

**THE *BOOK OF MORMON*:  
A BOOK OF MISTAKES, ERROR, AND FRAUD**

by

**Jon Gary Williams**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Mormon church promotes the *Book of Mormon* as an inspired writing. However, after a fair and candid examination of the evidence, many thousands of honest Mormons have discovered that this claim simply is not true. What have they learned that caused them to reject the *Book of Mormon*?

To those who believe the *Book of Mormon* to be inspired, no doubt the information that follows will be disturbing. However, please understand that it has been written in good will, with the intention of helping people come to a better understanding of spiritual truth. And as you read, please remember that only the truth can make one free (John 8:32), and that an open mind is required for truth to function as it should.

**WHAT IS THE *BOOK OF MORMON*?**

The *Book of Mormon* is the story of two groups of people that supposedly traveled by sea from Bible lands to the Americas. One group, the Jaredites (dated at about 2500 B.C.), populated Central America but eventually was destroyed. The other group, Jewish descendants of the tribe of Manasseh (with whom most of the *Book of Mormon* deals), came to South America about 600 B.C. and eventually migrated into Central and North America. This latter group was divided into two nations, the Nephites and Lamanites. Jesus is supposed to have revealed Himself on the American continent, where He preached the gospel and established Christianity. After becoming enemies, in A.D. 385 the Lamanites destroyed the Nephites, who were “cursed” with dark skin and became the ancestors of American Indians.

It is claimed that this story was recorded in an ancient language on gold plates that were buried on a hill in New York in A.D. 421 by Moroni, the last of the Nephites. It further is claimed that between 1827 and 1829, Moroni, this time as an angel, appeared to Joseph Smith, revealing to him the existence and whereabouts of the plates. Then, by the power of God and by using “miraculous” stones called the

“Urim” and “Thummim” (also referred to as “seer” stones), Smith allegedly translated these plates into English.

### **MORMON CLAIMS REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE *BOOK OF MORMON* AND HOW IT WAS TRANSLATED**

In 1841, Joseph Smith declared the *Book of Mormon* to be “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion,” and suggested that “a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461). This certainly is an astounding claim. Surely, a book that is the “most correct” on Earth would contain **no mistakes**. However, as we shall see, this is not the case.

Exactly how was the *Book of Mormon* supposed to have been “translated” from the golden plates? Describing how this was accomplished, David Whitmer, one of the so-called “three witnesses” to a testimony appearing at the front of the *Book of Mormon*, said: “Thus the *Book of Mormon* was translated by the **gift and power of God** and not by the power of man” (*Address to All Believers in Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, p. 12, emp. added). In addition, at the front of the *Book of Mormon*, in the section titled “Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” it is stated that the book was “translated into modern speech by the **gift and power of God** as attested by **Divine affirmation**” (emp. added).

If the *Book of Mormon* was translated by the “power of God,” it is reasonable to assume that it would be completely free from error. The fact is, however, that the original edition is filled with many mistakes. That this is true is evident from the fact that, through the years, numerous Mormon writers have tried to explain why the mistakes exist, and why thousands of changes have been made in subsequent editions of the *Book of Mormon*. Various suggestions have been made in an attempt to explain the errors, including such things as Joseph Smith’s poor education, his lack of communication with those who later copied the text, and typesetting mistakes. However, each of these is woefully inadequate.

Some have attempted to explain the egregious errors within the *Book of Mormon* by suggesting that Joseph Smith was not given the actual **words**, but instead only the “idea” or “sense” of the things that were to be written—therefore, allowing for the possibility of human error. However, this claim contra-

dicts clear statements made by renowned Mormon leaders of the past. For example, David Whitmer provided the following detailed explanation of how the “translating” came about.

Joseph Smith 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 a 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 (*Address to All Believers in Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, p. 12).

Martin Harris, another of the three witnesses, wrote: “The translation was just as it was engraven on the plates **precisely in the language then used**” (*The Myth of Manuscript Found*, p. 71, emp. added). He went on to state: “The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummim, sentence by sentence, and as soon as one was **correctly translated** the next appeared” (p. 91, emp. added). Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of the Mormon church, said: “Some persons have thought that the Lord revealed to Joseph the **ideas**, and that Joseph conveyed those ideas into the English language. But **this is not so**. The Lord gave not only the ideas but the language itself—**the very words**” (*The Territorial Inquirer*, March 2, 1881, emp. added). Again, he explained:

Joseph did **not** render the writing on the gold plates into the English language in his own style of language as many people believe, but **every word and letter was given to him by the gift and power of God**.... The Lord caused each word spelled as it is in the book to appear on the stones in short sentences or words, and when Joseph had uttered the sentence or word before him and the scribe had written it properly, that sentence would disappear and another would appear. And if there was as a word wrongly written or even a letter incorrect, the writing on the stoned would remain there (*Journal of Oliver Huntington*, Utah State Historical Society, p. 168, emp. added).

In addition, Mormon historian Brigham H. Roberts wrote that “the interpretation...was reflected in the sacred instrument, there to remain until correctly written by the scribe” (*New Witnesses for God*, 3:114). Also, the testimony of the three witnesses to the plates, found in the front of the *Book of Mormon*, reads: “And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true.” And finally, regarding the original manuscript, Joseph Smith himself claimed that he and the three witnesses were told by God: “These plates have been ...translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen **is correct**” (*History of the Church*, 1:54-55, emp. added).

The above statements are very important, for they explain the specific **nature** of the translating—the **very words** being given by God, spelled out, written properly, a character at a time, and repeated and corrected if in error. And all this allegedly was overseen by “the gift and power of God,” and “attested by Divine affirmation.” This means there could have been **no mistakes**. Therefore, mistakes found in the *Book of Mormon* cannot be attributed to Smith’s poor education or lack of communication with those who copied the text. The glaring mistakes that will be presented here make this all too obvious.

Neither can these mistakes be blamed on typesetting. When compared, the original handwritten manuscript allegedly dictated by Joseph Smith, and the corrected handwritten manuscript from which the first printing was made, reveal numerous changes—and this was **before** the typesetting was done! Following are several types of errors mitigating against the *Book of Mormon* being inspired.

#### **MISSPELLED WORDS IN THE *BOOK OF MORMON***

The original edition of the *Book of Mormon* contained dozens of misspelled words, documenting that the writer had a very poor knowledge of the English language. How could these misspelled words get into a translation allegedly being overseen by the “power of God”? Just a few such errors are listed below.

- “journied” (for journeyed; 1 Nephi 4:38; 5:6; 7:6; 18:25; 2 Nephi 5:7; Omni 1:16)
- “bellowses” (for bellows; 1 Nephi 17:11)
- “feading” (for feeding; Enos 1:20)
- “sayeth” (for saith; Mosiah 12:21)
- “babblings” (for babblings; Alma 1:32)
- “tempels” (for temples; Alma 16:13)
- “yars” (for years; Alma 19:16)
- “phrensied” (for frenzied; Alma 30:16)
- “eighth” (for eighth; Alma 53:23)
- “adhear” (for adhere; Alma 60:34)
- “eatheth” (for eateth; 3 Nephi 20:8)
- “rereward” (for rearward; 3 Nephi 20:42; 21:29)

That this book is promoted as inspired by God is a reflection on God’s wisdom, and on His ability to produce a volume containing marks of inspiration. Would God inspire a translation in which corrections

would have to be made in later editions? It should be remembered that Joseph Smith himself said that any mistakes were **corrected as they were detected**. The misspelled words alone show any claim of inspiration for the *Book of Mormon* is fraudulent.

### ERRORS IN GRAMMAR

There are literally thousands of grammatical errors in the original edition of the *Book of Mormon*—errors that gradually have been changed in later editions. These take the form of such things as double negatives, incorrect adverbs and adjectives, and incorrect tenses. Note the following examples.

- “Behold, for none of these I cannot hope” (2 Nephi 33:9).
- “And Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could not understand them” (Omni 1:17).
- “And now behold the Lamanites could not retreat neither way” (Helaman 1:31).
- “Yea, if my days could have been in them days” (Helaman 7:8).
- “And it came to pass that there was certain men passing by” (Helaman 7:11).
- “That all might see the writing which he had wrote” (Alma 46:19).
- “I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord gave these commandments” (Alma 13:1). [still exists in recent editions]
- “They did not fight against God no more” (Alma 23:7).
- “I have wrote to them” (3 Nephi 26:8).
- “I were about to write to them” (3 Nephi 26:11).
- “...the gates of hell is...” (3 Nephi 18:13).
- “...the multitude had all eat” (3 Nephi 20:9).
- “I Moroni have written the words which was commanded” (Ether 5:1).
- “The law had ought to be done away” (2 Nephi 25:27).
- “...which was wrote upon the plates...” (Alma 44:24).
- “Adam and Eve, which was our first parents...” (1 Nephi 5:11).
- “...who was the most foremost among them” (Alma 32:5).
- “...that there might not be no more sorrow” (Alma 29:2).
- “And this he done” (Alma 2:10).
- In the first chapter alone of the *Book of Mormon* (1 Nephi 1, which has only 20 verses), there are no less than four such errors. Two examples are: “My father had read and saw,” and “the tender mercies of the Lord is....”

The Mormon claim of accurate and precise translation for the *Book of Mormon* cannot be harmonized with errors such as these. A divinely guided book would not contain these kinds (or numbers) of grammatical mistakes, and to claim inspiration for such a book is to cast reproach upon God Himself.

### **REDUNDANT PHRASES AND WORDS**

In the *Book of Mormon* there are words and phrases that are repeated frequently, appearing so often that, to say the least, they become redundant.

- The phrase, “and it came to pass,” is so common in the *Book of Mormon* (occurring over 1200 times) that it makes the reading monotonous. In 1 Nephi alone this phrase is used almost 200 times. In 1 Nephi 3:21-29 it is used to begin eight of the nine verses. In the sixty-nine verses of Ether 14 and 15, it is used thirty-nine times. Another phrase duplicated beyond reason is “the more part.” Is it reasonable to suggest that God, through inspiration, would employ such awkward repetition?
- Numerous words in the *Book of Mormon* are overused. For example, the word “behold” is used repeatedly with no real need. Likewise the word “thereof” is used to excess, as is the word “inso-much.” These and many similar words confirm that the writer was deficient in vocabulary.
- Often the *Book of Mormon* is wordy, using far too many words to express a simple thought. A good illustration is 4 Nephi 6: “And thus did the thirty and eight years pass away, also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.” That is quite a mouthful just to say that 59 years had passed! Could anyone imagine the Bible reading like this? The writer definitely tended to ramble.
- The use of colloquial terms is apparent in the *Book of Mormon*. The frequent use of “a” with various participles is noticeable in such phrases as: “a journeying,” “a preaching,” “a marching,” “a pointing,” “a preparing” “a coming.” Such terminology betrays the influence of the vernacular of the 1800s, and is not the language one would expect to find in writings of ancient times.

### **FABRICATED WORDS**

The writer of the *Book of Mormon* not only misspelled many words, but also had a practice of inventing new, contrived words, or simply using words incorrectly. The following provide examples of such instances.

- “preparator” (for preparer; 1 Nephi 15:35) [still exists in later editions]
- “arriven” (for arrived; Alma 20:30)
- “numeriority” (for a vast number; Alma 56:10)
- “molten” (for melt; Ether 3:1) [still exists in recent editions]
- “flatter” (for allure and instigate; Alma 52:19 and Helaman 1:7)
- “enormity” (for enormous; Alma 52:5)
- “arrested” (for wrested; Alma 41:1)

- “consigned” (for convinced; Helaman 7:9)
- “repair” (for recompense; Alma 27:8) [still exists in later editions]
- “ezrom,” “senine,” and “limnah” (coins; Alma 11:6 and Alma 11:3)
- “cimeter” (a sword; Enos 1:20)
- “neas” (a plant; Mosiah 9:9)
- “sheum” (a crop; Mosiah 9:9)
- “deseret” (a bee; Ether 2:3)
- “curelom” and “cummons” (unidentified animals; Ether 9:19)

Obviously these are contrived and misused words, and do not bear marks of inspiration. Since God is “not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33), He would not have allowed such words to be penned.

### FRAUDULENT LANGUAGE

In the original edition of the *Book of Mormon*, there is much evidence of fraud—that is, the use of words, phrases, and sentences that reveal an obvious attempt to deceive. Instances of this are so numerous and so blatant they cannot be ignored. The following provide just a few examples.

- Alma 37:38, dated at 73 B.C., speaks of the people using a “compass.” However, such an instrument was not invented until about A.D. 1100. How could there be a divinely inspired translation of a word **describing something that did not exist**? This is a mark of fraud.
- 1 Nephi 18:25, dated at 589 B.C., speaks of “horses” and “asses.” But, these animals were unknown in the Western Hemisphere until the Spaniards introduced them about 450 years ago. Can anyone honestly believe that such a bungled mistake occurred as a result of divine revelation?
- Ether 9:19 speaks of “elephants” being in America when the Jaredites arrived, which was supposed to have been around 2250 B.C. However, it is a well-known fact that elephants were not native to America. To suggest that they were is absurd, and proves the *Book of Mormon* to be erroneous. If someone were to argue that elephants might possibly have been brought to America in the Jaredites’ boats, such an argument could be disproved easily since elephants were not native to Bible lands either.
- Surprising as it may seem, no less than six times the *Book of Mormon* employs the abbreviation “&c” (and so forth), a usage peculiar to the nineteenth century (subtitle of 2 Nephi; Jacob 1:11; Mosiah 8:8; 23:5; Alma 3:5). It can hardly be suggested that such a symbol is a “translation” from ancient writings. This kind of mistake is clear and compelling evidence of the recent origin of the book.
- In Jacob 7:27, the French word *adieu* occurs. But how could a **modern** French word have found its way into those ancient plates? This is additional evidence of fraud, and presents grounds for rejecting the *Book of Mormon*.
- In Jacob 3:11 and Mosiah 29:14, the word “faculties” appears. However, this is a term dating back no earlier than middle English. Strange, indeed, that it would be “translated” from a word on an ancient plate dating over 1,000 years earlier.

- 2 Nephi 29:3 reads, “A Bible, A Bible, we have got a Bible...” This statement is made in reference to the Jewish Old Testament, which is dated at about 550 B.C. However, the word “Bible” is the English transliteration of the Greek term “biblos,” **which came into use over 1,500 years later**. In using the word “Bible,” the writer of the *Book of Mormon* made a serious blunder that shows the book to be of recent origin and, hence, fraudulent in its claims.
- 3 Nephi 15:21 is a word-for-word quote of John 10:16 (from the King James Version). However, this version is **somewhat less than 400 years old**. And, to make matters worse, the *Book of Mormon* even quotes the italicized word “and” that was supplied by the King James translators. Here, the writer of the *Book of Mormon* unwittingly demonstrates his work to be plagiarism.
- The entire fourteenth chapter of Mosiah, made up of 12 verses, is a duplication of Isaiah 53:1-12. Interestingly, all eleven of the italicized words in the King James text are quoted, yet none is placed in italics, which indicates that the writer of the *Book of Mormon* apparently was unaware that the KJV translators used italics to highlight words that were not in the original manuscripts employed in the translation process. Thus, Mosiah 14 had to have been copied from the King James Bible.
- Moroni 7:45, which is a quotation of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in the King James Version, is another example of fraud. In citing this verse, the writer included the italicized word “easily” (“...is not easily provoked”). However, the word “easily” is not in the original, but was placed there (incorrectly) by the King James translators. [It is omitted, correctly, from later versions.] That the writer included this word shows that Moroni 7:45 was copied from the KJV.
- In 2 Nephi 31:13 and other places, reference is made to the “Holy Ghost.” But, the term “ghost” did not come into use until many hundreds of years **after** the *Book of Mormon* was supposed to have been inscribed on ancient plates. That the writer borrowed this from the King James Bible is indisputable.
- The word “baptism” is found in 2 Nephi 31:13 and other places. But this cannot be an actual translation of a word found on ancient plates, because “baptism” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptisma*, and was peculiar to the King James Version. This word is clearly a copy of an early English term, demonstrating again the fraudulent nature of the *Book of Mormon*.
- The word “epistle” in 3 Nephi 3:5 is an obvious copy from the King James Version. Like baptism, the word “epistle” (*epistolos*) was left in its original Greek form, but given an English ending. This shows the writer of the *Book of Mormon* was not very careful in selecting his words.
- The words “alpha” and “omega” appear in 3 Nephi 9:18. These, of course, are the **English** spellings of **Greek** words found in the Bible (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). Since the *Book of Mormon* was not recorded in Greek, why were these words used? The simple fact is, they were copied from the King James Version.
- 3 Nephi 20:23-26, dated at A.D. 34, refers to **Moses’** prophecy about the Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19). However, the writer unwittingly used **Peter’s New Testament paraphrase** of this prophecy (Acts 2:22-26), which was not written until around A.D. 63. This was almost 30 years too soon, and thus proves the *Book of Mormon* is a hoax.
- In the *Book of Mormon* there are numerous instances where the writer uses words that were not relevant to his time. Rather, these are words peculiar to the English spoken in the early 1600s (“prayest,” “durst,” “thou,” “thee,” “thy,” “thine,” “hast,” “doth,” “knoweth,” “hearest,” “cometh,” “thirsteth,” etc.). Did God really select these words for the *Book of Mormon*? This obviously shows the writer’s exposure to King James terminology. [NOTE: Scores of passages in the *Book of Mormon*, either in part or whole, exact or paraphrased, have been taken directly from the King James Version. Some researchers have estimated that as much as 4% can be traced to this English translation.]

These examples, and others too numerous to list here, clearly illustrate that the *Book of Mormon* is not a translation from ancient plates, but is instead of rather recent origin and therefore fraudulent in its claims of antiquity.

### CHANGES IN CONTEXT

The first edition of the *Book of Mormon* contains numerous instances of extremely poor sentence structure, which for obvious reasons, were changed in later editions. Also, it includes several doctrines now considered false by leaders within the present-day Mormon church. In such cases, the texts have been altered in order to conform to what is being taught currently. Notice the following examples.

- In Helaman 1:16, there is an incomplete sentence that shows the writer of the *Book of Mormon* to be unfamiliar with proper sentence structure. In an effort to correct this embarrassing problem, two words were removed from the text, and a period was changed to a comma. The original reads, "...who was the son of Ammoron. Now Tobiah supposing that...." The corrected edition, however, reads, "who was the son of Ammoron, supposing that...." Obviously, this is not merely a typographical change, but a change to correct bad sentence structure. Would God have allowed such a mistake to be penned under His oversight?
- Mosiah 21:28 contains a very serious mistake. In this passage, "king Benjamin" is spoken of as being alive. Apparently, however, the writer forgot that **fifteen chapters earlier he recorded this man's death**. What he meant to write was "king **Mosiah**." The second edition of the *Book of Mormon* made this change. How did such a conspicuous mistake slip into a translation being overseen by the power of God? In making this change, the Mormon church has admitted the error.
- 1 Nephi 11:18 says of Mary, "Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the **mother of God**." This glaring error was changed in the second printing with the addition of three words. It now reads, "...the mother of the **Son of God**." The question is, which version is to be believed—Smith's original, or the later, corrected edition?
- 1 Nephi 11:21 reads, "Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the **Eternal Father**." Such an idea is contrary to current Mormon theology, yet, this is the concept the original *Book of Mormon* presents. Thus, in order to remove the problem, later editions have changed the text by adding three words—"even the **Son of the Eternal Father**." Again, one must ask: which is to be believed—Smith's original, or the later, corrected edition?
- In Alma 5:48 is found the phrase, "...yea, **the Son of the only begotten** of the Father." That the writer of the *Book of Mormon* states that Jesus had a son is another example of bungled writing. Later editions replaced the word "of" with a comma, making it read, "yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father." Can anyone imagine God making such an error?

These, and numerous other textual changes in the *Book of Mormon*, have been made to correct bad composition and faulty doctrine. However, if this book had been inspired by God, errors such as these never would have appeared in the first place.

One might wonder why such glaring mistakes were not caught by the printer. The fact is, **they were**. However, John H. Gilbert, printer of the first edition, when asking Joseph Smith about the mistakes, was told to make **no corrections**. According to Gilbert's affidavit, Smith told him: "The Old Testament is ungrammatical, set it as it is written" (*Memorandum*, John H. Gilbert, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, containing a photocopy of the first printing of the *Book of Mormon*, Wilford C. Wood). Apparently, Smith used what he considered to be grammatical errors of the King James version as justification to leave in his own mistakes.

### ABSURDITIES

The *Book of Mormon* contains several stories that, to say the least, are absurd, and which involve tales that strain common sense. Here are a few such accounts.

- 3 Nephi 28:4-8 speaks of three men who were told by Jesus that they would **never** die, but would remain on Earth until His second coming. However, the Bible is clear in explaining that God has "appointed" man to die (Hebrews 9:27). Such a tale is so imaginary many Mormons are reluctant to admit they believe it.
- Ether 2:6-25 and Ether 6:6 relate the story of how the Jaredites came to America in eight boats called "barges." They were said to be "the length of a tree," whatever that may mean. These were strange barges, for they were "peaked" at the ends in the shape of footballs and were sealed "tight like unto a dish." They were like submarines, for they were sometimes "buried in the depths of the sea" like "whales." But the story is made even more absurd by the fact that God forgot to provide any ventilation for the boats. After having this pointed out to Him, He directed the people to put a hole in the top and bottom of each boat. This was commanded so they could alternate plugging and unplugging as they tumbled in the sea. But God also forgot to provide for light. After being reminded, He asked what to do. He was told to make sixteen illuminating stones, two for each boat. Such a story not only is foolish, but is an insult to God's intelligence in that it portrays Him as completely inept.
- Ether 15:30-31 relates one of the most peculiar and bizarre stories in the *Book of Mormon*. It tells of a man named Coriantumr killing a man named Shiz. "And it came to pass when he had **smitten off the head** of Shiz, which Shiz **raised upon his hands** and fell; and after that he had **struggled for breath**, he died." This is amusing. Imagine, a decapitated man raising up and trying to breathe! Isn't it a fact that decapitation brings immediate death? And one is made to wonder if this "struggle" to breathe was from the mouth or the neck?
- According to 2 Nephi 3:6-18 Joseph (of the Old Testament) allegedly prophesied that Joseph Smith would come from the "fruit of his loins." In other words, he was to be a direct descendant of Joseph. Such an idea is so silly it hardly needs exposing. His own mother, in her biography of Joseph Smith, traced their family back five generations and 300 years **to England** (*Joseph Smith, The Prophet*, pp. 38-44). And, too, the *Book of Mormon* itself tells that the **last** of the Jewish descendants in America, the Lamanites, **became Indians**. Accordingly, Joseph Smith, to be a descendant of the Jews, had to be of Indian blood. [Because it is so unbelievable, Mormon writers claim this prophecy was "figurative." However, in the inspired language of the Bible the phrase "the fruit of his loins" always refers to literal offspring.]

- 1 Nephi 5:14-16 tells that Lehi, a devout Jew, did not know from whom he descended. However, after reading some long lost plates, he “did discover the genealogy of his fathers” and “knew that he was a descendant of Joseph.” Now, since it is well known that the Jews were very careful in acknowledging and recording their ancestry, can it be believed that a Jew who “dwelt in Jerusalem all his days” (1 Nephi 1:4) would not be aware that he was descended from Joseph? Yet, this is what the *Book of Mormon* reports. It is evident that the writer of this book was not familiar with Jewish custom regarding ancestral records.

Stories like these, which are easily documented within the text and that are too ludicrous to accept, establish the fact that the composer of the *Book of Mormon* lacked credibility.

### CONTRADICTS THE BIBLE

The *Book of Mormon* contains numerous passages that contradict the Bible. The following examples, which still appear in recent editions, are conspicuous instances of such contradictions.

- The Bible says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1). However, the *Book of Mormon* reads: “And behold, he shall be born of Mary at **Jerusalem**” (Alma 7:10). The writer of the *Book of Mormon* simply did not have his facts straight. The common Mormon explanation for this is that since Jerusalem was so close to Bethlehem, it could be said he was born there. However, in the Bible, prophets of God did not make it a practice of just being “close” in their predictions. God would not have made such a mistake.
- The Bible relates that at the crucifixion there were **three hours** of darkness (Luke 23:44). However, the *Book of Mormon* states there was darkness “for the space of **three days**” (Helaman 14:20,27). Of course, this is a big difference. Which one is true? Can God be responsible for conflicting statements such as these?
- *The Book of Mormon* relates that at the tower of Babel the Jaredites had their **separate language** (Esther 1:34-35). The Bible, however, plainly states that “the whole earth was of **one** language” (Genesis 11:1). Apparently, the writer of the *Book of Mormon* mistakenly thought there were many different languages and that God confounded them while sparing the language of the Jaredites. The fact is, there was only one language and God confounded the people by creating different languages.
- 3 Nephi 11:8-10 claims that after Jesus ascended to heaven, He **appeared in America** to the Lamanites and Nephites in A.D. 34. However, this clearly contradicts the Bible. Of the ascension of Christ to heaven God said, “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstools” (Acts 2:34-35). How long was He to be in heaven at God’s right hand? “For he must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). Furthermore, in referring to the ascension, the Bible speaks of Christ as He “whom the heavens must receive until the restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21). Christ did not come to America—because He has been in heaven since His ascension.
- In the Bible, the name “Jesus” was announced first by an angel (to Mary; Luke 1:31). This was in 1 B.C. However, Alma 19:29, dated in the *Book of Mormon* at 90 B.C., has a woman speaking to the Lord and calling him “Jesus.” Which account is accurate?
- The Bible teaches that the church was established on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2), which would have been approximately A.D. 33. However, Mosiah 18:17, dated at 145 B.C., has the church **already in existence**. This represents quite a discrepancy, to say the least.

Obviously, both cannot be correct. [NOTE: This same reference from Mosiah also mentions “baptism” as the means of being added to the church. However, according to the Bible the baptism taught by Christ did not begin until New Testament times (Matthew 28: 19).]

- The Bible clearly reveals that the disciples of Christ “were called Christians **first** in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). This was approximately A.D. 40. However, Alma 46:13,15, dated at 73 B.C., has people already wearing the name “Christian”—which represents a difference of over 100 years. Which account are people to believe?
- The *Book of Mormon* teaches that “Melchizedek...did reign under his **father**” (Alma 13:18). Yet the Bible reveals that Melchizedek was a priest under no one. His priesthood typified the priesthood of Christ, and therefore was unique. In contrast to the *Book of Mormon*, the Bible states that Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without descent”—emphasizing that he did not inherit his priesthood (Hebrews 7:3). The writer of the *Book of Mormon* did not know his Bible very well.
- Ether 3:8-9 speaks of God having “flesh and blood.” Yet the Bible states clearly that God is a “spirit,” and thus does not possess a material body (John 4:24). In *Doctrine and Covenants*, another allegedly inspired writing of the Mormon church, Joseph Smith wrote: “The Father has a **body of flesh and bones** as tangible as man’s” (section 130:22). The Bible and the *Book of Mormon* both cannot be correct on this point.
- Mosiah 2:3 states: “And they also took of the **firstlings** of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings, according to the law of Moses.” This represents a blatant contradiction with the Bible, because the firstlings of the flocks were to be reserved for the Lord and given to the priests. They were never used for sacrifice (see Exodus 13:2,12; 22:29-30; Numbers 3:13; 18:15-18; 2 Samuel 24:24).
- 3 Nephi 18:28-29 speaks of those who are “unworthy” to partake of the communion, and suggests that such people should be forbidden to partake. This is an obvious reference to Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (in fact, the *Book of Mormon* has a footnote to that effect). The application made here, however, shows that the writer of the *Book of Mormon* did not understand what Paul was saying, and as a result ended up with a serious misinterpretation. Paul was not discussing **man’s personal worthiness**, or lack thereof. Rather, he was discussing the **manner** in which the communion was being partaken. The context makes this clear. The word “unworthily” is an adverb of manner, and points to the way or manner in which a thing is done. The church at Corinth was abusing the communion in the **manner** they were observing it by turning it into a common meal. The American Standard Version evokes the correct idea by employing the phrase, “in an unworthy manner.” By misinterpreting the word “unworthy,” the writer unknowingly demonstrated that his work was man-made.

It makes sense that if the translator of the *Book of Mormon* was guided by God, the volume would not contain such conspicuous contradictions with the Bible. Modern Mormon leaders claim that in the translation process, all mistakes were corrected as they were detected. This implies, then, that God somehow must have failed to detect these mistakes—a position that impugns the nature and integrity of God.

### NO LITERARY VALUE

While the Bible is held in high esteem in literary circles throughout the world for its outstanding quality, the *Book of Mormon* is not. The literary standard of both the Old and New Testaments in the

original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages in which they were written is matchless. The composition and style of the Bible set it apart from all other pieces of literature. However, the *Book of Mormon* has no such merit. The fact is, because of its tedious, repetitious, dull nature, it simply does not bear the identifying marks of good literature.

### **NO HISTORICAL OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE**

In the areas of history and archaeology, the accuracy of the Bible is flawless—so flawless, in fact, that for years researchers of the ancient middle east used it as a standard. Its record of cities, mountains, rivers, seas, and other locations is completely accurate. Likewise, its references to various nations are precise. Many biblical places and people, which for centuries were unknown to secular history (such as the great Hittite nation), now have been discovered. Archaeology consistently has verified the Bible record.

Yet the same cannot be said of the *Book of Mormon*. It records people and places that never have been authenticated. In fact, when questioned about its historical and archaeological reliability, major research institutions (such as the Smithsonian) have stated that it has **none**. The *Book of Mormon* contains numerous references to unverifiable people and places. For example, the following groups of people are unverifiable: Nephites, Lamanites, Jaredites, Amulonites, Zoromites, and Amlicites. The following places likewise are unverifiable: Shazer, Jershon, Jashon, Helam, Heshlon, Manti, Middoni, and many more. All of these names apparently are fabricated and, hence, are unknown to history and archaeology. How could the many great cities and vast numbers of people portrayed in the *Book of Mormon* have gone completely undetected during millennia of research?

The simple fact is, such people and places cannot be documented to have ever existed—a problem with which modern-day Mormons have struggled, and one that they have attempted to solve in a variety of ways. For example, a brochure published by the Mormon-sponsored Brigham Young University suggested: “Though we cannot speak authoritatively or precisely about the location of *Book of Mormon* sites, we can—by a visit to Mesoamerica—create a mental tapestry resembling the land and circumstances in which the story actually happened” (*Travel Study Update*, 1990). In other words, the events described

within the pages of the *Book of Mormon* cannot be documented historically or archaeologically, but they can be **imagined**.

#### **JOSEPH SMITH’S CLAIM TO BE “AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR”**

On the title page of the first edition of the *Book of Mormon* are found the following words: “By Joseph Smith, Junior, **Author and Proprietor**.” The words “by” and “author” indicate one who composes or originates. The word “proprietor” denotes one who owns or has legal right to something. These words convey Smith’s original concept of his book. Can it be believed that God would allow an inspired writer to make such a claim? In the second edition of the book, this was changed to read: “**Translated** by Joseph Smith, Jun.” Why was this change made? The truth of the matter is that Smith and his followers realized this expression detracted from the claim of inspiration they were attempting to make for the *Book of Mormon*. The original reading on the title page ought to cause even the most zealous Mormon to have very serious doubts.

#### **JOSEPH SMITH’S CLAIM TO BE “TRANSLATOR”**

The claim that Joseph Smith was the “translator” of the *Book of Mormon* is erroneous. According to Smith, and other early Mormon leaders, he merely **read** the words revealed on the magical stones. This means all he did was dictate to the transcribers what he saw. To claim that he was a “translator” is to make a false claim, and shows that Smith and his followers understood neither the function nor methodology of a translator.

#### **“WITNESSES” NEEDED FOR REINFORCEMENT**

One of the most incredible things about the *Book of Mormon* is the inclusion of human testimony to verify its alleged authenticity. Three men signed a statement to this effect—a statement that appears in the front of the book. Evidently the writer of the *Book of Mormon* anticipated people would not believe the book, and hence felt the need for reinforcement through such testimony. It is inconceivable that after giving an inspired writing, God then would need **men** to sign a written statement testifying to its inspiration. In their statement, the three men claimed to have seen some plates, and further suggested that God Himself told them the plates **had been translated correctly**. Eventually, however, all three of these “wit-

nesses” apostatized from the Mormon church. Joseph Smith himself remarked: “David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris are too mean to mention; and we had liked to have forgotten them” (*History of the Church*, 3:232). Of the testimony of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses, John H. Gilbert, printer of the first edition of the *Book of Mormon*, wrote in a sworn affidavit: “Martin was in the office when I finished setting up the testimony of the three witnesses.... I said to him, ‘Martin, did you see those plates with your naked eyes?’ Martin looked down for an instant, raised his eyes up, and said, ‘No, I saw them with a spiritual eye’” (*Memorandum*, John H. Gilbert, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, containing a photocopy of the first printing of the *Book of Mormon*, Wilford C. Wood).

As if this were not enough, Smith apparently felt it necessary to have a **second** group of men sign a statement to verify the *Book of Mormon*—a statement that also appears in the front of the volume. The second time there were eight men, but the only thing to which these men testified was that Joseph Smith showed them some plates. **They made no claim that God spoke to them.** It is of interest to note that all but one of these eight men were conveniently in the Smith and Whitmer families. In addition, the reading of the original statement of the eight has been changed. The original contained the words, “Joseph Smith, Jr., the Author and Proprietor.” However, it now simply reads, “Joseph Smith, Jr., Translator.” This change obviously was made for the same reason it was made on the title page.

Imagine the epistles of Peter, Paul, or John having attached to them written statements signed by groups of men to confirm their authenticity. The idea that God would need a signed affidavit from men to authenticate His Word is offensive, and nothing short of blasphemy. As one writer expressed it, a small child who has drawn a crude picture of a cat, and fears it will not be recognized as such, may write below it, “This is a cat!” Such an illustration applies equally well to the *Book of Mormon* with its “witness” statements. On the other hand, the work of a great artist needs no such verification, for the work will stand on its own merits. Such is the case with the Bible.

#### **CIRCULAR REASONING AND FAITH IN THE *BOOK OF MORMON***

The *Book of Mormon* closes with an appeal to pray to God asking Him to reveal that the book is true. An assurance is then given that if one is “sincere,” God will “manifest” that the book is true (see Moroni

10:4). However, this is circular reasoning. First, after assuming (expecting) the *Book of Mormon* to be true, one is to then ask God to reveal that it is true. So to establish the proof of this book, one must first accept it to be true! Such logic is worthless, but is typical of the subjective nature of the Mormon religion.

In contrast, the Bible is an objective revelation that needs no subjective confirmation. It is not necessary to ask God to reveal its authenticity through a separate source, for it stands on its own merits. However, the *Book of Mormon* cannot so stand, and this deceptive effort to create faith in the book exposes its author as the perpetrator of an elaborate hoax.

### CONCLUSION

It is difficult to believe that, after having seen the evidence, any honest person could accept the *Book of Mormon* as being inspired by God. There are simply too many things wrong with it. The evidence of mistakes, error, and fraud is so obvious that it stands as a barrier to any acceptance of this book. Mormon apostle Orson Pratt wrote: “The nature of the *Book of Mormon* is such, that, **if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it; if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it**” (*Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, p. 124, emp. added). The evidence discussed in this review of the *Book of Mormon* has been presented in a candid, straightforward manner, in the hope that the honest, sincere seeker of Truth will examine that evidence carefully, and correctly conclude that the *Book of Mormon* is nothing more than a man-made book that should be rejected.