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Author(s) Sidney B. Sperry

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Brothers and sisters, I am surprised at the great number of you that have turned out to this meeting; I am agreeably surprised. The title of my address is "The Book of Mormon and Textual Criticism." It is a fascinating topic. However, the brethren who assigned me the topic said I might depart from it somewhat. While I shall discuss textual criticism to a degree, I also discuss some higher criticism. Textual criticism, or lower criticism, concerns itself with the investigation of the alterations which may have occurred in the text of a document, with the object of restoring it to its original form. For example, we have between four and five thousand different New Testament documents varying one from another in certain respects. The problem facing textual critics is to attempt to classify the variants in this great number of documents

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and give us a text of the New Testament which is as near to the original as possible.

Indeed, as applied to the books of the Bible, the object of textual criticism is to classify the numerous variants recorded in a given manuscript tradition and to choose the one which most probably represents the original reading. Textual criticism is generally a difficult task, but of great importance because it is the very foundation of exegesis or the interpretation of a text.

In a doctrinal sense, if you are not sure of the text that you are using, what conclusions can you arrive at accurately? You see how important it is that we get a good text.

In this lecture we are not concerned with the condition of the text of the Book of Mormon itself—although I think it could be bettered in a place or two, and if I have time I may indicate to you some of those places. Rather, we are interested in the ways in which the text of the Book of Mormon contributes to an understanding of the text and meaning of other books, especially those in the Bible.

The contributions of the Book of Mormon to the text of the Old Testament are more prominently confined to the Pentateuch, or books of Moses, involving Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Of these, we are more specifically concerned with Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon text backs up the traditional claims that Moses wrote or had written the Pentateuch.

The Authorship of the Pentateuch

Now I do not have time to go into this tremendous problem, which is perhaps the greatest literary problem of the Old Testament, but the Book of Mormon backs up the traditional doctrine that the five books, composing the Pentateuch, were written by Moses or under his direction.¹ It certainly does not support the so-called "documentary theory," which holds substantially that the Pentateuch did not come from Moses, but that it is the end result of the work of groups of editors from about the eighth century B.C. to about 400 B.C. When I say that, I say that as an

¹ See "The Book of Mormon and the Problem of the Pentateuch," on pages 119–28 in this issue.

historical critic—that is, I am speaking of the realm of higher criticism.

Let me give you a few references here. First of all, notice 1 Nephi 5:10–14. Let me read there just for a moment and show you the position of the Book of Mormon. When Nephi and his brethren brought back the brass plates from Jerusalem to their father, we have this account:

And after they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning.

And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents;

And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah;

And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. (1 Nephi 5:10–13)

That will be far enough to show that the brass plates indicate that there were five books of Moses.

Now I do not have time to fully document my point that from the point of view of the Book of Mormon we cannot escape from the traditional conclusion that—despite the statements today of higher critics—the so-called five books of Moses were written by Moses.

Another point may be made from Mosiah 12:33–36. Here the courageous Abinadi points out certain passages that he includes under the law of Moses. In chapter 13:12–24, in which he quotes a part of Exodus 20, he certainly implies that Moses had to do with that writing. Then a point even more interesting to us is found in 3 Nephi 20:23, with which you may compare Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, and 19. Now critical scholars in the Old Testament field emphasize that the book of Deuteronomy was not

written under the direction of Moses. However, let me read this statement made by the Savior himself, in which he says:

Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. (3 Nephi 23:23)

You notice that the Savior himself attributes this particular passage in Deuteronomy to Moses. As critics we can scarcely escape the implication that the book of Deuteronomy was also written by Moses or under his direction.

Isaiah

Another book of interest to Book of Mormon scholars in the Old Testament is the text of Isaiah. Many years ago, as most of you know, I undertook a very careful textual examination of the quotations in the Book of Mormon of the prophet Isaiah. Now at least twenty-one full chapters of Isaiah are quoted in the Book of Mormon, and allusions are made to numerous other chapters, including parts of Isaiah which our present-day scholars say did not come from Isaiah. For example, notice 3 Nephi 22, in which the Savior quotes Isaiah 54 verbatim. The Savior attributes that text to Isaiah, not only in 3 Nephi 22, but also in 3 Nephi 23. In 3 Nephi 23:1 he says, "Great are the words of Isaiah" and advises the Nephites to read that prophet. There is no question that the Book of Mormon, again contrary to modern historical criticism, implies that Isaiah did write substantially all the text of his entire book. We as Latter-day Saints just have to throw out many of the assertions of higher criticism concerning Isaiah. I have gone over this problem a great many years, and I still hold that Isaiah wrote the whole text, substantially as we have it.

In the Book of Mormon text of Isaiah we have some very interesting readings. I am going to cite you a couple, to show you that when the Prophet Joseph Smith came to a known text, in this case Isaiah, he did not just quote it verbatim. I call your attention

to 2 Nephi 12:16, which corresponds to Isaiah 2:16. First, let me read the King James rendering of the text. The King James Version, as well as the Hebrew text, has only two clauses:

And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all
pleasant pictures. (Isaiah 2:16)

Now in the Book of Mormon parallel we find three clauses. The first one is found neither in the King James Version nor in the Hebrew text. The text reads:

And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the
ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.
(2 Nephi 12:16)

That the Prophet was actually translating independently is shown by the first clause, which is missing in the familiar versions. The scholar will say, "That's very interesting, but is there any evidence of a scientific nature that will bear out the Prophet's rendering of the first line?"

I have brought with me this morning a translation of the Greek Septuagint. It was made many years ago by a noted Englishman, and any of you are free to examine it. I will not translate the Greek parallel of Isaiah but will let this translation tell the story:

And upon every ship of the sea, and upon every
display of fine ships.

Notice just two clauses; the first one agrees with the first clause in the Book of Mormon. Here we have ancient evidence supporting the Nephite text. Observe also that each clause of the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon begins with the words, "And upon all." When scribes are copying such a text it is easy to drop out a line by a slip of the eye. I have tested that fact many times on my own secretaries. Here is a case where Nephi had copied the three clauses of Isaiah's original correctly. When the Septuagint text of Isaiah was made—that is, when the Hebrew text was translated into Greek—it is obvious that the first clause in the Book of Mormon was present in the Hebrew text. As time went on, one clause of the Greek text fell out, and the third clause was corrupted. In the

Hebrew text the first clause fell out after Septuagint times, but the last two clauses were retained correctly. The Book of Mormon has preserved all three. There is good reason, as I have shown, to believe that the Nephite text has preserved correctly Isaiah's text of this verse.

Now let me cite another text with a somewhat different problem. Turn to Isaiah 9:3. The Book of Mormon parallel is in 2 Nephi 19:3. I shall turn first of all to the King James Version and read it to you. It is a fairly good translation of the Hebrew.

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 9:3)

Take the Book of Mormon, and we find this reading:

Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy [the *not* is left out]—they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. (2 Nephi 19:3)

Of interest here—if you were close enough you could see an asterisk in my Hebrew text. You men here in front can see it, and it refers to the *qere*, or what is to be read as given in a footnote. The ancient Hebrew scribes felt that the text as traditionally handed down was wrong, that the $l\bar{o}$, which means “not,” should be supplanted by a *lo*, which would then give the reading as found in the Book of Mormon. In short, a word with the same sound has been improperly substituted for the right one. The Prophet caught the error, and most scholars today would agree in substance with the Nephite reading as one can substantiate with the *International Critical Commentary* on Isaiah.

Time permitting, I could give many more illustrations of the Prophet's translations of the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon. Let me say just this: The Book of Mormon disavows the conclusions of many higher critics concerning the text of Isaiah. The Nephite text shows that Joseph Smith was translating, and from a text older than our traditional Hebrew text. I might point out to those of you interested in the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Dead Sea Scrolls add relatively little to our knowledge of the text

of Isaiah. Actually the two manuscripts of Isaiah found in 1947 are quite inferior to our traditional printed text of Isaiah. That the traditional text of Isaiah is better is borne out by the Book of Mormon, which agrees with scholars in this respect.

Micah and Malachi

Another text I should point out to you in the Book of Mormon is one where the Savior quotes and comments on Micah 5. See 3 Nephi 21:12–21 and also some verses in chapter 23. Time does not permit me to enter into the literary problem here. I have not as yet, despite all the years that have gone by, had the time to probe into this text of Micah in the Book of Mormon as I should have liked, but I mention the matter to you.

The next Old Testament text I would call your attention to in the Book of Mormon is that of Malachi 3 and 4. These are quoted, substantially as found in our present King James Version, in 3 Nephi 24–25. The Book of Mormon affirms that these two chapters of Malachi have come down to us in a relatively pure state, textually speaking. But one very interesting passage in the Book of Mormon version gives a lot of joy to textual critics. Here it is:

But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall.
(3 Nephi 25:2)

Notice the reading “Son of Righteousness” instead of the familiar “Sun of Righteousness.” The reading of the original Hebrew is “Sun of Righteousness.” Here, again, we have homonyms—two words of similar sound but differing in meaning from each other. That is, they are homonyms in English. Now which reading is correct, the reading of the Book of Mormon or that as given in the King James Version? Despite the fact that the Book of Mormon reads “Son of Righteousness,” this is a case where I think the text ought to be changed. Now I do not know whether or not the Church authorities would approve the change, but let me show you the compelling evidence that it should be changed. This is the way a textual critic would go at the problem. In Hebrew,

“the Son of Righteousness” would be *ben tsōdhākāh*, where *ben* is “Son of.” But the original Hebrew reads, *shemesh tsōdhākāh*, where *shemesh* is “Sun of.” Now by no stretch of the imagination could one question the great difference between the sound of *ben* and *shemesh*. *Shemesh*, “Sun of,” may be masculine or feminine in gender. And notice this literal translation of the Hebrew of Malachi in question:

But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in *her* wings. [And you Hebrew scholars in the audience can see the third feminine suffix here.]

This shows that *shemesh*, “Sun of,” must have been the original reading, because *ben*, “Son of,” could not possibly be feminine. We are driven inevitably to the view that “Sun of Righteousness” is the correct reading.

Now, what happened? Well, I do not know at this particular point to whom the Prophet was dictating his translation, but let us assume that it was Oliver Cowdery. When the Prophet dictated to him, “shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings,” Oliver, or whoever it was, wrote down “Son,” a quite natural error. This same reading occurs in three different places. The meaning is not changed at all, because most conservative scholars through the centuries have agreed that “Son of Righteousness” refers to the Savior.

New Testament Examples

Let us go to the New Testament for a moment. The first New Testament text I refer to is John 1:28, in which we find the reading “Bethabara” in the King James Version. John was baptizing in Bethabara. This reading does not agree with the views of modern critical scholars, who prefer the reading “Bethany” as found in certain Greek texts. The question is, which is correct, “Bethabara” or “Bethany”? I have brought along a copy of Nestle’s critical Greek text, and he adopts the reading of “Bethany” and cites the textual evidence at the bottom of the page. Keep in mind that both readings have some justification, but which is correct?

Now in the Book of Mormon I cite 1 Nephi 10:9, where we have this reading:

And my father said he [that is, John the Baptist] should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan. (1 Nephi 10:9)

The inspired Book of Mormon, you see, says that “Bethabara” is the correct reading and that our modern scholars are wrong in choosing the reading “Bethany.” Origen, the early Christian New Testament critic, said that he went down to Palestine and could not find a Bethany near Jordan. He was aware that even then there were documents having the reading of “Bethany.” But “Bethabara” is the correct reading, according to the Book of Mormon.

Another text is Matthew 5–7, which you will recognize as the Sermon on the Mount, the parallel to which we find in 3 Nephi 12–14. In 3 Nephi 12 we find some important changes in readings in the Beatitudes. Notice this one:

And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. (3 Nephi 12:6)

As you can see, the Book of Mormon adds the phrase *filled with the Holy Ghost*, a real contribution.

A Latter-day Saint textual critic would be thrilled to find Greek manuscripts of the New Testament with readings like some of those in the Book of Mormon. And who knows but someday some will be found!

Let us suppose that a number of Greek manuscripts of the whole New Testament had been found in the Egyptian desert, all having variant readings. And let us further suppose that one set of the manuscripts contained a text whose readings in most respects were those set down by the original authors. How would I as a Latter-day Saint critic pick it out from all the rest? Having real faith in Joseph Smith as a prophet, I would select a number of readings from the Book of Mormon (such as 3 Nephi 12:3, 6; 13:34) and from the inspired revision (cf. Matthew 4:1–2; Luke 3:4–11; John 1:1; 1 Corinthians 15:40 JST, etc.), and look for

them in the newly found manuscripts. We would locate the correct manuscript without too much trouble.

Last of all, let us look at 1 Corinthians 13:4–6. It has a parallel in Moroni 7:45–46, in which Moroni is quoting his father Mormon on faith, hope, and charity:

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (Moroni 7:45)

Now he says:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. (Moroni 7:46–47)

Mormon's definition of charity is better than the "love" usually given by translators. Critics will say that Mormon's words were simply hijacked by Joseph Smith from Paul's words in the New Testament. It is true that the text in verse 45 is almost word for word the same as its parallel in 1 Corinthians. Now I am going to speak as a higher critic. I do not believe that Paul was the original author of the words in question. I think that the original author was the Savior. Paul had access to them and used our Lord's words to suit himself when writing to the Corinthians. In his time he would not be accused of plagiarism. When our Lord came to this continent as a resurrected, glorified person, he gave the same sermon on faith, hope, and charity. Mormon had access to that sermon just as Paul did and used it as he pleased. He was unaware that Paul had used the sermon on the other continent at an earlier time. We cannot accuse the Prophet Joseph Smith of being stupid, whatever else we may accuse him of. He told the truth and made an interesting contribution to our knowledge of Paul and his famous sermon.