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Abstract Review of *The Book of Mormon: Restored Covenant Edition* (1999), by Zarahemla Research Foundation.

A NEW APPROACH TO THE BOOK OF MORMON: THE RESTORED COVENANT EDITION

Brian M. Hauglid

The *Book of Mormon: Restored Covenant Edition* (RCE), published in 1999 by the Zarahemla Research Foundation (ZRF),¹ is a handsome volume with a total of 1,045 pages, including a short introduction and 851 pages of text formatted according to Hebrew parallelisms. The testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses immediately follow the Book of Mormon text, just as they apparently did in the original editions. In addition, almost two hundred pages of selected concordance, geographical, and summary materials may enhance the reader's study.

1. Although the ZRF does not explicitly connect itself to the RLDS Church, I believe the founders of the Zarahemla Research Foundation are members of the RLDS Church, soon to be named the Community of Christ. This seems quite apparent in that the ZRF uses the RLDS edition of the Book of Mormon as its primary text.

According to an official communication from the RLDS Church titled "RLDS Church Becomes Community of Christ" (rlds.org/news/sept00/RLDS_Becomes_Community_of_Christ.asp):

Review of *The Book of Mormon: Restored Covenant Edition*. Independence, Mo.: Zarahemla Research Foundation, 1999. xvii + 1028, with concordances and summaries. \$14.00 paperback, \$24.00 hardback, \$40.00 leather.

ZRF and its editors outline five main purposes for the RCE in the introduction. The RCE will

1. restore the purity of the Book of Mormon,
2. restore a knowledge of the covenants,
3. reveal the spiritual name of the Book of Mormon,
4. make available the Hebrew poetic nature of the text, and
5. bring to light the natural grouping of thoughts using blank lines, thus making it easier to understand (see pp. vii–viii, my paraphrase).

Although some arbitrary differences exist between the RCE and the original and printer's manuscripts, this review will not touch on them, as these differences have already been dealt with elsewhere.² However, even with the noted discrepancies (in my view mostly minor), I believe the publishers and editors had a sincere desire to restore the Book of Mormon to its original purity. Throughout, they display a careful reverence for the Book of Mormon and treat it as a sacred text.

I will briefly comment on the covenant aspect of the RCE, its spiritual name, its Hebrew parallelistic format, and the utility of the RCE.

Community of Christ will become the new denominational name of the Reorganized CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST of Latter Day Saints on April 6, 2001, the anniversary of the church's founding. History will again be made as members of the church commit themselves to become the Community of Christ and celebrate a new denominational name that reflects the church's theology and mission: "We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace." . . .

Delegates at the RLDS 2000 World Conference voted in favor of changing the church's name to Community of Christ. This change was approved by more than the required two-thirds margin in an affirmative vote of 1,979 to 561 in opposition. The current name, "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," has identified the church since the 1860s and will be retained for legal purposes.

The church's world headquarters is located in Independence, Missouri.

2. For a comparison of the RCE with the original and printer's manuscripts, see D. Lynn Johnson's review in this issue, pp. 21–38.

The Covenant Approach

As far as I know, the RCE represents the first effort on the part of any organization associated with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (albeit ZRF is not officially connected with that church) to produce the Book of Mormon for the above-stated purposes. I wanted to learn more about the publication of the RCE, so I went to the Zarahemla Research Foundation Web site.³

The ZRF Web site has twelve short lessons on the concept of covenant. A few statements from these lessons will illustrate ZRF's views and teachings on the idea of covenants and will show that the ZRF puts an emphasis on covenant that the RLDS Church so far has not. I'm not sure if this emphasis represents an ax to grind on the part of ZRF, but it seems clear that the ZRF has produced the RCE to help members establish a personal covenant relationship with God. The author of the lessons, Ray Treat, states,

The covenant relationship is the most ignored and least understood subject among our people. In asking people about the subject of the covenant relationship in the last 9–10 years I have discovered that this subject has not received any emphasis at all as far back as people can remember, which takes us back three generations. In my own experience in my first 30 years in this movement, I had not heard or even heard about a single sermon on the covenant relationship and I had only heard about one class with the word covenant in the title. The Lord officially informed us in 1832 (D&C 83:8 [LDS 84:54]) that we were ignoring or treating lightly the covenant.⁴

The Lord says in the Doctrine and Covenants, "And your minds . . . have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received." This revelation also

3. See restoredcovenant.org.

4. restoredcovenant.org/Document.asp?CAT=Covenant&DOC=Lesson+1&PAGE=3. Ray Treat is the author of these lessons.

indicates that the “whole church” is under condemnation and would “remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the *new covenant*, even the Book of Mormon” (LDS D&C 84:54, emphasis added; see also 84:55–57). Treat believes that most members of the RLDS Church have not yet taken the covenant aspect of the restoration seriously enough. He argues that, “collectively speaking, the Restoration Movement does not have a covenant relationship at the present time because covenant people are always gathered (Ps. 50:5) and non-covenant people are always scattered.”⁵ Treat insists that somehow the idea of a covenant relationship has waned or died out among RLDS members collectively.

Treat emphasizes that Jesus Christ “came to die to establish the covenant—He came to die to make the covenant relationship available to anyone who would desire to believe, repent and come unto Him. . . . Jesus Christ is the most important person but the covenant relationship is the most important subject.”⁶ He makes it clear that even the concept of the role of Jesus Christ is skewed when the role of covenants is misunderstood. Treat argues that “if we would ask 100 of our Book of Mormon believing friends [LDS?] to tell us the main purpose of the Book of Mormon, most of them would say ‘to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.’ This is one scripture everyone seems to know. This is a purpose of the Book of Mormon but it is not the main purpose. The main purpose of the Book of Mormon is to restore a knowledge of the covenants.”⁷ Although I do not agree that “coming unto Christ” should take a lesser role, the emphasis on the Book of Mormon’s restoring a knowledge of the covenants should be considered.

According to the ZRF, this way of looking at covenants also puts the ordinance of baptism in a different light. Treat examines 3 Nephi 11:37–38 (LDS), noting that verse 37 says, “ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized,” but that verse 38 reverses the

5. restoredcovenant.org/Document.asp?CAT=Covenant&DOC=Lesson+3&PAGE=2.

6. restoredcovenant.org/Document.asp?CAT=Covenant&DOC=Lesson+2, emphasis in original.

7. restoredcovenant.org/Document.asp?CAT=Covenant&DOC=Lesson+4, emphasis in original.

order: “ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child.” He interprets “become as a little child” as the first step in the covenant relationship. The author thus concludes that “water baptism is certainly necessary but it is a witness of what should have been the first step of the covenant relationship. How could it be a witness if it was never taught or known?”⁸

Finally, Treat concludes:

Whatever our mindset is now, we will not be able to avoid making a covenant sooner or later. No matter how much we may dislike the idea of a covenant, we will eventually make a covenant, either with God or with the devil. The time for fence sitting will come to an end. God is completely in control of history and He will bring about events that will cause everyone to jump or fall off the fence and make a total commitment one way or the other.

From the ZRF perspective, it seems the RLDS Church (and perhaps implicitly the LDS Church) does not adequately emphasize the covenant relationship. In the official statement of the RLDS Church, the covenant aspect is not mentioned:

Our mission:

To Proclaim Jesus Christ and Promote Communities of JOY, HOPE, LOVE and PEACE.

We offer:

A community of people where the gospel of Jesus Christ is the focus of worship, learning, caring, and mission.

An opportunity for genuine spiritual growth and relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Local congregations where deep friendships are established, individual ideas are valued, and where those special needs find security, care, and support.

A faith community that encourages the ministry of all people, including children and youth.

8. restoredcovenant.org/Document.asp?CAT=Covenant&DOC=Lesson+12.

A global community with a worldwide mission that values all cultures and celebrates the rich diversity of human life.

Meaningful opportunities to serve Jesus Christ by helping others and promoting peace.⁹

The RLDS statement of beliefs mentions the Book of Mormon as an added witness to the central scripture, the Bible, but it declares nothing about covenants, either explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that members of the ZRF are trying to fill a void they perceive in RLDS theology. According to the ZRF, a knowledge of covenants is preserved and can be easily accessed in this edition of the RCE. This added material from the ZRF and the RLDS church was helpful in gaining an understanding of why the ZRF felt the RCE was needed.

The third purpose for the RCE, dealing with the spiritual name of the Book of Mormon, also follows from the ZRF views on the covenant relationship. According to the introduction to the RCE, the actual name of the Book of Mormon can be symbolically or typologically understood from the incident at the Waters of Mormon, in which a group of people under Alma the Elder's leadership entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord (see LDS Mosiah 18).

From that time forward, the name Mormon reminded the people of the restoring of their covenants in the Land of Mormon. Its impact is seen even generations later when Mormon, the chief editor of The Book of Mormon, was named after the Land of Mormon where this restoration took place. Therefore, the name, The Book of Mormon, symbolically means The Book of the Restoration of the Covenant. (pp. v–vi)

How one interprets the name *Mormon* is left to personal preference.¹⁰ However, I think connecting the name symbolically to the

9. rlds.org/beliefs.asp.

10. The Prophet Joseph Smith said Mormon means "more good"; see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 299–300.

event at the Waters of Mormon is an interesting approach and bears some reflection.

Hebrew Parallelistic Format

In my opinion, the RCE is well done and worth reading. I was impressed with the Hebrew parallelistic format of the text. For the most part, the text reads very smoothly, and the emphasis seems to be well placed and well paced. A few awkward sentences result from restoring some of the original language, but these are relatively minor and infrequent. For instance, in 1 Nephi 18:15 (LDS), Nephi says, “and behold they [his wrists] had swollen exceedingly,” but the RCE reads, “and behold they had much swollen exceedingly.” These awkward readings do not occur often enough to bother or alarm most readers.

The most common Hebrew literary pattern, noted throughout the RCE, is the Hebrew device called “epanalepsis,” which is “loosely defined as ‘resumptive repetition.’ The writer interrupts a thought with a digression, then the original sentence resumes by repeating the main thought or word” (p. xi). An example of a short epanalepsis is RCE 2 Nephi 1:22–23 (LDS 2 Nephi 1:10).

- 22 But behold, when the time cometh
that they shall dwindle in unbelief—
After that they have received so great blessings
from the hand of the Lord,
Having a knowledge of the creation of the earth
and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works
of the Lord from the creation of the world,
Having power given them to do all things by faith,
Having all the commandments from the beginning,
And having been brought by His infinite goodness
into this precious Land of Promise—
- 23 Behold I say, if the day shall come that they will reject
the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah,
their Redeemer and their God,

Behold, the judgments of Him that is just
shall rest upon them—

In the marginal note, the editors explain, “epanalepsis resumes in v 23[;] reveals synonymous phrases: unbelief = reject Holy One of Israel” (p. 83).

Although not noted in the text, the RCE has many other Hebrew parallelisms that add to the readability of the text. In fact, because the entire text (including the title page) has been formatted, it has some advantages over Donald W. Parry’s *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns*.¹¹ The RCE provides a continuous Hebrew parallelistic format, while Parry formats only a verse or verses, with standard paragraphing in between.¹²

The ZRF editors have also done a good job of picking up on many of the patterns Parry identifies in his introductory essay. For instance, the Hebrew pattern reflected by the use of “many ands” refers “to the many phrases bound together by the repetition”¹³ of the conjunction *and*; this pattern is repeatedly and properly identified in the RCE (for example, see RCE 1 Nephi 1:5–11 [LDS 1:6–13a]; 2 Nephi 8:30–35 [LDS 12:14–19]; Alma 8:59–60 [LDS 11:8–13]). Also, the “climactic” pattern, in which one has the sense of moving from one level to the next,¹⁴ can be found in the RCE. In fact, the verse Parry quotes as an illustration of this pattern, Mormon 9:12–13 (RCE Mormon 4:71–72), is faithfully reproduced by the RCE. Note this comparison between Parry and the RCE:

Parry, *Parallelistic Patterns*

Behold he created
Adam, and by
Adam came
the fall of man. And because of

Restored Covenant Edition

Behold, He created Adam,
And by Adam, came the fall of
man,
And because of the fall of man,

11. See Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992).

12. However, in the paragraphs Parry still identifies several different patterns.

13. Parry, *Parallelistic Patterns*, xxxviii.

14. See *ibid.*, xviii–xxiv.

<u>the fall of man</u> came <u>Jesus Christ</u> , even the Father and the Son; and because of <u>Jesus Christ</u> came the <u>redemption of man</u> . And be- cause of the <u>redemption of man</u> , which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord. (LDS Mormon 9:12–13)	came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son, And because of Jesus Christ, came the redemption of man, And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, They are brought back into the presence of the Lord. (RCE Mormon 4:71–72)
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Parry, by underlining words and phrases, provides an excellent illustration of the ascent of man, beginning at the “fall of man” and ending at “they are brought back into the presence of the Lord.” The RCE does not use underlining but does present the verse in an ascending format, beginning each main thought with the conjunction *and*, the concluding line beginning with *they*. In addition, each dependent thought is indented to demonstrate its dependence on the main thought. Therefore, “even the Father and the Son” is a dependent thought to “came Jesus Christ.”

I found the parallelistic format to be quite good and even moving at times. The verses seem to flow poetically and rhythmically. Note, as an example, 3 Nephi 13:20–23 (LDS 3 Nephi 28:8–12), the final direct quotation of the Savior to the three disciples who would be translated,

And again, ye shall not have pain
while ye shall dwell in the flesh,
Neither sorrow, save it be for the sins of the world;
And all this will I do because of the thing
which ye have desired of Me,
For ye have desired that ye might bring the souls
of men unto Me while the world shall stand;
And for this cause ye shall have fullness of joy
and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of My Father;
Yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father
hath given Me fullness of joy;

And ye shall be even as I am;
And I am even as the Father,
And the Father and I are one,
And the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and Me;
And the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children
of men because of Me.

Utility of the RCE

The RCE has several features that, for the most part, add to its usefulness. First, the margin notes, which are kept to a minimum, contain cross-references to other scriptures, notably to Book of Mormon verses but also to Old and New Testament verses. These are marked in the RCE verses with lowercase letters and then presented in the margin opposite. Dates and other items are marked by a number in the RCE and also appear in the margin. The notes define words and identify Hebrew constructions, such as epanalepses. Second, in the back of the RCE the editors have added a fairly inclusive concordance of terms. The RCE also includes a geographical concordance. According to the preamble of this concordance, “the entries may consist of a summary or a quote. Clarification or commentary is in parentheses. A term in **bold** means it is a separate topic. Some non-geographic story line is included” (p. 999, emphasis in original). It seems to me that this could be a useful tool in studying the geography of the Book of Mormon.

Following these concordances, the ZRF has provided “A Summary of the Book of Mormon,” which identifies each book’s author(s) and provides an outline of the contents. “A Summary of the Records,” also included at the end of the RCE, discusses the records from which the Book of Mormon is compiled, such as the book of Lehi, the small plates of Nephi, the large plates of Nephi, and the plates of brass.

One of the features of scriptures that I have enjoyed since my days as a Roman Catholic is highlighting the words of Jesus in red. In fact, one of the first Bibles I obtained before I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was an old red-letter edition of the

New Testament. It served me well in preparation for the missionary discussions I later received. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the RCE printed in red all of Jesus' words to the Nephites as recorded in 3 Nephi. With Jesus' words in red, one can quickly see the context of the Savior's teachings as well as his first and last words spoken. This may be more of a personal preference here, but I think this form of emphasis enhances the utility of the RCE.

Finally, for those who like to write in their copies of the scriptures, the thick paper and wide margins of the RCE make it easier to write copious notes next to the verses. For the Latter-day Saint accustomed to the many scriptural footnotes in the LDS edition, one drawback to using the RCE is the noticeable scarcity of footnotes. In addition, the variation in versification would be somewhat confusing.

Conclusion

The RCE is a good effort by the ZRF to produce a book that is, in its view, close to the original Book of Mormon. From its perspective, the main purpose of the Book of Mormon is to restore a covenant relationship with the Lord. It is apparent from reading the ZRF material that the foundation is concerned that the covenant aspect of the Book of Mormon has been neglected by most members of the RLDS Church (and perhaps the LDS too). The RCE, as the "most accurate and pure text available" (p. ix), is the ZRF's solution to this problem.

Formatting the entire RCE text according to Hebrew parallelisms has, in my opinion, created a readable and sometimes moving narrative. It seems apparent that the ZRF did its homework on this score. The RCE is not only readable, but it is also easy to use. With the concordances, ZRF notes, and space for writing personal notes, the RCE can be a useful tool for RLDS and LDS students studying the Book of Mormon.

In my view, the RCE is a welcome addition to Book of Mormon studies. ZRF and its editors should be congratulated for their careful and thoughtful preparation of this volume.