



7-31-2003

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Hansen, Kristine and Lawrence, Keith (2003) "A Reader's Library," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 12 : No. 2 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol12/iss2/13>

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FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title A Reader's Library

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Reference *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/2 (2003): 100-106.

ISSN 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

Abstract Both Hansen and Lawrence review Grant Hardy's *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition*. Not meant to replace the 1981 edition published by the church, this edition appears in a reader-friendly format and provides additional notes and appendices.



A READER'S LIBRARY

Kristine Hansen and Keith Lawrence

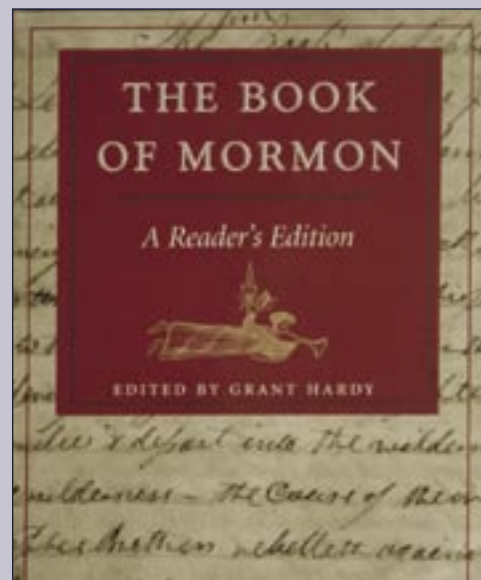
Review by Kristine Hansen

The rationale for this reader's edition of the Book of Mormon is one that I can applaud. In the words of editor Grant Hardy, an associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, the Book of Mormon is "one of the world's most influential religious texts" and therefore "worthy of serious study" (vii). However, as Hardy notes, it may often be ignored, particularly by those outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, simply because it is difficult to read. Its length, complexity, and sometimes archaic language are one obstacle, but Hardy believes its formatting in columns broken into chapters and verses is another. Also, the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon includes numerous footnotes that cross-reference doctrinal concepts with related passages in the other standard works of the church.

This visually daunting format, Hardy believes, may militate against readers' grasping the overall narrative as well as hinder their understanding of the complex intertextuality of the book, composed as it is of various ancient records compiled, abridged, and edited by Mormon and then

translated by Joseph Smith. So to help readers find the text more accessible and readable, Hardy has taken from the public domain the 1920 edition of the Book of Mormon and reformatted it "in accordance with the editorial style of most modern editions of the Bible" (vii). In place of the 1920 edition's footnotes, he has written footnotes of his own and added several appendices, all of which aim to help the novice reader become familiar with the provenance, stemma, authors, translation, language, and internal consistency of the text. All in all, I find the results praiseworthy and believe this edition of the Book of Mormon will become a useful tool for scholars, teachers, students, and parents.

The reformatting of the text has several noticeable features. First, Hardy presents the text in paragraphs and, where he deems appropriate, in poetic stanzas. The text still has the chapter numbers, which are set in a large stylized font, and verse numbers, which are very small superscripts, usually—but not always—at the beginning of a sentence. Occasionally, a verse is divided so that the first part



Grant Hardy, ed. *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. xviii + 710 pp. Hardback, \$39.95

belongs to one paragraph and the second part to the next. The text still includes the headnotes that preface some of the books in the Book of Mormon, but it leaves out the chapter summaries that are a feature of the 1981 edition. Instead, Hardy has added headings of his own throughout the chapters to help the reader follow the narrative or grasp the points made in a sermon. For example, 1 Nephi 1 has these headings: "Lehi's Visions and Call" and "Lehi Prophecies to the Jews." And Alma 5, entitled "Alma's Sermon at Zarahemla," has head-

ings that indicate main topics of the sermon, such as “Imagine the Judgment Day” and “Repent and Prepare.” I found the headings in Jacob 5, Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree, particularly helpful, as they indicate the various transplants, decayings, and remedies attempted to save the olive tree.

The poetic passages are the most striking feature as one thumbs through the book. Not only are long passages, such as the chapters from Isaiah, set as poetry, but short passages as brief as two lines are similarly reformatted whenever there is a form of parallelism that has been noted in the Hebrew Bible. So, for example, Alma 5:40 looks like this:

For I say unto you that:

Whatsoever is good cometh
from God,
and whatsoever is evil cometh
from the devil.

Appendix 5 gives a brief summary of synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, and climactic parallelism, along with illustrations of each, and an explanation of chiasmus. Only a few short chiasmic passages are printed in the text in such a way as to reveal their structure, but several longer examples are given in appendix 5. Here Hardy also outlines his criteria for deciding which passages to set as poetry: Where the language is “more refined and elevated” than usual and “where appropriate,” he highlighted the language in indented, parallel lines.

It would have been helpful to know how Hardy defined *appropriate* because I found some of his poetic passages dubious, especially where the context did not seem to call for the use of poetry. For example, when Amulek

rebukes the lawyers in Alma 10:17–18 or when Alma cautions his son Shiblon in Alma 38:11–12, the lines are set as poetry. While it is true that these brief speeches contain parallelism, calling rebukes and cautions poetry along with psalms, hymns, and prophecies required me to mentally stretch the category. But Hardy acknowledges that “literary analysis of the Book of Mormon is in its beginning stages” and that readers may disagree with his choices. He also notes that because readability is his primary goal, he has not attempted to “highlight all the possible literary twists and echoes and symmetries” (663–64). I find this last choice wise because even more variation in the formatting would make the text visually too busy.

Other noticeable and helpful features include the use of quotation marks around direct discourse, the addition of parentheses and semicolons to “clarify relationships among phrases,” and the occasional use of italics “to show how Book of Mormon prophets quoted and commented on earlier prophecies (as in 1 Nephi 22)” (xx). Yet another feature that is likely to help the first-time or non-Latter-day Saint reader is the addition of subscript numbers to names that are given to more than one person or place (e.g., Moroni). These subscript numbers appear only in headings, not in the paragraphs, and they correspond to appendix 8, the “Glossary of Names,” where one learns that Moroni₁ was a “Nephite military commander (ca. 100 BC),” first mentioned in Alma 43:16, but that Moroni₂ was the “son of Mormon, last of the Nephites (ca. AD 400),” first

mentioned in Words of Mormon 1:1. I find this glossary particularly helpful; Hardy boasts that it “includes several names that were missed in the index of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon” (690).

The text is relatively uncluttered with footnotes, which may make it seem less formidable to many readers. Some of the footnotes directly highlight the internal consistency of the text and therefore the improbability that Joseph Smith simply made it up. Such notes include cross-references to specific past events or quotations of earlier figures in the text as well as indications of prophecies fulfilled and where those prophecies were first uttered. Other footnotes provide insight into how the book was compiled from various sets of plates and then edited; these notes indicate where a narrative line has been broken off and where it resumes, if it does. Footnotes concerning dates of various events are rendered according to standard practice until the beginning of the reign of the judges at the end of the book of Mosiah. From that point on, dates are rendered as an exact negative or positive number corresponding to the sign of Christ’s birth. Thus, the note for Mormon 8:6 reads “+ 400 years” rather than “AD 421,” as it does in the 1981 edition. Still other footnotes contain comments on editing and sources, glosses or clarifications of names, alternate spellings and plausible alternative punctuation, and indications of chapter breaks in the 1830 edition.

I think an additional kind of footnote would have been helpful, one indicating where significant

wording changes were made in the 1981 edition. Hardy's appendix 6 lists the 50 most significant variants among the original and printer's manuscripts, the first three editions, the 1920 edition, and the 1981 edition; but the reader would not necessarily know when to turn to this appendix to see which manuscript or edition exhibited which variant. In the case of 2 Nephi 30:6, for example, not knowing that the 1981 edition changed the phrase *a white and a delightsome people to a pure and a delightsome people* might have unfortunate consequences. With just 37 additional footnotes indicating differences between the 1920 and 1981 editions, Hardy could have avoided this potential problem.

But that is my main quibble. I find the remaining appendices very helpful and likely to benefit not only non-Latter-day Saint readers but also long-time readers of the Book of Mormon. In addition to the testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses, appendix 1 contains the less frequently published or discussed testimonies of Mary Whitmer and Emma Smith about the reality of the plates. Appendix 2 gives a useful chronology of the translation process along with various photos related to stages in that process: the hill from which Joseph removed the plates, characters copied therefrom, the first page of the printer's manuscript, copies of the first edition, and the Nauvoo House cornerstone, where the original manuscript was deposited and mostly ruined.

While these appendices are largely focused on establishing external validation for the text, appendix 7 provides more

evidence for its internal validity through various charts and maps. Some are adapted from FARMS publications by John W. Welch and others, such as a chart showing how the plates were passed from one scribe to another, a chart showing which books of the Book of Mormon come from which plates, and a chart of the Jaredite kings. Other charts, however, are apparently Hardy's creations. His chart giving a chronology of the narrative begins with the "mid-third millennium BC" and proceeds to AD 420, giving scriptural references for each period and a summary of what happened, if anything, during that period in three places: the Land Nephi (south), the Land Zarahemla (middle), and the Land Desolation (north). Another chart showing leaders of the Lamanites and Nephites gives dates and categorizes leaders by their status as kings, "dissenters and colonists," "missionaries and heretics," or leaders in political, religious, or military affairs. There is also a map of the probable route of Lehi's journey on the Arabian peninsula and a hypothetical map of "relative locations of Book of Mormon sites based on internal references" (689). I would have found these charts and maps very helpful as a seminary student years ago, just as I do today.

Hardy's whole aim in preparing this edition was to show that "the Book of Mormon offers a much more sophisticated and tightly structured narrative than one might first assume, particularly given Joseph Smith's background" (xxiii). His primary audience appears to be non-Latter-day Saint scholars, whom

he invites to subject the book to "more sophisticated literary and historical analyses than have long been the norm" and to "enter more deeply into the world portrayed in the text" (xxiii). To that end, he also includes a four-page list of suggestions for further reading at the end of the book, and he particularly singles out Terryl Givens's *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* as "the best introduction to the Book of Mormon" (707). I believe that non-Latter-day Saint readers of Givens's book could do no better than to pick up a copy of Hardy's work to learn for themselves what this scripture contains.

For Latter-day Saint readers, Hardy is careful to note that his edition is not intended to replace the 1981 edition. But I think that many such readers would find it a valuable supplement to their study of that edition. In fact, I would recommend that missionaries consider taking it to their fields of labor to study, as it would give them information not present in the 1981 edition that would help them answer their own questions and those of their investigators. Particularly, I believe seminary teachers and parents would find that young people would respond positively to reading the Book of Mormon in this format. All royalties that Hardy receives from the sale of the book will be donated to the Humanitarian Services Fund of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—a noble gesture that underscores Hardy's commitment to increasing people's understanding of the Book of Mormon. ■

Review by Keith Lawrence

For the many who love the Book of Mormon and who delight in reexperiencing its language and teachings, Grant Hardy's *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2003) holds much promise. Recasting the 1920 edition of the familiar text in a reader-friendly format and adding relevant notes and appendices, Hardy characterizes the book as an invitation to "enter deeply into the world" of the Book of Mormon. Although *A Reader's Edition* was written primarily "to help non-Mormons understand what it is that Mormons see in this sometimes obscure text," Hardy seems conscious of the fact that his book may find the bulk of its readership among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who embrace the Book of Mormon as a divinely inspired translation of ancient scripture.

Convinced that the Book of Mormon is "an intriguing and provocative religious text . . . complex enough to reward many different types of readers and approaches" and that its "increasing prominence makes it an appropriate subject for more sophisticated literary and historical analyses than have long been

the norm," Hardy emphasizes accessibility of the text as his first priority. "Any reader confronting a text divided into verses," he writes, "must determine which phrases and sentences go together most closely, when direct speech begins and ends, and when new topics and narratives are introduced." The chronology of such a text, Hardy suggests, and the names appearing within it present additional challenges. His purpose, then, is to make reading easier for new (and returning) readers by emphasizing the narrative structure of the Book of Mormon text.

In general, I am very pleased with *A Reader's Edition*. It does indeed make for a different Book of Mormon reading experience, and that is what I had hoped for. When I first sat down with the book, I had not read many minutes before I realized that I was turning Book of Mormon pages faster than I usually turn them. I was experiencing its "story" and its structural and stylistic coherence in ways that I never had. Even the Isaiah sections of 2 Nephi read more quickly, more smoothly—partly because they were transcribed as poetry rather than as dense chunks of prose. Not surprisingly, perhaps, I was most cognizant of the height-

ened narrative drama of Mosiah, Alma, and Helaman—books that already convey a stronger sense of unfolding history than do the more doctrinal books.

Hardy's paragraphing is intuitive and, more than any other single element, increases readability and narrative sense. Primary titles and headings are helpful in marking narrative sections, as are page breaks and added punctuation, especially quotation marks. Hardy uses footnotes intelligently and sparingly: explanatory notes are genuinely helpful and never condescending; notes dealing with chronology are likewise unobtrusive (though most Latter-day Saint readers will already be familiar with what these notes convey). The appendices, without exception, are engaging and serviceable. Along with commonly known information, they also provide new contexts for enriched appreciation of the structural complexity of the Book of Mormon.

There are elements of Hardy's text that might be improved. His introduction affords useful literary and historical contexts; but its "borrowings" from recent scholarship, especially from that of Terryl Givens, should be documented more

clearly and consistently. That is, much of what Hardy says about the literary structure of the Book of Mormon, its transmission and language, and its historical and contemporary reception by Latter-day Saint readers seems condensed from Givens's much richer discussion in *By the Hand of Mormon*. True, Hardy cites Givens as the source of a quotation on page xiii of his introduction, but he does not otherwise credit Givens (or others) for any of the material appearing on the several pages preceding and following that single citation.

While readers may appreciate the increased narrative sense that comes from Hardy's edition, some may feel (as I do) a kind of diminishment of the integrity or power of individual verses. These readers may also have difficulty (as I also do) locating favorite verses or passages in Hardy's text. And although I appreciated Hardy's main headings—demarcating long sections of text—I suppose that I am enough of a literary scholar to see narrative subheadings as disruptive and even somewhat intrusive in their spelling things out for the reader. Not many pages into *A Reader's Edition*, I found myself wishing the subheadings away—or at least wishing that they had been relegated to the outside margins of each page and set in much smaller type.

In my longing for a fresh reading experience of my favorite book of scripture, I confess to desiring one other formatting change. I wish that Hardy had replaced the contemporary chapter divisions in the body of his text with the original chapter breaks (those from the 1830 edition of

the Book of Mormon). From a reader's perspective, the original chapter breaks often make more sense. Not only were they apparently dictated by what was written on the plates themselves (as Hardy notes in his introduction), but they often bring together related narrative blocks or doctrinal passages that are separated from one another in contemporary editions of the text. Contemporary chapter numbers could then be noted in the outside margins (along with subheadings), and contemporary verse numbering could be retained in the text as presently designated by Hardy. True, original chapter breaks are included in the footnotes, but these are easily overlooked—partly because of the fine print used in footnotes and the superscripts referring readers there, and partly because of the excessively large typeface used for in-text chapter numbering.

Hardy's attention to Hebrew poetry in the Book of Mormon is a mixed blessing. It is arguably the single most delightful element of *A Reader's Edition*. Certainly it is among the most promising elements of the text: I was pleased, as I began reading, to note that Hardy marks three poetic passages in the first two chapters of 1 Nephi alone. These are Lehi's psalm of praise following his prophetic call (1 Nephi 1:14), Lehi's adjuration to Laman and Lemuel (1 Nephi 2:9–10), and the Lord's words of comfort to Nephi following Laman and Lemuel's rejection of his counsel (1 Nephi 2:19–24). But the frequency of marked poetic passages drops off significantly in subsequent pages; and Hardy's seeming inconsistency in marking poetic (or likely poetic) Book

of Mormon passages is, finally, one of my biggest complaints about his text.

In his version of 1 Nephi 1:14–15, for example, he fails to note that Lehi's psalm of praise is echoed in Nephi's poetic commentary on his father's experiences:

For his soul did rejoice,
and his whole heart was filled,
because of the things which he had
seen,
yea, which the Lord had shown
unto him. (1 Nephi 1:15)

The Lord's warning to Lehi to flee Jerusalem may also be rendered poetically, emphasizing the warning as a blessing for Lehi's faithfulness:

Blessed art thou Lehi,
because of the things which
thou hast done;
and because thou hast been
faithful and declared unto
this people the things which I
commanded thee,
behold, they seek to take away thy
life. (1 Nephi 2:1)

Indeed, when the words of the Lord are recorded in the Book of Mormon—and especially in the writings of Nephi—they are frequently recorded, it seems to me, as poetic utterances. Apparently, Hardy's policy is to follow conventional wisdom. In cases where other scholars have identified poetic passages, he repeats their work—but he does not often hazard identification of new or undiscovered passages on his own. In his rendering of the Nephite "Sermon on the Mount," for example, Hardy follows long-standing Christian tradition in showing only the Beatitudes and the Lord's

Prayer in poetic form. Arguably, however, most—if not all—of this sermon employs Hebrew poetic forms; and it seems to me that such a poetic representation of the sermon intensifies its beauty, structure, and power. While I can understand Hardy’s desires to be cautious rather than freehanded in representing Book of Mormon passages poetically, to avoid “seeing” poetry where none exists, a somewhat looser or more liberal advancement of poetic passages would make *A Reader’s Edition* more appealing to readers like me.

There is a second problem beyond simple identification of poetry in the Book of Mormon. In some instances, Hardy seems to correctly identify a passage written poetically—but then, for some reason, he marks only certain lines of it as poetic. For example, he shows the last segment of 1 Nephi 4:3 as poetry but chooses to render as prose text the balance of verse 3 and the two verses preceding it. All three verses are clearly poetic:

Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold, he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?

Therefore let us go up. Let us be strong like unto Moses, for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground; and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in

the waters of the Red Sea.

Now behold, ye know that this is true; and ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you; wherefore can ye doubt? Let us go up. (1 Nephi 4:1–3)

In like manner, Hardy represents 1 Nephi 17:35–40 poetically but ignores similar poetic forms in neighboring verses, especially verses 30–31 and 45–46. A more obvious example is his representation of Alma 36. He renders verses 27–29 poetically but represents the balance of the chapter—all of it chiasmic poetry, as John W. Welch has shown (and as Hardy himself documents in his fifth appendix to the text)—as prose. These are only three random examples of a rather pervasive problem. For a literary reader, this problem is at best distracting; at worst, it bespeaks editorial haste or naivete—despite Hardy’s assertion that he has “opted for narrative coherence and ease of reading” rather than chiasmic or poetic integrity.

These few complaints aside, Hardy’s edition of the Book of Mormon is, as he intends, highly readable and engaging. I’ve previously alluded to some of the specific features of Hardy’s edition, but a more complete summary might be useful at this point. To make reading easier by emphasizing the narrative structure of the Book of Mormon text, Hardy does the following:

1. Preserves contemporary chapter numbering but adds headings (showing where multi-chapter sections begin and end) and subheadings (designating topics within chapters so that

readers may more readily discern speakers or unfolding events)

2. Adds paragraphing—which, he notes, is different from typesetter John Gilbert’s apparently arbitrary and often very long paragraphing in the original 1830 edition

3. Adds page breaks to emphasize discrete structural entities within the text, such as Mormon’s explanatory comments and Moroni’s additions

4. Adds quotation marks and other clarifying punctuation (“where alternative punctuation yields two equally plausible readings,” he writes, “one is incorporated into the text and the other into a footnote”)

5. Designates poetic passages using traditional line breaks and stanzas

6. Uses indentations to show when Book of Mormon authors quote from outside texts

7. Uses italics in the heading material to show original headnotes to books in the Book of Mormon; these headnotes are introduced by Givens’s own descriptive headings

8. Uses italics in the text itself to mark earlier prophecies from the Old Testament or from previous Book of Mormon prophets

9. Uses subscripted names in headings and titles to distinguish Book of Mormon figures sharing the same name (so that, for example, the fourth son of Lehi is “Nephi₁” and the son of Helaman is “Nephi₂”)

10. Uses footnotes to (a) show original chapter divisions as dictated by the printer’s manuscript for the 1830 edition, (b) guide readers through Book of Mormon chronology, (c) refer-

ence past Book of Mormon figures and events as well as previous prophecies whose fulfillment is recorded in the text, and (d) provide the kind of commentary or assistance traditionally expected of footnotes

Readers will also find Hardy's appendices enlightening and useful. These provide, among other things, a chronology of the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon; a brief explanation of Hebrew poetic forms in the Book of Mormon; a list of signifi-

cant textual changes in official editions of the Book of Mormon between 1830 and 1981; a chronology of central events in the Book of Mormon, listed according to the geographical region (land of Nephi, land of Zarahemla, land Desolation) in which they occurred; and maps showing the likely path taken by Lehi's family from Jerusalem to the sea and relative locations of Book of Mormon sites.

Overall, then, Hardy's edition has much to commend it: a

largely appealing design and format, structural additions (headings, punctuation, textual breaks) that clarify the text itself, and surprisingly rich and efficient appendices. Above all, it facilitates reading and understanding the Book of Mormon as complex narrative, enabling longtime readers of the text to experience it in fresh and faith-promoting ways. This last reason alone justifies purchasing and carefully perusing *A Reader's Edition*. ■