

John S. Dinger, ed.
*Significant Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon:
The First Printed Edition Compared to the Manuscripts
and to the Subsequent Major LDS English Printed Editions.*
Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2013.

Reviewed by Royal Skousen

John Dinger's Critical Text Publication

On July 11, 2013, I was surprised to get an email from a Community of Christ colleague informing me that the Smith-Pettit Foundation was publishing John S. Dinger's *Significant Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon: The First Printed Edition Compared to the Manuscripts and to the Subsequent Major LDS English Printed Editions* and that there was to be a book signing on July 18, 2013, at Benchmark Books in Salt Lake City. This was the first I had heard of this endeavor. The reference to the manuscripts piqued my attention, since I knew that neither manuscript was readily available, although fully readable microfilm-based photographs of the printer's manuscript were, but that was not the case for the original manuscript. The only readily available source for the original manuscript would be volume 1 of the critical text, the typographical facsimile of the original manuscript, edited by me and published in 2001 by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS).¹ And the most convenient source for the printer's manuscript would be volume 2, the typographical facsimile of the printer's manuscript, published at the same time.² Complete photographs of the two manuscripts, published as part of the Joseph Smith Papers, will not appear until at least 2015 (and probably later for the original manuscript).

1. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001).

2. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001).

I suspected that Dinger's work would be derivative of my own, but I could find no mention in the prepublication information provided by Smith-Pettit or Benchmark Books on how this critical text had been constructed. No advance copy or information was sent to me about this work. I had never had any communication from Dinger, and the first thing I learned about the actual sources for this book came when I was asked by *BYU Studies* to review the book and received a copy of it on August 15, 2013.

A Brief Description of Dinger's Work

Dinger's book begins with a foreword by Stan Larson that provides some historical background to Larson's own earlier work on the Book of Mormon text, plus a list of significant textual changes that come, for the most part, from the current Book of Mormon critical text project. This is followed by the editor's introduction in which Dinger describes the major LDS English-language editions of the Book of Mormon, with its unstated assumption that these editions had been consulted in preparing his critical text. There is also a selective list of previous critical text work on the Book of Mormon, including Larson's work and mine. Finally, there is a brief description of the 1830 text selected for use in the Dinger critical text.

Dinger's critical text is what is often called a variorum edition. In such a critical text, the editor prints a well-established early version of the text (a base text that is sometimes unfortunately referred to as "the best text," which is a loaded term). The base text may be a typographical facsimile of a manuscript with a clear text or, more often, a resetting of an early printed edition (usually the first printed edition), along with notes (either as footnotes on the page or as endnotes in an appendix) specifying variants to the reading of the base text. In a variorum edition, conjectural emendations, if provided, appear only in the notes; sometimes (but not always) a note will specify who first proposed a given conjectural emendation. Dinger's critical text is a variorum edition based on a particular version of the first, 1830, edition of the Book of Mormon (which I will describe below). Dinger decided that his variant readings would be based solely upon the manuscripts or the fifteen LDS printed editions he selected for use. Any additional readings, including conjectural emendations, would be ignored.

In contrast, an alternative type of critical text presents an eclectic text, one where the editor has created "the original text" (or an early version of the text) from the variant readings in the extant textual sources or

from conjectural emendations. Sometimes, editors of an eclectic edition studiously avoid placing conjectural emendations within the eclectic text itself and relegate them solely to the notes. Or they may decide to avoid conjectures altogether, at least ones that have never appeared in any printed version. The Yale edition of the Book of Mormon, edited by me and published in 2009,³ is an eclectic text, and it permits conjectural emendations within the text. Although standard editions of the Book of Mormon are not critical texts (there are no notes telling the reader of textual variants), nonetheless all editions have readings that were originally introduced into the text as conjectures. The textual basis for these editions is eclectic, with readings selected from earlier textual sources.

Near the end of his introduction, Dinger refers to my publication of “typographical facsimiles of both the Original and the Printer’s Manuscripts,” released in 2001 as volumes 1 and 2 of the Book of Mormon critical text project, “thus allowing readers themselves to compare the earliest manuscripts to the printed editions” (page xxix). Then in footnote 53 to that last quoted clause, Dinger states “I rely on Skousen’s readings of the original and printer’s manuscripts.” Indeed, as he puts it (on page xxix): “The importance of Skousen’s work cannot be overstated.” While I appreciate the endorsement, the full extent to which my work has been used has not been made at all clear.

That use can be more accurately stated, I believe, as follows: Dinger did not directly use the manuscript transcripts to construct his critical text, at least not in any consistent way. He may have occasionally consulted the transcripts published in 2001. Nor is there any evidence that he systematically consulted the printed editions of the Book of Mormon, although it seems that he did consult some of the earlier versions at various places. Rather, internal evidence argues that he went through the six books of volume 4 of the critical text, *Analysis of Textual Variants*,⁴ published in 2004–9 (and referred to as ATV), and basically used the variants and analyses printed in ATV in order to construct his critical text. With only the occasional exception dealing with grammatical change, the variants for which Dinger constructed footnotes appear to be precisely the ones discussed in ATV. He never mentions this close

3. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009).

4. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, published in six parts (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2004–9).

and derivative use of volume 4, although to be sure he does list all six of these books in his bibliography (called “Abbreviations and Experts Consulted”) that immediately follows his introduction.

Problems with Wilford Wood’s 1830 Base Text

One important source question has to do with the base text for Dinger’s variorum edition. On pages xxix and xxx, Dinger has a section devoted to “The 1830 Edition of the Book of Mormon Used in This Book.” He states that his base text comes from Wilford Wood’s 1958 facsimile edition, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work / Book of Mormon / 1830 First Edition / Reproduced from Uncut Sheets*.⁵ Dinger quotes Larry Draper’s description of these sheets⁶ as largely defective sheets that could not be used in bound copies, which is accurate. But what Dinger does not know is that Wilford Wood’s resulting facsimile edition is not at all equivalent to those uncut sheets. Since the defective pages in the uncut sheets were unusable, Wood substituted photographs from at least three bound copies of the 1830 edition in order to produce his 1958 edition (I have identified two of those bound copies as ones that Wood himself owned). So the resulting Wood edition is a reconstructed 1830 text that never existed until 1958.

But there are further difficulties. Wood discovered that some of the printed text on the pages he selected was unclear, so he had someone touch up his photographic plates before going to press. This person “cleaned up” punctuation marks, but in several places accidentally changed the punctuation. And in one place (at Mosiah 29:22), in the last line on page 218, the word *those* was changed to *these*, thus creating a reading that appears in no bonafide 1830 copy, but it does appear in Wood’s facsimile edition—and in Dinger’s “1830” text. In fact, Janet Jenson mistakenly listed this change as an in-press change made by the 1830 typesetter because she included Wilford Wood’s 1958 printed edition as an 1830 copy in her study of printing variants in the first edition of the Book of Mormon.⁷ On the other hand, this modern change of

5. Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work / Book of Mormon / 1830 First Edition / Reproduced from Uncut Sheets* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1958).

6. Larry W. Draper, “Book of Mormon Editions,” in *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*, ed. M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 40.

7. Janet Jenson, “Variations between Copies of the First Edition of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 13, no. 2 (1973): 216.

those to these (in a facsimile edition no less) was not discussed in volume 4 of my critical text, making it clear why Dinger offers no reference for this variant (the text on page 158 of Dinger simply reads “the laws of these which have reigned in righteousness,” with no bold for *these* and no footnote for it).

And finally, I should note that I have never found a bound 1830 copy with the last signature, the 37th, in the same uncorrected state as Wilford Wood’s last uncut sheet. The first 36 signatures as found in Wood’s uncut sheets can be found in bound copies. (I have examined over one hundred actual 1830 copies; none of them have the last sheet that appears in the Wilford Wood uncut sheets, but Wood’s other uncut sheets are found.) This suggests that the last uncut sheet is a proof sheet that John Gilbert, the 1830 typesetter, added at the end to his collection of (largely defective) uncut sheets that he had been laying aside during the press work. In other words, it looks like Wood’s 1958 facsimile edition reproduces a state for the last signature that had been totally rejected by the 1830 typesetter. The errors in that proof sheet end up in Dinger’s base text. (It should also be pointed out that this hodge-podge text published by Wilford Wood in 1958 was earlier used by Smith-Pettit Foundation when they produced their parallel Book of Mormon in 2008.)⁸ So we have ten typesetting errors that appear in the Dinger text in the last signature, all of which the 1830 typesetter caught and removed before doing the actual press work for the 37th signature.

Omitting the Witness Statements

At the end of the 1830 text, Dinger has omitted the testimonies of the three witnesses and the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon. They were in the 1830 edition, they were in Wilford Wood’s facsimile edition, and they were in the 2008 Smith-Pettit parallel Book of Mormon. Dinger’s base text, being a reproduction of the 1830 edition, should have included them. If Dinger believes that the witness statements are noncanonical, he should inform readers that he is removing them from his critical text. He does reproduce the 1830 preface at the beginning of his critical text, so we can assume he is not averse to noncanonical statements. Maybe he took the occurrence of the words *THE END* literally and decided that the

8. *The Parallel Book of Mormon: The 1830, 1837, and 1840 Editions*, with introduction by Curt A. Bench (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2008).

witnesses statements after THE END should not be included. We are left to make such assumptions because Dinger provides no explanation.

Difficulties in Finding a Passage

Beyond these questions regarding the sources, it is helpful to answer two most important questions: How good a job did Dinger do? And is the resulting book helpful to the reader who wants to study the history of the Book of Mormon text?

First, the book is practically unusable because there are no page headers specifying current LDS chapters or even RLDS chapters (which are equivalent to the original 1830 chapter numbers). Larson refers in his foreword to various passages using the LDS chapter and verse system; and because I wanted to check what Dinger had noted about the example from Alma 39:13 (dealing with *repair* and *retain*), I tried to find that passage. I first noticed that the whole book of Alma had the header “THE BOOK OF ALMA, THE SON OF ALMA.” Yes, the period ends the header (as it does for all headers in the 1830 edition). Now this was not the header that the 1830 typesetter had used (his was simply “BOOK OF ALMA.”). So I could see that Dinger was willing to depart from the 1830 headers. Thus he could have specified more than the book’s name.

In any event, I flipped through the book of Alma until I found an 1830 chapter specification. I first found CHAPTER XXI in Dinger (which differs from the LDS chapter number), but neither was CHAPTER XXI the one I needed for my LDS-specified Alma 39:13. So I realized I needed to look up the original chapter number in my marked-up facsimile 1830 edition, which I did. (This facsimile copy of mine has the LDS and RLDS chapters and verses marked in the left and right margins.) And the LDS chapter 39 was CHAPTER XIX in the 1830 edition, so then I started hunting for CHAPTER XIX in Dinger’s book, which I finally found on page 239. Now I hunted for a note dealing with *repair* and *retain* (there are no verse numbers, only long paragraphs, in the 1830 edition—and in Dinger), which I found on page 240, and under the footnote with the number 1838 it read “OMs: repair; PMs: retain; 1920: text removed.”

The total search took me about two minutes. But what if I didn’t have a marked-up facsimile 1830 edition? Virtually all readers of Dinger’s work will not have such an edition to reference. Even with my helpful facsimile edition, I was disinclined to look up LDS passages of interest, including those referred to by Larson in his foreword. Dinger would have greatly benefited by having readers give feedback about usability before publication.

Other Problems with the Page Headers

As far as Dinger's page headers are concerned, he generally provides those that can be derived from the individual book titles, which is largely what John Gilbert did (thus Dinger's header for the book of Alma is like the 1830 edition's, as noted earlier). But Dinger deviated from this practice in one place: in the middle of the book of Helaman, the 1830 text has CHAPTER III. THE PROPHECY OF NEPHI, THE SON OF HELAMAN. Consequently, Dinger uses THE PROPHECY OF NEPHI. as his header for CHAPTER III of Helaman, but then he continues with this header through the rest of Helaman, even to include the 1830 text covering CHAPTER V. THE PROPHECY OF SAMUEL, THE LAMANITE, TO THE NEPHITES. Most readers will be totally confused.

Also, because the 1830 typesetter did not distinguish between third and fourth Nephi (his page headers are simply BOOK OF NEPHI. for both of these books), Dinger decided to use the 1830 full book title for 3 Nephi as his header and then an abbreviated version for 4 Nephi:

3 Nephi title: THE BOOK OF NEPHI, THE SON OF NEPHI, WHICH WAS THE SON OF HELAMAN.

1830 header: BOOK OF NEPHI.

Dinger's header: THE BOOK OF NEPHI, THE SON OF NEPHI, WHICH WAS THE SON OF HELAMAN.

4 Nephi title: THE BOOK OF NEPHI, WHICH IS THE SON OF NEPHI, ONE OF THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST.

1830 header: BOOK OF NEPHI.

Dinger's header: THE BOOK OF NEPHI, WHICH IS THE SON OF NEPHI, DISCIPLE OF CHRIST.

In general, the headers are not helpful in finding passages in Dinger's book.

Problems with the Footnotes on the Title Page

Once a reader finds a given passage and its corresponding footnote, the paramount question of reliability still remains. Unfortunately, in just the first five pages, there are dozens of errors. I'll begin with the title page of the Book of Mormon or what may simply be called the title (or the extended title).

First, there are two textual variants missing from the (extended) title. The original text of the extended title read (1) "written and sealed and

hid up unto the Lord”, with no *up* after the first *sealed* in the title, and (2) “sealed **up** by the hand of Moroni and hid up unto the Lord”, here with an extra *up* after the second *sealed* in the extended title. When the printer’s copy of the title page was made in August 1829, Oliver Cowdery accidentally added *up* in the first instance and deleted it from the second one. Yet four other copies of the title page, independent of the printer’s copy (all were made earlier in 1829), read correctly in this regard. These two variants are discussed in ATV (on page 30), but Dinger ignored or overlooked them; he does not even refer to four additional textual sources (the two copyright certificates dating from June 11, 1829, a printed version of the title page submitted with the Library of Congress’s copyright certificate, and the notice published in the June 26, 1829, issue of the *Wayne Sentinel*). The original manuscript version of the title page is no longer extant. Dinger might justify this decision because he is comparing his base text (the 1830 edition) against O and P and fifteen LDS printed editions only. In this case, he apparently does not think it necessary to give readers all the textual evidence.

The first variant Dinger lists (footnote 1) deals with the 1837 grammatical change from *which* to *who* (“**which** are a remnant of the house of Israel”). Later on in the title, the other case where *which* was changed to *who* for the 1837 edition (“**which** were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people”) is not listed. This is because in ATV (see pages 29–30) I list only the first case of this editorial change, although in the discussion I note the second case and then state “Like most grammatical changes, this change of *which* to *who* will usually not be discussed in this volume. Instead, a comprehensive discussion regarding the editing of *which* can be found in volume 3 under WHICH.” As you can see, Dinger is not as clear or transparent. He simply lists the second *which* in the extended title with no variation, which by his method will mislead a reader into thinking that all the LDS printed editions read *which* in the second case, when only the 1830 edition does.

There are, however, examples of different grammatical variants in the extended title that are ignored by Dinger. The first instance of *shew* versus *show* in the text (“which is to **shew** unto the remnant of the house of Israel”) is discussed in ATV on page 32, but omitted by Dinger. The LDS text over time has gravitated towards the modern *show*. For this first instance of *shew* in the text, the 1888 LDS large-print edition was the first LDS edition to make the change. The complete list of *shew* versus *show* variation will be found in volume 3, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*.

Another instance where Dinger ignores variation in the extended title is the *how* in “**how** great things the Lord hath done”. As explained in ATV (pages 32–33), the use of *how* in this expression is found in the King James Bible, but Joseph Smith replaced *how* with *what* here in the title and also in 1 Nephi 7:11 (there he marked the change in P). Yet Joseph left unchanged six later instances of this usage in the Book of Mormon text. Here is an excellent example supporting the view that Joseph’s editing for the 1837 edition was sometimes uneven. I discuss this second instance of *how* under 1 Nephi 7:11 in ATV, and in that case, Dinger has a note for the original *how* in 1 Nephi 7:11:

and how is it that ye have forgotten **how**¹¹⁰ great things the Lord hath done for us

110. OMs: how; PMs: what; 1837: follows the PMs.

So Dinger’s footnotes imply that Joseph made the change from *how* to *what* only once, in 1 Nephi 7:11. Note also a problem with the specification in footnote 110. It simply states that the printer’s manuscript (PMs) reads *what*, when in fact it originally read *how*, just as it reads in the original manuscript (OMs), and Joseph crossed the *how* out and supra-linearly inserted his grammatical emendation, the word *what*. This is all clearly recorded in the ATV discussion and actually in the transcript of P itself:

from ATV (page 147)

▪ **1 Nephi 7:11**

yea and how is it that ye have forgotten
 [*how* 0A|*how* >js *what* 1|*what* BCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST]
great things the Lord hath done for us

from the transcript of P (from lines 36–37 on page 10 of P)

ten **what**

& how is it that ye have forgot^ <ho^w> great things
 the Lord hath done for us

The symbols for the various editions, from A to T, are listed a few pages below when I discuss the LDS and RLDS textual traditions.

Dinger apparently decided to ignore manuscript variation. So using his footnote to 1 Nephi 7:11, a reader will mistakenly think that the printer’s manuscript originally had the change from *how* to *what*, that it was made by Oliver Cowdery when he copied the text here from O into P way back in August 1829—when in fact Oliver copied the *how* from O

into P and Joseph Smith emended the manuscript much later, nearer to 1837, when he prepared the text for the second edition (Kirtland, 1837).

Returning to our analysis of the title page, we find two cases where Dinger sets up his footnotes so that a single grammatical change is split into two changes. The first example deals with the placement of the definite article *the* in the phrase “by **the** way of Gentile”. The 1920 LDS edition moved the definite article so that the phrase now reads “by way of **the** Gentile”. Dinger breaks this up into two changes, each with a separate footnote:

by **the**² way of [___]³ Gentile

2. 1920: text removed.
3. 1920: the.

The reader can figure this all out, but sometimes Dinger omits part of the change when he splits apart a single grammatical change, as in this later example from the end of the extended title:

And now if there be **fault**,⁴ it be the **mistake**⁵ of men;

4. PMs; fault; 1837: faults. [Dinger has a semicolon after *PMs*]
5. PMs: mistake; 1837: mistakes.

But what we really have here is a consistent switch from the singular to the plural (including a switch from the subjunctive *be* to the indicative *are*), from “and now if there **be fault** / **it be the mistake** of men” to “and now if there **are faults** / **they are the mistakes** of men”. This is what is precisely shown in ATV on page 33:

▪ **title page: second paragraph**

and now if there

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| □ <i>be fault / it be the mistake</i> | 23 ^c 4516A78 |
| □ <i>be a fault / it be the mistake</i> | 3* |
| □ <i>are faults / they are the mistakes</i> | BCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST |

of men

(Here 3* stands for what was originally written in the LDS copyright certificate—an extra *a*—and 3^c, its correction to the right reading.) From Dinger’s two notes, on the other hand, one would think that the change was to “and now if there be **faults** / it be the **mistakes** of men”, which is not the case. The editing here (presumably Joseph Smith’s) was much more consistent than Dinger’s two separate footnotes imply.

Dinger also ignores important structural and punctuational variants in his work. Here in the extended title, the 1830 typesetter decided to split the title page into two paragraphs, with the word *also* acting as the

boundary. His first paragraph ended with “an abridgment taken from the Book of Ether.” The second paragraph began with the *also*: “Also, which is a Record of the People of Jared”. Dinger shows this, but he does not indicate that in the 1837 edition, the statement referring to the abridgment of the book of Ether was moved to the beginning of the second paragraph. And starting with the 1849 LDS edition, the word *also* was moved to the end of the reference to the abridgment rather than to the following relative clause that refers to the people of Jared, so that in the subsequent LDS text the first paragraph ends with “the interpretation thereof by the gift of God” and the second paragraph begins with “an abridgment taken from the book of Ether also”. None of this is specified by Dinger.

Finally, on the title page, we have the famous 1830 reference to Joseph Smith, Junior, as the “Author and Proprietor”, plus a footnote indicating that this attribution was changed in the 1837 edition to “translated by Joseph Smith, Junior.” Yet there is a significant textual variant here that Dinger fails to note: for the last impression (in 1842) of the third edition of the Book of Mormon (1840, Cincinnati and Nauvoo), Joseph specified the attribution here without *Junior* because his father had died in 1840, but the *Junior* was later restored because the eight-witness statement needs to distinguish between Joseph Smith, Senior (his father), and Joseph Smith, Junior. This interesting variant is described in ATV on page 36. The lemmatized comparison of the attribution also shows it, but Dinger decided to ignore it, probably because it appeared only in a later impression of the 1840 edition:

▪ **title page or half title: attribution at the end**

- *by Joseph Smith Junior*
author and proprietor 234516A78
- *translated by Joseph Smith Junior* BC*DEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST
- *translated by Joseph Smith* C^c

Dinger ignores textual variants within printed editions, such as in-press changes, and variants that arise in later impressions from stereotyped plates, thus sometimes omitting important textual variants from his history of the text.

In summary, almost every textual variant in the title page is not accurately represented. Dinger did get the first case of *which* to *who* and, indirectly, the change of “by the way of Gentile” to “by way of the Gentile”. But everything else is either omitted or incorrectly stated. And problems continue to arise when we turn to the opening pages of 1 Nephi.

Problems with the Footnotes at the Beginning of 1 Nephi

For the first twelve references in 1 Nephi, Dinger presents six footnotes that refer to the reading of the original manuscript (OMs). The original manuscript is not extant for the first leaf. If only Dinger had actually found the first leaf of the original manuscript! But clearly he was referring to changes in the printer's manuscript (PMs) and had somehow mistyped OMs for PMs. (These are footnotes 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, and 20.)

I consulted a little further down into 1 Nephi where Dinger started to refer to the right manuscript, namely, the printer's manuscript, and unfortunately many of his statements about the reading of that manuscript were wrong or misleading. As noted above, he typically gives Joseph Smith's emended reading in the printer's manuscript as the invariant reading of that manuscript, when it is the corrected reading, and the original reading is the same as the 1830 reading. In other cases, however, by avoiding manuscript variants, he ends up ignoring a correction that the original scribe made. For instance, in 1 Nephi 1:11 Oliver Cowdery originally wrote the pronoun *it* but then erased it:

1 Nephi 1:11–12 (lines 6–7 from page 2 of P)

```

first came & stood before my father & gave him
                bade                read <%it%>
a Book & <bade>^ him that he should ^ & it came to
pass that as he read he was filled with the spirit

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Yet Dinger represents the last part of verse 11 as follows:

and bade him that he should read [____].²⁴

24. PMs: *it*.

This implies that the 1830 typesetter made a mistake in omitting the *it* that was in P. But Oliver had actually deleted the pronoun *it* by erasure, and the 1830 typesetter read the emended text in P correctly.

Earlier, in footnote 11, we have a persistent typo that Dinger continually repeats. He sets THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI three times as THE FIRST BOOKOF NEPHI, with no space between *book* and *of*. The persistence of this typo makes one think these editions really were set this way. Apparently Dinger used his word processor's copy-and-paste options here and thus repeated the typo. This kind of error makes one doubt that this volume was properly proofread. This error was not particularly hard to catch.

In his footnotes, Dinger sets up a linear system so that he can refer, when needed, to each LDS edition according to its date of printing

without referring to any stemmatic relationship between those editions. This decision has consequences. Consider, for instance, footnote 12:

He taketh three **days**¹² journey into the wilderness with his family.

12. OMs: days; 1837: day's; 1841: follows 1830; 1902: follows the PMs; 1905: follows 1830.

Of course, OMs should be PMs. The use of the word *follows* here (or in one case, *follows the*) is less than ideal since it implies a conscious decision to follow the reading of a certain edition or manuscript. It would have been better for Dinger to say that an edition *agrees with* another edition in its reading. The agreement may just be accidental, as it is here in the reading *days* in the 1902 LDS missionary edition. In preparing the 1902 edition, the printer's manuscript was definitely not consulted. It was not even available at the time. Instead, the 1902 edition was set from a copy printed from 1879 stereotyped plates, and in most of its details it follows the 1879 edition, but in the 1 Nephi preface it deviates by accidentally omitting the apostrophe. And the printer's manuscript generally did not have apostrophes, so the agreement is purely coincidental.

The linear method, unfortunately, implies that the 1840 edition is the copytext for the 1841 edition. And everywhere the 1841 edition disagrees with the 1840 edition but agrees with its copytext, the 1837 edition, it has to be specified in Dinger's footnote because of the linearity in his footnoting system. We see this, for instance, in footnote 30:

a full account of the things which my father **hath**³⁰ written

30. 1840: had; 1841: follows 1830.

Of course, the 1841 edition actually follows its copytext, the 1837 edition.

Ignoring the RLDS Textual Tradition

This linearity in the footnoting system also means that Dinger had to avoid specifying the RLDS textual tradition because it is different in so many ways from the LDS textual tradition. The RLDS textual tradition derives from the 1840 edition, but the LDS textual tradition derives from the 1841 British edition. And both of these editions were independently set from copies of the 1837 edition, although the 1837 copy for the 1840 edition would have been edited (that is, marked up) by Joseph Smith and Ebenezer Robinson. The dates for the editions in the two textual traditions are interwoven, which means that if Dinger had specified the RLDS text, he would have continually had to refer back and forth to editions in the two textual traditions:

LDS	RLDS
A 1830	
B 1837	
	C 1840
D 1841	
E 1849	
F 1852	
	G 1858W
	H 1874R
I 1879	
J 1888	
	K 1892R
L 1902	
M 1905	
N 1906	
O 1907	
	P 1908R
Q 1911	
R 1920	
	S 1953R
T 1981	

Now consider the following example from 1 Nephi 8:18. Here's how Dinger handles it using only LDS editions:

but they would not come unto me [____].¹²⁸

128. OMs: and partake of the fruit; PMs: text removed; 1840: and partake of the fruit; 1879: follows 1830; 1920: follows 1840.

By the way, one problem here is that Dinger never distinguishes in his footnotes between the words of the text versus his statements specifying the kind of change. Thus “and partake of the fruit”, “text removed”, and “follows” are all in roman type. It would have greatly helped to have placed the words “and partake of the fruit” in italics.

Even beyond typographical issues, the linear system is difficult to manage. In fact, Dinger himself got it wrong, because the 1841, 1849, and 1852 LDS editions also read without the phrase “and partake of the fruit”, so Dinger should have replaced the reference to the 1879 edition with one to the 1841, thus “1841: follows 1830” (or even PMs, although the 1841 edition follows the 1837 edition). This ease in making errors shows just how complicated Dinger's footnoting system is. The variant specified in ATV was copied and pasted from the computerized collation, and this is what we get on page 174 (and it includes the RLDS textual tradition):

▪ **1 Nephi 8:18**

but they would not come unto me
 [and partake of the fruit 0CGHKPRST| 1ABDEFIJLMNOQ]

Now if this were redone in Dinger's system, we would get all this switching back and forth between the two textual traditions:

but they would not come unto me [____].¹²⁸

128. OMs: and partake of the fruit; PMs: text removed; 1840: and partake of the fruit; 1841: follows 1830; 1858W: follows 1840; 1879: follows 1830; 1892R: follows 1840; 1902: follows 1830; 1908R: follows 1840; 1911: follows 1830; 1920: follows 1840.

No wonder Dinger decided to avoid specifying the RLDS textual tradition. Yet in many instances, that textual tradition is very significant, and in fact many changes that were first introduced into the LDS text in 1981 appeared earlier in the 1908 RLDS edition (editors for both those editions consulted the printer's manuscript).

Ignoring Variation within an Edition

Two examples from the beginning of 1 Nephi show what happens when one ignores variants within editions. First consider how Dinger specifies the variation in tense between *call* and *called* in the preface to 1 Nephi (here I ignore footnote 16, which is irrelevant to the discussion):

They **call**¹⁵ the place Bountiful.

15. 1841: called; 1852: follows 1830.

The change from *call* to *called* was a typo made by the 1841 typesetter. It persisted into the 1849 LDS edition and into the first printing of the 1852 LDS edition (both editions were printed in Britain, as was the 1841 edition). After completing the first printing, the stereotyped plates for the 1852 LDS edition were corrected and then sheets were apparently run off for the following impression (which would appear in 1854). Even so, a few copies of the 1852 edition with the corrected sheets were bound up (thus a second printing of the 1852 edition was created). The corrections for the 1852 edition, however, were not made by consulting a copy of the 1830 edition (or even the 1837 edition), but rather a copy of the 1840 edition. Dinger's footnote, because he avoids distinguishing between different impressions, counts *call* as the 1852 reading, when in fact it is the corrected 1852 reading and it follows the 1840 edition. This is all spelled out in ATV on page 48, in the discussion and partially summarized in the variant:

- **1 Nephi preface**

*they [call 1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRST|called DE|called > call F]
the name of the place Bountiful*

The other example worth noting deals with an in-press change that was made in the 1837 edition for 1 Nephi 1:1. Here the printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition have the verb form *having*. The 1837 compositor, however, set this as *have*, and seems to have printed off about two-fifths of his copies when he caught his error and corrected *have* to *having*, but as an in-press change, which means that some 1837 copies read *having* and others read *have* in this passage. The 1840 and 1841 editions, which used the 1837 edition as copytext, here both ended up with the correct *having*. This variant is represented in ATV, on page 53, as follows:

- **1 Nephi 1:1**

*and [haveing 1|having ACDEFGHIJKLMNQRST|have > having B] seen
many afflictions in the course of my days*

But Dinger ignores the in-press change in the 1837 edition and states that the 1837 edition reads *have*, which is true for only about two-fifths of the copies:

and **having**¹⁸ seen many afflictions in the course of my days

18. OMs: haveing; 1837: have; 1840: follows 1830.

(Once more we have the incorrect OMs instead of PMs.) Here the correction in the 1837 edition is ignored (up above, it was the original state in the 1852 edition that was ignored). And the 1840 edition (as well as the 1841 edition) actually follows its copytext, a copy of the 1837 edition with the correct reading, *having*.

Compounding the Problems

Both these problems involving variation between impressions and with the relationships between the two textual traditions can be seen in the addition of the name *Moroni* that Joseph Smith supplied at the end of the extended title in the 1840 edition. Here it is valuable to keep track of the RLDS text and how it has changed, but also the corrections to the stereotyped plates for the 1852 LDS edition. Here is how the variant reads in ATV on page 34:

- **title page: at the end of the second paragraph**

*that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ
[234516A78BDEIJLMNOPQRST|MORONI CGHK|NULL > MORONI F]*

Basically, the RLDS textual tradition kept the use of the name *Moroni* on the title page, which explicitly identifies Moroni as the author of its text (which can be inferred but is left unstated in the original text) until it was removed in the 1908 RLDS edition because it was not in the printer's manuscript. Of further interest, however, is that in the 1852 edition, since *Moroni* was in the 1840 edition, it was added to the stereotyped plates and continued through impressions from those plates up into the 1870s in Utah. In the 1879 LDS edition, however, Orson Pratt removed this use of the name *Moroni* from the LDS title page. Dinger's representation of the textual history for this name (in footnote 6) is so spare that you would mistakenly think that *Moroni* is to be found only on the title page of copies of the 1840 edition:

6. 1840: MORONI; 1841: text removed.

Of course, the 1841 edition did not remove the name. Its copytext, the 1837 edition, did not have it, so there was nothing to remove. And from Dinger's description, readers would be completely unaware that all impressions of the 1852 edition but the first one have *Moroni* (readers will find it on the few copies of the second printing in 1852 and all printings from 1854 through 1877). And the 1858 Wright edition has it as well as the first two RLDS editions, in 1874 and 1892. Yes, *Moroni* first appeared in the 1840 edition, but almost everything else readers would infer about its history would be incorrect if they followed Dinger's footnote.

In sum, Dinger's critical text is, in my opinion, unusable for a careful study of the Book of Mormon text. In too many instances, his footnotes are misleading. Some of his footnotes are correct, but serious students of textual variation in the Book of Mormon will never be sure of their accuracy until they check elsewhere. By definition, being dependably precise in every detail is the very essence of any critical edition of a written text. And such is even more essential in critical editions of scripture.

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