

August 27, 2007



Dear Ida,


I have read though Christopher's translation of the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, prayerfully as well as intellectually, trying to utilize both the promptings of the Spirit and the knowledge I have acquired with respect to the process of forgery. When I finished those pages, I then read through his own story as well as his version of the First Vision. After that, I dipped into the Sealed Portion, to get a flavor of it as well. As I promised you I would, I have stayed within the bounds of the manuscripts themselves, avoiding the temptation to condemn Christopher because of his life's story.

I am convinced, beyond any reasonable doubt, that they are forgeries.

As I said in my book, any writing tells you something about the person who wrote it, and, the longer the work, the more vulnerable it is if it is a forgery. Christopher's work is very long and exposes him as a young man who does not understand very much about either the *Book of Mormon* or actual Church history and practices. There are many, many examples of this, but I shall keep this short by citing only a few of the more obvious ones.

First, at the beginning of his 116 pages, he says the following, which I have cut and pasted as it appears on his web site, so the syntax and emphasis are just as he wrote them:

. . . here is the first part of the record known as the *Book of Mormon*, translated by the Urim and Thummim from the first plate made by the hand of Mormon *after* the words given and known as the Title Page of the Book of Mormon already published by the Mormon faiths:


With this statement, Christopher demonstrates the shallowness of his knowledge of the book he is trying imitate. What he calls "the words given and known as the Title Page of the Book of Mormon" were written more than 30 years after Mormon had died. It is impossible for him to have written anything that came after them; they are Moroni's summary of what was on the plates he placed in the stone box, 

Next, by insisting that his work is the full text of the 116 pages, he takes on the burden of covering roughly 450 years of history, but his narrative tells us nothing of import after Jacob.


Obviously Christopher was not familiar with the statements of Jarom, who is a particularly significant source because he was familiar with what was on both sets of plates, small as well as large. He wrote on the former himself, and, in Jarom 1:14, says the following about the latter, speaking in 361 BC:

And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are

engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written.


So, in 361 BC, a man who had read them says that the large plates contained a good amount of detailed secular history, provided by the kings who had ruled after Jacob's death. Christopher's work does not contain anything that corresponds to Jarom's description of what was on the plates in 361 BC, nor anything that was added thereafter. During the next two centuries, the time that passed between Jarom and King Benjamin, there would logically be a great deal more added, something that Christopher obviously did not realize. 

He blunders again with regard to the way the book is laid out. He uses the same format that appears in our present editions of the Book of Mormon, breaking down the manuscript into chapters and placing summaries at the beginning of each one. Because this format is the one that has been prevalent during most if not all of Christopher's adult life, it is logical for him to have assumed that the book had always been presented in this way. But you and I both know that it is not.

The manuscript that Joseph and Oliver produced was virtually one very long sentence. It was the printer who broke it into logical sentences and paragraphs and provided the punctuation; chapter summaries were a later addition, put in to make the book easier for modern readers to follow. These summaries were "beefed up" and expanded in 1981, when, in President Kimball's administration, the present set of scriptures was published, drawing on computer technology to coordinate and cross reference matching passages and topics. I am not sure who wrote the Book of Mormon chapter summaries we now have, but I have been told it was Bruce R. McConkie. By producing a work that imitates this modern format, Christopher demonstrates his ignorance of how the Book of Mormon was actually structured originally. 


Next, in his Chapter 1, verse 19, Christopher says:

For behold, the prophets did truly testify of the iniquities of the church at Jerusalem.
For the people of the church were corrupted by the examples of their leaders . .

The Jews were not organized as a formal church at Jerusalem, in 600 BC. Neither were the Nephites, in their first decades in the Promised Land. That was a development that occurred much later. Christopher is projecting his own view of present Church leaders back into a time when such a structure incorporating such leaders did not exist, something which Nibley would pick apart with great glee. 

He does it again with respect to Church practices. In his Chapter 2, verse 41, he says:

And it had been a tradition among the Jews, or rather, a commandment of the church, that each member pay a tithe to the church of all their increase. And this tithing was great, and was only used for the purposes of the church. And also, it was required of the members of the church to give regularly to the benefit of the poor and the needy. Yet, this offering, which the people made to the poor, was only a small part of their increase; the majority of their increase the people kept for themselves and their families, thus being taught by the words and the examples of their leaders.

There is no scriptural record of such a pattern of contribution among Biblical peoples; this is a clear description of today's system of tithing and fast offering in the Latter-day Church. Yes, tithing is spoken of anciently, but the only place it is described as being on one's *increase* is in our dispensation, in the Doctrine and Covenants. This is a modern term, unknown anywhere else in scripture. In the Old Testament, they "gave tithes of all," and Abraham paid his directly to Melchizedek. There is no suggestion that Melchizedek used the money – or, more likely, the goods, since money was used far less than barter in those days – for the "purposes" of a nonexistent church. 

Finally, Christopher stumbles the most, as he pretends to be Mormon, in his narrative point of view. This is a critical test, because the Book of Mormon is very unforgiving with regard to Mormon's point of view – he is writing long after the fact, always as a compiler and an abridger only, never as a story teller. He can comment on what he finds on the plates that others have written, as he summarizes it, but he cannot insert any information that does not come from his underlying sources, because he is writing centuries after the fact.


Christopher crashes blindly through this barrier, repeatedly inserting illogical new information that Mormon could not have known. As the most blatant example, I turn to his version of the exchange between Nephi and Zoram after Nephi has obtained the brass plates, starting in his Chapter 4, verse 24:

- . . . the servant of Laban began to call out loud for help that others inside the city walls might hear his cries.
- 25 And Nephi drew the sword of Laban and told the servant of Laban that he would slay him if he did not give unto them the plates and return with them to the tent of their father in the wilderness.
- 26 And Nephi pleaded with the servant of Laban that they would not harm him, and that he would no longer be a servant to any man as long as he abided with them in the wilderness.
- 27 And the Spirit of the Lord came over the servant of Laban. And his name was Zoram. And Zoram fell at the feet of Nephi and covenanted with him that he would be his servant from that time forth, if he would spare his life.
- 28 And Nephi lifted Zoram up and embraced him and said unto him: My brother, knowest thou not that thou art my brother and that we are all children of the same God? Knowest thou not that the same creator who gave me power to slay your master and obtain these plates hath spared thy life and hath from this day forth set thee free? Thou shalt be my brother and my friend.
- 29 And Zoram believed Nephi and was wrought upon by the Spirit of God so exceedingly that he wept on the shoulder of Nephi and promised to obey all the commandments of God from that time forth.
- 30 And it was in this way that the Lord prepared a means whereby the sons of Lehi would not be blamed for the murder of Laban, or for stealing the plates of brass, as the people of Jerusalem would believe.
- 31 For behold, the next morning the Jews did find the body of Laban; and they did also discover that the plates of brass were missing and had been taken from his house.

Nevertheless, they knew also that Zoram was missing from among them. And it came to pass that the Jews believed that Zoram had stolen the plates of brass from Laban after he had killed his master. And the Jews attributed no blame to Lehi or to his sons.


There were only two eyewitnesses to this experience, Nephi and Zoram, and Zoram left no record of his memory of what happened. But Nephi did. We have, in his own, first person record, a detailed description of the exchange and it contains none of the histrionics of his waving the sword of Laban while Zoram kneels at his feet and swears to be his servant if he will just spare his life. Nibley's explanation of both Nephi's and Zoram's actions as being fully consistent with ancient desert customs exposes Christopher's version as a modern, Western, invention.

Further, look closely at Christopher's description of the reaction of the Jews the next morning, when they find Laban dead. Speaking as Mormon, Christopher says they decided that Zoram did it and "attributed no blame to Lehi or to his sons." This is a fatal misstep because it changes Mormon's point of view. Christopher inadvertently makes Mormon an original source for an event that happened a thousand years before he was born.

His own narrative confirms the blunder. Christopher says that all of Lehi's sons moved safely away from the city during the night. That means that there was no witness left behind who could have known, and then written down in any document to which Mormon had access, what happened after they had gone, yet Christopher has Mormon tell us anyway. This is forgery at its clumsiest. 


A few final observations, comparing Christopher's overall story with Joseph Smith's:


First - The Book of Mormon stresses the importance of witnesses, and Joseph Smith had multiple witnesses who corroborated his story, several of which went public with their own written descriptions of what and how he did it. He did not ask the world to believe just him.



Christopher, on the other hand, insists that there have been no witnesses to his actions. None have come forward on their own, either, unless you credit the story of the woman who says she was his girl friend and watched Christopher write the whole thing. She says he told her he could sell it to the Church, on the grounds that they would buy it to suppress it. I have no way of checking her story, so must I put her supposed testimony aside as hearsay, but she is the only claimed witness to Christopher's story that I can find. 

Next - In my book, I point out that Joseph Smith never produced anything else remotely like the Book of Mormon. I quote a sample of Joseph's writing at the time the Book was published to make that point clear. Even as he matured, his writings did not resemble the style of the book. This is a strong argument for his claim that it was the work of someone else and all he did was translate it.

Christopher's version of Mormon's writings, on the other hand, sounds very much like his version of the Father's purported instructions to Joseph in the First Vision and, more

significantly, very much like his own description of his ordeal and calling as the new seer and revelator. This is a strong argument that he and not Mormon wrote the 116 pages. 

Finally, on the doctrinal side, he departs completely from the main message of the underlying book. Moroni, in the Title page, makes it very clear that the central purpose of the book is to tell the descendants of the survivors of the Lamanite wars that they are members of the House of Israel and to witness to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, that Jesus is the Christ. Christopher's central message is that a Christian Church is unnecessary. 

In the Book of Mormon that Joseph Smith gave us, there is not the slightest hint that this is true. On the contrary, every time the prophets call on the people to repent, they are sent to the leaders of the Church to be baptized as a formal statement of their allegiance to Christ.  Without such an ordinance, Mormon teaches, over and over again, their commitment is not complete. When Jesus changed the structure of the Church, by calling the Twelve and putting them at its head to carry on his work after he has gone, he never, ever suggested that it is not necessary. 

In short, Christopher's 116 pages are doctrinally at war with Joseph Smith's 534. They cannot possibly have come from the same underlying source.


Ida, I'm honored by your confidence in me as a truth-seeker, which I truly try to be. I hope that my observations will be useful to you as you continue your own efforts to find the truth. I have one last comment to make with respect to your desire to have the Sealed Portion available, the desire that led you to investigate Christopher's claims in the first place.

Many Latter-day Saints, very much including me, longed for the time when the Lord would change the Church's position with respect to the ordination of worthy black members of the Church. There were many prayers offered asking for that to happen, but they seemed to go unanswered. My mother-in-law spoke directly to President McKay about it, saying that she thought the Church policy on the matter was wrong. He said, as she reported it to me, "So do I, but it will take a revelation to change it, and I haven't had one."

I attended a solemn Assembly in the Los Angeles Temple in the mid Seventies, where President Kimball instructed us in a number of matters of doctrine. He brought up this one, and made it very clear that he was aware of the concerns that members had with regard to it. He then stressed that it was a matter to be decided by the Lord – period, end of discussion. He gave no hint of his hours of prayer and contemplation in the Temple, pleading with the Lord to know His will.

When the revelation finally came, it was dramatic – so dramatic that, for years afterwards, members of the Twelve that were present on that occasion could not speak of it without becoming emotional. When some Church members tried to figure out why it had taken so long, there was no answer, but there was some speculation that the delay may have been caused by the fact that, overall, the members of the church were not ready for the change.

There may be a parallel here. As I understand what is in the Sealed Portion, it contains prophecies for which the world was not ready at the time the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith. I cannot find the source for the quote, but I believe Joseph said that the sealed Portion would not be revealed to the world until the open portion – the book we have – had been accepted by the world.

What I am saying is that you may be ready for it, and longing for it, but too much of the rest of the world is not. Like the question of the timing of the revelation on Priesthood ordinations for the blacks, the timing of its arrival is in the hands of the Lord. 

With great affection,

