"If There Be Faults, They Be Faults of a Man"

Author(s): Robert F. Smith
Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, Volume 8 (2014), pp. 195-203
Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

Abstract: Review of John S. Dinger, ed., Significant Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon: The First Printed Edition Compared to the Manuscripts and to the Subsequent Major LDS English Printed Editions (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation/Signature Books, 2013); with foreword by Stan Larson; 418pp+ xxxvi; hardbound edition limited to 501 copies; ISBN 978-1-56085-233-9

INTERPRETER

A Journal of Mormon Scripture

Volume 8 · 2014 · Pages 195-203

"If There Be Faults, They Be Faults of a Man"

Robert F. Smith

Offprint Series

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication. Visit us at MormonInterpreter.com

"If There Be Faults, They Be Faults of a Man"[1]

Robert F. Smith

Review of John S. Dinger, ed., *Significant Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon: The First Printed Edition Compared to the Manuscripts and to the Subsequent Major LDS English Printed Editions* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation/ Signature Books, 2013); with foreword by Stan Larson; 418pp+ xxxvi; hardbound edition limited to 501 copies; ISBN 978-1-56085-233-9

It has been nearly 40 years since I walked into the BYU office of Stanley R. Larson in the early summer of 1974. Stan had just completed his master's thesis, and he proudly displayed a hot-off-the-press copy of it on his desk. Stan was justifiably proud, and I could see right away while thumbing through it that this was a very important work that could be utilized as the basis for a critical text of the Book of Mormon. I did not realize then that this would become a part of Ellis T. Rasmussen's much larger effort to prepare a new edition of LDS Scriptures (I had met Ellis in the Holy Land, and he was later kind enough to show me a mock-up of a page of the planned new edition to see what I thought of it).

Stan eventually went to England to earn his PhD, in the meantime producing a series of fine articles demonstrating the value of his thesis project. I set about gathering data for a small-scale critical text and spent a very fruitful seven

1 Mormon 8:17, following the Printer's Manuscript reading (likewise followed by the RLDS 1908 edition, and by the 1999 *Restored Covenant Edition*).

years in Independence, Missouri, nearly every day utilizing the material available in the Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, now the Community of Christ), working on that and a variety of other projects. By the time my colleague, John W. "Jack" Welch, established the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) in 1979, I had gathered some excellent data for a modest critical text. He and John L. Sorenson had both encouraged me to establish a dependable text—which is the objective of any good critical text project.

When I moved to Provo, Utah, in 1983, Jack Welch obtained a digital copy of the 1830 Book of Mormon produced by Larry K. Browning, which had been keyed to author by John L. Hilton I and Kenneth D. Jenkins. Jack suggested that I edit it using a large BYU mainframe computer along with new word-processing software that could do footnotes. The Critical Text Project immediately grew into a vastly larger affair than I had foreseen, requiring years of effort, tens of thousands of readings from the various manuscripts and editions, and thousands of references to quotations and allusions to biblical and other relevant writings (Hilton & Jenkins provided a massive computer-generated list of KJV parallels, and I received the valuable help of Grant R. Hardy and Gordon C. Thomasson in finding many additional parallels).

The FARMS *Book of Mormon Critical Text* eventually grew to three volumes, and when the first volume of the first edition was published in 1984, I began regular visits to the BYU office of Royal J. Skousen to discuss improvements for a projected second edition. That much improved edition was completed and published in 1987, at which point I moved to California, and Royal took over the project—breathing extraordinary new life into it.[2]

2 An excellent account is available in Royal Skousen, "The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project," in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man* , eds.,

When I recently obtained my copy of this new volume edited by John S. Dinger, I was pleased to see that it contains an authoritative and dependable foreword by Stan Larson.[3] It was a pleasure, as usual, to read his summary of the main issues surrounding textual criticism of the Book of Mormon. Would that Stan had taken a closer look at precisely what editor Dinger had done with this particular effort!!

It is a beautifully produced hardbound volume, and Stan's foreword, while not quite worth the price of the volume, is the only useful and dependable part of this book. That is, the book is rife with error and was not designed to be usable or accessible.

At a retail price of $60 (before taxes and shipping and handling), one might expect to have in hand a volume that includes the chapters and verses of the Book of Mormon familiar to most readers (including the 2004 Doubleday edition), without which it is nearly impossible to find any given word or phrase. Instead, Dinger provides us with the long chapters and unnumbered paragraphs of the 1830 edition. This makes it nearly unusable as a reference work and leaves the 3,143 footnotes in limbo.

Worse, right from the outset, Dinger has more errors than accurate notes to the text. It is so disappointing to find that no substantive peer review was provided by the publisher nor that Stan Larson took a few minutes to check the first few pages. It certainly would have been time well spent, and the publisher might have sent Dinger back to the drawing boards. Because Dinger's volume was merely derivative (not based on original research), one might have expected him to have studied and mastered the Skousen transcripts of the printer's manuscript

---

Susan E. Black and Charles D. Tate, 65-75. Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993.

3 On p. xvii, Signature Books erroneously has "joined" in Alma 62:29, where it should be "join" (as in PMs, 1830, etc.) – apparently a typo.

and original manuscript.[4] He might also have consulted the easily understood footnotes in my *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Provo: FARMS, 1986-1987). Taken together, those resources could easily have prevented the plethora of errors generated by Dinger.

Some representative examples:

Mistakenly attributes printer's manuscript (PMs) readings to original manuscript (OMs), where OMs does not exist:

—pages 5-6 have several notes leading with "OMs" in a section where it does not exist (nn. 10-12,17-18,20), where he clearly intended "PMs," or "PMs-cor," as later in the volume. This includes "The first Book of Nephi," "Chapter 1st," "three days," "&C," "haveing," "is," etc.

Repeatedly fails to attribute changes to OMs-cor (corrected OMs), although he does so sometimes later in the volume (OMs-cor or ~~strike out~~, nn. 114,207,211,235,425,468,485-486):

—page 8, nn. 45,54, even though Dinger declares "text absent" in OMs, they are actually present in OMs-cor: "the fountain of" is in OMs-cor; "of God" is in OMs-cor.

—page 11, n. 79, has "&" in OMs, but fails to show OMs-cor "I" (1 Nephi 4:8).

—page 17, n. 141 (1 Nephi 8:34), gives OMs instead of correct OMs-cor.

Repeatedly misleads by failing to attribute changes to PMs-cor (or perhaps PMs-corcor) or to line through replaced readings, although he does so sometimes later in the volume (PMs-cor nn. 188, 192, 226, 228, 266, and lining through at

4 Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text*. Provo: FARMS, 2001; Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts*. Provo: FARMS, 2001.

nn. 22,27,84,86,88-89,91,133,192,205,214, 229,234, or both), perhaps by then beginning to realize the crucial value of such data:

—pages 6-9, 14, 16-22, 24, nn. 24, 26, 34-36, 41-42, 57, 59, 63, 110, 121, 123, 125-126, 134, 147-152, 158-159, 164-167, 178, 197, including "it," "is," "are," "those," "said," "Brothers," "who," "thy," "who," "may," etc.

Misses some changes:

—page 11 (1 Nephi 4:19), fails to list OMs "own" head, which is dropped in PMs and editions. Has no note on "girted" in OMs PMs 1830;"girded" in OMs-cor 1837, etc. (1 Nephi 4:21).

—page 14 (1 Nephi 6:6), missed OMs "plate," PMs "plates," etc., just as he did at 1 Nephi 5:19.

—page 21 (1 Nephi 11:22), fails to note the insertion in OMs above the line "of men," which would be an example of OMs-cor, if noted.

Misleads or presents false information in notes:

—page 7, n. 43, entirely overlooks OMs "beside," and claims "by the side of" in PMs 1837. In fact PMs has "beside," and PMs-cor has "by the side of," thus missingthe standard pattern of corrections made to PMs for the 1837 edition.

—page 8, n. 49, only catches half the phrase "that he" which was removed in 1837, bolding and listing only "he."

—page 9, n. 62, falsely states that the 1852 ed reads "knew" (thus supposedly following the 1840 ed), but the 1852 actually reads "knowing," and actually follows the 1830 1837 & 1841 eds.

—page 10, n. 70, has PMs "Brother," which more likely reads "Brethren" (1 Nephi 3:28); not to mention PMs-cor "Brother," and PMs-corcor "Brothers."

n. 71, misses OMs "thou shalt" = PMs. It is PMs-cor which has "ye shal" (1 Nephi 3:29).

n. 72, PMs does not have "spake," but "spoken" (1 Nephi 3:30).

n. 75, has PMs "text absent," but fails to note PMs-cor "then" (1 Nephi 4:1).

—page 11, n. 81, "to me" (1 Nephi 4:12) is not in OMs or PMs.

—page 12, n. 94, claims falsely that 1852 follows 1830. 1852 follows the 1849 in dropping "had," thus leaving only "came" (1 Nephi 5:4).

—page 14, n. 108, the 1852 ed does not follow 1840 "ye are," as he alleges, but has instead "thou art" (1 Nephi 7:8).

—page 16, n. 119, incorrectly has 1849 "methought." It is hyphenated at line end, so that we do not know if it should have a hyphen (1 Nephi 8:4).

n. 121, has no indication of PMs-cor (1 Nephi 8:7).

—page 18, n. 153, falsely has "should" removed by PMs. Yet OMs PMs 1830 all read the same; PMs-cor included "should," which was not "removed," but simply ignored (1 Nephi 10:3).

n. 155, falsely claims that PMs reads "should be" (1 Nephi 10:3). Yet OMs PMs 1830 all actually read the same, and PMs-cor reads "should be," which is followed by 1837 ed.

Employs a faulty 1830 edition text:

—p. 36, misspells "statutes," as "statues" in 1 Nephi 17:22, even though it is spelled correctly in OMs, PMs, 1830 and all editions.

—p. 86, drops "and" from the beginning of 2 Nephi 29:9, even though it is in PMs 1830 and all editions (OMs not extant).

—p. 213, leaves out "death" at end of Alma 25:9, even though it is present in PMs 1830 and all other editions (OMs not extant).

—p. 347, misspells "new" as "knew" at the end of 3 Nephi 15:2. The PMs and 1830 read "new."

Because these were items noticed at random by me, the likelihood that there are many more such errors is quite high. One might need a collating machine to find out exactly how often the input was erroneous. Meanwhile, Royal Skousen's dictum that *such texts should never be keyed in by hand* is proven yet again.

Other assorted problems and errors:

p. xx, "in a language sometimes described as 'reformed Egyptian'," misses the point that the term comes from the Book of Mormon itself (Mormon 9:32).

pp. xxiv-xxv, xxxii, Dinger neglects to include the 1879 SLC: Deseret News, 6th American edition along with his 1879 Liverpool edition information.

p. xxvi, for the 1911 Chicago edition, Dinger simply said that it "was a reproduction of the 1905 Chicago edition," which is only indirectly true. In fact, the 1911 edition was based on the 9th electrotype edition produced by Charles W. Penrose in Liverpool in 1909, which was in turn based upon the 1st Chicago edition of 1905.

pp. xxvi-xxviii, Dinger doesn't bother to mention the BYU faculty members who did the actual heavy lifting in producing the 1979 & 1981 new edition of LDS Scriptures (foremost among them Ellis Rasmussen). Likewise, he does not bother to point out that the adoption of some of Stan Larson's recommendations in the 1981 LDS edition of the Book of Mormon took place via Ellis Rasmussen.

pp. xxvii-xxviii, in his "Major Studies of the Textual Changes," Dinger somehow missed the massive and path-breaking *Book of Mormon Critical Text* published by FARMS in two editions (1984-1987) of three volumes each, instead wasting precious space on the false claim that "a significant textual change to the Book of Mormon" was to be found in the 1981 introduction (n. 40). No biblical scholar would be

concerned with an introduction to the King James Version or other version of the Bible. Instead, scholars focus on the canonical text and the variant readings thereof.

p. xxxv, Dinger erroneously lists the books of Enos, Jarom, Omni, and Words of Mormon as having chapters. As for the biblical book of Obadiah, the epistle of Paul to Philemon, the epistles of 2 John, 3 John, and Jude in the KJV, one does not properly insert chapter numbers in a book with no chapters. References in such cases are to the verses only.

p. 7, n. 38, misleads on the complexity of OMs, OMs-cor, and PMs.

p. 10, n. 64 should not have inserted an indicator of missing text (1 Nephi 3:21) because OMs has simply "God," and should be bolded as an 1830 reading; PMs does make the mistake of "the Lord," but it is immediately lined out and "God" placed on the line following.

n. 69, bolded wrong word "hard," instead of "words" (1 Nephi 3:28). However, PMs "things" only tells half the story, since PMs-cor has "words."

pp. 11, 13,18,22-25, etc., frequently and inconsistently notes use of "&" (ampersand) in Ms, even though it seems a waste of space —particularly when he ignores more important variants, such as the deletion of "it came to pass (that)" in many locations (Mosiah 23:3,5,6,24, 24:12,20, 25, 25:15; Alma 8:27,30, 10:31, 17:26, 43:19,35,42, 55:8; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 11:16, 19:30), yet noting it in many other locations, thus likely skewing some types of statistical calculations addressing that issue —if dependent upon his book for accurate data.

p. 23, n. 222, misrepresents orthography of "paſs" in OMs at 1 Nephi 12:12 as "pafs."

p. 36, has the misspelling "statues," where it should be "statutes" in 1 Nephi 17:22. Perhaps a Signature Books typo, but ironic in view of Dinger's vocation.

p. 60, is a page with 8 footnoted changes (three of them "which" to "who"; 1 "hath" to "have"; and 1 "to" to "unto"), only 2 of which are "significant" items, in the midst of a quotation from Isa 51 —52. Yet misses the difference on that same page of 19th century "rung" for 20th century and KJV "wrung" in 2 Nephi 8:17.

p. 85, Dinger mentions in note 722 (2 Nephi 28:16) that "nought" gets changed in 1879 to "naught," but doesn't notice the same phenomenon at 2 Nephi 27:31-32. The rationale for such all-too-common hit-and-miss decisions is not explained, and it might be mentioned in passing that "nought" is KJV style.

It is a worthy objective to provide this important text-critical information in a single volume. So it is a mystery why John Dinger painstakingly prepared and edited an expensive 452-page book without bothering to make it accurate and easily usable. Buyers may rightly be disappointed—and author and publisher be embarrassed—about the lack of professionalism in this enterprise. They will, hopefully, try again—but this time with a heavy dose of peer review.

Robert F. Smith is an alumnus of BYU and has had advanced training in archeology and Near Eastern languages at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, UCLA, and CalState University, Long Beach. He was the first editor of the FARMS Book of Mormon Critical Text Project (1979–1987), and most recently presented a paper on "Book of Mormon Theologies: A Thumbnail Sketch" at the 2012 annual meeting of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology (SMPT). He is currently a member of Grandview Stake and a veil worker at the Provo Temple.