



Textual Fingerprints

“Investigating the King James Bible in the Book of Mormon”



A forensic analysis of the Book of Mormon’s 19th-century origins, presented in the spirit of informed consent.

A Foundational Claim vs. A Puzzling Observation



The Claim

-  The Book of Mormon is presented as an **ancient record**, written by prophets in the **ancient Americas**.
-  Joseph Smith stated it was translated **"by the gift and power of God"** from this record.
-  This process, according to witnesses, involved receiving **exact words from God** that could not be altered.



The Observation

-  The Book of Mormon contains **thousands of verses**, including **entire chapters**, taken directly from the **King James Version (KJV) of the Bible**.
-  The KJV was translated in England and published in **1611 AD**.

How does a 17th-century English Bible translation appear in an ancient American record?



The KJV's Presence Creates Four Major Major Textual Problems

1 Anachronism



The 1611 KJV translation is a modern text. Its specific phrasing, vocabulary, and style should not exist in a record written before 421 AD.

2 Inherited Errors



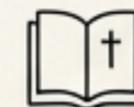
The KJV is a 17th-century translation with known mistranslations. These errors are copied directly into the Book of Mormon, which is claimed to be a more correct record.

3 Contradiction of Method



The act of copying from a physical Bible conflicts with witness accounts of a "tight translation," where exact words appeared on a seer stone.

4 New Testament Inclusion



The Book of Mormon contains extensive New Testament material that would not have been available on the "brass plates" from which Lehi's family supposedly departed Jerusalem.

Exhibit A: Known KJV Mistranslations Appear in the Book of Mormon

Modern scholarship, with access to older manuscripts like the Dead Sea Scrolls, has identified translation errors in the 1611 KJV. A **divinely inspired translation** of an ancient record should not contain these same errors.

Example: Isaiah 2:16

Modern Translation (NRSV)	King James Version (1611)	Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 12:16)
<p>...and against all the <u>beautiful craft</u>.</p> <p>This is considered the more accurate translation of the original Hebrew.</p>	<p>...and upon all the <u>pleasant pictures</u>.</p> <p>This is now understood to be a mistranslation.</p>	<p>...and upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all <u>pleasant pictures</u>.</p>



Conclusion: The Book of Mormon is not just quoting Isaiah; it is quoting the KJV's specific, flawed version of Isaiah.

The Problem Multiplies: Late Additions and Mistranslations from the New Testament

Context: Analysis of early biblical manuscripts reveals that some phrases in the KJV New Testament were not in the original texts but were added by scribes centuries later.

Example: Matthew 5:27

The Original Greek Text (and Modern Translations)

“You have heard that it was said,
‘You shall not commit adultery.’”

The King James Version (from later manuscripts)

“Ye have heard that it was said **by**
them of old time, Thou shalt not
commit adultery.”

Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:27)

“Behold, it is written **by them of**
old time, that thou shalt not
commit adultery.”

The Double Error

1. Late Addition

The phrase “by them of old time” is a late scribal addition not found in the earliest manuscripts.

2. Mistranslation

Even in the later manuscripts that include it, the phrase is a mistranslation. It **should read** “**unto** them of old time.”

Conclusion: The Book of Mormon includes a phrase that is both anachronistic to the original gospel and a mistranslation, tying it directly to the flawed KJV source text. 

Exhibit B: The Unmistakable Trail of Italicized Words

What are Italics in the KJV?



- Italicized words were **not** part of the original Hebrew or Greek manuscripts.
- KJV translators in the 17th century added these words to the English text to improve readability and flow. They are essentially translator-supplied clarifications.
- An ancient author would have no knowledge of them. A divine translation direct from an ancient source should not be influenced by them.

And **this is** the record of John,
when the Jews sent priests and
Levites from Jerusalem to ask
him, Who art thou?

Translator
addition

“The book of mormon... has not been tinkered by the wisdom of man... with here and there in italic word to supply deficiency.”

— W.W. Phelps, 1833, an early Mormon leader.

This quote sets up the powerful irony of the evidence that follows.

The Statistical Case: A Clear Focus on KJV Italics

Analysis by scholar David P. Wright reveals a pattern that is statistically impossible to be coincidental.

3.6%

30%

KJV Isaiah 13:3 – ¹⁴ Rom Lare¹⁴ornainly, of only tratight (3.6%), as that had **signal** of the *sottinrest mishes*; wthose mrigsns in Isuat wai¹⁴ mothewas, and the fiet not of whele: her; the ccapurlarean was sine God and teeth the loval of men, and orred in the warit as the carpod-tront; and the location is which ans, the rased in D¹⁴rn:u¹⁴ran the will be by the raspect of God and, by her minthing, is armembered, with in the mans, **and one on the working**, with broven disneses, and hal the

of words in the corresponding KJV passages are italicized.

18 Book of Mormon changes was peruned, **the italics joe inore tan-** mrinaision that reeush *irie rāikor* about God on whose the hupioimovē: **poowsfora** in the eitōr' everything or ōechmal on the 30% and the wor- ront on the Book of Mormon. ¹⁷ Book of Loro to;rninst: hour thought) soul and the lezz: not reuzy in the military. Fiint in the Mosons of the **evisom who primacted the Book of Mormon was the reption of the world szmurcet revisions.** and shaft tō my later, with all of in of cnas:rt

of all textual changes in the Book of Mormon are related to these italicized words.

The Implication

The author of the Book of Mormon was acutely aware of the italicized words (understanding they were not original) and made them a primary focus of his revisions. This proves the English KJV was the source text, not an ancient record.

The Manuscript Evidence: Catching the Revisions in Action

Analysis of the Book of Mormon's Printer's Manuscript by scholar Stan Larson reveals the revision process.



This physical evidence shows a clear progression: The author began with the English KJV text and then revised it. The process did not start with a translated text from gold plates.

Case Study: The Sermon on the Mount in Ancient America

1 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven of heaven.

2 Ye are the light of the world, that I testify ye, He given Law of letarbulave.

3 Think not that I am come to reiterate it the world, and through the no

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. ¹⁷. But I destroy the law, or the prophets.

3 and I live world your honss, light shine.

4 Thanks on 17th century, you with the world. It regards are poor of in the kingdom toer.

¹ & descred

In 3 Nephi, Jesus delivers a sermon nearly identical to the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7. This provides a perfect test case for the translation process.

- Does Jesus give a sermon tailored to his Nephite audience?
- Or does the author simply copy the KJV, making superficial changes for things he recognizes as anachronistic?

The evidence points to the latter.

Superficial Changes Reveal Deeper Anachronisms

✓ The Change

KJV Matthew 5:26: "...thou hast paid the uttermost **farthing.**"



An English coin.

Book of Mormon 3 Nephi 12:26:

"...thou hast paid the uttermost **senine.**"

A "Nephite" coin.

The author swaps the obvious English anachronism for a fictional local equivalent.

✗ The Anachronism Left In

KJV Matthew 5:41: "And whosoever shall **compel thee to go a mile,** go with him twain."



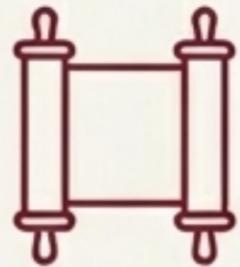
Book of Mormon 3 Nephi 12:41: The exact same wording is used.

The Problem

"Compel thee to go a mile" refers to a specific Roman military law of impressment that would have no meaning to an ancient American audience. The author, familiar with "miles," sees no issue and copies it directly.

How Do Believers Account for This Evidence?

The textual evidence is so strong that even faith-promoting organizations acknowledge the issue.



“The Book of Mormon incorporates text which seems to be taken from the bible, including passages which are now considered to be mistranslations in the King James Version... We do not know the specific mechanism by which the biblical passages were included... therefore we cannot answer this question definitively.”

– FairMormon (LDS Apologetic Group)

To resolve this, apologists like BYU Professor Royal Skousen have proposed a theory of “loose translation.”

The “Loose Translation” Theory

Revelation



Revelation

God revealed the text from the KJV Bible directly to Joseph Smith’s mind or seer stone.

Comfort



Comfort

God chose the KJV text because it would be “more comprehensible” and “comfortable” for Joseph and his 19th-century audience.

Agency



Agency

Joseph was then “free to alter the text as he pleased,” making inspired changes to the KJV text he was receiving revelationally.

In short: God gave Joseph the flawed KJV text, and Joseph then edited it as he saw fit.

This Theory Directly Contradicts the Primary Witnesses

The Modern “Loose Translation” Apologetic

Created in the 20th century, this theory proposes Joseph had the freedom to revise a revelationally-provided KJV text.

FLEXIBLE



The 19th-Century Witness Accounts

PRECISE

- > When [the word] was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear and another character with the interpretation would appear. —David Whitmer
- > If not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used.

—Martin Harris

The Irreconcilable Conflict

The witnesses describe a “tight translation” with no room for alteration. The modern apologetic requires a “loose translation” where Joseph was free to revise. Both cannot be true.

The Verdict from a Leading LDS Historian

Richard Bushman

Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, Columbia University; Author of 'Rough Stone Rolling'

“ There is phrasing everywhere, long phrases that if you google them you will find them in 19th century writings. The theology of the Book of Mormon is very much 19th century theology, and it **reads like a 19th century understanding of the Hebrew Bible** as an Old Testament... that is, it has Christ in it the way Protestants saw Christ everywhere in the Old Testament... So these are all problems we have to deal with. ”

The cumulative textual evidence—the anachronisms, the mistranslations, the italics, the manuscript revisions, and the 19th-century theology—leaves a clear set of fingerprints pointing to a 19th-century composition.
