The "Isaiah Problem" in the Book of Mormon

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Abstract   Doubts as to the literary unity of the book of Isaiah are fairly recent. The late nineteenth century saw a division of Isaiah into three parts by critics, who categorized only 262 of the 1292 verses as the genuine product of Isaiah. These critics deny the prediction element of prophecy and highlight different literary forms and theological ideas. The Book of Mormon attributes two of these three sections to Isaiah by quotation; ancient scriptures as well give no hint of a division. Christ and the apostles themselves attribute the book to Isaiah. Internal evidences of the unity of the book include imagery, repetition, expressions peculiar to Isaiah, and song. Changes in style can be attributed to mood. The differences between the Book of Mormon and the King James Version support the authenticity and literary unity of Isaiah.

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The Book of Mormon quotes twenty-one entire chapters of
Isaiah and parts of others. In the light of modern biblical criticism,
these quotations raise problems that have a serious bearing on the
integrity of the Nephite record as a whole. It is believed, therefore,
that a presentation of the literary problem of Isaiah and its bearing
on the Book of Mormon will be of general interest.

Literary Unity of the Book of Isaiah

As Professor Andrew B. Davidson pointed out many years ago, for nearly twenty-five centuries no one dreamt of doubting that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who lived in the eighth century B.C., was the author of the whole book that goes under his name. That is to say, the literary unity of Isaiah was not doubted until comparatively recent times. There is no evidence that the ancients who lived a few hundred years after Isaiah's time knew of any problem in connection with the great prophet's writings. The Greek translator of Isaiah, whose work is part of the Greek Bible (Septuagint), probably made his translation about 200 B.C., but it betrays no sign that the sixty-six chapters of the book are not all Isaiah's work. Jesus Ben-Sirach (see the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus 48:20–25), who wrote about 180 B.C., cited Isaiah as one of the great characters of Hebrew antiquity and quoted enough from the prophecy to indicate that by the beginning of the second century B.C., it had reached the form in which we now know it.

The first doubt concerning Isaiah's unity seems to have been expressed by Ibn Ezra, who lived in the twelfth century A.D., and not again until the eighteenth century, when the critical disintegration of the book began. Johann B. Koppe in the year 1780 expressed doubt as to the genuineness of Isaiah 50. In 1789, Johann C. Döderlein threw suspicion on the Isaianic origin of Isaiah 40–66. Then Karl W. Justi, and after him Johann G. Eichhorn, Heinrich E. G. Paulus, and Leonhard Bertholdt enhanced the suspicion that it was not genuine.

The results attained by these scholars cast doubt upon the authorship of the first part of Isaiah. Ernst F. K. Rosenmuller, who, as Professor Franz Delitzsch points out, is everywhere very much dependent on his predecessors, was the first to deny to Isaiah the prophecy against Babylon in Isaiah 13:1–14:23. In this judgment Justi and Paulus concurred.

At the beginning of the last century Eichhorn denied the genuineness of the prophecy against Tyre in Isaiah 23, and, together with the great Hebraists, Wilhelm Gesenius and Heinrich Ewald, denied that Isaiah was the author of Isaiah 24–27. Eichhorn's excuse for denying the genuineness of the latter four chapters was that they contained plays upon words unworthy of

Isaiah; Gesenius found in them an allegorical proclamation of the fall of Babel. Ewald transferred them to the time of Cambyses (ca. 525 B.C.).

Gesenius also ascribed Isaiah 15–16 to some unknown prophet. Rosenmuller then quickly disposed of Isaiah 34–35 because of their relationship to Isaiah 40–66. In 1840 Ewald questioned Isaiah 12 and 33. It will thus be seen that by the middle of the nineteenth century some thirty-seven or thirty-eight chapters of Isaiah were rejected as being no part of that great prophet's actual writings.

In 1879–80 the famous Leipzig professor, Delitzsch, who for many years had vigorously defended the Isaianic origin of the whole book, yielded to the modern critical position. But he did so "with many hesitations and reserves" in a manner unsatisfactory to the divisionists, "unbiased, and indeed unaffected, by critical considerations."[1] Shortly after this time (1888–90), Samuel R. Driver and George Adam Smith did much to popularize the new critical position in Great Britain.

Since the year 1890 the divisive criticism has become more vigorous and microscopic than ever. The work of such prominent scholars as Carl H. Cornill, Karl Marti, Bernhard Stade, Hermann Guthe, Heinrich F. Hackmann, and Bernhard Duhm on the continent, and of Thomas K. Cheyne, George B. Gray, and others in Great Britain and America, has still further served to throw doubt in some quarters on the unity of Isaiah. Fifty years ago Isaiah 40–66 were admitted to be a unity, though not from Isaiah. They were designated as "Deutero-Isaiah" or better, "Second Isaiah," the unique product of some wise but anonymous sage who lived in Babylonia.

But in the hands of the critics the unity of "Second Isaiah" was also doomed to vanish. Deutero-Isaiah was limited to Isaiah 40–55 and a new division, "Trito-Isaiah," comprising Isaiah 56–66 was invented.

More recently Dr. Charles C. Torrey has written of the partition of Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40–66) in the following words:

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[1]   See translator's statement in the third edition of Franz J. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, trans. James Denney, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1891–92).

The result has been to make a great change, in suc-
cessive stages, in the critical view of the Second Isaiah,
affecting the extent and form, and therefore of neces-
sity the general estimate, of the prophecy. In the hands
of those scholars who now hold the foremost place in
the interpretation of Isaiah, the series of Isaiah begin-
ning with 40 and ending with 66 has become an inde-
scribable chaos. The once great "Prophet of the
Exile" has dwindled to a very small figure, and is all
but buried in a mass of jumbled fragments. The
valuation of his prophecy has fallen accordingly; partly
because a brief outburst, with a narrow range of themes,
can never make a like impression with a sustained
effort covering a variety of subjects; and partly because
the same considerations which governed the analysis of
the book have necessitated a lower estimate of each of
its parts.[2]

After giving a brief history of the disintegration of Isaiah 40–
66 in his book, *The Second Isaiah*, which all interested in the
subject should read, Dr. Torrey continues:

The necessity of making the division into
"Deutero-Isaiah" (chapters 40–55) and "Trito-
Isaiah" (56–66), with all that it involves, would of itself
be a sufficiently great misfortune. That it is not possi-
ble to take this step without going still farther, the
recent history of exegesis has clearly shown. The sub-
sequent dissection of "III Isaiah" is a certainty, while
that of the curtailed "II Isaiah" is not likely to be long
delayed. We have here a good example of that which
has happened not a few times, in the history of literary
criticism, where scholars have felt obliged to pare down
a writing to make it fit a mistaken theory. The paring
process, begun with a penknife, is continued with a

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2   Charles C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (New
York: Scribner's Sons, 1928), 4–5.

hatchet, until the book has been chopped into hopeless chunks.[3]

Torrey accordingly proceeds to show in a very scholarly way that Isaiah 34–35 and 40–66 of Isaiah are a unity.[4]

Those scholars who in times past have denied the unity of the book of Isaiah may be divided into two groups, moderates and radicals. For convenience, as well as for its inherent interest, I present herewith a list of chapters and verses in Isaiah *rejected* by the moderates as coming from the pen of that prophet. The scholars represented in this group are Driver, Smith, John Skinner, Alexander F. Kirkpatrick, Eduard König, Davidson, and Owen C. Whitehouse. They throw out 11:10–16; 12:1–6; 13:1–14:23; 15:1–16:12; 21:1–10; 24–27; 34–35; 36–39; 40–66. Of a total of 66 chapters they believe some 44 were not written by Isaiah. If we look over the results of the radical wing of the critical school we find it more convenient to list the *verses* they believe were genuinely Isaiah's. The radicals are represented by such men as Cheyne, Duhm, Hackmann, Guthe, and Marti. They accept 1:2–26, 29–31; 2:6–19; 3:1, 5, 8–9, 12–17, 24; 4:1; 5:1–14, 17–29; 6:1–13; 7:1 to 8:22; 9:8–10:9; 10:13–14, 27–32; 14:24–32; 17:1–14; 18:1–6; 20:1–6; 22:1–22; 28:1–4, 7–22; 29:1–6, 9–10, 13–15; 30:1–17; 31:1–4. Only about 262 verses of a total of 1292 in Isaiah are considered to be the genuine product of Isaiah. The above-named scholars were by no means the only ones who helped to dismember Isaiah, but they were probably the most influential.

Summary of Critical Views on the Authorship of Isaiah

Having now indicated the course and amount of the dissection of Isaiah, it will be well to point out some of the reasons why the critics have dismembered the work of the great prophet.

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[3]   Ibid., 13.

[4]   Torrey is one of the greatest scholars of our day. There is food for thought in the fact that his views are so out of harmony with other radical critics who partition "Second" Isaiah.

No attempt will be made to be exhaustive because the literature is too vast.

1. A twofold postulate is made to the effect that a prophet always spoke out of a definite historical situation to the present needs of the people among whom he lived, and that a definite historical situation shall be pointed out for each prophecy.

One scholar has said: "It is a first principle that the historical horizon of a prophet belongs to his own time. He takes his stand in his own generation and looks onward from it." Put into plain English, this scholar meant that a prophet cannot see beyond the horizon of his own times. With some exceptions, the critics who dismember Isaiah openly or tacitly deny the predictive element in prophecy. In the third edition of his commentary mentioned above, Professor Delitzsch says:

> The newer criticism bans all who still venture to maintain Isaiah's authorship as devoid of science, and indeed of conscience as well. To it, that authorship is as impossible as any miracle in the domain of nature, history, and spirit. In its eyes only those prophecies find favor of which a naturalistic explanation can be given. It knows exactly how far a prophet can see, and where he must stand in order to see so far.[5]

According to such views, it would be impossible for Isaiah, living about 700 B.C., to speak of Cyrus by name, who lived about 540 B.C. Consequently those sections of Isaiah connected in any way with Cyrus (44:28; 45:1) are dated late, i.e., during or after the Persian king's lifetime. And in general, since Isaiah 40–66 appear to the critics to have the exile as their standpoint, with a change in place, time, and situation, they cannot possibly have come from the pen of Isaiah. Therefore "The Great Unknown" is invented to take his place. As we have already pointed out, even he has subsequently to share his glory with other unknowns as ingenious and plausible theories were invented to explain the biblical text.

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5   Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:62.

2. The literary style of those chapters held not to be from Isaiah is very different from those which are admitted to be that prophet's.

Professor Driver explains the significance of this point as follows:

> Isaiah shows strongly marked individualities of style: he is fond of particular images and phrases, many of which are used by no other writer of the Old Testament. Now, in the chapters which contain evident allusions to the age of Isaiah himself, these expressions occur repeatedly; in the chapters which are without such allusions, and which thus authorize *prima facie* the inference that they belong to a different age, *they are absent, and new images and phrases appear instead.* This coincidence cannot be accidental. The subject of Isaiah 40–66 is not so different from that of Isaiah's prophecies (e.g.) against the Assyrians, as to necessitate a new phraseology and theoretical form: the differences can only be reasonably explained by the supposition of a change of author.[6]

3. The theological ideas of the non-Isaianic portions of the prophecy differ from those of Isaiah. To quote Driver again:

> The *theological ideas* of Isaiah 40–66 (insofar as they are not of that fundamental kind common to the prophets generally) differ remarkably from those which appear, from Isaiah 1–39, to be distinctive of Isaiah. Thus, on the nature of God generally, the ideas expressed are much larger and fuller. Isaiah, for instance, depicts the majesty of Jehovah: in Isaiah 40–66 the prophet emphasizes His *infinitude*; He is the Creator, the Sustainer of the universe, the Life-Giver, the Author of history (41:4), the First and the Last, the Incomparable One. This is the real difference. . . . Again, the doctrine of the preservation from judgment of a faithful remnant is characteristic of Isaiah. It

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6   Samuel R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1922), 238.

appears both in his first prophecy and in his last (6:13; 65:8f); in Isaiah 40–66, if it is present once or twice by implication (59:20; 65:8f), it is no distinctive element in the author's teaching. . . . The relation of Israel to Jehovah—its choice by Him, its destiny, the purpose of its call—is developed in different terms and under different conceptions from those used by Isaiah.[7]

4. Some other governing criteria which lead certain critics to reject various portions of Isaiah as subsequent to the prophet's own age are summed up by Dr. George L. Robinson as follows:

> (1) To one critic "the conversion of the heathen" lay quite beyond the horizon of any eighth century prophet and consequently Isaiah 2:2–4 and all similar passages should be relegated to a subsequent age. (2) To another "the picture of universal peace" in Isaiah 11:1–9 is a symptom of a late date, and therefore the section must be deleted. (3) To another the thought of universal judgment upon "the whole earth" in chapter 14:26 quite transcends Isaiah's range of thought. (4) To still another the apocalyptic character of Isaiah 24–27 represents a phase of Hebrew thought which prevailed in Israel only after Ezekiel. (5) Even to those who are considered moderate the poetic character of a passage like chapter 12 and the reference to a return from captivity as in 11:11–16, and the promises and consolations such as are found in chapter 33, are cited as grounds for assigning these and kindred passages to a much later date. Radicals deny in toto the existence of Messianic passages in Isaiah's own prophecies. [8]

Now how do the above "critical" views of the authorship of the book of Isaiah create a problem in connection with the Book of Mormon? This we shall briefly point out.

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7   Ibid., 242.
8   George L. Robinson. *The Book of Isaiah in Fifteen Studies*, rev ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1954), 61–62.

Book of Mormon Support for the Unity of Isaiah

The Book of Mormon quotes from the following chapters of Isaiah: 2–14 (2 Nephi 12–24); 29 (2 Nephi 27); 48–49 (1 Nephi 20–21); 50–51 (2 Nephi 7–8); 52 (3 Nephi 20); 53 (Mosiah 14); 54 (3 Nephi 22); 55 (2 Nephi 26:25). If the reader will take the trouble to compare this list with the references given above, which indicate the portions of the book of Isaiah not generally accepted by the critics as being the genuine work of the great eighth-century B.C. prophet, he will at once discover a sharp conflict. The Book of Mormon not only quotes extensively from those chapters (40–55) called "Deutero-Isaiah," but also from portions of "First" Isaiah which are regarded by the critics as late and not the genuine product of the son of Amoz. The Nephite record accepts all of its Isaiah chapters as the authentic words of that great prophet.[9] If the critics are right, the Book of Mormon quotes extensive portions of the sayings of unknown prophets who lived sixty years or more *after* the Nephites were supposed to have left Jerusalem, and mistakenly attributes them to Isaiah. This is the intellectual jam students of the Book of Mormon are supposed to find themselves in and constitutes the main problem of Isaiah in that record. A lesser problem, but one that should be thoughtfully considered, is that of explaining why most of the text of Isaiah in the Nephite scripture is in the language of the King James Version.

Is it possible for a sincere and honest believer in the Book of Mormon to give a satisfactory answer to the problems centering around its text of Isaiah? I believe so. The Germans have a very convenient word that I may use at this point. It is *Weltanschauung*, which means *conception of the world* or *world-philosophy*. If one's *Weltanschauung* rigidly embraces the ideas that there are no men who under divine inspiration can foretell the future and that purely naturalistic explanations of phenomena in this world are the only acceptable ones—then my attempts to solve the problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon will not be wholly satisfactory. If (and this is stating the conditions positively), on the other hand, one's *Weltanschauung* is such that he may concede

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9   Note especially the words of Christ in 3 Nephi 23:1–3.

the possibility of "the supernatural reality of prophecy" and acknowledge the possibility of the Book of Mormon being a true record translated by divine aid—then I can give a reasonable answer to the Isaiah problem as stated above. On this basis let us proceed to the task.

Scholars Advocating the Unity of Isaiah

In the first part of this article I confined myself to the problems of tracing the history of the critical dismemberment of Isaiah and of indicating the degree thereof. No attempt was made to present at length the views of scholars who opposed the critical dissection of the book of Isaiah. Now the first part of my answer to the Isaiah problem in the Book of Mormon is this: *Many great scholars through the years have held that the book of Isaiah is a unity, and have shown that the "critical" hypothesis is far from being proved*. Unless criticism can prove *beyond reasonable doubt* that Isaiah is not a unity, Latter-day Saints are justified in assuming that the traditional views held by the Book of Mormon with respect to its authorship are on the whole correct.

The Isaianic authorship of the book has been maintained by Ernst W. Hengstenberg, Heinrich A. C. Havernick, Ewald R. Stier, Carl F. Keil, Max R. H. Lohr, Kurt Himpel, Edward Strachey, William Urwick, Carl W. E. Nägelsbach, Albert Barnes, George C. M. Douglas, William H. Green, William H. Cobb, Delitzsch (who half-heartedly departed from his original convictions late in life). James W. Thirtle, William Kay, Michael Rosenthal, John J. Lias, Richard R. Ottley, Robinson, and Mrs. Letitia D. Jeffreys. Erich Klostermann and Conrad J. Bredenkamp took a middle course in the criticism. These scholars held that Isaiah 40–66 arose in exilic times, but consisted in a considerable measure of ancient prophecies of Isaiah, which were reproduced by an author of Isaiah's school living in the exilian period, because the events of the day were bringing the fulfillment of the prophecies.

The above-named scholars form impressive opposition to the divisive criticism of Isaiah. Many other names might be added to the list.

It may be of interest to quote two or three representative conclusions of these scholars in relation to the problem, before pro-

ceeding to specify in detail reasons why their school of thought holds to the unity of Isaiah.

Dr. Green, one of the finest Hebraists America ever produced, observed that a noted critic, Dr. Herbert E. Ryle, had concluded Isaiah 1–39 were compiled a short time before the period of Nehemiah (444 B.C.), but that Isaiah 40–66, though not of so late a date as some of the preceding chapters, could only have been added a century and a half later, "when the recollection of the authorship of this section having been forgotten, it could, not unnaturally, be appended to the writings of Isaiah."[10] Dr. Green in answer said:

> So the critics first dissect Isaiah, and then find it impossible to get the disjointed pieces together again without putting the collection of the canon at a date at variance with historical testimony and every reliable indication bearing on the subject. It is, indeed, a puzzling question which the critics have to solve, and to which no satisfactory answer can be given, how it came to pass that this prince of prophets, living, as we are told, near the end of the exile, whose predictions of the coming deliverance and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple were so strikingly fulfilled, and who must have stirred the souls of the exiles to an unwonted degree with his own glowing enthusiasm, could be so utterly unknown, and not only his name, but his very existence so entirely forgotten, that his prophecies were attributed to another, who lived at a different period of time, and under entirely different circumstances. But if the exigencies of the critical hypotheses demand a long interval to account for this complete oblivion, does it follow that the recognition of the divine authority of this magnificent prophecy was delayed?[11]

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10   Herbert E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture* (London: Macmillan, 1892).

11   William H. Green, *General Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York City: Scribner's Sons, 1906), 104.

Dr. Ottley, the famous English biblical critic, in the notes of his valuable work, *The Book of Isaiah According to the Septuagint*, briefly reviews the critical position in reference to Isaiah and then continues:

> These views are probably held, in one form or another, by a majority of the authorities and students of the present day. It is perhaps therefore proper for the writer of these notes to state that he is not convinced by them, but holds that, substantially, the whole of the "Book of Isaiah" is the work of that prophet, and that the work of the modern "critics," while of immense value as a contribution to knowledge of details, is a failure as to the broad issues involved.[12]

Dr. Robinson, one of the greatest of living American Hebraists, sums up his attitude toward the critical problem as follows:

> More and more the writer is persuaded that broad facts must decide the unity or collective character of Isaiah's book. Verbal exegesis may do more harm than good. Greater regard must be paid to the structure of the book, which is no mere anthology, or collection of independent discourses by different writers belonging to different periods. There is an obvious, though it may be to some extent an editorial, unity to Isaiah's prophecies. To regard them as a heterogeneous mass of miscellaneous oracles which were written at widely separated times and under varied circumstances from Isaiah's times down to the Maccabean age, and revised and freely interpolated throughout the intervening centuries, is to lose sight of the great historic realities and perspective of the prophet.
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> Not in the spirit of an antiquated apologist, there-fore, but rather as a contribution to historical criticism, the writer feels constrained to say, that to him chapter 2:2–4 is the key to Isaiah's horizon; that Isaiah 40–66

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12   See Richard R. Ottley, *The Book of Isaiah According to the Septuagint*, 2 vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1906–1909), 2:297.

are in germ wrapped up in the vision and commission of the prophet's inaugural call (chapter 6); and that the whole problem of how much or how little Isaiah wrote would become immensely simplified if critics would only divest themselves of a mass of unwarranted presuppositions and arbitrary restrictions which fix hard and fast what each century can think and say.

Accordingly, the writer's attitude is that of those who, while welcoming all ascertained results of investigation, decline to accept any mere conjecture or theories as final conclusions. And while he acknowledges his very great debt to critics of all latitudes, he nevertheless believes that the book of Isaiah, practically as we have it, may have been, and probably was, all written by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, in the later half of the eighth century B.C. To what extent the editors revised and supplemented the prophet's discourses can never be definitely determined.[13]

Let us now proceed to indicate in greater detail the reasons why so many scholars have held that the book as we have it is essentially Isaiah's.

1. The Jewish and the Christian churches (apart from the gently hinted doubts of Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century A.D.) have, until the last one hundred and fifty years, unhesitatingly assigned the whole to Isaiah the son of Amoz. Such a strong and persistent tradition cannot honestly be set aside without positive and compelling historical evidence. Such is missing. Subjective analysis of the text of Isaiah, the results of which are disputed, cannot be accounted sufficient grounds upon which to put aside the ancient tradition.

2. The Septuagint and other ancient versions of scripture give absolutely no hint of the multiple authorship of Isaiah. It is a most surprising fact that the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Isaiah, which was made from the Hebrew about 200 B.C., does not give us the name of a single one of the ten or more "prophets" that are assumed by various critics to have contributed to Isaiah's book. "Singular . . . that history should have lost all knowledge of this

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13   Robinson, *The Book of Isaiah*, 62–63.

Isaianic series of prophets. Singular . . . *that it should be these prophets whose names had the common fortune of being forgotten, although in point of time they all stood nearer to the collector than the old prophet who was their model, and after whom they had formed themselves.*"[14]

3. Christ and his apostles assigned the book to Isaiah. The New Testament quotes from thirty-two chapters of Isaiah. Many of these chapters are quoted from several times. Fourteen chapters from 1–35 are represented and eighteen chapters from 40–66. There is not the slightest hint anywhere in the New Testament that any other prophet than Isaiah the son of Amoz was the author of the quoted passages. In fact the emphasis is the other way. Note that Christ quotes Isaiah 61:1–2 and expressly declares that it was fulfilled at that time (see Luke 4:18–21). Luke (a capable historian) definitely states that Christ was given "the book of the prophet Isaiah" (Luke 4:17), from which he quoted the fulfilled prophecy. Note also that the learned and critical Paul who quotes Isaiah so often and from so many different places (see especially Romans) knows of no equivalent to "Deutero" or "Trito" Isaiah.

In fact, it seems passing strange that three minds so penetrating and spiritual as Christ's, Paul's, and Luke's could not see just a little of what modern critics see—even presuming the latter were correct. Most critics will concede the great powers of mind and heart of Christ, Paul, and Luke even when denying them any supernatural powers of inspiration or revelation. Nor are these three the only ones who quote Isaiah in the New Testament.

4. Jesus Ben-Sirach, about 180 B.C., when recounting of Hezekiah's day, recorded that Isaiah the prophet

> saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last; And he comforted them that mourned in Zion. He showed the things that should be to the end of time, And the hidden things or ever they came. (Ecclesiasticus 48:24–25, Revised Version)

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14 Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah,* 1:13, emphasis added.

Ben-Sirach thus also reveals that in ancient times Isaiah was regarded as the sole author and that he prophesied concerning the future.

5. Josephus expressly points out that Cyrus the king was especially impressed by a prophecy of Isaiah to the effect that God had chosen him (Cyrus) to send Israel back to their own land and to build the temple. There then follows a rather extended description of how Cyrus helped the Jews to go to their native land and begin the reconstruction of their temple.[15] Josephus also makes the following interesting statement concerning Isaiah:

> Now as to this prophet, he was by the confession of all a divine and wonderful man in speaking truth; and out of the assurance that he had never written what was false, he wrote down all his prophecies, and left them behind him in books, that their accomplishment might be judged of from the events by posterity.[16]

Even after discounting Josephus for his weaknesses as a historian, it is hard to believe that he would deliberately manufacture letters purporting to be from Cyrus that confirm Isaiah's prophecies made nearly two hundred years before the Persian king's time. We can be certain, however, that Jews in the days of Josephus believed the book of Isaiah to be a unity and that the prophet could see into the future.

Thus we see that all of the external evidence is in favor of the unity of the book of Isaiah. Now let us proceed to a consideration of some of the internal evidence.

The following striking characteristics common to the entire book plead strongly for its unity:[17]

6. The very marked detachment of Isaiah's personality from his prophecies. Only once (Isaiah 6) does Isaiah relate a vision and tell the circumstances under which his prophecy was delivered. Contrast this usage with such books as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

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[15] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* XI, 1–2.

[16] Ibid., X, 2.

[17] In the discussion from points 6–13 I have freely adopted much from an article by Rev. John J. Lias, "The Unity of Isaiah," *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 48 (1916): 65–84.

7. Every chapter in the book—yes, nearly every verse—is characterized by the majestic imagery in which the writer revels, the poetic elevation of style and the love of nature. Even the limited Isaiah of the critics has no monopoly on these qualities. The style of the book throughout is unique in literature.

8. The tendency to repetition. Note the use of "woe," in Isaiah 5, as an instance. It reappears in Isaiah 45, which is ascribed to "Second" Isaiah. In "Second" Isaiah repetition often assumes such forms as "Awake, awake," "Cast ye up," for the sake of emphasis.

9. The tendency of the prophet to quote his own words. This habit is not quite peculiar to Isaiah but much more common with him than any other prophet. Note Isaiah 11:6–9 and compare 65:25.

10. The abundant use of *paronomasia* or the repetition of the same sound. It is necessary to resort to the Hebrew text, of course, to illustrate such usage. Paronomasia is occasionally found in other books, but in Isaiah it stamps the whole book as one written by a man who has the ear as well as the mind and heart of a poet.

11. Expressions peculiar to Isaiah. The most remarkable of these is "the Holy One of Israel." Dr. Robinson states:

> The divine name, "the Holy One of Israel," which Isaiah ascribes to Jehovah, and which occurs twenty-five times in his book and only six times elsewhere in the entire Old Testament, interlocks inseparably all the various portions with one another and stamps them with the personal imprimatur of him who saw the vision of the Majestic God seated upon his throne high and lifted up, and heard the angelic choirs singing, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6). The presence of this divine name in all the different portions of the book is of more value in identifying Isaiah as the author of these prophecies than as though his name had been inscribed at the beginning of every chapter."[18]

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[18]   Robinson, *The Book of Isaiah*, 14.

Note other expressions such as "Lord of Hosts," "Mighty God of Jacob" or "Israel," "The Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," "Set up an ensign," etc.

12. The tendency to break suddenly into song. This feature is common to all the portions of the book and altogether peculiar to Isaiah. Note Isaiah 5:1–7; 12:1–6; 26:1–4; 35:1–10; 36:10–20; 44:23; 48:20; 51:11; 54:1, etc.

13. The piling up of ideas or imagery is a peculiarly Isaianic feature—the building up of ideas, sometimes of a similar and sometimes of a contrary nature, with a most powerful effect. The reader may consult Isaiah 2:10–17; 24:2; 65:13–14, for instance, from undisputed Isaiah, from the "fragments," and from "Second" Isaiah respectively. Shorter passages of a similar kind occur very frequently throughout Isaiah. No writer but Isaiah supplies us with such examples.

It is seen that the later portions of Isaiah are by no means devoid of literary characteristics found in other parts of the book. Even so, I am willing to admit a somewhat different style in Isaiah 40–66 as contrasted with most of what precedes. There is a note of triumph in these chapters not so apparent in other sections of the book. There is a brighter and more comforting tone throughout. But all of the supposed differences do not necessarily argue for a different author. A writer may vary his style from one time to another as he writes under different conditions and on different subjects.

In Isaiah 40–66, Isaiah deals with the great theme of Israel's redemption. This accounts for the difference in style (or should we say *mood*) between them and most other chapters in the book. With clear prophetic eye, Isaiah saw the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the atoning sacrifice of the Christ, the gathering of scattered Israel in the latter days, the eventual glorification of Zion and the Millennial era—yes, and even "new heavens and a new earth." No wonder the poet-prophet strikes a triumphant note and comforts his people with his wondrous message. Only those who approach his book with a strongly naturalistic bias can fail to see the reason for the poet's change in style (or mood).

14. In "Second" Isaiah and in "Trito" Isaiah there is no real difference in the prophet's theology as compared with other

chapters—what we find is rather an *extension* or *more complete expression* of his theology. What Professor Driver and other writers of his class fail to see is that a writer may not exhaust his theological ideas on a given theme in thirty-nine chapters—some may be left for Isaiah 40–66. Authors usually claim the privilege of emphasizing different doctrines and topics as occasion requires.

The internal evidence, therefore, is strongly in favor of the unity of Isaiah. Certain it is that the critics' arguments for the division of Isaiah are far from being compelling and conclusive. Lacking that, their case must be labeled "not proved." The most serious problem in connection with the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon therefore disappears.

The Book of Mormon Isaiah as an Ancient Text

The second part of my answer to the Isaiah problem in the Book of Mormon arises from the results of a careful examination of the Isaiah chapters in that record. The text of Isaiah in the Nephite scripture reasonably well fulfills the technical requirements of one presumed to be really ancient.

An expert might venture such questions and comments as these:

1. Is the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon word for word the same as that of the King James Version? If it is, the claims made that the original on the gold plates harks back to the time of Isaiah can be denied. In other words, the Book of Mormon should be thrown out of court as a witness to the original text of Isaiah. This would be a reasonable action because every biblical scholar knows that the Hebrew text of Isaiah upon which the King James Version mainly depends has been somewhat corrupted in the course of transmission through the centuries. If the Book of Mormon reproduced all these corruptions there would be plain evidence that Joseph Smith did not translate from a really ancient text of Isaiah.

2. What is the witness of the ancient Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions of Isaiah to that of the Book of Mormon? These versions have also become corrupted in the course of transmission through the ages, *but by the laws of chance they ought to agree in some*

instances with the readings of the Book of Mormon where the latter differs from the Hebrew. That is to say, each occasionally preserves a true reading of Isaiah where the Hebrew fails us, and in such places where the true text of Isaiah appears the Book of Mormon should agree. In general we should be prepared to admit that the science of textual criticism will throw great light on the question of the genuineness of the claims that the Book of Mormon text of Isaiah has high antiquity. Textual critical tests can be most subtle and powerful in probing for slips on the part of unlearned impostors who offer amended biblical texts for the examination of the public.

Now let us consider the Isaiah text of the Nephite record in the light of these questions and observations.

1. The text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is not word for word the same as that of the King James Version. There are 433 verses of Isaiah in the Nephite record. Of these, 234 verses were changed or modified by the Prophet Joseph Smith so that they do not conform with the King James Version. Some of the changes made were slight, others were radical. However, 199 verses are word for word the same as the old English version. We therefore freely admit that Joseph Smith used the King James Version when he came to the text of Isaiah on the gold plates. As long as the familiar version substantially agreed with the text on the gold plates record he let it pass; when it differed too much, he translated the Nephite version and dictated the necessary changes.

2. In 2 Nephi 12:16 (cf. Isaiah 2:16) there is prefixed a whole clause to the reading of the King James Version. The clause reads: "And upon all the ships of the sea." The ancient Septuagint (Greek) substantially agrees with this clause by rendering: And upon every ship of the sea."

Second Nephi 13:9 (cf. Isaiah 3:9) reads in part "and they cannot hide it" as against the Hebrew and King James reading "they hide it not." The Syriac reading is in agreement with the Nephite reading and even the Septuagint clearly supplies the "and."

Second Nephi 13:14 (cf. Isaiah 3:14), "And the spoil of the poor in your houses," as against the Hebrew and King James Version "the spoil of the poor is in your houses." The Book of

Mormon "and" is clearly supported by the Syriac and apparently by the Septuagint.

Second Nephi 23:11 (cf. Isaiah 13:11), "I will cause the arrogancy," etc., for the "and I will cause the arrogancy" of the King James and Hebrew versions.

Here the Syriac supports the Book of Mormon reading by omitting "and."

Second Nephi 7:2 (cf. Isaiah 50:2), "Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make their rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up, and they die because of thirst." This reading is really remarkable from the angle of textual criticism. The King James and Hebrew versions read: "Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh because there is no water, and dieth for thirst."

The Book of Mormon reads "their rivers" as against "rivers." This is readily explained on the basis that the letter *mem* ("their") which was attached originally to "rivers" accidentally dropped out of the Hebrew text because the very next word ("wilderness") begins with the same letter. Such accidents are well-known to textual critics. Furthermore, in the next clause the reading is "their fish," which argues well for the correctness of "their rivers."

The ancient Greek reads: "And their fish shall be dried up because there is no water, and shall die for thirst." It will be noted that the Hebrew omits *dried up* while the Greek on the other hand omits *stinketh*. The Book of Mormon retains both, indicating that the Hebrew and Greek each lack elements that were in the original text of Isaiah. On the basis of the Book of Mormon reading the textual critic can reconstruct what happened to the original text. By a most peculiar coincidence the words *stinketh* and *dried up* in this Hebrew context have nearly the same sound and look very much alike. Transliterated they read *tiv'ash* and *tivash* respectively. The accidental dropping of one of these verbs from the original text, or a misreading of either, would occasion considerable difficulty and cause scribes to reconstruct the text in different ways. The present Greek and Hebrew readings illustrate the processes of reconstruction. The Book of Mormon reading is

so reasonable on the basis of the Greek and Hebrew texts as to appeal to the reason of every thinking person.

In 2 Nephi 13:12 (cf. Isaiah 3:12) the reading "And my people" occurs in contrast to the King James Version "*as for* my people." The present Hebrew reads simply "my people" as the italics of the English version suggest. We think it very significant that the last letter of the Hebrew of Isaiah 3:11 if placed in front of the first word of Isaiah 3:12 gives the Book of Mormon reading "and my people." The word division of the Isaiah text on the gold plates before the Prophet Joseph Smith differed somewhat at this point from the traditional word division preserved in our present Hebrew Bible. Anciently the words in the Hebrew text were all run together without any formal indication as to where each began and left off. When scribes later divided the words they occasionally made errors. If it be pointed out that my suggestion destroys Isaiah 3:11, the answer is that the present text of Isaiah 3:10-12 is corrupt. Let the reader consult the obviously better readings of the Nephite record.

One more illustration will suffice. In 2 Nephi 19:3 (cf. Isaiah 9:3), the text reads: "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy—they joy before thee according to." The King James Version reads: "Thou has multiplied the nation, and *not* increased the joy: they joy before thee according to" (emphasis added). Commentators would agree almost one hundred percent that the Book of Mormon reading is superior to that of the King James Version and hence of the Hebrew. There are two Hebrew words, *lo'* and *lo*, respectively, which sound alike but have different meanings. The present Hebrew text reads *lo'* ("not") but should read *lo* ("to it"). Sometime in the history of the Hebrew text the wrong word intruded into the text in a way easily explained by the textual critic. But the Prophet Joseph Smith caught the error which passed into the King James Version.

The text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is thoroughly discussed in a master's thesis prepared under my general direction at Brigham Young University by Principal H. Grant Vest of the

Vernal Seminary and entitled "The Problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon."[19]

We are now able to extend greatly, thanks to Grant Vest's thesis, the number of verses that definitely reveal translation phenomena in the Book of Mormon text of Isaiah, and that together give relative indications of its age. That is to say, these verses, when studied in connection with ancient versions of Isaiah, give substantial evidence that the translator of the Book of Mormon had before him a version of Isaiah more ancient than any now in existence, and that he actually translated. Following is a list of references that we offer for the examination of textual critics: 2 Nephi 12:16, 20; 13:9, 12, 14; 14:3; 15:5, 7, 11; 16:9; 19:3; 23:3, 11, 14; 24:3–4; 27:6, 19; 1 Nephi 20:5, 13–14; 2 Nephi 7:2; 8:5, 15, 18, 21; Mosiah 14:6 (others might be added).

The version of Isaiah in the Nephite scripture hews an independent course for itself, as might be expected of a truly ancient and authentic record. It makes additions to the present text in some places, omits material in others, transposes, makes grammatical changes, finds support at times for its unusual readings in the ancient Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions, and at other times no support at all. In general, it presents phenomena that will be found of great interest to critics in many fields.

> *Author's Note:* I am aware of the fact that I have not exhaustively met every phase of every argument that might be advanced or that has already been advanced in defense of the critical division of Isaiah. In a relatively short article that could not be expected; I am appending some references for the benefit of critical readers who want to follow the pros and cons of the question in still further detail.[20]

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19 H. Grant Vest, "The Problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1938).

20 The following references appeared in the *Improvement Era* version but not in *Our Book of Mormon.*

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