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Higher Criticism and the Book of Mormon, II

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Abstract: This article produces a Mormon view of the historical-critical method of biblical source analysis. “The methods . . . of higher criticism we recognize as proper; but we must disagree as to the correctness of many of the conclusions arrived at by that method.” The author deals with the literary critics by delivering logic against logic, but also establishes the spiritual nature of the Book of Mormon. The second part covers Isaian authorship.

Higher Criticism and the Book of Mormon.*

BY ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS.

II.

The prime reason why we are asked to believe that this second part of the Book of Isaiah could not have been written by the one who wrote the first part is that if we suppose the first Isaiah to have written the latter part of the book, then we must believe in the possibility of a man being wrenched from the environment in which he stands, so to speak, and be projected forward in time, and become so immersed in a different environment as to speak by the spirit of prophecy in a new style and spirit, and from the midst of future events, as if they were present. Higher critics, as a rule, insist that the miraculous does not happen, that wherever the miraculous appears, there you must halt, and dismiss the miraculous parts of narratives, since they suggest fraud on the one hand and credulity upon the other—therefore we are asked to reject the second part of Isaiah as being the work of the prophet who wrote the first part of the book of that name, since accepting it would involve us in the belief of the possibility of Isaiah being so immersed in the events of future time as to speak from the midst of them as if they were present.

Let us consider this principle of the higher criticism just a moment. Is it possible for the mind of man to have revealed to it the future? Is it possible to penetrate in advance

* A discourse delivered in the tabernacle, Logan, Utah, Sunday evening, April 2, 1911.

one day's happenings, the happenings of three months into the future, three years, or three centuries into the future? If you can demonstrate the fact that the mind can foresee the events of tomorrow, you win your case; because the veil is as impenetrable that hides tomorrow from the mind of man in its normal state, as is the veil that separates him from the future of three hundred years. Let me illustrate what I have in mind by relating a circumstance which happened within my own knowledge, and I speak of this incident with the greater freedom here because I know that in the experience of scores of men who are before me it could in large part be duplicated.

I knew two young elders who were missionaries in the Southern states more than a quarter of a century ago. They were young and inexperienced, yet full of zeal for the faith. They had left all their interests in the west, in order to teach their faith, in their weak way, to the people of the south land. They happened to be in a section of country where they had many friends, but these were slow to accept their message, so far as being baptized was concerned. The interest of the community in the message these young men bore was quite general, but very few, in fact, up to the point I am speaking of, none had joined the Church by baptism. These young men were very disappointed that they were not baptizing people and organizing branches of the Church, as the elders did in early days. The result was that they grew restive, and made up their minds that they would seek other pastures, hoping for a more fruitful ingathering of souls. They quietly bade good bye to their warmest friends, and prepared to take their departure. But during the night preceding the day of their departure, one of them had the dream I shall here relate. At the time, the brethren were guests of one of the wealthiest families in this particular part of the state, a family that had received them with great kindness, a family made up of a husband, a wife and a beautiful daughter, married to a young student of medicine of the neighborhood, soon to graduate as a physician. The lady herself was very much interested in the gospel, the husband very much afraid of it, and full of anxiety concerning it. The young elder in question dreamed that he was at the gate of the plantation where this family lived. His companion passed by the

entrance to the plantation with a strange partner, and went on, apparently through the wood lot lying beyond the plantation, while the young man who had the dream, together with a new companion, (and, by the way, I happen to remember he was an honored resident aforesaid of your beautiful city) passed into the plantation. Presently, in the strange changes that come over dreamers, the elder was walking about the fore-yard of the plantation, when he saw standing in a doorway the married daughter of the household, and as he was passing by the doorway, he observed that she was crying; and as the young elder approached, she extended her hand, and smiling through her tears said, "O, I am so glad you have returned! I was afraid you would never come back, and I want you to baptize me."

The young elder woke up his companion to tell him his dream, and as he finished it, he said, "We are not going to leave this neighborhood. We will stay and see what comes of it."

A few weeks later these young men received a letter from President John Morgan, then president of the mission, appointing a place for conference on the Tennessee river, and asking them to meet him. They traveled several hundred miles to meet with him at the designated place. At the conference the elders reported their field of labor; and Elder Morgan, in that larger wisdom of his, said that instead of leaving such a field as had been described in their report the need was more help. And so he gave them two more companions, and the four of them returned to their field of labor. As they came into the neighborhood where they had hosts of friends, and to the gate of the plantation I have been telling you about, two of them passed on to visit other friends, and the other two, the dreamer and his new companion, entered the plantation. Being mid-day, dinner was soon prepared and partaken of. After the conclusion of the meal, the dreamer wandered about the plantation, that had become somewhat like home to him. Passing a cottage near the principal dwelling (this was some three months after his dream) he saw, standing in the doorway, the young matron of the household, and as he approached, he discovered she was crying. She smiled through her tears, and extending her hand, in broken voice said, "O, I am so glad you have returned; I

was afraid that you would never come back; and I want you to baptize me.”

With a shock the young elder remembered his dream. The whole incident he had witnessed and lived through three months before. The passing of the gate of the plantation by his companion with another associate; the doorway with the young matron standing in it crying; the meeting, the smile through the tears, the very words spoken. But why the tears? There had been some disagreement between the young matron and her husband upon the subject of her baptism. Soon afterward, however, he withdrew his objections, and several months later the lady, with about eight or nine other persons, was baptized by our young elder. The husband himself also finally joined the Church.

I have related this rather long story for the express purpose of showing that the future can be exactly revealed to the mind of man. And remember what I said—that if the events of tomorrow, or three months hence, can be revealed to him, so can events three centuries hence, and it is true that “prophecy is but history reversed.” If that is the case, then I want to say to you that all the difficulties over this question of the first Isaiah being the author of the last half of the book that bears his name disappear—the first Isaiah can do all that is attributed to this second Isaiah.

Here is a question that I want to submit to you about Isaiah: If the first Isaiah, as we will call him, is not the author of the second Isaiah, who is? The second part of Isaiah is confessedly the more important part of the book; it is the Messianic part of the prophecy, and for that reason is the most important part of the book. If you could find the author of the first part of it, why could there not be found the author of the second part of it?

Then again, there is no heading or title to the second part at all it follows right along in sequence, so far as any physical or arbitrary division is indicated. But it is claimed by the higher critics that there is a sharp transition as to matter and style between the 39th chapter and the 40th chapter. I modestly beg leave to differ from that conclusion. If you allow something to the power of prophecy, to the possibility of the future being revealed to man, let that be established in your mind, I say, and there is no break between the 39th and the 40th chapters, that is, no considerable break. Listen

to what is the conclusion of the 39th chapter. Hezekiah has just been made to hear the word of the Lord to this effect: "Behold the days come that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon." Here is the spirit of prophecy, even in the 39th chapter of this book, because it is foretelling things that shall happen to this man Hezekiah—all that he has shall be carried into Babylon." Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord—and thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon." In the opening of the second Isaiah (so-called) you find that the matter is closely related. Remember that the prophet has just told of the future captivity of Israel, their bondage in Babylon, and the 40th chapter opens thus: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." And then he proceeds to proclaim the ultimate deliverance of Israel from this state of bondage to which the 39th chapter of the so called first Isaiah alluded. Thus the opening of the "second Isaiah" is in good sequence to the first.

Now another point in the case is this. Our higher critics must deal with some very important facts of history, accredited history, before they can make good their claim of the doubtful authorship of this latter part of Isaiah. To begin with, here is Josephus. According to Josephus, the Jews exhibited the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 44: 28 and chapter 45: 1-13, to Cyrus, king of Persia, to induce him to return the Jews to Jerusalem, and order the rebuilding of the temple, upon which Cyrus issued the following decree:

Thus saith Cyrus, the king: Since God Almighty has appointed me to be the king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship, for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I shall build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea. This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies, for this prophet said that God had spoken to him in a secret vision: "My will is that Cyrus, whom

I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land and build him a temple." This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, after Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was written (*Antq. of the Jews*, Book XI, chapter 1).

Such is the testimony of Josephus in relation to the effect of this prophecy upon the mind of Cyrus, and the fact that the prophecy had been uttered, and the name spoken as the future deliverer of Israel from their bondage, to rebuild the house of the Lord, is what influenced him to issue his decree to that end.

There is one other item of history that higher critics will have to deal with, and that is in relation to the Christ himself reading the prediction from the prophecy of Isaiah—the "second Isaiah," from the 61st chapter, and applying it to himself. The incident is told by Luke as follows:

And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the Prophet Esaias [Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth * * * (Luke 4: 16-23).

Here is the prophet—the second Prophet Isaiah—honored by a quotation by the Master himself, and applying the prediction to himself, the Messiah. Now, the point of argument from the passage is this, if we are to reject the second prophet Isaiah from the 40th chapter to the close, because it is "unthinkable that it was written by the first Isaiah, because it would be necessary to immerse him in the spirit of prophecy, out of the environment of his life and his labors," are we not under the same obligation to reject it as the

utterance of a second Isaiah, who must needs be conceived of as being immersed by the spirit of prophecy into the future, making the prediction concerning the Christ, who, as he read from the second part of Isaiah, declared to the people, "*This day is this saying fulfilled in your ears.*" It would be no more difficult for the first Isaiah to utter this prediction than for the second to give voice to it. In either case it involves the fact of the miracle of prophecy.

One other thing. In all this criticism you must take into account the magnificence of the man God was using to be the prophet pre-eminent of the coming of the Messiah—the Messianic prophet *par excellence*. And one of the books that is an authority on higher criticism, the work of Dr. Driver, *Introduction to the Old Testament Literature*, in describing Isaiah pictures him as follows:

Isaiah's poetical genius is superb. His characteristics are grandeur and beauty of conception, wealth of imagination, vividness of illustration, compressed energy and splendor of diction. . . . Examples of picturesque and impressive imagery are indeed so abundant that selection is difficult. These may be instanced, however: the banner raised aloft upon the mountains; the restless roar of the sea; the waters rising with irresistible might; the forest consumed rapidly in the circling flames, or stripped of its foliage by an unseen hand; the raised way; the rushing of many waters; the storm driving or beating down all before it; the monster funeral pyre; Jehovah's hand "stretched out" or "swung" over the earth, and bearing consternation with it. Especially grand are the figures under which he conceives Jehovah as "rising up," being "exalted," or otherwise asserting his majesty against those who would treat it with disregard or disdain. . . . The brilliancy and power of Isaiah's genius appear further in the sudden contrasts and pointed antitheses and retorts, in which he delights. . . . No prophet has Isaiah's power either of conception or of expression; none has the same command of noble thoughts, or can present them in the same noble and attractive language.

Such is a description of Isaiah by a higher critic. Now take that man, at the close of his 39th chapter, give him, under the inspiration of God, the vision of Israel in captivity, of Israel's deliverance through Cyrus, the Persian king; give him the vision, as God did, of the "Man of Sorrows," the "one acquainted with

griefs," who "bore our sorrows," upon whom was laid "the burden of us all," "by whose stripes we are healed," and "from whom men turned away their faces" (Isaiah, chapter 53)—give him the vision of a world's redemption by such a character as this, and bid him describe it—will there be anything impossible in the "second Isaiah" for the author of the first thirty-nine chapters to utter, under the inspiration of God?

And now comes the strength and power of the testimony of the Book of Mormon in relation to this subject. Higher critics say that this second part of Isaiah was not written by Isaiah. But the new volume of scripture, the Book of Mormon, written by prophets upon this American continent, bears witness to the fact that the colony of Lehi leaving Jerusalem six hundred years before Christ, and at least fifty years before the date of the composition of the second part of Isaiah, insisted upon by the higher critics, carried with them the prophecies of Isaiah, the second part as well as the first, and transcribed it into their records, where Joseph Smith found it. Of course this statement may not appeal to higher critics, but how strong it must be to us, who accept the testimony of the Book of Mormon, as establishing the integrity of the Book of Isaiah's prophecies!

In conversation with one of our young men who recently returned from an eastern college, where he had come in contact with higher criticism, he remarked to me, "Yes, higher criticism shoots to pieces the Book of Mormon." "Pardon me, my brother," I answered, "you have misstated the matter; you mean that the Book of Mormon shoots holes into higher criticism!"

And that is true. The Book of Mormon establishes the integrity and unity of authorship for the whole book of Isaiah. It is claimed in the little brochure by Mr. Jones that we are discussing, that a similiar point to the one we have been considering arises concerning the word "Malachi," spoken of in Third Nephi, 23rd chapter and fourth verse, "where Christ is represented as quoting 'Malachi' quite definitely as the words of an individual by that name." "The best of authorities," says the brochure here examined, "now agree that Malachi is not a proper name at all, but should be translated, 'my messenger.'" The brochure writer says it is the English version of the scriptures that has crystal-

ized the word into a proper name. All I shall say upon that particular subject is just this, that if the Christ, among the Nephites, referred to Malachi quite definitely as a person of that name, the author of the gospel according to St. Mark also quite definitely refers to him as one of the "prophets" who had delivered a certain message concerning the messenger who should go before the Christ. I will read to you the passage from Mark: "As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." So much from Malachi, one of the prophets: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight:" so much from Isaiah, the other prophet. The Christ himself quotes also from Malachi, in the New Testament; and while one may not say that the reference to him is definite as a person of that name, yet he quotes a passage from Malachi as from one of the prophets. Referring to John the Baptist, the Christ says: "This is he of whom it is written,"—now quoting from Malachi—"Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way before thee" (Luke 7: 27). Dr. Driver is of the opinion that the book of Malachi came to the hands of the compilers with no title to it, and since they found in it this expression, "I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me," they took the term, "my messenger," for the title. He says: "From the similarity of the title in form to Zechariah 9: 1, it is probable that it was framed [*i. e.*, the title, "Malachi"] by the compiler of the volume of the twelve prophets; and this taken in conjunction with the somewhat prominent recurrence of the same word in Malachi 3: 1, has led some modern scholars to the conjecture that the prophecy, when it came to the compiler's hands, had no author's name prefixed, and that he derived the name from chapter 3: 1, 'my messenger' being there understood by him either as an actual designation of the author, or a term descriptive of his office, and so capable of being applied to him symbolically." This discussion of the subject by an authority on higher criticism itself is scarcely in agreement with the notion that it was the "English version of the scriptures that has crystalized the word [Malachi] into a proper name (Brochure page 9). Dummelow's commentary on the word Malachi says that

the oldest Jewish tradition identifies the author of the book of Malachi with Ezra, the scribe, "understanding the word 'Malachi' as an honorable title conferred by Jehovah upon his prophet." True, this author, who accepts quite generally the results of higher criticism, says this "oldest Jewish tradition" is "without adequate reason;" but if the phrase, "my messenger," could be, according to the aforesaid oldest tradition, understood as an honorable title conferred by Jehovah upon Ezra, could it not be applied as such to whatever prophet wrote the book, and thus cause him naturally to be referred to "very definitely" as an individual by that name?

But do not such "tests" as these constitute rather small groundwork upon which to build a structure of objection to such a work as the Book of Mormon purports to be?

There are other matters in this brochure that ought to be considered, but they introduce questions that may not be treated on this occasion for lack of time.

I promised in the outset, however, to say something in relation to higher criticism as affecting the New Testament, as well as to its bearing upon the Book of Mormon. I now proceed to fulfil that promise.

I hold in my hand the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1911, and on the questions with which it deals, Religion, Theology and Philosophy, it is recognized as one of the foremost journals of the world. It is a journal the contributors to which quite generally accept the results of higher criticism; and reading a few passages from it will show the effect of higher criticism upon the New Testament. The article I quote is by the Rev. K. C. Anderson, D. D., and in his opening statement he says:

The time has come when it seems necessary deliberately to raise the question whether the story which we have in the four gospels of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of their central figure was designed by their authors to be taken as literal history. The higher criticism, indeed, is forcing this question to the front, and the time does not seem far distant when all sections of the church will have to face it. The higher criticism may be described as a virtual, though not intentional, attack on the historicity of the Bible. It did not, indeed, begin in that way. That was not its avowed purpose, it called itself "historical

criticism, ' and aimed at judging the various parts of scripture in the light of actual circumstances in which they were produced. But the result has been to show in almost if not every part of scripture that what we have is not history proper—that the author's purpose was not to write history, but to edify, to teach some religious truth which he regarded as all-important. . . . As a result of the work of the higher criticism, the four gospels are a complete wreck as historical records. . . . It [the Gospel of St. John] cannot be depended upon in any way, particularly as authority for the history of Jesus. . . . The same is substantially true of the synoptics [that is, the three gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke]. As authorities for the life of Jesus they are hopelessly shattered by the assaults of the higher criticism. How little they tell us of an historic Jesus! And that little full of contradictions and discrepancies, of impossible incidents and errors. . . . The higher criticism has forced the Christian world to interpret spiritually, and not literally, much that these gospels tell us of Jesus.

And then referring to the effect of higher criticism upon some of the earlier historical facts in the gospel, he goes on to say:

So long as the higher criticism confined itself to these incidents, little concern was felt, but now it is beginning to lay its hands on matters which are regarded as essential, such as the trial and death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and to point out the impossibility of reconciling these with history. It seems as if it will not stop until it has pronounced all the leading features of the gospel story incredible; and when this is done, where will be the evidence for the historicity of Jesus? It would seem as if the result of the higher criticism is to be something the higher critics themselves did not contemplate—that there is only one way in which Christianity can survive, and that is by the surrender of its claim of being a historical religion, and the placing of it on a purely spiritual foundation. . . .

He argues as follows for this new position:

Why not listen to the mystic who tells us that it is nothing less than idolatry to fix our thought and worship on a historical Jesus, who is supposed to have lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, that a flesh-and-blood Jesus is a contradiction in terms, and that what the gospel writers intended to give the world was not history or biography, *but spiritual allegory or drama.* (!) If this theory fits the fact as the historical theory does not, this will be the proof of its truth.

There is much more to the same effect; and this writer

admonishes his readers to free themselves from the thought of salvation through a historical Jesus, and to accept the term "Christ" as the symbol for the individual soul, and apply the written experiences of Jesus to the experiences of the birth and struggle of the individual soul; in other words, accept myth instead of fact as the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I shall close with a comment upon one more passage of this little brochure. Speaking of that matter of the "Isaiahs," and the authorship of the second part of the book, your fellow townsman, who has written this brief criticism aimed at the Book of Mormon, says:

There was a time when the Isaian authorship of these chapters was warmly contested for, but it is hard now to find a modern commentary by any scholar of repute that seriously tries to defend that position. The advocates of the Book of Mormon will probably be the last to attempt it, for to admit the late date of the last half of Isaiah is, to quote Mr. Roberts' words, to throw "the whole Book of Mormon under suspicion of being fraudulent."

What I wanted out of this passage is the thought that the advocates of the Book of Mormon will probably be the last to attempt to uphold the integrity of the whole book of Isaiah as it now stands in the Bible, the product of the prophet of that name, the Messianic prophet *par excellence*. That is probably a true prediction. We may, indeed, be the last, but we shall continue the contest. The Book of Mormon will stand for the integrity of the book of Isaiah; and not only for that, but for all the great historical facts concerning Messiah, and concerning the gospel of salvation through faith in and acceptance of the atonement of the Christ and obedience to His laws, since those facts were revealed to the ancient prophets upon these American continents. They knew of Messiah's coming, of his birth and life; for they had prophets among them much of the spirit of Isaiah, who predicted that fact, and very much pertaining to his earthly life; and finally, our Book of Mormon declares the physical and glorious appearance of the risen Messiah among the inhabitants of this western world. It contains the account of the establishment of the Church of Christ among them. It lays down the fundamental principles of the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, as no other book con-

tains it. It teaches the means of salvation better than any other work of even divine authority teaches it. The Christ lived among the men of the western world for a short period only, but in that time presented the same splendid truths he taught in Judea; only it was the risen Messiah who appeared upon this continent, as he appeared after his resurrection to the disciples in Judea, when he said to them, in all the glory and splendor of a resurrected, immortal personage: "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Shortly after that, but even in a more splendid manner, he revealed himself to the Nephites in the land of Zion; he came forth out of the blue expanse of heaven, heralded by the voice of God saying: "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name: hear ye him." Multitudes worshiped at his feet; saw and felt the wounds in his hands and in his side; and knew that the prophecies of the old prophets among their fathers were now fulfilled in this manifestation and personal presence of the Christ with them. He felt with them the fulness of the gospel of salvation through the atonement of Christ. And that testimony of the gospel, its historicity and reality, contained in the Book of Mormon, shall stand against the results of higher criticism. In that book we have a New Witness for God and Christ, a Witness whose voice cannot be silenced. It speaks not only for the Jewish scriptures, but it speaks for the integrity of the whole gospel program. It stands for the reality and truth of the atonement and the gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God unto salvation. It will resist all such conclusions of higher criticism as those set forth by this author in the *Hibbert Journal*, that I have been reading to you. The truth of God it will establish, and O, how the world needs it! Speaking of his future glorious coming, the Christ said: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?" If the results of higher criticism shall be accepted by the Christian peoples of the world, he will not find real, valid faith in the world; neither will he find faith in the gospel of Christ, for which he stands; nor in the scriptures, as the word of God. If our testimony prevails, the answer is to be given in the affirmative: Yea, Lord, thou shalt find faith in the earth.

(THE END.)