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## Benjamin or Mosiah? Resolving an Anomaly in Mosiah 21:28

Author(s): L. Ara Norwood

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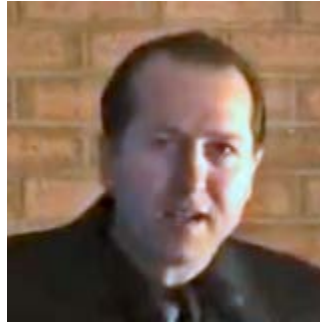
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# Benjamin or Mosiah? Resolving an Anomaly in Mosiah 21:28



**L. Ara Norwood**

This should be an interesting conference, one that combines apologetics and Book of Mormon studies. For those of you who are not familiar with the term, *apologetics*, it does not refer to the notion of giving an apology. Rather, the term refers to giving an answer, as in a defense of the faith. The idea is captured rather well by the Apostle Peter, who wrote as follows:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.<sup>1</sup>

So at this conference we are giving our answers, as it were, relative to this marvelous, magnificent book of scripture called The Book of Mormon! And as the Book of Mormon is a key target of the adversary (as well it should be), we apologists find ourselves with lots of opportunities to explore the Book of Mormon as we seek answers to the challenges our critics raise. And as our critics are, by and large, guided by the spirit of the adversary, or at least by some spirit that is not of God, we find ourselves in the role of reluctant warriors. Reluctant because as disciples of Jesus Christ, we prefer the message of peace as taught by the Prince of Peace; warriors because the battles for the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon are just that—battles!

Now for those of you not familiar with the nature of the battle, you need to understand that the critics of the Book of Mormon have little interest in a true and meaningful dialogue about the Book of Mormon. Instead the posture of most of our critics is to hurl a bevy of criticisms at the Latter-day Saints in the hopes that some argument will persuade some individual Saint to leave the fold. These attacks on the Book of Mormon can involve just about anything imaginable, including whether the

Book of Mormon teachings comport with those of the Bible, or whether the Book of Mormon is internally consistent. The critic might examine the Book of Mormon from the perspective of textual studies, or from the perspective of the authorship question. Invariably, these examinations will be loaded with a spirit of advocacy (i.e., advocating a predetermined position) but largely bereft of any spirit of inquiry or honest exploration.

One of the most common criticisms of the Book of Mormon concerns changes that have occurred in the text over the years. And within this category of criticisms, one of the most interesting involves a textual change involving a proper name, where the name Benjamin was printed in the 1830 edition, but was changed to the name Mosiah in later editions. This actually occurs in two separate passages in the Book of Mormon.

## The Problem

At Mosiah 21:28 of the Book of Mormon, both the Printer's Manuscript and the 1830 edition reads *Benjamin*, while all subsequent editions read *Mosiah*.<sup>2</sup> Why was this change made, and was it warranted?

Similarly, at Ether 4:1 the Printer's Manuscript and the 1830 edition, as well as many of the early editions, all read *Benjamin*, while the later editions, including the current edition, read *Mosiah*.<sup>3</sup> Why was this change made, and is it related to the change in Mosiah 21:28?<sup>4</sup>

## Anti-Mormon Reactions

Considering the nature of this textual change, I am a bit surprised our critics have not made more noise than they have. When one considers that the vast majority of our critics entertain a world-view where the unbiblical notions of biblical inerrancy and infallibility are accepted uncritically and without question, and combined with our eighth Article of Faith wherein we put a qualifier on our acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God but put no such qualifier on our acceptance of the Book of Mormon as the Word of God, one would think the critics would spend much more time on this particular textual anomaly than they have.

Don't get me wrong: they haven't actually been silent, either. Here are a few examples of how our critics have approached this problem. As you listen to these attacks, judge for yourself how much depth of thought has gone into the arguments presented.

In his book *The Kingdom of the Cults*, the late Walter Martin addresses the problem this way:

Since the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, the first edition has undergone extensive “correction” in order to present it in its present form. Some of these “corrections” should be noted.

1. In the book of Mosiah, chapter 21, verse 28, it is declared that “King Mosiah had a gift from God”; but in the original edition of the book, the name of the king was Benjamin—an oversight which thoughtful Mormon scribes corrected. This is, of course, no typographical error as there is little resemblance between the names Benjamin and Mosiah; so it appears that either God made a mistake when He inspired the record or Joseph made a mistake when he translated it. But the Mormons will admit to neither, so they are stuck, so to speak, with the contradiction.<sup>5</sup>

Note that Martin’s inerrancy mind-set allows for only two possibilities: either God goofed up, or Joseph Smith blew it when he translated the record (Martin’s preferred explanation). Nowhere is there any critical analysis of a possible scribal error, or of an examination of the chronology, or an examination of the intricacies of the text, nor is there any consideration of the key figures in the story, since it is assumed that such figures as Ammon, Limhi, and Mormon are figments of Joseph Smith’s fertile imagination.

A second witness against the Book of Mormon is the husband-and-wife team of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. In discussing the topic of textual changes, they write as follows:

Another important change was made in Mosiah 21:28. In this verse the name of the king has been changed from Benjamin to Mosiah. In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon we read as follows:

“... king **BENJAMIN** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; . . .”  
(Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 200)

In modern editions of the Book of Mormon this verse has been changed to read:

“... king **MOSIAH** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; . . .”  
(Book of Mormon, 1964 edition, page 176, verse 28)

It would appear from chronology found in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 6:3-7 and 7:1), king Benjamin should have been dead at this time, and therefore the Mormon Church leaders evidently felt that it was best to change the king’s name to Mosiah.<sup>6</sup>

The Tanners then go on to summarize some of the published comments on this issue by Sidney B. Sperry, which comments I will examine momentarily. In their comments cited above, however, it is easy to see that the Tanners did a smidgen more analysis than had Walter Martin, in that the Tanners brought up the idea that, based on their understanding of Book of Mormon chronology, Benjamin should have been deceased at the time Mosiah 21:28 was written. However, in terms of an in-depth, penetrating, or thoughtful analysis on this matter, we find none coming from the Tanners.

So we turn now to John Weldon, who coauthored a highly polemical book that also has televangelist John Ankerberg's name prominently displayed. Now, Weldon boasted of holding several advanced degrees (including two doctorates) so presumably we would be looking at a publication of seasoned scholarship. Well, I hate to disappoint you, but here is what we get from John Weldon:

As we have seen, Mormons who admit to Book of Mormon changes may claim that they are grammatical only and that the basic *meaning* of the text has never been changed. This is also false. For example, the 1830 edition of Mosiah 21:28 refers to King Benjamin while modern editions read "King Mosiah." According to Mormon chronology, Benjamin was dead and so no longer king at this point (Mosiah 6:3-7; 7:1), so the divinely inspired name was changed to King *Mosiah* to *cover the error*.<sup>7</sup>

From Dr. Weldon, we get the impression that Mormons, as a general rule, do not admit to textual changes in the Book of Mormon, but when they do, they will only admit to grammatical changes that do not change the basic meaning of the text. Along with that straw man, there is the subtle notion that there is some sort of conspiracy, some vast cover-up operation at work here. Again, apart from making the same comment about chronology that the Tanner's make (along with the exact same scriptural references), Weldon offers no substantive analysis. He was content to take his few pot shots and then move on to other targets.

Finally, let me share the spunk and fervor of James White of Alpha & Omega Ministries. In his first of several publications attacking the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, White wrote a book comprised of fictitious letters he "wrote" to a fictional full-time LDS missionary about White's very real angst over LDS truth claims:

Changes of an historical nature have been made as well. Seemingly Joseph became confused as to which king was which, and who was supposed to be alive at what time, while dictating the book of Mosiah. On page 200 of the 1830 Book of Mormon we read,

And now Limhi was again filled with joy, on learning from the mouth of Ammon that *king Benjamin* had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; yea, and Ammon did also rejoice.

This passage is to be found in the modern edition in Mosiah chapter 21. The problem is fairly obvious, for Mosiah 6:5 reads, “And king Benjamin lived three years and he died.” Fifteen chapters later, however, he is alive and well in the 1830 Book of Mormon. The modern edition reads,

28 And now Limhi was again filled with joy on learning from the mouth of Ammon that ***king Mosiah*** had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; yea, and Ammon also did rejoice.

White goes on to taunt his fictitious correspondent, “Who had this gift, Elder Hahn? Was it Benjamin or Mosiah?”<sup>8</sup> Once again, we see slightly more thought—but only slightly more—put into the issue before us. White has tried to shape the problem with a little more detail by delineating the number of chapters that separate the account of Benjamin’s death and the passage in Mosiah 21. But here he has unwittingly demonstrated a lack of competence concerning the very nature of the record he is criticizing. Quite simply, James White, like his fellow critics, betrays no real understanding of the issues he is busy attacking.

Before I delve into just what those issues are, it would perhaps be appropriate to survey our own apologetic history and assess who has published information on this question from the LDS camp. I think it also important to assess just how well our own scholars have handled the issues involved with Mosiah 21:28.

## Previous Mormon Explanations

I know of only four previously published attempts by LDS writers, thinkers, or educators. The earliest of these would be Sidney Sperry who taught at BYU from 1932 until his retirement in 1971. In pondering this textual change, Dr. Sperry wrote as follows:

Was it an inadvertent slip of the tongue on the part of Joseph Smith as he dictated his translation to Oliver Cowdery, or did he translate correctly enough an original error on the part of Mormon, the abridger of the Book of Mormon? The last of these suggestions is probably the correct one, for the fact remains that the reading “king Benjamin” is an out-and-out error, because the king had been dead for some time.<sup>9</sup>

In this rather brief comment, Dr. Sperry attributes the anomaly to an error of some sort, either on the part of Joseph Smith, or more likely on the part of Mormon as editor. Sperry shares the assumptions held by the Tanners and some of the other critics that Benjamin would have “been dead for some time” when Mosiah 21:28 was written; short of that, there does not seem to be much in the way of analysis.

Hugh Nibley took a different approach when he made passing reference to the issue as it is found in Ether 4:1, although his comments would apply just as well to the passage in Mosiah 21:28. In his 1967 book, *Since Cumorah*, Nibley was running through a quick survey of some of the textual changes in the Book of Mormon. The portion that concerns us reads as follows:

Sometimes the editors of later editions of the Book of Mormon have made “corrections” that were better left unmade. . . . Was it necessary to change the name of Benjamin (in the first edition) to Mosiah in later editions of Ether 4:1? Probably not, for though it is certain that Mosiah kept the records in question, it is by no means certain that his father, Benjamin, did not also have a share in keeping them. It was Benjamin who displayed the zeal of a life-long book lover in the keeping and studying of records; and after he handed over the throne to his son Mosiah he lived on and may well have spent many days among his beloved records. And among these records could have been the Jaredite plates, which were brought to Zarahemla early in the reign of Mosiah, when his father could still have been living (Mosiah 8:9-15).<sup>10</sup>

With all due respect to Dr. Nibley, this assessment, while largely sound, could stand some tidying up in places. First, to his credit, Dr. Nibley answers his own question of the necessity of the textual change with a rather tentative, “probably not.” Note that Nibley didn’t say “absolutely not”. “Probably not” is an appropriately cautious phrase, for it denotes a leaning, a likelihood, not a certainty. For the record, while I would share Nibley’s use of the phrase “probably not” as it applies to the passage in Mosiah 21:28, I do not share his use of the term as it applies to the passage in Ether 4:1 for reasons I will get to later.

Nibley is also correct in noting that Mosiah was not the only record keeper, an appropriate and accurate statement relative to Ether 4:1 since it is record keeping that is the topic under discussion in Ether 4. However, although Nibley wasn’t discussing Mosiah 21:28 per se, I must hasten to point out that *record keeping* is not the subject matter in the Mosiah passage. Instead, the topic involves *record translating* abilities. Here, Nibley’s comments would be just as accurate were they applied to the Mosiah passage, for we have every reason to believe that both Benjamin and Mosiah were in possession of the gift of translating ancient documents.<sup>11</sup>

I suppose my largest misgivings concern Nibley's statement that "among these records [possessed by Benjamin] could have been the Jaredite plates, . . ." True, they could have been, yet I consider this unlikely, given that Benjamin died somewhere in the neighborhood of three years following Mosiah's coronation (Mosiah 6:5) possibly as early as 122 BC but more likely in 121 BC and certainly no later than 120 BC. The Jaredite records probably came into Mosiah's possession around the latter portion of 121 BC when Limhi's people found the land of Zarahemla and became Mosiah's subjects:

And it came to pass that the people of king Limhi did depart by night into the wilderness. . . And after being many days in the wilderness they arrived in the land of Zarahemla, and joined Mosiah's people, and became his subjects. And it came to pass that Mosiah received them with joy; and he also received their records, and also the records which had been found by the people of Limhi.<sup>12</sup>

While it is possible Benjamin was still alive at this point in time, his name is conspicuously absent from the record here.

Sometime after this, in about 120 BC, Mosiah read some records to the general populace. These included the Zeniffite annals and Alma's record (see Mosiah 25:5-6.) They did not include the Jaredite records in question. It is not until about 92 BC, that the Jaredite plates get translated. And it is important to note that they get translated by Mosiah, not Benjamin, inasmuch as Benjamin has died almost thirty years previous:

Now king Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon, for there was not any of his sons who would accept of the kingdom. Therefore he took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and all the things which he had kept and preserved according to the commandments of God, after having translated and caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi, which were delivered to him by the hand of Limhi.<sup>13</sup>

In summary, it is entirely possible that Nibley is correct in his assumptions that Benjamin may have still been around when the Jaredite records were brought back to Zarahemla with the return of Ammon and Limhi. However, the Book of Mormon text itself lacks clarity on this question, and it is untenable that Benjamin would have lived to see their translation into his tongue—unless he gave them a kind of preliminary "once-over."



A third bit of commentary on this issue was published in 1988 by George A. Horton, Jr., then department chairman of Ancient Scripture and associate professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU. In writing about textual revisions and transmission problems, Professor Horton writes as follows:

Perhaps the most difficult change to understand occurs at both Mosiah 21:28 and Ether 4:1. The first edition had “Benjamin” where “Mosiah” now appears. Since King Benjamin would not likely have still been living at the time of the text, the Prophet changed the 1837 edition reading of Mosiah 21:28. The change in Ether was made in the 1849 edition. We can only speculate about who made the original “error.”<sup>14</sup>

Professor Horton acknowledges the difficulty of this textual anomaly, agrees with Sperry that Benjamin would not likely have still been alive when Mosiah 21:28 was written, and leaves the question of the source of the problem to the realm of speculation.

And finally, the last published commentary on this issue of which I am aware was authored by me in the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, Volume 5, published by FARMS. In this publication I was responding to the arguments against the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon raised by the Reverend James White which I cited earlier. Essentially, I had pointed out that we are not certain when Benjamin died. He may, in fact, have been alive when the events described in Mosiah 21:28 took place. Or, he may have been dead at that time, but Ammon was not aware of it. If Ammon’s departure from the land of Zarahemla occurred prior to Benjamin’s death, the likelihood is very high that he would have mentioned Benjamin’s name to Limhi, rather than Mosiah’s, even though Mosiah had assumed the role of king. This is because Ammon would have had greater experience under Benjamin as both a king and a holy man, and he likely would have referenced the one with whom he had had a longer history—and who was the senior member of the co-regency in any case.

I made four points in that essay, the fourth which is as follows:

As indicated previously, if Benjamin was still alive when Ammon left Zarahemla, then Ammon was correct in citing Benjamin to Limhi in Mosiah 21:28. Thus, the prophet-historian Mormon would have correctly written down the name *Benjamin*, and Joseph Smith, the prophet-translator, would have correctly rendered it *Benjamin* as well- so why the change in the 1837 edition? It may have been the result of undue concern on the part of one of the early Brethren that a problem of some sort might be apparent with the name Benjamin. This concern would likely have been alleviated had greater thought gone into the issues involved. I myself believe that the change from *Benjamin* to *Mosiah* was neither crucial nor necessary.<sup>15</sup>

So there we have it. There have not been a great many LDS responses to this issue over the years. My purpose in this paper is to delve a little deeper into the issue, looking a little closer at various Book of Mormon texts that bear on the question in the hopes that a more plausible explanation will become apparent. Let me now share several thoughts that may serve to deepen our understanding of this textual anomaly.

## Looking Deeper

The first thing that needs to be pointed out is the fact that Mosiah 21:28 is one of two passages that chronicles the same historical data. The parallel passage is found in Mosiah 8:13-14.<sup>16</sup> The presence of parallel passages of the same event is consistently lost on our critics. Yet it is crucial in making sense of the scope of the problem.

The very presence of parallel renditions of the story brings up the obvious questions: What is the nature of the two records? What is their source? How compatible are the two? Why would there be two different renditions of the same story? The answer is very simple. The book of Mosiah opens at festival time, features a major covenant rite, contains major flashbacks<sup>17</sup> and chiasms, and is clearly a composite record. It is a record containing records within records. We have at least three different chronicles taking place at various times within the 29-chapter book of Mosiah as a whole. We could call the first of these the core book of Mosiah, or the book of Mosiah proper. This would consist of chapters 1-8, and chapters 25-29, totaling 13 of 29 chapters, or about 45% of the total. Then we have something called the record of Zeniff, which comprises chapters 9-22, totaling 14 of 29 chapters, or about 48% of the total. Also, there is a record of Alma comprising chapters 23 and 24, or about 7% of the total.

Now the passage in Mosiah 8:13-14 is very important to our understanding of what actually took place, and who said what to whom.

And Ammon said unto him: I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer.

And behold, the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man that is commanded to do these things, and who has this high gift from God.

So here we have a passage of scripture that tells of the same event, with the notable exception that King Benjamin is never named. In fact, no one is actually identified by name but by title. We are left to wonder whom Ammon had in mind when he identified the person with the gift to translate as the king over the people in Zarahemla. If Ammon was to be understood literally, then Ammon would be speaking of Mosiah, since Mosiah was crowned king (or co-regent) of Zarahemla prior to Ammon's travels to Lehi-Nephi. It is always possible that Ammon was speaking without such literalistic strictures and was, in fact, referring to Benjamin. I will explore this a little later.

Second, one must look at each of these two accounts from the standpoint of originality. In other words, one must reflect on which account is a first-hand account and which one is a second-hand, hearsay account. If all other factors seem equal, the first-person account should be given a bit more weight. As it turns out, it is the account in Mosiah 8 that is the first-person account. It is with this account that we get what appears to be direct quotes from the mouth of Ammon. And this is the account where Ammon fails to name either Mosiah or Benjamin directly. Looking at the nature of the account from Mosiah 21, we find that it is not a first-person account, but is part of the narrative history that was a part of the Zeniffite record, not the book of Mosiah proper. It is this record that paraphrases Ammon's comments without actually quoting him. Whether this alleged statement by Ammon can be attributed to a Zeniffite scribe who recorded the incident, or whether this alleged statement can be attributed to Mormon's own interpolation, cannot be determined.<sup>18</sup>

Third, as I hypothesized in my review of James White's anti-Mormon book, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, it is entirely possible that Ammon departed on his expedition prior to the death of king Benjamin. And, if this is the case, it is very possible that Ammon would have mentioned king Benjamin by name. Naïve readers who would argue that Benjamin had to have died prior to the departure of Ammon since Mosiah 6:5 records his death while Mosiah 7:1-3 records the departure of Ammon are imposing a sequential chronology on the events that may not be warranted. Such readers are assuming that Mormon, as editor and abridger, was always precisely sequential as he laid out the chronology of the events, not taking into consideration the possibility that Mormon, who was privy to numerous and sundry records, was putting down on metal plates the items that seemed most salient to him, and in an order which seemed best to him. Mormon may not always have been sequential in his chronology, and, not having an eraser, may not have been able to make corrections when he got ahead of himself on some details. After all, when you think of how many times you have told someone a story that contained a fair amount of detail and found yourself stopping mid-sentence to back up and tell of some earlier chronological details you missed, it really isn't such a far-fetched occurrence.<sup>19</sup>

Fourth, if Ammon did leave on his expedition prior to Benjamin's death, the question remains whose name he would have attributed the gift of translation to, had he actually named either Benjamin or Mosiah (for in this scenario, it is conceivable he could have named either). If Ammon actually did name someone, and if Benjamin was still alive upon Ammon's departure, I would venture a guess that Ammon would have named Benjamin. In support of this hypothesis, I cite Mosiah 8:3:

And he also rehearsed unto them the last words which king Benjamin had taught them, and explained them to the people of king Limhi, so that they might understand all the words which he spake.

Although this passage is not definitive on what Ammon said or did not say, it is interesting to me that he mentions Benjamin but not Mosiah, as far as the text is concerned. Thus, what follows at 8:13-14 would naturally be interpreted by King Limhi and his scribes within the same context.

In other words, if Ammon told Limhi that the person who had this gift to translate was "the king over the land of Zarahemla" without mentioning who that king was by name, we have no idea whether Ammon was thinking of Benjamin, Mosiah, or either. If this is how it occurred, then it is likely that either Mormon, or an unnamed Zeniffite scribe, interpolated the passage at Mosiah 21:28 and inserted the name *Benjamin*. Likewise, Moroni, following the lead of his father, would have interpolated the passage at Ether 4:1 and inserted *Benjamin* as well.<sup>20</sup> This would have constituted an historical error by Moroni, but an understandable one.

Moreover, if Ammon told Limhi that the person who had this gift was Benjamin, Ammon would likely have departed on the expedition for Lehi-Nephi shortly before Benjamin's death, and therefore would have been unaware of Benjamin's death. This would make the 1830 edition of Mosiah 21:28 correct. This would also mean that Mosiah 8:14, while correct, was vague. And it would mean that when Moroni wrote Ether 4:1, he inadvertently copied the name Benjamin from the Mosiah 21:28 passage, while failing to capture the nuance of historical reality found in Mosiah 28:10-19.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, if Ammon told Limhi that the person who had this gift was Mosiah, then both the passage at Mosiah 21:28 and Ether 4:1 is incorrect as published in the 1830 edition, even though it follows faithfully the Printer's Manuscript and the context of the Plates. However, this last alternative seems most unlikely.<sup>22</sup>

## Concluding Thoughts

Let me now shift gears and speak as a person. I have become fond of quotes that contain meaningful ideas. One that has had deep meaning for me recently comes from philosopher Eric Hoffer, who said:

In times of massive change it is the learner who will inherit the earth, while the learned stay elegantly tied to a world which no longer exists.<sup>23</sup>

This quote is rich in meaning on many levels. Its application in this forum may be obvious to you. As it pertains to our critics, who often believe themselves to be “learned” (or informed) on LDS matters, it seems to suggest that our critics are stuck in a rut. In other words, our critics are asking the same tired questions over and over again, apparently unaware of the growing body of LDS scholarship that tends to substantiate LDS truth claims. The critics are elegantly, or not so elegantly, tied to a world that no longer exists, a world where substantive answers are becoming more and more available.

Now, let me close with this. It has now been 25 years this month since I became a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at age 18. I was blessed to have as my first Bishop a man by the name of Leon Davies. He was a man of enormous spiritual stature. He had been a student of Lowell Bennion at the University of Utah. And Bishop Davies passed on to me something that he had learned from Brother Bennion. Bishop Davies told me in no uncertain terms that “This is the Church of Jesus Christ! This church can withstand any test!” I have remembered that affirmation as I have dabbled in apologetics for the last quarter century. And I have continually been persuaded that Bishop Davies remains correct. And so I continue to do apologetics.

Some would question the value of the work of apologetics. I understand such questions. Some would argue along the lines that it’s too bad our critics have to bother us with these ongoing interruptions. Why can’t they just live their religion without trying to tear down our religion?

On one level I would heartily agree with such sentiments. But I have come to believe there is a higher road we apologists must walk if we are to become truly celestial, and that higher road can best be described with two thoughts:

1. Instead of being annoyed at our critics, we could opt to be grateful that we have opponents for they can be, in an indirect sense, and in an ironic sense, among our best teachers—or at least sources for great learning. In other words, if our critics did not make some

noise concerning this passage in Mosiah 21:28, it is not at all clear that I and others would be motivated to study the text and gain a more intimate grasp of the intricacies of the text.

2. Having critics make it possible for us to live some of the highest and most difficult of the gospel standards set forth by Jesus Christ. And although these standards are difficult, they are sanctifying and edifying. The standards I am speaking of include the mandate to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute, and to do it with absolute integrity and sincerity.

Those are celestial principals. Those are the teachings that transform corrupt and selfish persons into beings with enormous capacity for holiness and a sense of the sacred. These kinds of principles are taught very clearly in the Book of Mormon. Therein lies its power.

## Appendix A

### Key Passages and Traditional Chronology:

Omni 1:20	Mosiah1 interpreted stone by gift and power of God (ca 279 BC-130 BC)
Mosiah 1:15-16	Benjamin gave Mosiah2 charge concerning the kingdom, and gave him the plates and the ball/director, etc. (ca 124 BC).
Mosiah 6:3	Benjamin gave Mosiah2 all the charges concerning the kingdom (ca 124 BC)
Mosiah 6:4	Mosiah2 began to reign in his father's stead (ca 124 BC)
Mosiah 6:5	King Benjamin lived three years and died. (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 7:1	After 3 years, Mosiah2 wanted to know the fate of the earlier expedition to Lehi-Nephi (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 7:2	16 men selected to go on expedition to Lehi-Nephi. (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 7:3	The next day, they depart, led by Ammon. (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 8:3	Ammon mentions Benjamin, but not Mosiah2 (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 8:13-14	The king in Zarahemla is the man who has this gift (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 21:28	Limhi was filled with joy on learning from the mouth of Ammon that king [Benjamin/ Mosiah2] had a gift from God whereby he could interpret such engravings. (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 22:11-14	Limhi's people find Zarahemla and become Mosiah2's subjects (ca 121 BC)
Mosiah 25:5-6	Mosiah2 reads to all the people the record of Zeniff and the record of Alma [no mention of the record of the Jaredites] (ca 120 BC)
Mosiah 28:10-19	Mosiah2 translates the gold plates found by people of Limhi. (ca 92 BC)

Ether 4:1

For this cause did king [Benjamin/ Mosiah<sup>2</sup>] keep them, that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people.



## Appendix B

### Mosiah 8:13-14

**Ammon** said unto him [King Limhi]:

I can assuredly tell thee, O King, of

**A man** that can translate the records;

For he has wherewith that he can look,  
And translate all records that are of ancient date;

And it is **a gift from God**.

And the things are called **interpreters**

### Mosiah 21:28

And now Limhi was filled with joy

On learning from the mouth of **Ammon**

that **King Benjamin**

had **a gift from God** whereby he could

**interpret** such engravings.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 3:15.

<sup>2</sup> This includes all editions from the 1837 to the present, including RLDS versions. (No original manuscript reading exists of this passage.) See *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference*, Vol. 2 (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1987), 469.

<sup>3</sup> The printer's manuscript and the 1830 through the 1841 and 1858, and even the RLDS 1874 editions, all read *Benjamin*, while the 1849, 1852, 1879 through current editions, including the RLDS 1966 edition, read *Mosiah* (the RLDS 1908 edition reads indecisively *Benjamin {Mosiah?}*). See *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, Vol. 3 (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1987), 1198.

<sup>4</sup> Since the change is first made in the 1849 Liverpool edition (the second European edition), it most likely reflects the work of Orson Pratt, since he published that edition. The change did not enter American usage until around 1871 as an American subedition of the sixth European edition (published in 1866).

<sup>5</sup> Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 1985), 186.

<sup>6</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism-Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1972), 90.

<sup>7</sup> John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Mormonism* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1992), 310, italics in original.

<sup>8</sup> James White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Southbridge, Massachusetts: Crowne, 1990), 184-185.

<sup>9</sup> Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 203.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 7.

<sup>11</sup> It would strain credulity to believe that Benjamin's father possessed the gift of translating ancient records (see Omni 1:20), and that Benjamin's son possessed the gift of translating ancient records (see Mosiah 28:10-19), but that Benjamin himself was not in possession of this same spiritual gift.

<sup>12</sup> Mosiah 22:11, 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> Mosiah 28:10-11.

<sup>14</sup> George A. Horton, Jr., "The Book of Mormon-Transmission from Translator to Printed Text," *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, edited by Paul R. Cheesman (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 249-250.

<sup>15</sup> L. Ara Norwood, "Ignoratio Elenchi: The Dialogue That Never Was" *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 5, (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1993), 340-342. For an absolutely delightful rebuttal by James White, see his Web site ([www.aomin.org/Farms1.html](http://www.aomin.org/Farms1.html)) where his only response is, "Three entire pages are then dedicated to attempting to rescue Joseph Smith from the problem created by the change at Mosiah 21:28 regarding Benjamin and Mosiah. Obviously I struck a nerve, for Norwood labors hard to come up with some kind of meaningful answer for this change. I leave it to the reader to discover if he is successful or not."

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the flashbacks charted in John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), chart 29.

<sup>18</sup> The possibility of a Zeniffite scribe assuming Ammon was referring to Benjamin (even though Ammon never named Benjamin specifically) carries some weight when one considers that Benjamin was the only king the Zeniffite people remembered by name inasmuch as Benjamin was the reigning monarch when the Zeniffite colony left Zarahemla for Lehi-Nephi. See Omni 1:23, 27-30; Mosiah 7:1.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, just such non-sequential ordering of narrative documents occurs in the Bible, e.g., note the sections out of sync in 1 Kings 14:1-15:8, with verse 15:6 often being eliminated in translation. I am indebted to John Tvedtnes for alerting me to this biblical passage.

<sup>20</sup> Compare the discussion in Stanley R. Larson, "A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon, Comparing the Original and Printer's MSS., and Comparing the 1830, 1837, and 1840 Editions," master's thesis (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1974), 271-272.

<sup>21</sup> It is important to remember that Book of Mormon authors, including Moroni himself, cautioned us to not expect an inerrant or infallible book: "And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ" (Title Page.) See also Mormon 9:33, 1 Nephi 19:6.

<sup>22</sup> In this regard, another possibility suggested to me by Robert Crockett involves a variation of the concept of Patronymic naming conventions, i.e., the notion that Ammon was referring to Benjamin with the name-title “Mosiah”, just as Nephi’s name became a name-title following Nephi’s death. See Jacob 1:11. While there may be potential with this theory, I suspect it is replete with problems. For a Web site that touches on this phenomenon, log on to [www.orthohelp.com/geneal/yohasin.HTM](http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/yohasin.HTM).

<sup>23</sup> At present I am unable to locate a source for this quote, but I have determined that the quote does not come from Hoffer’s book *The Passionate State of Mind*, as erroneously referenced in Goldsmith, et al, *Coaching For Leadership*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2000), 132, 377.