

Several *Book of Mormon* passages defy understanding. In the Book of Ether we read” And it came to pass that after he had smitten off the head of Shiz, that Shiz raised upon his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for breath, he died (15:31). How anyone with his head cut off could struggle for breath is a mystery. In Helaman 9:6 we learn that a judge was “stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy.” But the strangest malapropism appears in Alma 46:19. “And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving the rent [part] of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had wrote [writer] upon the rent [part]...” The words in brackets have been altered in recent editions but the original edition seems to give the impression that a “rent” is something on which a man can write!

Most critics of the *Book of Mormon* make reference to the anachronisms in the text. Laban draws a sword and Nephi observes that “the blade thereof was of the most precious steel” No one believes that steel was available to Laban or anyone else in 592 B.C. The ship taking Lehi and his family and friends to the New World is guided by a compass which was invented many centuries later. In Alma 20:6 the writer mentions horses, which all archaeologists agree were extinct on this continent by that period and were not introduced until the coming of the Spanish settlers. The Jaredites were provided with a catalogue of anachronisms:

...having all manner of fruit, and of grain, and of silks, and of fine linen, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and also all manner of cattle, of

oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals, which were useful for the food of man; and they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants, and cureloms, and cumons, all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants, and cureloms, and cumons (Ether 9:17-19).

Nobody knows what “cureloms and cumons” might be although the *LDS Reference Encyclopedia* ventures a guess: “Useful animals known to the Jaredites. By some these were thought to be the Mastodon, by others the Llama or Alpaca.”

Textual changes since the original 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* number more than 2,000 [4,000 to date]. Nevertheless, the Prophet insisted that the “*Book of Mormon* is the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (1841).

Mormon scholars insist that new evidence corroborates the statements about the pre-Columbian history of this hemisphere, but non-Mormon archeologists put no faith in the *Book of Mormon*.

The plain fact is that no non-Mormon anthropologist or archaeologist accept the thesis that the American Indians are of Jewish ancestry.

Taken from *The Latter-day Saints in the Modern World*, by William J. Whalen, John Day Company, 1964, pp. 44-51.

The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net

www.evangelizationstation.com

Pamphlet 598

Inconsistencies in the *Book of Mormon*

William J. Whalen

Unlike the Old and New Testaments the *Book of Mormon* has never been subjected to the rigorous criticism of biblical scholars. Believing Mormons do not question its authenticity and few Mormons have the academic equipment to apply the critical methods used in examining the Christian scriptures. Protestant and Catholic scripture scholars have not bothered to examine the internal evidence of the *Book of Mormon*, although the remarkable growth of Mormonism may prompt a thoroughgoing examination of its basic book.

It is possible, however, for the layman to question many of the anachronisms of the *Book of Mormon*, for example, if a book purportedly written in the year 1000 tells of a political movement led by a Fuehrer, symbolized by a swastika, and arrayed against a coalition known as the Allies, we might suspect that the writer was contemporary of the Nazi movement.

Many words appear in the text which were unknown at the dates ascribed to the composition of the *Book of Mormon*. The Nephites worship in *synagogues*, a Greek word signifying an institution which developed after the Nephites had left Palestine. Other words which the Nephites could hardly have known are *baptize*, *church*, *gospel*, *barges*, etc.

The Greek word *biblia* from which we derive the word *bible* was first used as a

name for the scriptures in the fifth century after Christ. It means “books” or “booklets” and is used to designate a collection of inspired writings bound in codex form. But in 2 Nephi 29:3 we read, “Many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.”

The point of view of the Nephites puzzles the non-Mormon reader since the Messianic hopes of the Nephites are so clearly identified with the person of Jesus Christ, his atonement, baptism, death by crucifixion, and resurrection. Nothing anywhere so specific and prophetic appears in the Old Testament. Verses in 2 Nephi 31:6 and 8, allegedly written between 559 and 545 B. C. refer to Jesus Christ in the past tense: “Now I would ask you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized in water?...Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.” Again in 2 Nephi 33:6 the Nephite prophet exclaims: “I glory in my Jesus for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.” These sentiments would have a more genuine ring if we were told they were expressed by a frontier revivalist than by a Nephite writing six centuries before the birth of Christ.

Biblical scholars would be startled to discover the invented word *Jehovah* in the Nephi scriptures. In 2 Nephi 22:2 we read:

Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation.

With one minor change this is a transcription of Isaiah 12:2 in the 1611

version. The problem for Mormon scholars is that the word Jehovah was made up from the Jewish tetragrammaton—JHWH—long after the plates of the *Book of Mormon* were buried in A.D. 420. The Jews did not pronounce the name of God but used these four letters in their scriptures. The true pronunciation was lost but Christian scholars inserted the vowel points from the word *Adonai*, which means Lord. They came up with “Jehovah” but this was certainly not the correct name. It was probably closed to “Yahweh” and recent Bible translations have dropped “Jehovah” for this reason. The word could not have existed before the invention of Hebrew vowel points in the sixth century after Christ, but it appears in the *Book of Mormon*.

By examining the extensive selections corresponding to those in the Bible we can also arrive at a judgment as to the date at which the *Book of Mormon* was actually composed. For example, the ending of the Lord’s Prayer, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever”—which appears in the King James Version as Matthew 6:13 and in the *Book of Mormon* as 3 Nephi 13:13—is certainly an interpolation. Scripture scholars agree that this liturgical addition was introduced around the fifth century and mistakenly incorporated into some versions of the New Testament. Recent versions eliminate the interpolation. That a Nephite scribe on another continent could come up with the identical interpolation stretches credibility.

The King James Version renders Isaiah 5:26 incorrectly as “and their carcasses were

torn in the midst of the streets.” The Hebrew word *suchah* means “refuse” not “torn” and Modern Protestant versions correct this error so that it reads “And their corpses were as refuse (offal) in the midst of the streets.”

The *Book of Mormon* in 2 Nephi 15:25 perpetuates the King James error.

A serious problem for Mormon scholars is that of Isaiah. The *Book of Mormon* quotes 21 complete chapters of Isaiah and parts of other chapters. But few Christian scripture scholars contribute the entire book of Isaiah to the Prophet Isaiah. They believe that at least nine other unknown prophets contributed to the Book of Isaiah and many of these wrote their passages at least sixty years after the Nephites were said to have left Jerusalem. Lehi and his family presumably lost all contact with their homeland after their voyage to the New World. How then could the Nephites incorporate the saying of these unknown prophets into the *Book of Mormon*?

An odd discrepancy appears in 3 Nephi 25:2. The Mormon passage reads:

But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and yet shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall.

In all other Catholic and Protestant versions this appears as Malachi 4:2, but the translation is “sun of righteousness” not “Son of Righteousness.” Had the translator been reading from a copy of the Bible it is understandable that Cowdery should have written “Son” instead of “sun.” The Mormons must insist that this is the correct rendering since the translation proceeded only after the spirit ascertained its correctness.