Bible.

In their 2007 *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* that has become a standard for bible scholars, the editors G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson address some perspectives that might be of use to Book of Mormon students seeking understanding from parallel bible quotations and phrasing. They write:

All O[ld] T[estament] citations in the N[ew] T[estament] are analyzed as well as all probable allusions. . . . The editors have encouraged each contributor to keep in mind six separate questions where the NT cites or clearly alludes to the OT . . . :

1. What is the NT context of the citation or allusion? . . .
2. What is the OT context from which the quotation or allusion is drawn? . . .
3. How is the OT quotation or source handled in the literature of . . . early Judaism? . . .
4. What textual facts must be borne in mind as one seeks to understand a particular use of the OT? . . .
5. What is the nature of the connection as the NT writer sees it? . . .

6. To what theological use does the NT writer put the OT quotation or allusion? . . .
(Introduction, pp. xxiii-xxv)

Sadly, modern-day detractors of the Book of Mormon do not think this way. They do not focus on these scriptural parallelisms as a teaching form. They would rather focus on the “fact” that many of these lines and phrases are seemingly non-chronological or “anachronistic.” In other words, in the Book of Mormon there are parallels to biblical scripture not written until many years later.

In view of these attacks on the validity of the Book of Mormon text, I would like to offer a few very brief perspectives on what might be missing in the focus and understanding of those who dismiss these phrases as “plagiarism.”

In the very first verse of the very first chapter of 1 Nephi, we encounter the phrase “mysteries of God.” This phrase can be linked to Mark 4:11. It can also be linked to 1 Corinthians 2:7, 4:1, 14:2; Colossians 1:27, 2:2, 4:3; 1 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 10:7. But rather than viewing this as plagiarism, let’s view this as a chance to gain understanding, for that is why scriptural quotations and phrases are considered figures of speech.

In 1 Corinthians 2:7 we find: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a **mystery**, even the **hidden** wisdom, **which God ordained before the world** unto **our** glory."

Mark 4:10,11 states the following:

10 And when he [Jesus] was alone, **they that were about him with the twelve** asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, unto **you** it is given to **know** the **mystery** of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables

Question: What other religion besides the LDS religion believes in a pre-existence (“before the world”), where things were done by "ordination," and where the way for “our glory” was apparently planned?

Answer: No other religion that affords man his free agency.

Question: And who can refute the Savior’s own words that "knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God" (or in Paul’s words, “hidden wisdom”) was to come only to those who would become disciples of Christ (which involved covenant ordinances like baptism and obedience to those covenants)?

Answer: Presumably nobody that believes the Bible.

In the Book of Mormon, the phrase "mysteries of God" appears thirteen times. In view of this, it is not surprising that in the beginning of his record Nephi states:

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, **having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God**, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. (1 Nephi 1:1)

(Quotations)

It is also not surprising that when Paul wrote to the "saints" in Ephesus, he said something that gives more insight into what has previously been quoted by Paul and Nephi:

1:1 Paul, an [ordained] apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the "saints" [or covenant followers] which are at Ephesus . . .

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ

1:4. According as he hath chosen **us** to him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love,

1:5. Having predestinated [or foreordained] **us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will [or the Plan of Salvation which was presented by Christ to us in the pre-existence or "before the foundation of the world"].

3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.

3:3 How that by **revelation** he made **known** unto me the **mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words,

3:4 Whereby, when ye read, **ye** may understand **my knowledge** in the **mystery** of Christ.)

(Ephesians 1:1-5; 3:2-4)

[Note The translated word "predestinated" has come to be understood as an outcome of our lives that has no bearing on our actions. A better word would be "foreordained, which implies promised blessings on the condition of good behavior and covenant obedience.]*

Thus, according to Paul and Nephi, knowledge of the mysteries of God can be obtained by revelation from God, not just by themselves, but by "US" ("ye") also. In fact, they want us to know.

When Jesus Christ appeared to the people in the New World, he "expounded all the scriptures in one."

1 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had told these things he **expounded** them unto the multitude; and he did **expound all things** unto them, both great and small. (3 Nephi 26:1)

14 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had **expounded all the scriptures in one**, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them. (3 Nephi 23:14)

if Jesus Christ is the chief author of the Book of Mormon,

and if Mormon and Moroni said that they were writing to the people of OUR day and time (Moroni 1:4),

and if at the time of the translation of the Book of Mormon, "OUR scripture" was the King James Version of the Bible;

then would not Jesus (the chief author) also try to "expound all the scriptures in one" by using the King James language throughout the Book of Mormon?

And if Jesus truly is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 48:12, Revelations 22:13)

And if Jesus Christ knows all things, or He can SEE the end from the beginning, (Isaiah 44:7-8, 45:21, 48:3,5, John 18:4, Exodus 18:1, 2 Samuel 14:20),

then chronology becomes irrelevant, and the word “anachronistic” is meaningless.

If God or Jesus knows ALL things

and if Jesus wanted to speak in the scriptural “language” of OUR time,

then could He not inspire Nephi, Mormon and Moroni to write in such a way, and inspire Joseph Smith to “translate” in such a way that the “language” of the King James Bible could be used in the Book of Mormon to help expound His teachings in ONE (see Ezekiel 37: 15-20)? What better method in the writing and translation of a concise “abridgment” such as the Book of Mormon than to insert key quotations of words and phrases that intentionally connect the “language” of the Book of Mormon with the “scripture” of our day? Some might call this “plagiarism,” but when the extremely complex structure and setting of the Book of Mormon text is taken into consideration, I believe it constitutes an opportunity for us to learn more about the teachings of Christ.

We have the choice of either rejecting this opportunity or accepting it. Hopefully we won’t proclaim, as Nephi prophesied:

“And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.” (2 Nephi 29:3)

As Moroni wrote:

I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust? (Moroni 10:27)

LDS authorities and scholars have been aware of the biblical quotations and language in the Book of Mormon from its publication in 1830. In 1981, John Hilton and Kenneth Jenkins identified thousands of parallel words and phrases common to both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. However, most were random and trivial with regard to content. In 1986, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies published a 3-volume *Book of Mormon Critical Text*. In these volumes, hundreds of biblical phrases and quotations were footnoted. So now I believe that our ongoing intertextual focus should be to increase our understanding of what these parallel phrases teach us.

Note: For a chronological list of pertinent articles on this subject, see the Sources section.

(Quotations)

(2) A Brief and Partial List of Biblical Phrases in 1 Nephi chapter 1.

In order to give the reader some idea of the intertextual correspondences between the Bible and the Book of Mormon, I have prepared the following list of quoted verses. Most of the references have been taken from the 1986 *Book of Mormon Critical Text*. Because of the length of the list, I have chosen only those phrases coming from chapter 1 of First Nephi.

First Nephi chapter 1

1 Nephi 1:1 “goodly parents”

Compare Psalm 16:6 “I have a goodly heritage”

1 Nephi 1:1 “highly favored of the Lord”

Compare Luke 1:28 “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee”

1 Nephi 1:1 “the mysteries of God”

Compare 1 Corinthians. 4:1 “the mysteries of God”

Compare Revelation 10:7 “In the days . . . of the seventh angel . . . the mystery of God should be finished”

1 Nephi 1:2 “the language of the Egyptians”

Compare Acts 7:22 “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in words and deeds.”

1 Nephi 1:3 “I know that the record which I make to be true”

Compare John 8:14 “Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go”

Compare John 19:34-35 “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side . . . And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

Compare John 21:24 “This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true”

Compare 3rd Epistle of John 1:12 “and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.”

1 Nephi 1:3 “I make it with mine own hand”

Compare Judges 7:2 “lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.”

Compare 1 Samuel 25:33 “avenging myself with mine own hand”

Compare 1 Corinthians 16:21 “The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand”

Compare Galatians 6:11 “Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand”

Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:17 “The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write”

Compare Philemon 1:19 “I Paul have written it with mine own hand”

1 Nephi 1:4 “for it came to pass” (1398 times in the Book of Mormon)

Compare 388 times in the Old Testament, and 65 times in the New Testament.

(Quotations)

- 1 Nephi 1:4 "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah"
Compare 2 Kings 24:17-18 "And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem."
Compare 2 Chronicles. 36:10 "made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem"
Compare Jeremiah 37:1 "
- 1 Nephi 1:5 "with all his heart"
Compare Old Testament (The elements of this phrase appear 15 times)
Compare New Testament (The elements of this phrase appear 3 times)
- 1 Nephi 1:5 "pillar of fire"
Compare Old Testament (The elements of this phrase appear 8 times)
Compare New Testament (The elements of this phrase appear 1 time)
- 1 Nephi 1:7 "being overcome with the Spirit"
Compare Rev. 1:10 "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"
- 1 Nephi 1:7 "things which he had seen"
Compare Luke 9:36 "those things which they had seen"
- 1 Nephi 1:8 "carried away in a vision"
Compare Ezekiel 11:24 "the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea"
Compare Ezekiel 37:1 "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones."
Compare Acts 8:39 "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip"
Compare Revelation 17:3 "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness"
- 1 Nephi 1:8 "He saw the heavens open"
Compare Ezekiel 1:1
Compare 6 times in the N.T. (Matt. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:21, John 1:51, Acts 7:56, Revelation 19:11)
- 1 Nephi 1:8 "he saw God sitting upon his throne surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God"
Compare 1 Kings 22:19 "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left"
Compare Isaiah 6:1,3 "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple"
Compare Luke 2:13 "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God"
Compare Revelation 5:11 "And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne . . . and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands"
- 1 Nephi 1:9 "one descending out of the midst of heaven"
Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16 "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven"
- 1 Nephi 1:11 "their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament"
Compare Daniel 12:3 "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."
Compare Matthew 13:43 "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"
Compare Revelation 12:1 "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars"
- 1 Nephi 1:11 "the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book"
Compare Ezekiel 2:6-10 "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them . . . And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein"

Compare Rev. 5:1 "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside sealed with seven seals. "

Compare Revelation 10:1-2 "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven . . . and his face was as it were the sun . . . and he had in his hand a little book open"

1 Nephi 1:11 "face of the earth "

Compare Old Testament (The elements of this phrase appear 61 times)

Compare New Testament (The elements of this phrase appear 5 times)

Compare Book of Mormon (The elements of this phrase appear 74 times)

1 Nephi 1:12 "filled with the spirit of the Lord"

Compare Ephesians 5:18 "be filled with the spirit"

Compare Exodus 28:3 "unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom"

1 Nephi 1:13 "carried away captive into Babylon"

Compare Jeremiah 39:9 "Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city"

See also Jeremiah 13:19, 27:3-22, 29:7-14; 2 Chronicles 36:12-13

1 Nephi 1:14 "Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty"

Compare Revelation. 15:3 "Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty"

Compare Tobit 13:7; 1 Enoch 39:12-13

1 Nephi 1:14 "the inhabitants of the earth"

Compare Psalm 33:13-14 "The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men, from the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth."

Compare Jeremiah 25:29 " I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts"

Compare Daniel 4:35 "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand"

1 Nephi 1:16 "I Nephi do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written"

Compare the details of Revelation, chapters 4-15

1 Nephi 1:17 "I make an abridgment"

Compare 2 Maccabees 2:25-32

1 Nephi 1:18 "things which I had both seen and heard"

Compare 1 John 1:3 "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you"

1 Nephi 1:19 "And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of . . . of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.

Compare Matthew 27:29 "And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

1 Nephi 1:19 "a Messiah"

Compare Daniel 9:25-26 "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks . . . and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself"

Compare John 1:41 "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ"

Compare John 4:25 "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

(Quotations)

1 Nephi 1:20 "the prophets of old whom they had cast out and stoned and slain"

Compare Jeremiah 26:8-11 "Then spake the [wicked] priests and the [false] prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man [Jeremiah] is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears."

Compare Matthew 5:12 "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Compare Matthew 23:31 "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets."

Compare Romans 11:3 "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars"

1 Nephi 1:20 "the tender mercies"

Compare Psalm 25:6 "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old."

Compare Psalm 40:11 "Withhold not thy tender mercies from me, O Lord; let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me."

Compare Proverbs 12:10 "

Compare Luke 1:77-78 "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us"

Compare James 5:11 "the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy"

1 Nephi 1:20 "He hath chosen them because of their faith"

Compare James 2:5 "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith"

Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:13 "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."