

# Did the Author of 3 Nephi Know the Gospel of Matthew?<sup>1</sup>

Ronald V. Huggins

IN 3 NEPHI IN THE BOOK OF MORMON (hereafter BOM) the resurrected Jesus Christ repeats in large part the famous Sermon on the Mount, but this time before a New World audience. The Sermon on the Mount appears twice in the New Testament, once in Matthew and once in Luke. Luke's version is often called the Sermon on the Plain because where Matthew begins by saying that Jesus "went up into a mountain" (5:1) Luke has "he came down with them, and stood in the plain" (6:17). For the sake of simplicity I will refer to both as the Sermon on the Mount (hereafter SOM). The form of the SOM in 3 Nephi agrees with the sequence in Matthew rather than in Luke. And the language is (for the most part) identical to that of the King James Version (hereafter KJV).

## THE AGREEMENT OF 3 NEPHI WITH MATTHEW

That the 3 Nephi SOM agrees with that in Matthew but differs from that in Luke is seen from the following:

<i>Sayings</i>	<i>3 Nephi</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i>
1. Beatitudes	12:1-12	5:3-12	6:20-23
2. Salt of the earth	12:13	5:13	14:34-35

---

1. Earlier studies on the relation of 3 Nephi to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount include Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 139-54, and Stan Larson, "The Sermon on the Mount: What Its Textual Transformation Discloses Concerning the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," *Trinity Journal* 7 (Spring 1986): 23-45. See also Vernon K. Robbins, "Divine Dialogue and the Lord's Prayer: Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28 (Fall 1995): 119-46.

3. City on a hill	12:14	5:14	-
4. Candle under a bushel	12:15	5:15	11:33
5. Let your light shine	12:16	5:16	-
6. To fulfill the law	12:17	5:17	-
7. Jot and tittle	12:18	5:18	16:17
8. Obeying	12:19	5:19	-
9. More righteousness	12:20	5:20	-
10. <i>Raca</i> / fool	12:21-22	5:21-22	-
11. Offering your gift	12:23-24	5:23-24	-
12. On the way to court	12:25-26	5:25-26	12:57-59
13. Heart adultery	12:27-28	5:27-28	-
14. Cast into hell	12:29-30	5:29-30	-
15. Divorce	12:31-32	5:31-32	16:18
16. Swear not at all	12:33-37	5:33-37	-
17. Turn the other cheek	12:38-39	5:38-39	16:29
18. Your cloak also	12:40	5:40	16:29
19. The second mile	12:41	5:41	-
20. Give to the borrower	12:42	5:42	16:30
21. Love your enemies	12:43-45a	5:43-45a	6:27
22. On the just and unjust	12:45b	5:45b	-
23. Law fulfilled	12:46-47	5:46-47	-
24. Be ye perfect	12:48	5:48	6:36
25. Alms in secret	13:1-4	6:1-4	-
26. Prayer in secret	13:5-6	6:5-6	-
27. Vain repetitions	13:7-8	6:7-8	-
28. The Lord's Prayer	13:9-13	6:9-13	11:2-4
29. If you forgive ...	13:14-15	6:14-15	-
30. Fast in secret	13:16-18	6:16-18	-
31. Treasures in heaven	13:19-21	6:19-21	12:33-34
32. The single eye	13:22-23	6:22-23	11:34-36
33. God and Mammon	13:24	6:24	16:13
34. Do not worry	13:25b-34	6:25-34	12:22-31
35. Judge not	14:1-2	7:1-2	6:37-38
36. Mote and log	14:3-5	7:3-5	6:41-42
37. Pearls before swine	14:6	7:6	-
38. Ask, seek, knock	14:7-11	7:7-11	11:9-13
39. The golden rule	14:12	7:12	6:31
40. The strait gate	14:13-14	7:13-14	13:23-24
41. In sheep's clothing	14:15	7:15	-
42. By their fruits	14:16-20	7:16-20	7:43-45
43. I never knew you!	14:21-23	7:21-23	6:46
44. House on rock / sand	14:24-27	7:24-27	6:47-49

What is more where the language of parallel sayings in Matthew and Luke differ, 3 Nephi's version consistently agrees with Matthew's form rather than Luke's. Two typical examples will suffice. The first is the familiar Golden Rule:<sup>2</sup>

<i>3 Nephi</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i>
Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (14:12).	Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (7:12).	And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise (6:31).

In this case, as in many others, the language of 3 Nephi and Matthew is identical, while Luke's is conspicuously different. Some sayings have been modified to a greater or lesser extent in 3 Nephi but nevertheless still reflect closer affinity to Matthew than to Luke. The second example, the Lord's Prayer, is of this kind:

<i>3 Nephi</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i> <sup>3</sup>
Our Father which <sup>4</sup> art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.	Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.	Our Father which art in heaven, <b>Hallowed be thy name.</b>
Thy will be done in <sup>5</sup> earth as it is in heaven.	Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.	<b>Thy kingdom come.</b> Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.	Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.	<b>Give us day by day our daily bread.</b> <b>And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.</b>
And lead us not into temptation,	And lead us not into temptation,	<b>And lead us not into temptation;</b>

2. All quotations from the BOM are taken from the 1830 first edition. Chapter and verse divisions, however, conform to the modern LDS edition. In the first edition of the BOM the SOM appeared in chapters 5 and 6 of the third book of Nephi (pp. 479-85).

3. The KJV version of the Lord's Prayer (reproduced here) has been expanded somewhat in the process of textual transmission. We therefore put those portions now considered part of the original Lukan version of the prayer in bold type.

4. Recent editions of the BOM have "who" rather than "which."

5. Recent editions have "on" rather than "in."

but deliver us  
from evil. For  
thine is the  
kingdom,  
and the power,  
and the glory, for  
ever. Amen  
(13:9-13).

but deliver us  
from evil: For  
thine is the  
kingdom,  
and the power,  
and the glory, for  
ever. Amen (6:9-13).

but deliver us  
from evil (11:2-4).

Apart from the absence of the petitions for the coming of the kingdom and daily bread, the form of the Lord's Prayer in 3 Nephi agrees with Matthew's rather than with Luke's.

It is obvious from these examples that we are dealing here with one of many BOM passages where the language is clearly taken from the KJV. A standard argument accounting for this phenomenon in the BOM has been to speculate that when Joseph Smith saw that the passage before him on the gold plates was the same as some known passage of scripture he simply adopted the familiar language of the KJV in his translation. Thus in the present case it would be assumed that we are dealing with the retelling of an almost identical sermon in the New World which had already been delivered in Palestine and been preserved in Matthew. Such an explanation, however, overlooks important factors relating to the composition of Matthew, particularly its use of written sources.

It has long been recognized that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are inter-related in terms of their shared sources. Sometimes their language is identical in related passages, pointing to a common source or else to mutual dependence of some sort. Yet at other times they differ significantly in both language and chronology. By far the most common way of explaining this interrelationship by scholars today is to say, first, that Matthew and Luke had Mark as a common source. They both, in other words, knew and used Mark. It is then further argued that, given their differing versions of the infancy account and genealogy of Jesus, Luke could not have known Matthew, nor Matthew Luke. Such differences, it is urged, would be hard to explain if one gospel writer knew the other. On the other hand, there are a number of passages that Luke and Matthew both have but Mark does not. This being the case, it is necessary to suppose that, not knowing each other, Matthew and Luke must have shared another source besides Mark. This additional shared source is commonly referred to as "Q" (from the German *Quelle*, meaning "source").

Another argument commonly given for the independence of Luke and Matthew is the fact that material from Q does not always appear in the same location in Matthew and Luke. It is reasoned, in other words, that if Luke had known Matthew, or if Matthew had known Luke, they

would have consistently placed Q material (which is mostly sayings) at the same places in their narratives. They do not.

This common explanation is called the *two-source theory*, since it contends that Matthew and Luke share two common sources: Mark and Q. Further details of this theory along with a description of the arguments usually set forth in its favor may be found in any standard New Testament introduction.<sup>6</sup>

According to the two-source theory, the compositional problem faced by Matthew and Luke can be understood as follows: Imagine you are about to write a gospel. As sources on your desk you have first of all the gospel of Mark, which will provide your narrative framework but which contains relatively few sayings of Jesus. Also on your desk is another document which contains mostly sayings. Few of these, however, give any clue as to the actual setting in which they were originally uttered. Your task is to shape the two documents (along perhaps with a number of other items you have found elsewhere) into a coherent whole.

According to the dominant two-source theory, something very like this was faced by Matthew and Luke as they set about writing their gospels. Of the two, Luke took the simpler approach to incorporating Q into Mark's outline. Most of it he introduced in more or less one large block at the point in Mark's outline where Jesus has embarked on his final trip to Jerusalem (9:57-19:27 // cf. between Mark 10:45 and 46). Luke introduces Q's expanded version of the preaching of John the Baptist and the baptism and wilderness temptation of Jesus at the natural place in Mark's outline, where Mark had his own shorter version of the same events already. Luke's placement of the SOM follows immediately after the choosing of the twelve disciples. This is probably because the Q version of the SOM contained in its preamble a reference to the fact that the sermon was addressed primarily to Jesus' disciples. Scholars gather this from the fact that both Matthew and Luke take this for granted. In addition, the Q version of the SOM must have been preceded by reference to large crowds coming from various places to be healed or delivered from demons since both Matthew and Luke agree in inserting their versions almost immediately after such a statement (Luke 6:17-18 // Matt 4:23-25). Mark's parallel passage (3:7-12), which is also connected with the choosing of the twelve (vv. 13-19), would thus have provided Luke with a clue as to where to incorporate his version of the SOM. Once Luke had determined the proper location for the SOM, his placement of the material originally following

---

6. See, for example, Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. and enl'd. English ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 38-80. For a non-technical yet pleasingly comprehensive (though by now a little dated) discussion of Q, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 1-27.

the SOM in Q (i.e., the healing of the centurion's son [Luke 6:20b-6:49 + 7:1-10] and probably John the Baptist's question to Jesus and Jesus' answer and subsequent praise of John [7:18-35]) followed suit as well.<sup>7</sup> The last bit of Q material, the twelve thrones on which the apostles will eventually sit (Luke 22:28-30), is linked by Luke to Jesus' teaching on the difference between rulers of this world and rulers in the kingdom.

Matthew, in contrast to Luke's conservatism with regard to breaking up and redistributing Q material, has, in the process of developing five major dominical discourses (Matt. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25), freely rearranged Q material and supplemented it with his own special material. This rearrangement of material is not limited to Q, but extends even to reshaping Mark's narrative outline.<sup>8</sup> Part of Matthew's rationale for doing this appears to have been (among other things) his interest in structuring his gospel around significant numbers, especially threes and fives. Echoing the Trinitarian baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19 and the three-tier genealogy of 1:1-16, Matthew's entire gospel is divided into three main sections by the transitional phrase *apo tote ērxato ...* ("from that time on he [Jesus] began ...") at 4:17 and 16:20.<sup>9</sup> Following the suggestion made in 1930 by B. W. Bacon, many scholars see in Matthew's five great discourses an intentional parallel to the five books of Torah, with Jesus being represented as the new lawgiver, the new Moses.<sup>10</sup>

Some scholars have tried to dispense with Q by suggesting that Luke knew and used both Mark and Matthew.<sup>11</sup> The reason that solution is not acceptable was already explained by B. H. Streeter in the 1920s. If Luke had really

derived his material from Matthew, he must have gone through both Matthew and Mark so as to discriminate with meticulous precision between

---

7. The account of the healing of the centurion's son/servant follows close on the heels of the SOM in both Matthew and Luke, indicating that it also followed it in Q. The location of the material on John the Baptist, though less certain, is probable given the fact that Luke, consistent with his aims as outlined in Luke 1:1-4, is much less ready to break up and redistribute parts of Q than is Matthew.

8. Thus J. C. Hawkins long ago noted that in chapters 8-11 of Matthew not "much account is taken of the Marcan arrangement and order" (in E. P. Sanders, "The Argument from Order and the Relationship between Matthew and Luke," *New Testament Studies* 15 [1968-69]: 254).

9. See, for example, F. Neiryneck, "APO TOTE HPEATO and the Structure of Matthew," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 64 (1988): 21-59. For other significant threes, see J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 2d. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 165-67, and W. A. Allen, *St. Matthew*, 3d. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d. [1912]), lxiv-lxv.

10. B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Scribner's, 1930). See, more recently, Ben F. Meyer, *Five Speeches that Changed the World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), and Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

11. See Austin Farrer, "On Dispensing with Q," in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1957), 55-86.

Marcan and non-Marcan material; he must then have proceeded with the utmost care to tear every little piece of the non-Marcan material ... from the context of Mark from which it appeared in Matthew—in spite of the fact that contexts in Matthew are always exceedingly appropriate—in order to re-insert it into a different context of Mark having no special appropriateness.<sup>12</sup>

A simpler way of expressing this would be to say that (1) although it would be easy to imagine that if Matthew had Luke as one of his sources along with Mark, he might have broken down the sayings sections in Luke (especially the large central section 9:57-19:27) in order to scatter them about in different locations in his gospel in service of his own redactional interests; and (2) it would be harder to imagine and for Luke to accomplish having Matthew before him to draw the various sayings that Matthew has scattered throughout his gospel together (some of them appear outside the boundaries of the five main discourses: Matt. 15:14; 17:20; 19:28; 19:30; 22:1-10) in order to deposit them for no apparent reason in a lump in the middle of his gospel. What conceivable reason, in addition, could Luke have had for dismantling Matthew's beautiful SOM or for replacing Matthew's fuller version of the Lord's Prayer with his own more clipped one? Because of considerations such as these, scholars have rejected the idea that Luke had Matthew as one of his sources.

On the other hand, because of this difference between the way Luke and Matthew arrange their common "second-source" material, I have also attempted in an earlier study to dispense with Q by proposing that while Luke did not know Matthew, Matthew knew Luke.<sup>13</sup> But whether Matthew knew Luke, or Matthew and Luke knew Q, it is clear that it was Matthew who aggressively restructured and expanded the traditional material that came into his hands in the interest of the design and message of his gospel.

#### THE FORM OF Q'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Given Luke's overall conservatism, compared to Matthew's, it is scarcely surprising that the majority of scholars today believe that Luke reflects more accurately both the original order and the original form of Q. This general conclusion includes the Q version of the SOM as well. Hans Dieter Betz, for example, describes the view "most agreeable to present scholarship" as follows: "There was one source Q that contained an early form of the Sermon (Q-Sermon), identical, or nearly identical, with Luke's SP [Sermon on the Plain] (Q-SP). Matthew's SM [SOM]

12. B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 161.

13. Ronald V. Huggins, "Matthean Posteriority: A Preliminary Proposal," *Novum Testamentum* 34 (1992): 1-22.

would then be this evangelist's revision and expansion of Q-SP, for which he used other special traditions (*Sondergut*).<sup>14</sup> The extent to which Matthew's SOM differs both in length and arrangement from Luke's is seen in the following, which follows the order and extent of Luke:

	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Matthew</i>
1. The Beatitudes	6:20-23	5:3-12
2. But woe to the one ...	6:24-26	-
3. Love your enemies	6:27-28	5:44
4. Turn the other cheek	6:29a	5:39
5. Thy cloak also	6:29b	5:40
6. Give to the borrower	6:30	5:42
7. The golden rule	6:31	7:12
8. If you love those ...	6:32-33	5:46-47
9. If you lend ...	6:34-35	-
10. Be ye merciful/perfect	6:36	5:48
11. Judge not	6:37	7:1-2a
12. Give and it will be	6:38a	-
13. The same measure	6:38b	7:2b
14. Blind leading blind	6:39	15:14
15. Not above his teacher	6:40	10:24-25
16. Mote and log	6:41-42	7:3-5
17. By their fruit	6:43-44	7:17-18
18. Heart treasury	6:45	12:35
19. Lord! Lord!	6:46	7:21
20. House on rock/sand	6:47-49	7:24-27

If Matthew's SOM derives from a Q SOM "identical, or nearly identical" to Luke's, as common scholarly opinion suggests, or if he derived it from Luke and then built it up with material from other places in Luke along with additional material of unknown origin, as I have elsewhere argued, then it is clear that to a great extent the form and arrangement of the Matthean SOM comes not from Jesus but from Matthew.

#### DID THE AUTHOR OF 3 NEPHI KNOW MATTHEW?

This brings us back to the question raised in the title: "Did the author of 3 Nephi know the gospel of Matthew?" Obviously the Nephi who recorded the post-resurrection, New World version of the SOM could not have known the gospel of Matthew. But if Matthew is responsible for the

14. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 42-43.



arrangement of his gospel's SOM, then it would also seem to be impossible for the author of 3 Nephi 12-14 to produce those chapters without knowing the gospel of Matthew. The answer to the question in the title therefore is both *no* and *yes*. *No*, Nephi did not know, could not have known, the gospel of Matthew. *Yes*, the author of 3 Nephi, presumably Joseph Smith, Jr., did know, must have known, the gospel of Matthew.

This conclusion strengthens arguments set forth in certain earlier studies. Stan Larson, for example, in his detailed study of the textual history of Matthew's SOM as it relates to the 3 Nephi version, concluded that consistently

the BOM blindly follows the KJV at the precise point where the KJV falls into error due to mistranslating the Greek or translating late and derivative Greek texts which are demonstrably secondary developments in the textual tradition. The evidence leads one inexorably to the conclusion (at least for the section comprising 3 Nephi 12-14) that the term "translation" is inappropriate, since nowhere in the BOM version of Jesus' masterful sermon is there any indisputable evidence of being a translation from an ancient document.<sup>15</sup>

Given the thoroughness of Larson's treatment, there is no reason to dwell on questions relating to the textual criticism of the SOM here. Those arguments, in any case, touch only the issue of the transmission of Matthew in its final form, while our discussion deals with an earlier phase—the process of composition through which Matthew originally came into its final form. Given Larson's article alone, some might continue to appeal (if not quite legitimately at least semi-plausibly) to the argument that Smith, upon realizing that he was encountering a version of the SOM on the gold plates that was for all intents and purposes identical to Matthew's, simply chose to translate it in the familiar language of the KJV. In the process, the imposing evidence presented by Larson could be dismissed by (1) attempting to cast doubt on current text-critical methods, or by (2) suggesting that Smith's concept of "translation" was flexible enough to render insignificant those cases where he inadvertently incorporated inferior KJV readings into the BOM. Is it really so heinous, it might thus be argued, that the ending of the Lord's Prayer—"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"—though a late addition to Matthew's version and therefore probably absent from the lips of the resurrected Lord as he taught the Nephites, ended up in the BOM? If what we have argued here is correct, however, the Lord was not simply repeating a sermon which he had previously delivered but was organizing his sayings into a form that agreed with the organization Matthew would independently give them several decades later. While "anything is possible

---

15. Larson, "Sermon on the Mount," 43.

with God," such an explanation makes a sham of all textual and source-critical studies.

RECONTEXTUALIZING MATTHEW'S SOM  
IN 3 NEPHI'S NEW WORLD SETTING

Once it is recognized that 3 Nephi's SOM had as its principle source Matthew's SOM in the language of the KJV, a number of things become clear. Not only does it explain why 3 Nephi's version contains the textual corruptions of the KJV version of Matthew's SOM, and why Matthew's organization of the sayings of Jesus appears in a document ostensibly written decades before the gospel of Matthew and in a different hemisphere, it also explains why certain changes were made and why certain other points where changes were not made introduce significant historical and narrational inconsistencies.

While the reasons for some of the changes are not immediately apparent, others seem obvious. The replacement of KJV Matthew's "farthing" (5:26) with "senine" (12:26), for example, was a move taken to introduce verisimilitude, the senine being "the smallest Nephite measure of gold (Alma 11:3, 15-19)."<sup>16</sup> Further in the KJV Matt 5:20 Matthew had:

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3 Nephi 12:20b changes this to:

... for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The shared language of these two passages and their identical placement in relation to Matthew's sequence indicate that 3 Nephi's version was derived from Matthew. Krister Stendahl's attribution of the absence in 3 Nephi 12:20b of any mention of Scribes and Pharisees to the "truly refreshing and welcome and unique," "non-anti-Semitic" character of the Mormon tradition<sup>17</sup> is kind but almost certainly not correct. The more ob-

---

16. Robert Timothy Updegraff, "Sermon on the Mount," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1299. It is also possible that it was intended to avoid mention being made of the coinage of the Roman Empire to people who had come to the Western hemisphere long before that empire existed. But this is less certain since "farthing" was the name of the English quarter-penny used by the KJV in this instance to translate the Greek *kordantēs*, which refers to the Roman *quadrans*.

17. Stendahl, "Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," 151.

vious explanation is that Scribes and Pharisees were both bodies in Judaism which arose long after Lehi departed from Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. It is probably with this same motive that 3 Nephi 12:46-47 has also been changed, with the result that the double reference to the *publicani* ("publicans") in Matthew 5:46-47 has been removed. It is not because of the "non-anti-Publicanic" character of the Mormon tradition that they are not mentioned, but rather because of the need to remove reference to a class of persons unknown to first-century Nephites. Another example of this is the removal of mention of Jerusalem in 3 Nephi's parallel to Matthew 5:34-35:

*Matthew 5: 34-36a*

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head ...

*3 Nephi 12:34-36a*

But verily, verily I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth for it [is] his footstool; neither shalt thou swear by the head ...

Even more interesting are those instances where we might have expected such changes to be made but they were not. Matthew's reference to *synagogues* in 6:2 and 5 is retained in 3 Nephi 13:2 and 5. While the BOM mentions the existence in the New World of "synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews" (Alma 16:13), it is certain that synagogues did not exist as an institution early enough for Lehi and his family to carry knowledge of them to the New World prior to the Babylonian exile. The generally accepted theory of their origin is that they arose in Exilic or early Post-exilic times as a compensatory response to the destruction of Solomon's temple (and therefore after the departure of Lehi). But actual evidence for their existence even that early is entirely lacking.<sup>18</sup> It was in fact only on the eve of the New Testament period that the synagogue began to come into its own as an established institution within Judaism.<sup>19</sup> By incorporating unchanged Matthew's passages about what hypocrites do when praying and giving alms "in the synagogues, and in the streets," 3 Nephi seems to imply that identical institutions inexplicably emerged independently in both the New World and Palestine. This becomes especially striking if the sounding of a trumpet to announce the hypocrites' giving of alms (Matt. 6:2 / 3 Ne. 13:2) was an

18. See "Synagogue," in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.*, ed. Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green (New York: Macmillan, 1996).

19. For a discussion of the relevant evidence, see Howard Clark Kee, "Defining the First-Century CE Synagogue: Problems and Progress," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 481-500.

actual first-century practice (rather than merely Jesus' scathing satire on the general desire of hypocrites to make sure people see them doing good).

One might also have expected that the Aramaic word *raca* (Matt. 5:22 // 3 Ne. 12:22) would have been changed. To be sure, Imperial Aramaic was known in Palestine prior to the time of Lehi's departure, but it had not yet become the common language of Palestine, as it had by Jesus' day.<sup>20</sup> That would occur, again, only after the Exile. It seems unlikely in view of this that the Nephites could have independently come to use the Aramaic insult *raca!* against people they did not like in the same way the native Aramaic-speaking Palestinians did.

Along these same lines we might ask if Nephites would have understood what the resurrected Jesus meant by not being able to serve both God and *mammon* (Matt. 6:24 // 3 Ne. 13:24).<sup>21</sup> Would that word have communicated the same thing to the Nephites, cut off as they were for centuries from the Near-Eastern environment, as it did to the first-century audience of Matthew?

#### CONCLUSION

The version of the SOM presented in 3 Nephi closely follows the form and arrangement given in Matthew 5-7. The claim on the part of 3 Nephi to represent an independent witness to this teaching of Jesus rests on the assumption that it was Jesus who organized the material into the form in which we now find it in both the gospel of Matthew and 3 Nephi. Current scholarship on Matthew, however, indicates that this is not the case, that indeed Matthew contributed significantly to the shaping of his version of the SOM. If this assessment is correct, it is no longer possible to regard 3 Nephi 12-14 as a record of an actual sermon that was delivered before first-century Nephites by the resurrected Jesus, since Nephi could not have known Matthew. Rather, the 3 Nephi SOM was derived from Matthew (in the particular form given it by the KJV), after which certain minor changes were made with a view toward assimilating it to its New World setting.

---

20. See Joseph Fitzmyer's "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 501-31.

21. *Mammon* is a semitic word that has simply been transliterated into Greek in the gospels as *mamēnas* (pointing to the Aramaic form). Its meaning in both Aramaic and Hebrew seems to have been simply "wealth" or "property" without a specifically negative connotation.