

Were Biblical Commentaries Used in the Book of Mormon Translation?”

A [study at BYU](#)¹ already found powerful evidence that he was utilizing Adam Clarke’s biblical commentary during his Bible translation. So naturally, some are proposing that an interesting area of study would be to explore whether any commentaries might have been used to render various bible verses and chapters in the Book of Mormon. Randall Bowen suggested this sort of study [HERE](#).²

I would be very interested in such study because I know of one potential evidence that Joseph *was* using some kind of similar source during the Book of Mormon translation. It comes from 2 Nephi 12:16 where a version of Isaiah 2 is quoted. The KJV says “*upon all the ships of tarshish*” but many commentaries and family bibles of the day noted that the Septuagint says “*upon all the ships of the sea.*” 2 Nephi 12:16 happens to have included both. Although in the past believers have cited this as evidence of a more ancient version of the text, caution is now being offered even by believers (see [HERE](#)³). In addition, starting toward the bottom of pg 159 of the Dialogue article [HERE](#)⁴, a very plausible suggestion is made by Huggins as to how the differing Septuagint version could have come about via an error during the Greek translation/copying. And if it did come about during the Greek translation, then its insertion into the text actually creates more problems for the Book of Mormon's claims, because it shows that someone was using sources that didn't exist in Nephi's day. Huggins also proposes mechanisms by which someone in Joseph's day could have encountered this sort of information even without having access to the Septuagint. It notes several commentaries of the day that noted this difference of translation in the Septuagint, and also notes that some family Bibles of the day included footnotes that noted this difference. Joseph also could have encountered it during some Bible study/sermon.

¹ “A Recently Recovered Source,” Haley Wilson and Thomas Wayment. *BYU Journal of Undergraduate Research*. <http://jur.byu.edu/?p=21296>

² <https://wheatandtares.org/2018/01/18/40843/>

³ “Upon all the Ships of the Sea, and Upon All the Ships of Tarshish”: Revisiting 2 Nephi 12:16 and Isaiah 2:16.” Dana M. Pike and David Rolph Seely. *Neal A Maxwell Institute. Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/2 (2005): 12-25, 67-71. <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/14/2/S00005-50c257241c7d12Pike:Seely.pdf>

⁴ "Without a Cause" and "Ships of Tarshish": A Possible Contemporary Source for Two Unexplained Readings from Joseph Smith. Ronald V. Huggins. https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V36N01_171.pdf

Another possible instance where a commentary may have influenced the Book of Mormon text is when “*without a cause*” is omitted from the Sermon on the Mount (3 Nephi 12:22/Matthew 5:22). I know of two commentaries that suggest that this line shouldn’t be in the text. One is Adam Clarke’s ([HERE](#)⁵), and another is John Wesley’s ([HERE](#)⁶). Both are from the Methodist tradition that Joseph was most interested in.

Haley Lemmon, who along with Thomas Wayment produced the study noted at the start of this document, did a podcast in early 2018 where she notes a couple of other potential links between Adam Clarke’s commentary and the Book of Mormon. One is Isaiah 50:2/2 Nephi 7:2, where the Book of Mormon’s addition of “*the waters are dried up*” follows what [Clarke’s commentary](#)⁷ suggests is in the Septuagint. Another is Isaiah 53:6/Mosiah 14:6 where [Clarke’s commentary](#)⁸ specifically suggests that “iniquity” should be plural “iniquities,” which is a change the Book of Mormon makes.

I wonder if more potential parallels could be found in other commentaries or family Bible’s of the time?

⁵ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/matthew/5.htm>

⁶ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/wes/matthew/5.htm>

⁷ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/isaiah/50.htm>

⁸ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/isaiah/53.htm>