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An Analysis of the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Gives an analysis of the composition of the Book of Mormon, provides an explanation of Mormon's work of abridgment, identifies the contributors to the Book of Mormon text, and presents a comparison of the Book of Mormon Isaiah with the biblical Isaiah.

more distant, and which outlined against its course a delicate tracery of dripping leaves and branches was more than welcome, perhaps a vague suspicion, that we might never be able to see again, had entered our minds.

But the end of our trouble was now approaching. Finally extricating ourselves from out the bushy maze, we came to a stretch of rounded boulders and soon afterwards heard the voice of the Weber River. Led by this we found the beaten track; and as ill-luck or good seldom comes singly, the storm began to abate; or rather like a victorious army, it swept onward to other fields of conquest. The booming

of its heavy artillery, sounded more and more to the northeast. In a short time but few drifting clouds could we see, and these but stragglers hastening forward to join the main body. When in the distance we noticed a signal light, a herald of comfort, warmth and good cheer, the storm's advance was surely pouring into, and the battle beginning, among the defiles, and around the peaks of the far-off Wind River range.

Alfred Lambourne.

The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to nought.—*Doc. and Cov.*

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

THE reader of the Book of Mormon will do well to remember that it is a translation of a record inscribed on gold plates, which was an abridgment made from more extensive records kept by the ancient civilized peoples of America—chiefly by the people known in the Book of Mormon as Nephites. The abridgment, for the most part, is made by one Mormon, a Nephite prophet who was born 311 A. D., and slain by his enemies in the year 400 A. D. The parts which are not his abridgment are the first one hundred and fifty-seven pages (N. E.), which brings us to the “words of Mormon,” page one hundred and fifty-eight; and from page one hundred and sixty-three (N. E.), to the end of the volume—sixty pages.

This latter part of the record was made by Moroni, the son of Mormon, who was also the one who hid the plates containing his father's and his own abridgment, in the year 421 A. D.; and who having been raised from the dead, revealed the existence of these plates to Joseph Smith, on the twenty-first of September 1823. The first one hundred and fifty-seven pages are a *verbatim* translation from what are known as the “smaller plates” of Nephi—we will explain:

The first Nephi, who left Jerusalem

with a small company of colonists led out from that city by his father, Lehi, 600 B. C., and who afterwards became the leader, prophet, and their first king on the American continent, made two sets of plates, on which he purposed engraving the history of his people. On the larger of these two sets, he engraved an account of his father's life, travels, prophecies, etc., together with his genealogy; and upon them he also recorded a full history of the wars and contentions of his people, as also their travels, and an account of the cities they founded and colonies they established. These larger plates were preserved in the care of succeeding kings; and, in a word, upon them was written a full history of the rise and fall of the nations, which existed in America from the landing of this colony from Jerusalem to 400 A. D., a period of nearly one thousand years.

It is quite evident that as these plates were transmitted from king to king, or from one ruling judge of the republic to another, or given into the possession of a prophet, that they each recorded the historical events of his own day, and gave to such account his own name—hence Mormon found in these “larger plates” of Nephi, the Book of Mosiah, the Book of Alma, the Book of Helaman, etc.

Furthermore, it happened that there were colonies from time to time that drifted off into distant parts of the land, and became lost for a season to the main body of the people; and there were missionary expeditions formed for the conversion of the Lamanites; and these parties, whether missionary or colonial, generally kept records, and when these colonists or missionary parties were found, or returned to the main body of the people, their records were incorporated within the main record, being kept by the historian—hence there was, sometimes, a book within a book, and the current of events was interrupted to record the history of these detached portions of the people, or some important missionary expedition.

Mormon, when abridging these plates of Nephi, gave to each particular division of his abridgment the name of the book from which he had taken his account of the events recorded—hence the Book of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman and III and IV Nephi in his abridgment. He also, in some instances at least, followed the subdivision we have alluded to, hence we have the record of Zeniff within the Book of Mosiah (page 181, N. E.); the account of the church founded by the first Alma (page 213); and the account of the missionary expeditions of the sons of Mosiah to the Lamanites within the Book of Alma (page 283).

Again we caution the reader to remember that the Book of Mormon is, for the most part, an abridgment of the "larger plates" of Nephi; but it is quite evident that Mormon frequently came to passages upon the plates of Nephi, which pleased him so well that he transcribed them upon the plates containing his abridgment, *verbatim*. An example of this will be found beginning on page 163, in the second line of the ninth paragraph, and ending with page 169—the words of King Benjamin to his people. The words of King Benjamin are also renewed on page 170, in the second line of the fourth paragraph, and continue to the close of the chapter. There are many such passages throughout Mormon's abridgment.

In addition to this, Mormon frequently introduces remarks of his own by way of comment, warning, prophecy or admonition, and since there is nothing in the text, neither quotation-marks nor a change of type to indicate where these comments, or what we might call annotations, begin or end, they are liable to confuse the reader—a difficulty that we hope will be obviated by this caution. So much for Mormon's abridgment. Now, to consider the part of the work done by his son Moroni. This is from page 563 to the end of the volume. He closes up the record of his father, Mormon, and then gives us an abridgment of the twenty-four plates of Ether, which were found in North America by the people of Limhi, in the second century B. C.; and then concludes his work with notes on the manner of ordaining priests and teachers, administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, baptism, spiritual gifts, together with a sermon and some letters of his father's. In his abridgment of the record of the Jaredites, the peculiarity of mixing up his comments, admonitions and prophecies with his narrative, is even more marked than in the abridgment of Mormon, therefore the reader will need to be doubly on his guard.

We have already said that the first 157 pages of the Book of Mormon was not a part of Mormon's abridgment. Those pages are a *verbatim* translation of the "smaller plates" of Nephi, and became connected with Mormon's abridgment in this manner: Mormon had abridged the "larger plates" of Nephi, as far as the reign of King Benjamin, and in searching through the records which had been delivered to him, he found these "smaller plates" of Nephi. They contained a brief history of events connected with the departure of Lehi and his colony from Jerusalem to their landing in America, and thence down to the reign of this King Benjamin—covering a period of about four hundred years. These plates were made by Nephi, that upon them might be engraven an account of the ministry of the servants of God, among his people, together with their

prophecies and teachings. They contain, in other words, an ecclesiastical history of the Nephites, while the "larger plates" of Nephi contained a political or secular history of the same people. (See I Nephi ix; also xix, 1-5.)

Mormon was particularly well pleased with the contents of these "smaller plates" of Nephi, because upon them had been engraven so many prophecies concerning the coming and mission of the Messiah; and instead of condensing their history into an abridgment, he took the plates and attached them to the abridgment of Nephi's "larger plates." "And this I do for a wise purpose," says Mormon, "for thus it whispereth me according to the Spirit of the Lord which is in me." (Words of Mormon, page 159, N. E.) Nephi, also, in speaking of these "smaller plates," says, "the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in Him, which purpose I know not." (I Nephi ix, 5.) What that wise purpose was we shall see in a moment.

By Mormon attaching these "smaller plates" of Nephi to his own abridgment of Nephi's "larger plates," it will be seen there was a double line of history of the Nephites for about four hundred years, and the wisdom of this arrangement is seen in the following: When Joseph Smith had translated the first part of Mormon's abridgment—amounting to one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript, he listened to the importunities of Martin Harris, who was giving him some assistance in the work of translating, and who desired to show that portion of the work to his friends. The result was the manuscript was stolen from him; the records were taken from Joseph, and he lost his power to translate for a season. After a time, however, he was permitted to go on with the work, but the Lord made it known to him that it was the design of those, into whose hands the manuscript had fallen, to wait until he had translated that part again, and then by changing the manuscript in their possession would bring it forth and claim that he could not translate the same record twice alike;

and thus they would seek to overthrow the work of God.

But the heavenly messenger commanded Joseph Smith not to translate again the part he had translated, but instead thereof he should translate the "smaller plates" of Nephi, and that account should take the place of Mormon's abridgment up to the latter days of the reign of King Benjamin. Thus it is that we have the "words of Mormon," beginning on page 158, explaining how the "smaller plates" of Nephi came into his possession and attached to the plates containing the record he himself was making, and connecting the historical narrative of the "smaller plates" of Nephi with his own abridgment of Nephi's "larger plates." The "words of Mormon," interrupting as they do the history of the Nephites, have caused no little confusion in the minds of unthoughtful readers; but after it is understood that they are merely the link connecting the ecclesiastical history engraven on the "smaller plates" of Nephi to Mormon's abridgment, and that they take the place of the first part of Mormon's record, the difficulty will disappear.

One thing I cannot forbear to mention, and that is, in the parts of the Book of Mormon translated from the "smaller plates" of Nephi, we find none of these comments or annotations mixed up with the record that we have already spoken of as being peculiar to the abridgment made by Mormon—a circumstance, I take it, which proves the Book of Mormon to be consistent with the account given of the original records from which it was translated. There will be found however, in this translation direct from the "smaller plates" of Nephi, as also in Mormon's abridgment, extracts from the Jewish scriptures—especially from the writings of Isaiah—this is accounted for by the fact that when Lehi's colony left Jerusalem, they took with them copies of the books of Moses and writings of the prophets, and a record of the Jews down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, all of which were engraven on plates of brass (see I Nephi v, 10-13), and the Nephite historians

transcribed passages from these sacred records into their own writings. There are a few suggestions about these transcribed passages which may not be uninteresting to the reader, and which to the student will be invaluable, as they furnish an indirect evidence to the truth of the Book of Mormon. The Nephites having transcribed passages from the brass plates they carried with them from Jerusalem into their records, wherever such passages occur in the Book of Mormon, and corresponding passages are found in our English Bible, it will be seen by the reader that so far we have two translations of the writings of the old Hebrew prophets; and it will be found on comparison that the passages in the Book of Mormon are stronger and more in keeping with the sense sought to be expressed by the prophet than the corresponding passages and chapters in the Bible. As a proof of this I ask the reader to compare I Nephi, xx and xxi, with Isaiah, xlvi and xlix.

In some instances there are sentences, in the Book of Mormon version of passages from Isaiah, not to be found in our English version as witness the following:

<i>Book of Mormon.</i>	<i>Bible.</i>
O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord; yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways. <i>II Nephi, xii, 5.</i>	O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord. — <i>Isaiah, ii, 5.</i>

In other instances it will be found that the sense of the passages is different, and that the passages in the Book of Mormon best accord with the sense of the whole, as witness the following:

<i>Book of Mormon.</i>	<i>Bible.</i>
Therefore, O Lord, Thou hast forsaken Thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and hearken unto soothsayers like the Phillistines, and they please themselves with the children of strangers.— <i>II Nephi, xii, 6.</i>	Therefore hast Thou forsaken Thy people, the house of Jacob, because they replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Phillistines, and they please themselves with the children of strangers.— <i>Isaiah, ii, 6.</i>

Their land is also full of idols—they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made; and the mean man boweth not down, and the great man humbleth himself not, therefore, forgive him not.—*II Nephi, xii, 8, 9.*

Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.—*II Nephi, xix, 3.*

Observe, too, the difference in the clearness of the following passages:

<i>Book of Mormon.</i>	<i>Bible.</i>
And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to hear from the dead?— <i>II Nephi, xviii, 19.</i>	And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead.— <i>Isaiah, viii, 19.</i>

Again, the English translators of the Bible, in the translations sometimes, to make the sense of various passages more clear, inserted, here and there, words of their own; which are always written in *italics*, that the reader may know what words have been inserted by the translator, and for which he will find no exact equivalent in the original text. It is worthy of note that in those transcribed passages from the brass plates into the Book of Mormon, in almost every instance, the words in the Book of Mormon version are different to those substituted by the translators of the common English version; or are left out, as follows:

<i>Book of Mormon.</i>	<i>Bible.</i>
What mean ye? ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor.— <i>II Nephi, xiii, 15.</i>	What mean ye <i>that</i> ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?— <i>Isaiah, iii, 15.</i>

The above is a case where the inserted

Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made; and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself; therefore, forgive him not.—*Isaiah, ii, 8, 9.*

Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.—*Isaiah, ix, 3.*

word of the translator, which I have written in *italics*, is omitted, and to my mind the passage as it stands in the Book of Mormon is stronger, more beautiful, because more harmonious. Here is a passage where different words are used than those inserted by the translators:

<i>Book of Mormon.</i>	<i>Bible</i>
Say unto the righteous, that it is well with them; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.	Say ye unto the righteous, that <i>it shall be well with him</i> : for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
Woe unto the wicked! for they shall perish; for the reward of their hands shall be upon them.— <i>11 Nephi, xiii, 10, 11.</i>	Woe unto the wicked! <i>it shall be ill with him</i> ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.— <i>Isaiah, iii, 10, 11.</i>

I think it will be readily conceded that the above passage as it stands in the Book of Mormon is much superior to the version given in our common Bible, indeed it is so throughout. And when it is remembered that Joseph Smith and those who assisted in the work of translation were most likely uninformed as to the words supplied by the translators and their being written in italics, it is an incidental evidence that those passages in the Book of Mormon to which are found corresponding passages in the Bible were not merely copied from the Bible, but in the Book of Mormon we have really another translation of those passages taken from original records of the Hebrews, uncorrupted by the hand of man, and hence more perfect.

B. H. Roberts.

MODERN AND ANCIENT ARIZONA.

TO THE lover of scientific and antiquarian research Arizona presents a very interesting field for study. To the most superficial observer it is apparent that many and great changes have taken place in that land, not only in regard to its inhabitants but in its physical character. To more clearly illustrate these changes let us briefly glance at the present condition of the natives as compared with those who anciently dwelt there; and also contrast the present physical aspect of the Territory with that it exhibited in the dim, shadowy past.

To-day we find Arizona peopled by various Indian tribes, as Apaches, Yumas, Maricopas, Papagos, Zunis and others, who, as a rule are sunk in the depths of superstition and barbarism. They gain a scanty subsistence by hunting and fishing, gathering the beans of the Mesquite tree, and by cultivating very small areas of land in corn and squashes. A notable exception to this general rule is found in the Maricopa tribe, who raise annually from six to eight million pounds of wheat in the Salt River valley and produce thousands of pounds of sugar from

the cane. But these Indians are only a small portion of the whole.

Of architecture they have no idea, and but little knowledge if any of the industrial arts, except such as pertain to the fabrication of their weapons, the dressing of skins, the weaving of blankets, the manufacture of rude pottery, and the making of baskets and water vessels of willows, elegant in form and of excellent workmanship. We here remark, in passing, that the Apaches on the San Carlos reservation, under the fostering hand of the government, are making satisfactory progress in farming and fruit culture; and that Indian children in the schools make as fair advancement in their studies as white children of the same age; and this, to those who desire the advancement and redemption of the sons of Lehi, is very pleasing. Taken as a whole, however, the social condition of the Indian is miserable and degraded, and their numbers but few, probably not exceeding one person to ten square miles of Territory.

But it has not always been so. Many evidences present themselves everywhere that in some former time Arizona