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## Establishing the Truth of the Bible

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## ESTABLISHING THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE

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Robert J. Matthews

**T**he emphasis in this paper, in keeping with the entire symposium, will be on 1 Nephi. My views are my own—I am speaking for myself, not for the University, but what I am about to say I believe to be correct.

The Book of Mormon is a record like the Bible. It is not designed as a commentary about the Bible, nor is it written to take the place of the Bible. It is a record of people who came from the time and the land and the lineage of the Old Testament and who migrated to America. Through their prophets they produced a record which is in some ways parallel to the Bible and is in some ways superior to it. It does not compete with, but rather it complements the Bible. The Book of Mormon is separate and independent and is not based upon the Bible for its source, yet one who believes the contents of the Book of Mormon will believe in the Bible as well.

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Furthermore, because of a certain obscurity which surrounds the Bible, no one today—scholar, philosopher, oriental, occidental, Saint, or sinner—can truly understand the doctrinal teachings of the Bible without the aid of the Book of Mormon. That is, the Book of Mormon adds a dimension to understanding the Bible that cannot be obtained in any other way. A scholar may learn much about the Bible, and about the biblical people, through study and exploration, by a knowledge of language, history, culture, archaeology, and religion; but there is a doctrinal dimension and an insight into the dealings of God with his people that escapes all inquirers who search only with the tools of the secular scholar. This dimension, without which no one fully understands the Bible, can be discovered only through the pages of the Book of Mormon and other books of latter-day scripture.

The Book of Mormon repeatedly makes reference to biblical things, both incidentally and deliberately. It boldly announces that one of its own purposes is to establish the truth of the Bible. This it accomplishes in at least four major ways: First, by speaking of the historical verity of specific biblical events and persons. There are literally hundreds of such instances. Second, by quoting extensively from the biblical text, such as from Isaiah or Malachi. Third, by affirming that such things as angels, visions, and miracles are real and that there is a God in heaven who is the father of the human family. And fourth, by giving us a history of the biblical text and also making known and restoring some of the things that have been taken out of the Bible.

The prophet Mormon, addressing the Lamanites of the latter days, said:

[You must] lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record [the Book of Mormon] but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews [the Bible], which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you.

For behold, this [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that ye may believe that [Bible]; and if ye believe that [Bible] ye will believe this also. (Mormon 7:8–9.)

One purpose of the Book of Mormon is to defend and make known the truth of the Bible. The choice seer (Joseph Smith) was not only to bring forth more of the word of God but was also to convince people of the truth of the word (Bible) already gone forth (2 Nephi 3:11).

## The Book of Mormon Cites Specific Biblical Events and Persons

As an example of the first point cited above, I offer a partial list of specific items that are biblical in origin and are confirmed and affirmed in the Book of Mormon record. I have listed 106 specific points in which the Book of Mormon offers confirmation of the biblical record, and many of these are supported by more than one reference. Anyone who examines the list cannot fail to see that the Book of Mormon is a witness for the Bible.

### Old Testament

#### I. *Creation to Abel*

1. Man created in God's image. Mosiah 7:27; Alma 18:34; 22:12; Ether 3:15 (Genesis 1:26–27).
2. Adam and Eve as first parents; and their fall. 1 Nephi 5:11; 2 Nephi 2:19, 20, 22, 25; 9:21; Mosiah 3:11, 16, 19, 26; 4:7; 28:17; Alma 12:22, 23; 18:36; 22:12, 13; 40:18; 42:5 (Genesis chapters 3–4).
3. Adam (and all men) made from dust of earth. Alma 42:2; Mosiah 2:25; Jacob 2:21; Mormon 9:17 (Genesis 2:7; 3:19).
4. Forbidden fruit. 2 Nephi 2:15, 18, 19; Mosiah 3:26; Alma 12:22; Helaman 6:26 (Genesis 2:17; 3:3–6).
5. Serpent tempted Eve. 2 Nephi 2:18; Mosiah 16:3 (Genesis 3).
6. Garden of Eden, man driven from. 2 Nephi 2:19, 22; Alma 12:21; 42:2 (Genesis 3).
7. Flaming sword at east of Eden. Alma 12:21; 42:2, 3 (Genesis 3).
8. Abel, son of Adam, slain by Cain. Helaman 6:27; Ether 8:15 (Genesis 4).

#### II. *Noah to Babel*

1. Noah (Bible patriarch) and the flood. Alma 10:22; 3 Nephi 22:9; Ether 6:7 (Genesis 6–9).
2. Building of tower, scattering of people, confounding of language. Title page; Omni 22; Mosiah 28:17; Helaman 6:28; Ether 1:3, 5, 33 (Genesis 11).

III. *Abraham to Bondage*

1. Melchizedek as a real person. Alma 13:14–18 (Genesis 14).
2. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob as real persons. 1 Nephi 6:4; 17:40; 19:10; Jacob 4:5; Mosiah 7:19; 23:23; Alma 5:24; 7:25; 29:11; 36:2; Helaman 3:30; 3 Nephi 4:30; Mormon 9:11 (Genesis 12–30).
3. Abraham, God made covenant with. 1 Nephi 15:18; 22:9; 2 Nephi 29:14; 3 Nephi 20:25, 27; Mormon 5:20; Ether 13:11 (Genesis 17).
4. Abraham offering Isaac as sacrifice. Jacob 4:4–6 (Genesis 22).
5. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Alma 13:15 (Genesis 14).
6. Abraham saw Christ's day. Helaman 8:17 (Genesis 22; John 8:56).
7. Joseph, son of Jacob, taken to Egypt. 1 Nephi 5:14; 2 Nephi 3:4; 4:1; Ether 13:7 (Genesis 37).
8. Joseph sold by his brothers. Alma 10:3 (Genesis 37).
9. Joseph's coat. Alma 46:23–24 (Genesis 37).
10. Manasseh, son of Joseph. Alma 10:3 (Genesis 48).
11. Jacob taken to Egypt by Joseph and died there. Ether 13:7; 1 Nephi 5:14 (Genesis 46–50).

IV. *Moses and Events Connected with Him*

1. Named by prophecy beforehand. 2 Nephi 3:9, 16, 17.
2. Moses to be a writer. 2 Nephi 3:17.
3. Five books of Moses. 1 Nephi 5:11.
4. Books of Moses. 1 Nephi 19:23.
5. Moses not to be great in speaking. 2 Nephi 3:17 (Exodus 4:10–14).
6. Rod of Moses. 2 Nephi 3:17 (Exodus 7:9).
7. Led Israel out of Egypt. 1 Nephi 4:2; 5:15; 19:10; 2 Nephi 3:10; 25:20 (Exodus 14).
8. Moses divided Red Sea. 1 Nephi 4:2; 17:26; Mosiah 7:19; Helaman 8:11 (Exodus 14).
9. Egyptian Army destroyed at Red Sea. 1 Nephi 4:2; 17:27; Helaman 8:11; Alma 36:28 (Genesis 14).
10. Moses received law and commandments at Sinai. Mosiah 12:33–36; 13:12–24 (Exodus 20).

11. Moses' face shone at Sinai. Mosiah 13:5 (Exodus 34:29).
12. Pillar of light for Israel in wilderness. 1 Nephi 17:30 (Exodus 13).
13. Manna in wilderness. 1 Nephi 17:28; Mosiah 7:19 (Exodus 16).
14. Water from the rock. 1 Nephi 17:29; 20:21; 2 Nephi 25:20 (Numbers).
15. Held up brazen serpent for healing. 1 Nephi 17:41; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19; 37:46; Helaman 8:13–15 (Numbers).
16. Moses to have a spokesman. 2 Nephi 3:17 (Exodus 4:14–16).
17. Moses prophesied of Christ. 1 Nephi 22:20; Mosiah 13:33; Helaman 8:13; 3 Nephi 20:23 (Deuteronomy 18).
18. Moses' death and burial. Alma 45:19 (Deuteronomy 34:5).
19. Law of Moses, originated in the time of the man Moses. 1 Nephi 4:15–16; 5:11; 2 Nephi 3:17; 25:30; 3 Nephi 15:4–8; 25:4; Ether 12:11.

V. *From Entering Canaan Until Jesus' Time*

1. Israel enters promised land, drove inhabitants out. 1 Nephi 17:32–34, 42 (Joshua 11:6; 24:8).
2. David, king of Israel, had many wives. Jacob 1:15; 2:23–24 (2 Samuel 12:8).
3. Solomon, son of David, had many wives. Jacob 1:15; 2:23–24 (1 Kings 11:1–3).
4. Solomon built temple, very elaborate. 2 Nephi 5:16 (2 Chronicles 3).
5. Zedekiah, king of Judah. 1 Nephi 1:4; 5:12, 13; Omni 1:15 (2 Chronicles 36:11).
6. Sons of Zedekiah. Helaman 6:10; 8:21 (2 Kings 25:7).
7. Jeremiah, Jewish prophet. 1 Nephi 5:13 (Jeremiah 1).
8. Jeremiah's prophecies in record of Jews. 1 Nephi 5:13.
9. Jeremiah cast into prison. 1 Nephi 7:14 (Jeremiah 37:15).
10. Many prophets rejected by Jews at this time. 1 Nephi 1:4; 7:14 (Jeremiah 44:4–6; 2 Chronicles 36:15–16).
11. Jeremiah prophesied of destruction of Jerusalem. Helaman 8:20 (Jeremiah 6).

12. Jeremiah's prophecies fulfilled. Helaman 8:20 (2 Chronicles 36:20–21).
13. Isaiah, Hebrew prophet. Writings on plates of brass. 1 Nephi 19:22–23.
14. Isaiah saw the Lord. 2 Nephi 11:2; 2 Nephi 16:1 (Isaiah 6:1).
15. Babylonian captivity of Jews. 1 Nephi 1:13; 10:3; 17:43; 20:14, 20; 2 Nephi 6:8 (Ezekiel 1).
16. Return from Babylon. 1 Nephi 10:3; 2 Nephi 6:8–9; 2 Nephi 25:10–11 (Ezekiel 1).
17. Samuel, Hebrew prophet. 3 Nephi 20:24 (1 Samuel 1).
18. Elijah, Hebrew prophet. 3 Nephi 25:5 (1 Kings 17:1).
19. Malachi, Hebrew prophet. 3 Nephi 24 and 25 (Malachi 3 and 4).

## New Testament

- I. *Work of John the Baptist* (Name Not Given)
  1. A prophet to prepare way for Christ. 1 Nephi 10:7; 11:27.
  2. This prophet to baptize Christ with water. 1 Nephi 10:9–10; 2 Nephi 31:4–8.
  3. To bear witness of Christ. 1 Nephi 10:10.
  4. Not worthy to unloose Christ's shoe latchet. 1 Nephi 10:8 (John 1:26–27).
  5. Place of baptism. 1 Nephi 10:9 (John 1:28).
- II. *Jesus Christ* (Named Beforehand by Prophecy, 2 Nephi 10:3; Mosiah 3:8)
  1. Jesus, God of Old Testament. 3 Nephi 15:4–5; 1 Nephi 19:7–10; Mosiah 3:5–11; 7:27.
  2. Jesus was baptized. 1 Nephi 10:9–10; 11:27; 2 Nephi 31:4–8 (Matthew 3).
  3. Received Holy Ghost (form of dove). 1 Nephi 11:27; 2 Nephi 31:8 (Matthew 3).
  4. Mocked by people. 1 Nephi 11:28–32; Mosiah 3:7.
  5. Jesus sweat blood. Mosiah 3:7 (Luke 22:44).
  6. Crucified. 1 Nephi 10:11; 11:33; 2 Nephi 10:3; Mosiah 3:9 (Matthew 27).
  7. Buried, rose third day. 2 Nephi 25:13; Mosiah 3:10 (Matthew 28).

8. Jesus the first to rise in resurrection. 2 Nephi 2:8 (Acts 26:23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).
9. Chose twelve apostles from the Jews. 1 Nephi 11:29–36; 12:9; 13:24, 26, 39, 40, 41; Mormon 3:18–19 (Luke 6:12–13).
10. Performed many miracles (in Palestine). 1 Nephi 11:31; Mosiah 3:5; 3 Nephi 17:7–8 (John 2).
11. Jesus' apostles performed miracles (in Palestine). Mormon 9:18 (Luke 10; book of Acts).
12. Jesus taught by parable (in Palestine). 3 Nephi 15:14–24 (Matthew 13).
13. Fulfilled law of Moses. 3 Nephi 15:5–8.
14. Cancelled circumcision. Moroni 8:8 (Acts 15).
15. No other name for salvation. 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; 5:8 (Acts 4:12).
16. Ascended to heaven (from Palestine). 3 Nephi 18:39 (Acts 1:10–11).

III. *Mary, Mother of Jesus* (Named Beforehand by Prophecy, Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10)

1. Virgin. 1 Nephi 11:13–20; Alma 7:10 (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:27).
2. Lived at Nazareth. 1 Nephi 11:13 (Matthew 2:22–23).
3. Mother of the Son of God. 1 Nephi 11:18 (Luke 1:26–27).

IV. *Other*

1. One of the Twelve to be named John. 1 Nephi 14:27 (Matthew 10:2).
2. John to have writings in book of the Jews. 1 Nephi 14:23.
3. John not to taste of death. 3 Nephi 28:6–7 (John 21:21–24).
4. Record of the Jews to consist of the writings of the prophets and also the records of the Twelve Apostles (Old and New Testaments). 1 Nephi 13:38–41.
5. Jerusalem to be destroyed after Christ's ministry. 2 Nephi 25:14; 6:9–10 (Matthew 24).
6. Twelve Apostles to judge Israel. 1 Nephi 12:9; Mormon 3:18–19 (Matthew 19:28).



### Experiences Similar to Those Recorded in the Bible

1. Handwriting on wall interpreted. Alma 10:1–2 (Daniel 5).
2. Nephi had power to seal heavens against rain or to call it forth again. Helaman 10:5 to 11:17 (James 5:17–18; 1 Kings 17:1 to 1 Kings 18:46).
3. Three Nephites in furnace and den of beasts. 3 Nephi 28:21–22 (Daniel 3 and 6).
4. Nephi calms storm at sea. 1 Nephi 18:21 (Mark 4:36–39).
5. Food miraculously provided. 3 Nephi 20:6–7 (Mark 7:35–44).
6. Abinadi's face shone, like Moses'. Mosiah 13:5 (Exodus 34:29–35).
7. Mountain moved by faith. Ether 12:30 (Matthew 17:20).
8. Many Saints arise and appear to many after Jesus' resurrection. 3 Nephi 23:9–12; Helaman 14:25–26 (Matthew 27:52–54).
9. Mary, Jesus, John, Moses all named in prophecy before birth, so why not Isaiah able to do this with Cyrus? Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10; 2 Nephi 10:3; 1 Nephi 14:27; 2 Nephi 3:9, 16, 17 (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1–5).
10. Alma, Nephi possibly translated. Alma 45:18–19; 3 Nephi 1:3; 2:9 (Deuteronomy 34:5).
11. Person raised from the dead. 3 Nephi 7:19; 19:4 (Mark 5:35–43; Acts 9:36–43).
12. Devils cast out. 3 Nephi 7:19 (Mark 5).

### Some Other Similarities

1. Death penalty for murder. Alma 1:13–15 (Genesis 9:5–6).
2. New Jerusalem to come down from heaven. Ether 13:3 (Revelation 3:12; 21:2).
3. Sun stand still. Lengthen out day. Helaman 12:13–15 (Joshua 10:12–14; 2 Kings 20:8–11; Isaiah 38:7–8).
4. Sermon in 3 Nephi similar to Sermon on Mount. 3 Nephi 12; 13; 14 (Matthew 5; 6; 7).

## The Book of Mormon Quotes Extensively from the Bible Record

This section illustrates the second way in which the Book of Mormon establishes the truth of the Bible. There are in the Book of Mormon numerous and sometimes lengthy quotations from the Bible. These were chiefly taken from the plates of brass, whose contents are given to us as follows:

They did contain the five books of Moses, . . .

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.

. . . my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers. (1 Nephi 5:11–14.)

Since the plates of brass are a different manuscript source than is used by any of the versions of the Old Testament available today, they, as cited in the Book of Mormon, serve as a corroborating witness of the Bible. Chief among the quotations are those from Isaiah, consisting of twenty-one entire chapters and also many isolated passages. A detailed examination of these quotations is outside the scope of this paper, and it is enough to say that one of the consequences of the use of so much of Isaiah from a text that was in existence in 600 B.C. is that it demonstrates the unity and original authorship of the whole book of Isaiah. As you may know, many scholars divide Isaiah into several portions, with multiple authors, most of them later than when the original Isaiah lived, even down to 200 B.C. The Book of Mormon corrects this erroneous view. Likewise, the presence of Malachi chapters 3 and 4 (3 Nephi 24, 25) and the Savior's sermon to the Nephites (similar to the biblical Sermon on the Mount—3 Nephi 12–14) are also witnesses to the biblical text of these chapters.

In its quotations from and references to the Bible, the Book of Mormon makes direct mention of things recorded in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, Matthew, Luke, John, and the book of Revelation. Of special interest is the fact that 1 Nephi and 2

Nephi, by their literary style, have a remarkable affinity for the subject matter and vocabulary of John the Beloved and the book of Isaiah.

### The Book of Mormon Affirms the Miraculous Elements of God's Dealing with Mankind

In support of point three, listed above, we find that on almost every page and in nearly every chapter of the Book of Mormon there is repeated reference to such things as God, angels, visions, revelation, miracles, prayer, baptism, Holy Spirit, blessings, divine intervention, cursings, punishments, and numerous items of a similar nature that have to do with revealed religion. That the Book of Mormon supports these kinds of events (which are also characteristic of the Bible) is evident to anyone who has even casually read the book.

### The Book of Mormon Foretells the History of the Biblical Text

We now turn our attention to point four. The most extensive statement in all of the scriptures about the history of the Bible is found in chapter 13 of 1 Nephi. It is given to Nephi in vision, with the assistance of an angel as an interpreter—sort of a guided tour accompanying a panoramic view of the Bible through the centuries. This vision, given to Nephi about 600 B.C. shows him what would happen to the biblical text. By heavenly vision Nephi was made aware of the facts *before* they occurred. A vision or inspired prophecy can be more accurate than reading about the matter *after* the fact. Prophecy is history in reverse. When a prophecy is inspired of the Lord, things made known by that prophecy can give a more accurate view than would a historical record written by researchers and scholars who might not write by the Spirit. Today we are able to ascertain by historical search most of the things of Nephi's prophecy, but not all. That there was tampering with the Bible text in the second and third centuries A.D. is evident to many biblical scholars. Marcion and others are known to have done this. But modern textual critics do not realize how extensive the changes really were. It is my belief and faith that, with time and by historical research, every detail of Nephi's prophecy and vision concerning the history of the

Bible text will be proven and verified. Research will someday provide the details of persons, time, and place. If we believe this account in the Book of Mormon, however, we do not have to wait for that future time in order to know the general outline and to understand just what the Bible is and exactly what has happened to the Bible text. We can know it *now* as surely and accurately as we know anything from the scriptures. And we know it because of our faith and confidence in the Book of Mormon. Later discoveries will only confirm what we already knew and were told in the revelations.

The words to which I refer are found in 1 Nephi 13:13–42. Nephi beheld that a people whom he identifies as Gentiles established a government in this land of America and that through the power of God they became politically free and independent of all other nations. We recognize them as the early European colonists in America. He beheld that these Gentiles carried a book with them which they had brought from the nations of Europe (1 Nephi 13:13–20).

And the angel said unto me: Knowest thou the meaning of the book?

And I said unto him: I know not.

And he said: Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me: The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles. (1 Nephi 13:21–23.)

We note that the early settlers of America, including the Puritans or Pilgrims, and also early Catholic settlers, brought with them the Bible—the record of the Jews. Those on the Mayflower brought a Geneva Bible, and there is today in the Harvard University library a copy of a Geneva Bible which made its way to America on the Mayflower. This was the same translation that was used by Shakespeare and came before the King James Version was in wide circulation. These were Protestant Bibles. Many of the Catholic immigrants to America brought the English version of the Vulgate, known as the Rheims-Douai version,

which was translated into English in 1582, a few years before the King James Version and at about the same time as the other Protestant Bibles were coming into being.

In Nephi's vision the angel describes the Bible as a record of the Jews, noting that it contains (1) the covenants of the Lord to the house of Israel, (2) many of the prophecies of the holy prophets, that (3) it is a record similar to the plates of brass, only smaller, and also (4) is a record of the gospel of the Lord as taught by the Twelve Apostles (1 Nephi 13:23–24).

After establishing beyond question with Nephi that the early American settlers of the seventeenth century had a Bible, the angel then proceeded to explain to him that the Bible he saw in their hands was not the same as when it was originally written by the Jews. The words of the angel are given thus:

And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.

And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb *many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.* (1 Nephi 13:24–26; italics added.)

The angel's words are plain and to the point: When the biblical records were originally written by the Jewish prophets and apostles, they contained the fulness of the gospel. When these records went to the Gentiles, some valuable plain and precious things were taken out of them. That this reduction was *deliberate* and not simply caused by carelessness or by the difficulties encountered by transcription and translation is further emphasized by the angel:

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. (1 Nephi 13:27–28.)

If the foregoing words say anything, they say that the alteration of the text was *deliberate* and intentional and extensive and for unholy and wicked purposes. It is plain also that the corruption of the text was not simply a matter of interpretation, or an awkward rendering of a few passages. It was not simply “lost in the translation.” The words of the angel specify that “*many* plain and precious things are taken away” from and “out of” the “book of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 13:26, 28, 29, 32, 34). He also said that “*many* covenants of the Lord are taken away.” (Italics added.) This explanation gives us to understand why the Bible in its reduced form—the Protestant and Catholic versions of the seventeenth century—is smaller than the plates of brass, as noted in verse 23. This comparative expression by the angel gives us a clue as to just how much has been “taken away” and lost to our present Bible. The plates of brass contained a record beginning with the five books of Moses down to Jeremiah—only a portion of the time period of the Old Testament and none of the New—yet the reduced version of the whole Bible—the Bible with which we are acquainted, containing both the Old and New Testaments—is “not so many” as the record on the plates of brass.

The angel then continues to explain to Nephi the history of the Bible. After many plain and precious things are taken out of the Bible, it then—in its reduced form—goes throughout the nations of the Gentiles (evidently Europe), and eventually to America and then to the Lamanites. Here are the exact words of the prophecy:

And *after* these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken *out of the book*, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb,

an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them (1 Nephi 13:29; italics added).

The changes and losses made the Bible not so easy to understand, and thus there are many interpretations and disputations about what is required for salvation.

According to the sequence and the declaration of this prophecy, speaking of things to come as though they had already happened, it is seen that the nations of the Gentiles—the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean world of the early centuries after Christ—never did have a complete Bible, for it was reduced and altered before it was distributed among them. Unfortunately there are no original copies of the Bible manuscripts available today for comparison. The earliest known manuscripts of the New Testament are dated two centuries or more after the time of the Apostles, except for very small fragments. The persecutions against Christianity in the first and second centuries seem to have helped destroy the manuscripts of that time. It appears self-evident from this remarkable vision given to Nephi that the earliest complete New Testament texts available today—among which are the Vaticanus, the Alexandrinus, and Sinaiticus (all fourth century A.D.)—are of such a date that they represent the text in its reduced and altered form, not in its original state. When Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Empire at about A.D. 313, he ordered Eusebius to prepare fifty copies of the New Testament. The great uncials—Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, etc.—are possibly survivors of this order.

### Alteration to the Text Was Early

In order for an alteration to have widespread effect, the text would have to be tampered with early enough that multiple copies were not already extant. In other words, the alteration had to be early and by a person or persons having access to very early records and first-generation copies. This is what we today would call an “inside job.” We should not be too surprised that this could happen, for in our own dispensation and with our own scripture, we have had a similar thing. We have suffered the loss of 116 pages of translation from the gold plates—what would have been the book of Lehi in the Book of Mormon. We also lost the earliest official history of the Church from 1830 to 1838 through the perfidy of the then Church historian, John Whitmer.

Having such a parallel in our own history, Latter-day Saints should be able to visualize the kinds of things that can happen to a sacred record, and that 1 Nephi 13 says *did* happen to the Bible centuries ago. The Book of Mormon was written for our day. It is written for our learning and understanding. Does it not seem apparent that Nephi's vision has been preserved by the Lord because he wants us to know these very things and have these views about the Bible? The vision was not for Nephi alone, but for us also.

### Lack of an Adequate Manuscript

That the problem with the text of the Bible is much larger than translation of language or the misplacement of a few words was repeatedly taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. We are dealing with a matter of transmission (which includes copying, translating, revising, editing, interpreting, adding to, and taking from) and not simply translation of language alone. Note several statements from the Prophet Joseph:

From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of men, had been *taken from* the Bible, or lost *before* it was compiled (1832).<sup>1</sup>

I am now going to take exception to the present translation of the Bible in relation to these matters [the books of Daniel and Revelation]. Our latitude and longitude can be determined in the original Hebrew with far greater accuracy than in the English version. There is a grand distinction between the actual meaning of the prophets and the present translation (1843-44).<sup>2</sup>

There are many things in the Bible which do not, as they now stand, accord with the revelations of the Holy Ghost to me (1843-44).<sup>3</sup>

I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors (1843-44).<sup>4</sup>

These and other statements by the Prophet show that he regarded problems in the present text of the Bible to be the result not only of translation of language, but also a loss of actual text, and a wilful changing and editing of the text in ancient times. As Moroni asked: "Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God . . . ?" (Mormon 8:33). These expressions give us a broader



understanding of what is meant by the eighth article of faith: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly." Although he used the word *translated*, the Prophet obviously had in mind a wider meaning, such as the term *transmitted*; for as his own statements illustrate, there was more involved than mere translation of languages. From the words of Joseph Smith and also the vision of Nephi, we can see that the intended meaning of the eighth article is, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is *transmitted* correctly." Editing, adding to, taking from, as well as translating, have all contributed to the present condition of the Bible.

With this point firmly in place, we can see that the real condition of the Bible is not that we lack capable men or women who can read and translate from the ancient languages. The problem is the absence today of an adequate, complete, and accurate manuscript to translate.

### Prophecies of the Restoration of Lost Material

I have noticed that whenever the Lord predicts a loss or a falling away, he also speaks of a restoration, a return of that which is lost. This is true not only of priesthood and of church organization, but also of scripture. As we see with the words of the angel to Nephi:

Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen (1 Nephi 13:32).

The loss of so many plain and precious parts has rendered some doctrinal things in the Bible obscure and ambiguous. Also, the purposes of God are not so well discerned in the Bible as they were originally.

After explaining that the Gentiles in America will take the Bible to the Lamanites, the angel showed Nephi that the lost and missing parts will be restored:

And after it [the Bible] had come forth unto them [the Lamanites] I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the

records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. (1 Nephi 13:39–40.)

The “other books” and “last records” spoken of in these two verses no doubt include the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. The “other books” could also include the record of the ten tribes that will yet come to us. These books, which are our standard works, do indeed make known many passages that are lost and also tell of whole books that are missing from the Bible. They also clarify many doctrinal concepts. Furthermore, they declare that the Bible is a divinely inspired record and that its fundamental message, though presently incomplete, is true. In spite of its loss, the Bible is still a testimony of the existence of God and of the mission of Jesus Christ as Redeemer of the world. It just does not testify as effectively as it would if it were precise and complete. A similar prophecy, telling of a loss and then a restoration of Moses’ writings, is found in Moses 1:40–41.

The angel continues the theme of restoration by stating that the “words of the Lamb” of God, who is Jesus Christ, shall be established and “made known in the records of thy seed [the Book of Mormon], as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb [New Testament]; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth” (1 Nephi 13:41). Every significant doctrinal question raised at the Nicene Council in A.D. 325, and in church councils and debates in the past sixteen hundred years of the apostasy, has been answered in the Book of Mormon and other latter-day revelation.

### Additional Scripture Yet to Be Restored

The Book of Mormon not only confirms and certifies the truth of the biblical records, but by its very existence it shows that

the Bible is not the complete source for the word of God. It makes clear that the Jewish record once had more books and that even the books we do have are reduced in size in some instances. We understand that these will eventually be restored to their original purity. We now have thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New, making a total of sixty-six books in all. In our present Church Sunday School curriculum, we take one year to study the Old Testament and another to study the New Testament. At BYU we use two semesters on the undergraduate level to go through the Old Testament and two more semesters to study the New Testament. There are also graduate-level advanced courses with another seven hours for Old Testament and six hours for the New.

With the clearer insight concerning the Bible and the promise of eventual restoration, we will someday have to take a much longer time to study the Bible when we have it in its complete and restored form. I can mentally visualize that at some future semester at BYU, the Religion offering for the Bible will contain courses not only in the present two Old Testament courses, 301 and 302 (two hours each), but a semester in Brass Plates 303 (five hours), with an emphasis on the prophecies of Joseph in Egypt. We now have Old Testament 304 specializing in Isaiah. When the plates of brass are restored, we will need Old Testament 305, Zenock; 306, Zenos; and 307, the prophecies of Neum (each with three credit hours). At this rate, it could involve a student four years just to take the beginning courses in the Old Testament alone. Instead of the present thirteen hours in an Old Testament offering, there could be as many as forty credit hours with undergraduate and graduate offerings. An equal enlargement would be necessary with the New Testament. And we did not even mention courses in Lost Tribes 101, 102, and 103—three courses of two hours each, using as the text the record yet to come forth giving their history and an account of the Savior's visit to show his resurrected body to them (3 Nephi 17:4).

The Book of Mormon curriculum will likewise have to be enlarged. We will not only need the two beginning courses, 121 and 122, presently in the curriculum, but when the time of restitution really descends upon us, there probably will be courses in Book of Mormon 123, Readings from the 116 Lost Pages (two hours); Book of Mormon 124, The Twenty-four Gold Plates of Ether (four hours); 125, 126, and 127, The Sealed Plates containing a revelation "from the beginning of the world until the end

thereof" (five hours each). Advanced courses might read as follows: 531, The Large Plates of Nephi, Mosiah; 532, Large Plates, Alma; 533, Large Plates, Helaman; and so on through the entire collection. This is in contrast to our offering today of a four-hour survey course on Book of Mormon, and a four-hour upper-division course, and eight hours of graduate course work in Book of Mormon, making sixteen in all. At some future day there will be so many records available on the Book of Mormon alone that we could sensibly have forty to fifty information-packed semester hours in the Book of Mormon and a like number of biblical course selections. And all this because of the restoration of records that are mentioned in the Book of Mormon that are yet to be made available to us.

All of these records, being sacred and being translated by the power of God, will contain the truth and will shed additional light on man's origin and man's history in the world and his early culture and high civilization. These new records will also confirm what we already know in the scripture we now have. Thus, there will be a need also on this campus for revised courses about the Ancient World and revised courses in American history before A.D. 1600. There will be a need also for revised courses in ancient civilization and in the origin of language, origin of writing, and the origin of man. Present courses on these subjects will no doubt be seen as inadequate and even erroneous in light of revealed knowledge.

### The Law of Witnesses Is Operative with the Book of Mormon

It is not only *desirable* that the Book of Mormon should substantiate the Bible and supply certain missing parts, it is absolutely *necessary* for eternal justice. It appears that in the economy of God there must be more than one witness for the truths that are taught to mankind. Without a second or third witness, the law cannot be binding and valid in the day of judgment.

The law of witnesses is stated in Deuteronomy 19:15 as follows: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." This principle is referred to by Jesus in Matthew 18:16: "Take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Paul likewise alludes to this law in 1 Timothy 5:19; 2 Corinthians 13:1; and Hebrews 10:28.

We have an interesting account of Jesus invoking the law of witnesses in John 5:31. The whole episode of John 5 is an encounter between Jesus and the Jewish rulers, with legal implications. Jesus says, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." In plainer terms, the meaning is this: "If I am the *only* witness, my witness is not legally valid and binding."

Jesus then established John the Baptist as a witness for him (verses 32–34). He further declares that he has more witness than the testimony of John. He identifies this further witness as the testimony of his divine works; the testimony that the Father has given of him (verse 37), and also the testimony of the scriptures (verse 39), especially those things written by Moses (verses 45–47). A short time later in John chapter 8, the Pharisees verbally attack Jesus and say: "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true [that is, not legally valid]" (John 8:13). Jesus replies:

I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. (John 8:16–18.)

An honest, candid reader with only a fourth-grade education can see that the Old and New Testaments teach that God himself establishes his truth in the earth by virtue of the law of witnesses and leaves men without excuse. The concept is clear and open and without argument or equivocation.

It must be equally clear to any reader that since Jesus invokes his Father as his second witness in John 8:18, the Father and the Son must be two separate men; otherwise, they are not two witnesses and could not fulfill the requirement wherein Jesus says, "I am one witness and the Father is the other witness."

We thus have this eternal and divine principle showing that God uses witnesses to establish his word. And so in like manner we have been given the Book of Mormon to establish the truth of the Bible—not just the truth of the Bible as history and as a cultural record, but to establish the greatest truth that the Bible was intended to declare, and that is to prove that the testimony of Jesus Christ contained in the scriptures is true and correct.

President Brigham Young gave this instruction:

There is not that person on the face of the earth who has had the privilege of learning the Gospel of Jesus Christ from these two

books, that can say that one is true, and the other is false. No Latter-day Saint, no man or woman, can say the Book of Mormon is true, and at the same time say that the Bible is untrue. If one be true, both are; and if one be false, both are false.<sup>3</sup>

President Heber J. Grant adds this:

All my life I have been finding additional evidences that the . . . Book of Mormon is the greatest witness for the truth of the Bible that has ever been published.<sup>4</sup>

### The Time Is Right for a Second Witness to the Bible to Appear

Most of the Christian world today professes to hold the Bible in high esteem as a religious record—both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Our Jewish brethren profess a belief in the Old Testament as a record of their fathers. Yet it seems evident that the Bible has suffered neglect at the hands of millions who, while having certain reverence for the Bible as a religious record, have multiple doubts about its inspiration and historical accuracy. We do not have to go very far to find biblical adherents who at the same time doubt the story of creation in Genesis (the Garden of Eden story), who hold the fall of man as a myth, who systematically reject the miracles of the Old and the New Testament, and who look upon Jesus Christ as a great teacher of ethics but hesitate to think of him as the divine and literal Son of God, and doubt that he rose from the grave with a tangible, physical, immortal body.

Millions professing faith in the Bible do not believe in the gift of prophecy, the ministry of angels, or the blessings of continued revelation. This is a great contradiction and inconsistency, but many seem to be in that situation. President Brigham Young had noticed this same tendency among the people and is reported to have said: “We take this book, the Bible, which I expect to see voted out of the so-called Christian world very soon, they are coming to it as fast as possible, I say we take this book for our guide.”<sup>5</sup>

At another time President Young declared:

The Bible is true. It may not all have been translated aright, and many precious things may have been rejected in the compilation and translation of the Bible; but we understand, from the writings of one of the Apostles, that if all the sayings and doings

of the Savior had been written, the world could not contain them. *I will say that the world could not understand them.* They do not understand what we have on record, nor the character of the Savior, as delineated in the Scriptures.<sup>8</sup>

The way in which churches vote out the Bible is simply that they continue to use it for an ethical guide, but stop believing what it teaches historically and doctrinally.

We are in the habit of using the Bible to prove the Book of Mormon is true, but as we have seen in various passages used in this article, the opposite should be the case. We should gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon by the Spirit and use it to prove that the Bible is true. The Book of Mormon has come to us directly through the intervention of heavenly beings and revelation. One of its purposes, as declared by the Lord himself in D&C 20:11, is to prove to the world that the "holy scriptures [the Bible] are true."

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

There is, however, one great difference between the Bible and the Book of Mormon that shows why some people can disbelieve the Bible and let the matter drop, but disbelieving the Book of Mormon, they find themselves compelled to arise in wrath and defame the Nephite record. It is that people who believe the Bible, as they suppose, can also believe any creed of their choice and belong to any church that suits them. But belief in the Book of Mormon presupposes the acceptance of Joseph Smith as a prophet as well as membership in the church organized by him. . . .

Further, the Bible is difficult to interpret and understand, and reasonable men, approaching it wholly from an intellectual standpoint, can reach divergent conclusions on almost all doctrines—hence, the many contending sects in Christendom. The Bible [because it has been flawed by man] is indeed the perfect tool to support every conceivable doctrinal view. But the Book of Mormon is otherwise; this American scripture sets forth the doctrines of salvation in simplicity and plainness so that reasonable men, even from an intellectual standpoint, can scarcely disagree. This leaves religionists in the position where they must freely accept or openly oppose the Nephite scripture. There is no middle ground, no readily available gray area, no room for compromise.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that the time is right in the history of mankind for the Book of Mormon to come forth from the Lord as another

witness for the Lord Jesus Christ to sustain and support the truths already taught in the Bible. This has a double effect—first, it blesses the believer and guides him to the truth, and second, it leaves the unbeliever without excuse on the day of judgment.

We live in a materialistic and humanistic society in which it is popular to place one's trust in the learning of man, in worldly norms, and in physical comforts. Such a life-style does not require prayer, faith, sacrifice, or obedience to divine laws. It does not call for or expect, or even want, divine intervention. In such an environment, the things of God can be easily disregarded and neglected. In 2 Nephi 29:8–14, we read that the testimony of two nations is a witness for God. We are given to understand in that chapter that we will eventually have three major written sources of scripture: the record of the Jews—the Bible, which is a testament of Jesus Christ; the record of the Nephites—the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ; and the record of the ten tribes—a third testament of Jesus Christ—three witnesses to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ: that he is the literal Son of God, that he shed his blood for atonement, died, and that he rose from the grave in splendor and physical perfection. And we are further invited to consider the fact that out of these records we shall be judged of God for our eternal salvation.

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), pp. 9–10; italics added.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 290–91.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 310.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
5. *JD* 1:38.
6. *Improvement Era*, November 1936, p. 660.
7. *JD* 13:236.
8. *JD* 14:135–36; italics added.
9. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), pp. 460–61.