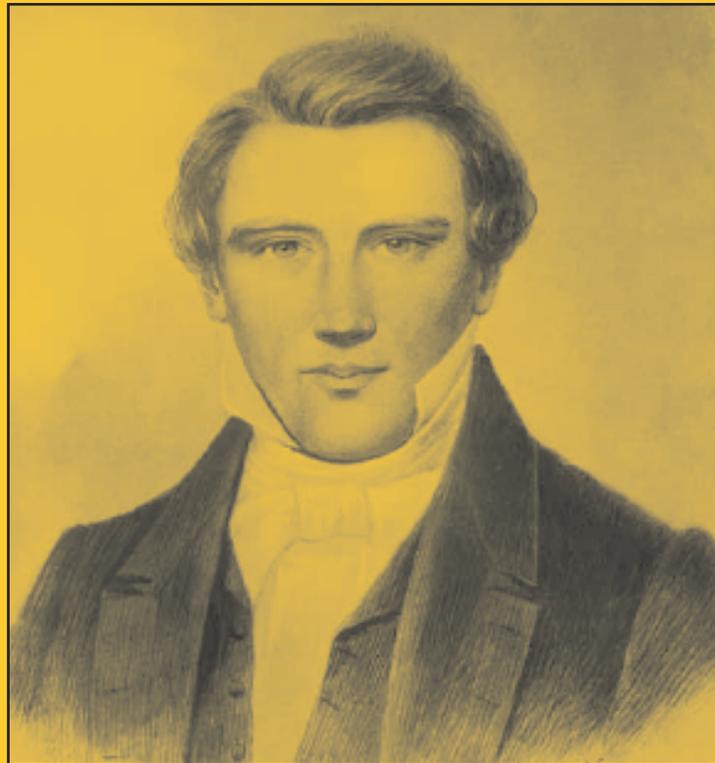


Sample

# JOSEPH SMITH'S PLAGIARISM OF THE BIBLE IN THE BOOK OF MORMON



By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

INCLUDES COVERING UP THE BLACK HOLE  
IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Revised and Expanded  
2010 Edition

JOSEPH SMITH'S PLAGIARISM OF THE BIBLE  
IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

by Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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# Contents

## Part 1

### Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon

Preface .....	5
Introduction .....	7
Joseph Smith .....	7
Was Joseph Smith Capable of Writing Such a Book? .....	9
Ancient or Modern? .....	9
Nineteenth Century Revival Language .....	12
Recasting Bible Stories .....	13
Alma Like Paul? .....	13
John the Baptist .....	16
Nephi's Psalm .....	16
New Testament Concepts .....	18
Mimicking the King James Style .....	18
Another Story in the King James Style .....	19
Use of the Old Testament .....	20
How Important are the Issues of Plagiarism? .....	21
A Mormon's Response .....	25
Biblical Names Used in the Book of Mormon .....	26
Preface to the King James Version of the Bible .....	27
Westminster Confession of Faith .....	28
The King James Version of the Apocrypha .....	29
Stan Larson's Study of the Sermon on the Mount .....	32
Another LDS Scholar Dismissed .....	35
Computer Studies .....	36
Smith the Author? .....	37
Smith's Common Phrases .....	39
Doctrines Missing From the Bible? .....	42
Growing List of Parallels .....	43
New Testament Quotes .....	44
New Testament Phrases in the Book of Mormon .....	47

## Part 2

### Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon

Chapter 1:	The Lost 116 Pages of the Manuscript .....	151
	The Black Hole .....	154
	Testing the Theory .....	156
	Using Filler.....	161
	Lehi's Dream of the Tree of Life .....	161
	The Book of Isaiah.....	164
Chapter 2:	Renaming the Plates .....	169
	Three Problems with the Story .....	170
	The Small Plates of Nephi .....	172
	Lehi's Genealogy.....	172
	Small Plates not Mentioned After "Words of Mormon" .....	173
	Other Changes Concerning the Plates.....	174
	Plates Made by Jacob? .....	175
	The Jaredite Records .....	176
	Moroni's Book.....	176
	Too Many Plates? .....	177
Chapter 3:	1 Nephi Through Omni Written Last .....	185
	Smith's Use of "Therefore" and "Wherefore" .....	188
	Prophecy of Christ's Birth .....	190
Chapter 4:	Dates, Kings and Money .....	191
	Dates .....	191
	Kings.....	191
	Names of Kings .....	192
	Dating Events .....	192
	Measurements.....	193
	Distances.....	194
	Weights.....	194
	Money.....	195
Chapter 5:	Impersonal Accounts of Family Life .....	198
	Marriage .....	198
	Women Missing .....	198
	Children's Names .....	199
	Houses .....	201
	Food and Cooking .....	202
	Colors .....	203
	Sickness .....	203
	Death .....	204
	Music .....	205

Chapter 6:	Jew or Protestant?.....	206
	Jewish Customs .....	208
	No Passover.....	209
	Sabbath .....	210
	Day of Atonement.....	211
	Circumcision.....	211
	Tithing.....	211
	The Temple.....	211
	Animal Sacrifices .....	212
	Nothing Unclean.....	214
Chapter 7:	Revealing Jesus' Name .....	215
	The Printer's Manuscript .....	216
	Name of Jesus Christ .....	217
	Book of Moses.....	218
	Jesus Christ, Lamb of God or Messiah? .....	218
	Jesus in America .....	220
Chapter 8:	Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon .....	222
	Alma 36 .....	223
	Chiasmus and Parallelism .....	226
	James J. Strang.....	227
	Other Examples of Chiasmus.....	228
	Borrowing From the Bible .....	228
	Repeated Phrases.....	229
	Lengthy Sentences.....	231
	Identifying Chiasmus .....	232
Chapter 9:	The Solomon Spalding Theory .....	234
	Family Statements.....	235
	Who Could Have Given It to Smith.....	236
	Record Hid in an Underground Box.....	237
	Two Manuscripts?.....	238
	Same Names?.....	239
	Writing Styles.....	239
	"And It Came To Pass" .....	241
	The Use of "Therefore" and "Wherefore".....	242
	Spalding and the Missing 116 Pages .....	243
	Books About the American Indians Before 1830 .....	244
	"The Language of the Egyptians" .....	246
	Ancient Records .....	246
	Slipping Treasures.....	246
	Masonic Influences.....	247
Chapter 10:	Fraud or Revelation .....	249
	Automatic Writing? .....	249
	Italicized Words? .....	249
	The Making of Props .....	251
	Conclusion.....	252
	Selected Bibliography.....	253

## Preface

About fifty years ago Jerald and I became acquainted with the noted LDS scholar Francis W. Kirkham. Even though we had recently left the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we still agreed with Dr. Kirkham that the Book of Mormon was an authentic book of scripture. While we did not agree with many of Dr. Kirkham's beliefs, we did find him to be a very kind and understanding man. On July 22, 1960, Kirkham gave us a copy of his book, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, and inscribed the following on one of the pages: "To newly found friends and believers in the Book of Mormon. Mr. & Mrs. Jerald Tanner."

At that time in our lives it all seemed so simple: we would spend our lives declaring the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and God would vindicate his work. As it turned out, we began to encounter problems in the Book of Mormon which made it increasingly difficult to continue in the course we had planned. The more familiar we became with the Bible, the more questions we had concerning the Book of Mormon.

While many of the basic doctrines of the Book of Mormon seemed to be in agreement with the Bible, we began to notice how often the Book of Mormon echoed phrases found in the King James Version (KJV). Since this was not printed until 1611 A. D. we were troubled that Nephi, who lived almost 600 years before Christ, used some of the same phrases as the Apostle Paul in the KJV New Testament. When we mentioned this problem to other believers in the Book of Mormon, they tried to explain the problem by quoting from 2 Nephi 29:8: "Wherefore, I [God] speak the same words unto one nation like unto another."

While we believed that God could give the same concepts to two different groups of people, we still struggled with the idea that both texts would use almost exactly the same words. It would be nearly impossible for two different translators to independently come up with the same English wording even if they worked from

the same text. The problem with the Book of Mormon is much more complex. The Bible was translated from both Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated from "reformed Egyptian." That the words from the "reformed Egyptian" language would come out so close to those translated from the Hebrew and Greek language seemed almost impossible to explain. This problem and many others of a similar nature led us into a very exhaustive study of the Book of Mormon.

When we began our research, we sincerely wanted to prove it true and to silence the critics. The Book of Mormon itself admonished us to "ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4). We, therefore, spent a great deal of time praying for God's direction in the matter, but he did not "manifest the truth of it" to us. In fact, the more we looked into the matter, the more evidence we found against the book's authenticity. God seemed to be telling us something we did not want to hear, and we found it extremely painful to face the facts which we encountered. As it turned out, however, we found a peace and joy in biblical Christianity that is far greater than anything we sacrificed in giving up the Book of Mormon.

LDS Apostle Orson Pratt printed the following challenge:

The Book of Mormon claims to be a divinely inspired record. . . . If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidence and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated. . . .

But on the other hand, if investigation should prove the Book of Mormon true . . . the American and English

nations . . . should utterly reject both the Popish and Protestant ministry, together with all the churches which have been built up by them or that have sprung from them, as being entirely destitute of authority . . . (“Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” *Orson Pratt’s Works*, Liverpool, 1851, pp. 1-2)

We have tried to follow Apostle Pratt’s admonition to state “clearly and logically” the “evidence and arguments on which the imposter was detected.” The material presented here, however, is only a portion of

the evidence we have compiled challenging the book’s authenticity. For more information we recommend our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

This volume is an enlarged version of our earlier works: *Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible* and *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*.

Sandra Tanner  
Utah Lighthouse Ministry  
April 2010



# Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon, one of the books of scripture accepted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is purported to be the record of ancient groups of people who migrated to the New World. The first group, referred to as Jaredites, is said to have made their journey after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, approximately 2200 B.C. The other groups, later referred to as Nephites, Lamanites and Mulekites, were Israelites who came to the Americas in approximately 600 B.C.

The Introduction to the 1981 printing of the Book of Mormon notes that “after thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the **principal** ancestors of the American Indians.” However, the LDS Church recently changed this to read “they are **among** the ancestors of the American Indians.” This change was evidently made to eliminate the problem of claiming Lamanite ancestry for the majority of American Indians. Recent DNA studies have shown that the “principal” ancestry of the Native Americans is Asiatic, not Semetic<sup>1</sup>

The record of these people, ending about 421 A.D., was reported to have been buried in a hill in upstate New York and later unearthed by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism.

## Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805. His father later moved the family to western New York near the town of Palmyra. Smith claimed that on the night of September 21, 1823, when he was only seventeen years old, an angel appeared to

him in his bedroom and told him that ancient records made of gold were buried in a hill near his home, referred to as the Hill Cumorah. The angel, later identified as Moroni, was the last man to write on the plates and the one who hid them in the hill. Moroni died sometime after 421 A.D. and was later resurrected and became the angel sent to Smith. Moroni explained that the plates contained “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent,” and that they also contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.”<sup>2</sup>

According to Joseph Smith, after receiving instruction from the angel, he went to the hill and found the plates buried under “a stone of considerable size.” The angel, however, would not let him take the plates at that time. Four years later, on September 22, 1827, Joseph Smith was allowed to retrieve the plates and began the process of translating the record. The translation was published in 1830 under the title, *The Book of Mormon*.

Prior to this time, Joseph Smith and his father had been involved in seeking buried treasure by using magic. One such method was looking at a stone in a hat to learn where the treasure was buried. Another was using a forked divining rod that would supposedly point to the spot where the treasure was hidden. Smith found an unusual stone in a well in 1823 and for several years used this stone to search for objects buried in the ground and to evidently translate the plates for the Book of Mormon.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows that in 1826 Joseph Smith was arrested and brought before a Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge, New York, on a “misdemeanor” charge for being paid to use his seer stone to locate hidden treasure. On the judge’s bill to the county Joseph Smith was listed as a “glass looker.”<sup>4</sup>

1 Simon Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).

2 Introduction to the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981).

3 H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1998), pp. 63-87.

4 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2008), pp. 32-38.

Joseph Smith, Sr., Joseph Smith, Jr., and their associates had even entered into a contract with several neighbors that if anyone found a treasure they were to share it with the others.<sup>5</sup> When Smith claimed to have found gold plates it apparently caused a good deal of excitement among the local population. There were several failed attempts by his treasure-hunting associates to steal the purported plates from Smith's home. Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, related the following:

These plates [Book of Mormon] were found at the north point of a hill two miles north of Manchester village [New York]. Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well . . . In this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates. . . .

When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa. and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. . . .

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been [a] traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates.<sup>6</sup>

While some people believed Smith's story, others questioned that he found such a record.

Smith, however, was able to convince eleven men to testify that they had seen the plates. Their names are published in the front of the Book of Mormon. Three of these witnesses were from Smith's own family: his father and two of his brothers, Hyrum and Samuel. Five came from the John Whitmer family. The others were Oliver Cowdery (a distant cousin of Smith, who later married into the Whitmer family), Hiram Page (who also married into the Whitmer family), and Martin Harris, a local farmer who financed the printing of the book.

Smith kept the sacred plates hidden from the public and they were never shown to any scholar. Even the witnesses seem to have only seen them in a visionary state or handled them while covered with a cloth. In fact,

one Mormon gave up belief in the Book of Mormon when he heard Martin Harris state that the witnesses only saw the plates in a vision. Stephen Burnett related this event in a letter to Lyman E. Johnson on April 15, 1838:

I have reflected long and deliberately upon the history of this church & weighed the evidence for & against it—loth to give it up—but when I came to hear Martin Harris state in a public congregation that **he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] & also that the eight witnesses never saw them** & hesitated to sign that instrument [their statement at the front of the Book of Mormon] for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped & the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins . . . M[artin] Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or a handkerchief over them, but **he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain.**<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Smith maintained that he was the only mortal person who could translate the mysterious engravings, and that he was able to do so through the power of God. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, described the process of translation:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the **seer stone into a hat**, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. **One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English.** Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> Joel Tiffany, "Mormonism—No. II," (Interview with Martin Harris), *Tiffany's Monthly*, vol. 5, no. 4, New York (Aug. 1859) pp. 163-167.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), pp. 290-292.

<sup>8</sup> David Whitmer, *An Address To All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), p. 12. Similar descriptions of the translation process were given by Joseph's wife, father-in-law, brother-in-law and Martin Harris. See *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), pp. 97-104.

Those who witnessed the translation all described a miraculous process of receiving the exact words from God. This becomes important as we examine the various places the Book of Mormon plagiarizes other writings.

According to Joseph Smith, after the book was completed the plates were returned to the angel and the book was published in 1830.

Because of the secrecy and the unusual claims relating to the finding and translating of the record, many found it difficult to give credence to Joseph Smith's story. Today the LDS (or Mormon) Church claims over 13 million believers in the Book of Mormon. However, to date there has not been one artifact or sample of writing that can be identified as being from the Nephite, Lamanite, Mulekite, or Jaredite civilizations. The LDS Church does not even issue an official map for the location of the Book of Mormon story.

## Was Joseph Smith Capable of Writing Such a Book?

Mormons often defend the Book of Mormon by stating that Joseph Smith lacked the education to have produced it. However, many young people have accomplished things that seem beyond their years. Alexander the Great led an army at age of eighteen, and Mozart was composing music by the age of six. In his late teens Joseph Smith showed signs of being a creative and charismatic leader as evidenced by his leadership in various money-digging schemes. According to his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, he was a creative storyteller as well:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. **He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship.** This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them.<sup>9</sup>

Simply because Smith did not spend a number of years in a formal school setting does not mean that he

was uneducated. He even enrolled in school when he was twenty. Further instruction could have come from Smith's father, who had been a school teacher and subscribed to the local newspaper.<sup>10</sup>

On the next page is a sample of Smith's handwriting in 1832 which shows that he had been instructed in composition and penmanship.

Author Dan Vogel observed:

Certainly, Smith had less schooling than his wife, but he managed to write reasonably well. After examining several letters from the early period of Smith's life (1831-32), historian Dale Morgan concluded that they exhibit "a flair for words, a measure of eloquence, and a sufficient degree of schooling." William Smith [Joseph's brother] challenged the view that his brother was "unlettered" as a "mistake," remembering that Joseph "wrote [in] a plain intelligible hand." Still, Smith's talent lay not in correct orthography but, while telling a story, in his sense of narrative and ability to create memorable images.

The book Joseph dictated abounds with examples of his poor grammar and Yankee dialect as well as his penchant for digression, redundancy, and wordiness. Rarely are his characters' inner moral conflicts reflected. Most often we encounter flat, uncomplicated, two-dimensional heroes and villains. Generally the plots are simple and frequently improbable. However, the point was not to produce a literary masterpiece, although there are occasional passages exhibiting the lyrical quality of romantic writers of the era as well as the rhetorical style of the area's preachers.<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Smith's creative imagination, years of Bible reading, attendance at various religious meetings, exposure to common ideas about the origin of the Native Americans, prepared him to write the Book of Mormon.

## Ancient or Modern?

One of the early objections to the Book of Mormon was the seeming absurdity that the ancient Nephites and Lamanites would have been debating the same theological issues as were discussed in New York in the early 1800's. In 1831 Alexander Campbell, a minister and leader in the Restoration movement, made these observations concerning the Book of Mormon:

<sup>9</sup> Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, England: S.W. Richards, 1853), p. 85; reprinted under the title *Joseph Smith's History by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry).

<sup>10</sup> Marquardt and Walters, *Inventing Mormonism*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. 119.

2  
 with regard to the all important concerns ~~of~~ the world  
 -fore of my inmost soul which led me to search  
 -ing the scriptures believing as I was taught, that  
 they contained the word of God they applying  
 myself to them and my intimate acquaintance  
 with those of different denominations led me to  
 marvel exceedingly for I discovered <sup>they did not mean</sup> that ~~instead of~~  
 adorning their profession by a holy walk and god-  
 -ly conversation agreeable to what I found contain-  
 -ed in that sacred depository this was a grief to  
 my soul thus from the age of twelve years  
 to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart  
 concerning the situation of the world I marking  
 the contentions and divisions the wickedness and  
 abominations and the darkness which pervaded  
 the ~~of the~~ minds of mankind my mind become  
 exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my  
 sins and by searching the scriptures I found  
 that ~~man~~ <sup>man had</sup> did not come unto the Lord but that  
 they had apostatized from the true and living  
 faith and there was no society or denomination  
 that built upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ as  
 recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn  
 for my own sin and for the glory of the world  
 for I learned in the scriptures that God was  
 the same yesterday to day and forever that he was  
 no respecter to persons for he was God for I  
 looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of  
 the earth and also the moon rolling in their  
 majesty through the heavens and also the stars  
 shining in their courses and the earth also upon which  
 I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of  
 heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walk-  
 -ing upon the face of the earth in majesty and in  
 the strength of beauty whose powers and intelligence  
 in governing the things which are so exceeding great and

A sample of Joseph Smith's handwriting from his 1832 diary.

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the past ten years. He decides all the great controversies;—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry [sic], republican government, and the rights of man.<sup>12</sup>

A popular controversy in Joseph Smith's day was whether or not infants needed baptism. Since Joseph Smith's mother, sister and two brothers had all joined the Presbyterian Church in the mid-1820's, which practiced infant baptism, we assume this was a point of discussion in his own home. Joseph Smith, Sr., was distrustful of organized religion and Joseph Smith, Jr., favored the Methodists. When Joseph Smith related his first vision to his mother he is reported to have said: "I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true."<sup>13</sup> Conveniently, this issue was settled in the Book of Mormon by the great general, Mormon, Moroni's father, in approximately 400 A.D.:

And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that **it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.**

Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—**repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable** and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

And their little children need no repentance, **neither baptism.** Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins. (Moroni 8:9-11)

Another current issue reflected in the Book of Mormon was the growing popularity of Universalism. Alma, in about 91 B.C., recorded the appearance of Nehor, a man who was spreading false doctrine:

And he had gone about among the people, preaching . . . that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice . . . and, in the end, all men should have eternal life. (Alma 1:3-4)

This issue was settled further on in Alma's writings:

For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; . . . and this is the final state of the wicked. (Alma 34:35)

Dan Vogel observed:

That the Book of Mormon confronts Universalism was noticed by friend and foe. Ohio newspaperman E. D. Howe expressed this assumption in 1834 when he wrote that "the name of our ancient Universalist is called Nehor."<sup>14</sup>

LDS writers George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl admitted that the Book of Mormon deals "with a number of modern theological controversies," but they maintained that "Religious controversies must have been, to a large extent, the same anciently as they are today."<sup>15</sup>

While there is some truth in this statement, there are just too many things in the Book of Mormon that are similar to Joseph Smith's environment to be explained in this manner.

Another seemingly anachronistic issue in the Book of Mormon is a republican form of government. When the Puritans settled in the New World they drew up a document known as the "Oath of a Freeman." The word "freeman" was commonly used in Joseph Smith's day. Also, members of the Smith family had been involved in America's fight for freedom from England in 1776, and in the war of 1812.<sup>16</sup> Thus the concept of liberty and freedom were part of Smith's environment. This would seem to be the inspiration for the freemen in the Book of Mormon. The following was supposedly written about 67 B.C.:

12 Alexander Campbell, "An analysis of the book of Mormon with an examination of its internal and external evidences, and a refutation of its pretenses to divine authority," *Millennial Harbinger*, Bethany, Virginia (Feb. 1831): p. 93.

13 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:20 (Salt lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981).

14 Vogel, *Making of a Prophet*, p. 201.

15 George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), p. 419.

16 Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 30-32.

And those who were desirous that Pahoran should remain chief judge over the land took upon them the name of **freemen**; and thus was the division among them, for **the freemen had sworn or covenanted to maintain their rights and the privileges of their religion by a free government.**

And it came to pass that this matter of their contention was settled **by the voice of the people.** And it came to pass that **the voice of the people** came in favor of the **freemen**, and Pahoran retained the judgment-seat, which caused much rejoicing among the brethren of Pahoran and also many of the **people of liberty**, who also put the **king-men** to silence, that they durst not oppose but were obliged to maintain **the cause of freedom.** (Alma 51:6-7)

Also in Smith's day it was common to refer to America as the "land of liberty," a phrase found in the Book of Mormon. Mosiah, writing in 92 B.C., counseled:

"I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, . . . but I desire that this land be a **land of liberty**, and every man may enjoy **his rights and privileges** alike." . . . And he also unfolded unto them all the disadvantages they labored under, by having an **unrighteous king** to rule over them; . . . Therefore, it came to pass that they assembled themselves together in bodies throughout the land, **to cast in their voices concerning who should be their judges**, to judge them according to the law which had been given them; and they were exceedingly rejoiced because of **the liberty** which had been granted unto them. (Mosiah 29:32, 35, 39)

The Nephites sound more like nineteenth century Americans than a society before the time of Christ.

## Nineteenth Century Revival Language

One of the famous events in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon is King Benjamin's speech in approximately 124 B.C. However, it sounds more like the nineteenth century revival meetings that Joseph Smith attended.<sup>17</sup>

First, everyone was gathered from far and near to hear the speech, bringing their tents so that they might remain in the area for the event (Mosiah 2:1, 5). It was a common practice for those in Smith's day to camp

out in the area of a local revival. A similar scene was described by Captain Frederick Marryat:

The camp was raised upon . . . a piece of tableland . . . at one end . . . was a raised stand, which served as a pulpit for the preachers . . .

Outside of the area, which may be designated as the church, were **hundreds of tents pitched** . . . In front of the pulpit was a space railed off . . . which I was told was the anxious seat . . . girl after girl dropped down upon the straw on one side, and men on the other. . . .

Every minute the excitement increased; some wrung their hands and called for mercy . . .<sup>18</sup>

King Benjamin informed the Nephites that the coming Messiah would be called "Jesus Christ," his mother's name would be "Mary," and "he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name" (Mosiah 3:8-9). Benjamin went on to prophecy that Jesus would be crucified and rise on the third day, thus "his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam . . . For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 3:9-12).

At the end of his speech (Mosiah 3:27) Benjamin warned that the "torment" of the wicked will be "as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen."<sup>19</sup>

The response of the people to Benjamin's sermon in Mosiah 4:1-2 is reminiscent of the revival meetings in the early 1800's:

And now, it came to pass that when King Benjamin had made an end of speaking . . . that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold **they had fallen to the earth**, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

And they viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all **cried aloud** with one voice, saying: **O have mercy**, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In his autobiography Charles G. Finney, a famous nineteenth century revival preacher, reported many cases

<sup>17</sup> Vogel, *Making of a Prophet*, pp. 147-162; Marquardt and Walters, *Inventing Mormonism*, pp. 15-33.

<sup>18</sup> Captain Frederick Marryat, *Diary in America*, as cited in *Uncommon Americans*, by Don C. Seitz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1925), pp. 74-77.

<sup>19</sup> For a list of phrases in King Benjamin's speech that appear to be lifted from the New Testament, see *Answering Mormon Scholars*, vol. 1, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1994), pp. 101-117.

of people falling down during his meetings and crying out for mercy. For example, Finney related:

I had not spoken to them . . . more than a quarter of an hour when all at once an awful solemnity seemed to settle down upon them; the congregation **began to fall** from their seats in every direction, and **cried for mercy**. . . . nearly the whole congregation were either on their knees or prostrate . . .<sup>20</sup>

LDS leader B. H. Roberts also suspected that the religious manifestations found in the Book of Mormon were derived from Joseph Smith's environment:

It will not be necessary to further repeat the scenes, nor describe again the manner of these "religious" manifestations. It is clearly established now that these scenes of religious frenzy were common in the vicinage where Joseph Smith resided in his youth and early manhood. . . . The question is, did his knowledge of these things lead to their introduction into the Book of Mormon narrative? I think it cannot be questioned but where there is sufficient resemblance between the Book of Mormon instances of religious emotionalism and those cited in the foregoing quotations from the works of Edwards et al. to justify the thought that the latter might well have suggested and indeed become the source of the former.<sup>21</sup>

After researching the claims for the Book of Mormon, Old Testament scholar Thomas J. Finley concluded:

There is no solid evidence that the Book of Mormon was written by Semites in ancient times. Contrary evidence makes it more likely that the book is a product of Joseph Smith's time, with the KJV strongly influencing it. Its linguistic features and supposed original form on brass or gold plates differentiate it from known ancient Near Eastern literature. The social, cultural, and geographic features within the Book of Mormon derive easily from the KJV. In fact, some features are anachronistic even for the KJV. We have not discovered any features of the Book of Mormon that would make plausible the hypothesis that Joseph Smith translated it from ancient gold plates.<sup>22</sup>

## Recasting Bible Stories

In the Book of Mormon many of the stories appear to be biblical stories retold in a new setting. In 1 Nephi we read about a great storm that the Israelites

encountered on the way to America (see Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 18:6-21). Interestingly, the story bears a remarkable resemblance to an incident mentioned in the New Testament concerning Jesus (see Mark 4:37-39). Both stories use identical language when speaking of the storm. In 1 Nephi 18:13 we read: "there arose a great storm . . ." Mark 4:37 also says: "there arose a great storm . . ."

In both cases people in the boat become concerned that they are about to "perish" and seek help from their spiritual leader. In both cases, after the leader comes forth, the storm ceases.

Almost identical wording appears in both accounts concerning the calming of the sea. 1 Nephi 18:21 states: "the winds did cease . . . and there was a great calm." In Mark 4:39 we read: "the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

It seems obvious that the author of the Book of Mormon borrowed from the gospel of Mark. The close parallels certainly show a dependence on the King James account. Lehi's family, of course, would not have had access to the books of the New Testament, which were written hundreds of years after they left Jerusalem.

## Alma Like Paul?

Wesley M. Jones made the interesting observation that Alma, who supposedly lived in the New World in 100 B.C., seemed to have experiences that were strikingly similar to those of Apostle Paul in the New Testament:

Joseph's chief source of material by all odds, was the Bible, in which he was exceptionally versed . . . St. Paul, too, was most helpful to Joseph; his unique phrases became a part of Joseph's literary vocabulary and shine out on most any page in Joseph's work— though Paul was *not yet born* when the "Nephite Record" was allegedly written. And more, the ministry of St. Paul is duplicated almost exactly in the ministry of Alma, one of Joseph's characters—even in manner of speech and travels.<sup>23</sup>

On the next two pages is a list of parallels between the account of Paul and the story of Alma. Examining the similarities, it is clear that the writer of the Book of Mormon was structuring his story of Alma using the New Testament.

20 Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1876), p. 103.

21 B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), p. 308.

22 Thomas J. Finley, "Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?" in *The New Mormon Challenge*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), p. 336.

23 Wesley M. Jones, *A Critical Study of the Book of Mormon Sources* (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1964), pp. 14-15.

End of sample pages.  
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