

The *Book of Mormon*

Part Three

This is the third and final chapter of our discussion of the Book of Mormon. In this chapter we will look at the content of the Book of Mormon in terms of its Plagiarism From the King James Version and its inclusion of many Anachronisms. We will conclude with a look at the Book of Mormon from the perspective of Archeology and Anthropology.

Plagiarism From the King James Version

In addition to the source material we discussed in the last chapter, there is another document we *know* Joseph Smith used to produce the Book of Mormon: the King James Version of the Bible. The Book of Mormon contains approximately 275,000 words. Roughly 10% of these, about 27,000 words, were taken directly from the King James Version.¹ For example, beginning at 2 Nephi 8:18 the Book of Mormon begins quoting Isaiah chapter 2 *verbatim*. This single quote of Isaiah continues until the end of 2 Nephi chapter 10, *a total of 274 verses!* And this is just one example.

The language used in this section of Isaiah tends to blend right into the Book of Mormon since Joseph Smith used Elizabethan English throughout the remainder of the book as well. Elizabethan English was very appropriate for the 17th century world of the King James Version. But it certainly was not the language of 19th century New England. Joseph most likely used it to give the Book of Mormon the feel and sound of genuine scripture.

So how did this much verbatim King James Version end up in the Book of Mormon? If we are to seriously entertain Joseph Smith's translation process it would look like this: First, the Book of Mormon people would have brought portions of the ancient Hebrew scriptures with them from Jerusalem, on brass plates, having already been translated into Egyptian.² Next, these Egyptian texts would have been translated into the "reformed Egyptian" which Joseph found on the Book of Mormon plates.³ In 1829 Joseph Smith would have then translated this reformed Egyptian into the verbatim Elizabethan English found in the King James Version of 1611, which version was based on altogether different manuscripts. Does this sound the least bit possible? I don't think so.

1. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 61–62; Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, pp. 80–81.

2. *BM* Mosiah 1:3–6.

3. *BM*, Mormon 4:98, 100.

Book of Mormon Anachronisms

Anachronisms are “things that are out of their proper time.” For example, if we were to see a personal computer in a movie about the Civil War we would immediately know that it was a work of fiction because they did not have personal computers in the 1860s. Likewise, we would not expect to hear of Mozart having used an electronic synthesizer. Legitimate history, and legitimate scripture, contain no anachronisms, because they faithfully represent the time period being portrayed. However, when we carefully examine the Book of Mormon we find many such anachronisms which thus betray it as a work of fiction. We will take a look at some of these below.

“Jesus Christ” — in Old Testament Times? The use of the name *Jesus* and/or *Christ* in the Old Testament period of the Book of Mormon is one of the book’s most glaring anachronisms; I count over seventy occurrences. The name *Jesus Christ* comes into English directly from the Greek *Iesous Christos*. This is because the New Testament was first written in Greek, the popular language of the first century. The underlying names in Hebrew are *Y’shua hamashiach*, which translate into English as *Jeshua the Messiah*. Consequently, we do not find the name *Jesus Christ* anywhere in the Old Testament, but rather *Jeshua* and *Messiah*. It is very clear, then, that the name *Jesus Christ* got into our English New Testament only by *first* passing through the Greek language.

Furthermore, this *specific* name for Israel’s Messiah was revealed to virtually *no one* until the angels came to so instruct His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, just before His birth (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31). Before the time of His unveiling to Israel this mighty Son of David was known simply as their *Messiah*.

The Book of Mormon people are claimed to have left Jerusalem around 600 b.c. and to have kept their records in a “reformed Egyptian.” They could not have had any familiarity with Greek, nor any knowledge of the angels’ message. And we have already shown that the Greek language is virtually the only path by which *Jesus Christ* could come into English. It could not *possibly* have been a legitimate translation of Hebrew *or* Egyptian. Since this is the case, Joseph Smith’s use of the name *Jesus Christ* in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon clearly betrays it as a work of fiction. Joseph would make this same mistake again when he revised the King James Bible. We will discuss this further in chapter 9 which deals with his *Inspired Version* of the Bible.

Commingling the Old and the New Covenants. Early in the Book of Mormon we find the following statement “*Notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses...*” (2 Nephi 11:45). This is just one of many such passages throughout the book which commingle the Old and New Covenants. But the Bible is very clear that these two covenants are distinct from each other, and *absolutely incompatible*.

At the very first Communion service Jesus said “This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). This new covenant in Jesus’ blood forever did away with the first, or Old Covenant, embodied by the Law of Moses, replacing it with a far better one. This is emphatically stated by the author of Hebrews, and is the predominant theme of his book.

“The former regulation [Mosaic law] is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

“By calling this covenant [in Jesus’ blood] ‘new’, [God] has made the first one [the Mosaic law] obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

“[God] sets aside the first [covenant—the Mosaic law] to establish the second [covenant—in Jesus’ blood]. And by [God’s] will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb. 7:18; 8:13; 10:9–10)

The Apostle Paul not only confirms that the Mosaic Law was done away by Jesus, he says that any attempt to return to the Law results in alienation from Him.

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, *having cancelled the written code [Mosaic law], with its regulations, that was against us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.*

“Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised [a requirement of the Mosaic law], *Christ will be of no value to you at all.* Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*” (Col. 2:14; Gal. 5:2–4, emphasis added)

The Bible is unequivocal—the Old and New Covenants are incompatible with each other. More shall be said of this incompatibility in chapter 14 when we see if there is any Biblical basis for Joseph Smith’s Aaronic Priesthood.

In contrast to the Biblical distinction between these two covenants, the Book of Mormon completely blends them together. All the way through the Old Testament portion of the book we find references to “the gospel” and the practice of Christian “baptism,” concepts which are conspicuously out of character for that time. And as we found with the name *Jesus Christ*, even the words *gospel* and *baptism* are out of place.

The word *gospel* is the English equivalent of the Greek *euaggelion*. Both the definition, “good news,” and the general concept behind it come directly from Greek culture. Accordingly, we do not find *gospel* anywhere in our English Old Testament. In a similar manner the English *baptize* is the equivalent of the Greek *baptizo*, and is not found in our English Old Testament. All of this notwithstanding, we find *gospel* used 14 times and various forms of *baptize* over 80 times in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon.

This commingling of the Old and New Covenants and the use of Christian terms and concepts hundreds of years before Christ reveals a mind that did not have even the most fundamental understanding of Biblical theology, and no understanding of the gospel of Christ. This lack of understanding on the part of Joseph Smith would result in many other such blunders as time went on. Sadly, the absolute confusion he created by doing this has also prevented his followers from understanding the true gospel of Christ as well. As a result of following Joseph Smith, instead of having “the one true church,” they have actually ended up with “a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all” (Gal. 1:6–7).

The Presence of Other Greek Words. In addition to the Greek words we have already discussed there are a few others which should be noted. During Jesus’ supposed visit to the

Americas he quotes a portion of Revelation 21:6 “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (3 Nephi 4:48). Needless to say, the words *Alpha* and *Omega* come directly from Greek; they are the first and last letters of its alphabet. Here is where Joseph obviously “blew it” again. To the first recipients of the book of Revelation, who understood Greek, this phrase would make ultimate sense: Jesus is the first and the last. But if Jesus had actually said these Greek words to the Book of Mormon Nephites they would have said “Huh?”

During His visit to the Americas, the Book of Mormon has Jesus selecting twelve disciples, two of whom have the Greek names of *Jonas* and *Timothy* (3 Nephi 9:4). *Jonas* is the English form of the Greek *Jonas*. Its Hebrew counterpart is *Jonah*, which is the same in English. Accordingly, we find references only to *Jonah* in the Hebrew based Old Testament and references only to *Jonas* in the Greek based New Testament. *Timothy* is the English form of the Greek *Timotheus*, a uniquely Greek name for which there is no counterpart in Hebrew. Accordingly, we find references to *Timothy* in the New Testament, but none in the Old Testament. In summary, just like *Jesus Christ* and *Alpha* and *Omega*, the only source through which the names *Jonas* and *Timothy* can be translated into English is Greek, not Hebrew or Egyptian.

Despite all of this irrefutable evidence to the contrary, Joseph Smith insisted “There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of God, translated the Book of Mormon.”⁴

Scriptures Which Were “Ahead of Their Time.” We spoke above about Joseph Smith’s extensive plagiarism of the King James Bible; about 10% of the Book of Mormon comes directly from its pages. One of the Bible books which Joseph plagiarized was Malachi. Compare the following.

Book of Mormon	King James Version Malachi Chapter 4
<p>For the day soon cometh, that all the proud and they that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned. (1 Nephi 7:33)</p> <p>Wherefore all those who are proud, and that do wickedly, the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, for they shall be as stubble. (2 Nephi 11:65)</p> <p>...they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them, saith the Lord of hosts. (2 Nephi 11:69)</p>	<p>1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.</p>

4. *T&S*, vol. 4, no. 13, May 15, 1843, p. 194.

Book of Mormon	King James Version Malachi Chapter 4
<p>But the Son of Righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them... (2 Nephi 11:73)</p> <p>...he shall rise...with healing in his wings... (2 Nephi 11:22)</p>	<p>2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.</p>

This kind of plagiarism is not unusual in the Book of Mormon. About 22 chapters of Isaiah were copied in like manner. The interesting thing about this passage from Malachi, however, is its dating. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It was written after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity. Most scholars place the writing of the book at about 450 b.c. The trouble is that this is about 150 years after the Book of Mormon people left for the Americas. How could they carry records with them which would not be written for another 150 years?

But hold on—the plot thickens. When Jesus supposedly visited the Nephites after his resurrection he was careful to check out their records to see what scriptures they already had (as if He wouldn't have already known!). When He discovered that some important ones were missing he said “Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not” (3 Nephi 10:33). He then commanded them to write some scriptures from Malachi, and proceeded to quote the entire third and fourth chapters directly from the King James Version (3 Nephi 11:2, 4–27).

Let's see if we can get this straight now. When Nephi left Jerusalem he took scriptures with him which would not be written for another 150 years. Over 600 years later Jesus visits the Nephites, in 34 a.d., and gives them Malachi because they had left Jerusalem before it was written, all of which was taken directly out of the King James Version of 1611. I think I see now...

This use of Malachi in the Book of Mormon is understandable, notwithstanding the obvious dating problem. You see, Joseph Smith liked Malachi a whole lot. And what Joseph did with Malachi in the Book of Mormon is mere child's play compared with what he did to Malachi in his Doctrine & Covenants. After Joseph Smith finished the Book of Mormon he would go on to use and abuse Malachi several more times before he died. We will have much more to say about Joseph's use of Malachi in the final section of chapter 8 which deals with his Doctrine & Covenants.

Book of Mormon Archeology and Anthropology

If the claims of the Book of Mormon are the least bit true we would expect to find a variety of supporting archeological and anthropological evidence. But we don't. In fact, all of the available evidence suggests just the opposite: that neither the Book of Mormon people nor geography ever existed.

Position of the Smithsonian Institution and National Geographic Society. Rumors circulate within the RLDS church from time to time that the Smithsonian Institution and/or the National

Geographic Society are secretly using the Book of Mormon as a tool to discover Mesoamerican ruins. The statements of these two institutions indicate just the opposite. The following is a portion of a statement made by the Smithsonian Institution.

“The Smithsonian Institution has received hundreds of inquiries in recent years regarding the use of the Book of Mormon as a guide to archeological researches. Answers to questions most commonly asked are as follows:

“1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.

“2. The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia. Archeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the present Indians came into the New World—probably over a land bridge known to have existed in the Bering Strait region during the last Ice Age—in a continuing series of small migrations beginning about 30,000 years ago.

“3. Present evidence indicates that the first people to reach this continent from the East were the Norsemen who arrived in the northeastern part of North America around A.D. 1000. There is nothing to show that they reached Mexico or Central America.

“4. There is increasing evidence of the spread of cultural traits to Mesoamerica and the northwestern coast of South America across the Pacific, beginning several thousand years before the Christian era. However, these appear to be the result of accidental voyages originating in eastern and southern Asia and show no relationship to ancient Egyptian or Hebrew cultures.

“5. We know of no authentic cases of ancient Egyptian or Hebrew writing having been found in the New World. Reports of findings of Egyptian influence in the Mexican and Central American areas have been published in newspapers and magazines from time to time, but thus far no reputable Egyptologist has been able to discover any relationship between Mexican remains and those in Egypt.

“6. There are two copies of the Book of Mormon (and part of a third copy) in the United States National Museum, and another copy was sent by the Smithsonian library to the Library of Congress for deposit. Two of these were gift copies, and one was received by transfer from another government agency. One or two members of the staff have personal copies that were presented to them by Mormons.”⁵

5. A portion of the statement as presented in Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, p. 97.

The position of the National Geographic Society is comparable.

“With regard to the cities mentioned in the Book of Mormon, neither representatives of the National Geographic Society nor archeologist connected with any other institution of equal prestige have ever used the Book of Mormon in locating historic ruins in middle America or elsewhere.

“Christianity was not practiced on this continent prior to the Spanish conquest. The major civilizations of North and South America were practicing their own form of religion.”⁶

Book of Mormon Archeology: “Only in Your Dreams.” Of course, these rejections of the Book of Mormon have come from “unbelievers.” Because of this, Book of Mormon believers have mounted their own crusades in an effort to find some kind of archeological support. One of the most notable of these efforts was a twenty-five year crusade led by Thomas Stuart Ferguson. Ferguson was a prominent Mormon lawyer and a staunch Book of Mormon buff. His love of the Book of Mormon was so great that according to his wife “during their courtship...she was sometimes piqued by his passion for the Book of Mormon and once complained to her mother ‘I think I’m going out with the Book of Mormon.’”⁷ His zeal led him to ask the Mormon church for the funding of an extended series of archeological digs in Book of Mormon lands. The church complied with his request and contributed several hundred thousand dollars to his cause. After twenty-five years of work he not only came away empty-handed, but he had lost faith in Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon and the Mormon church as well. In 1976 he said, “The *real implication* of [my findings] is that you can’t set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere—*because it is fictional* and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology. I should say—what is in the ground *will never conform to what is in the book*” (emphasis as in the original).⁸

Many RLDS Book of Mormon faithful will reject this work of Mormon archeologists because they feel that the Mormons are looking in the wrong spots. That is because RLDS and Mormons disagree over exactly what portions of Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America) represent Book of Mormon lands.⁹ But RLDS efforts by looking in the “right” spots have proved no more successful than the Mormons’. The reason for this is, as Ferguson says, “*because [the Book of Mormon] is fictional and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology...what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book.*”

Recent Findings from Anthropology. In the last chapter we explained the popular view of the 1820s, that the American Indians were of Israelite descent. This, of course, is what Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon also claim. Twentieth-century research, however, has given us quite a different picture. As the Smithsonian Institution indicated above, scholars now view the Indians as of Mongoloid descent. A recent landmark study now confirms this view. This study has been published by the Princeton University Press and is entitled *The History and Geography*

6. Letter from the National Geographic Society dated May 29, 1979 as cited in Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, p. 125-I.

7. Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *The Messiah in Ancient America*, (1987), p. 250, as cited in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, “Ferguson’s Two Faces,” *Salt Lake City Messenger*, Issue No. 69, September, 1988, p. 1.

8. Letter from Thomas Stuart Ferguson to Mr. & Mrs. H.W. Lawrence, dated Feb. 20, 1976, as cited in Tanner, “Ferguson’s Two Faces,” p. 6.

9. Current *Book of Mormon* archeological efforts are focused on Mesoamerica since no geographical evidence points to New York state where Joseph supposedly found the plates.

of *Human Genes*, by population geneticists Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi and Alberto Piazza.¹⁰ Hailed as the “first genetic atlas of the world,” it represents over 50 years of research in population genetics and includes data from nearly 2,000 communities and tribes. It is said to be “the closest thing we have to a global family tree.” The conclusion of this study? That the American Indians are of Mongoloid stock, most likely arriving in America through multiple migrations via the Bering Strait.

Concluding Observations. Biblical archeology has a long and distinguished history. Biblical people, places and literature continue to be verified by a vast array of artifacts and literature from a myriad of ancient sites. Even people who have not yet placed their faith in God continue to support the Bible through their research and study.

But when it comes to the Book of Mormon we have nothing. None of its people, places or literature can be verified by a single objective piece of ancient evidence. Remember, the Book of Mormon claims that “the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land” shortly after Jesus supposedly visited them after his resurrection. This massive conversion of the entire population created a “golden age” of Christian peace and prosperity throughout the whole land which lasted *nearly two hundred years*.¹¹

Think about it. If such a massive expression of Christianity over such a period of time ever existed, could all evidence of it remain suppressed? Of course not. Mesoamerica would be virtually oozing with evidence. And yet no sign of the Egyptian language, Hebrew culture *or Christianity itself* has ever been found in Mesoamerica prior to the sixteenth century. When evidence of Christianity *is* found, it dates only from the Spanish conquest of the 1500s. In contrast, the Mesoamerican evidence we *do* have from this supposed “golden age” period (a.d. 34–200) portrays a pagan, bloodthirsty people throughout the land, who made stair-stepped temples for the purpose of human sacrifice.

In the light of such evidence many RLDS and Mormons alike have long since given up any hope of establishing a factual basis for the Book of Mormon based on archeology or anthropology. They simply recognize that none exists. But there are many others who still believe that this factual basis will someday be established. They believe that for the time being God has elected to keep all of this a big secret until the time is right to unveil it for all the world to see.

10. Sribala Subramanian, “The Story in Our Genes,” *Time*, January 16, 1995, pp. 54–55.

11. *BM*, 4 Nephi 1:3–28.