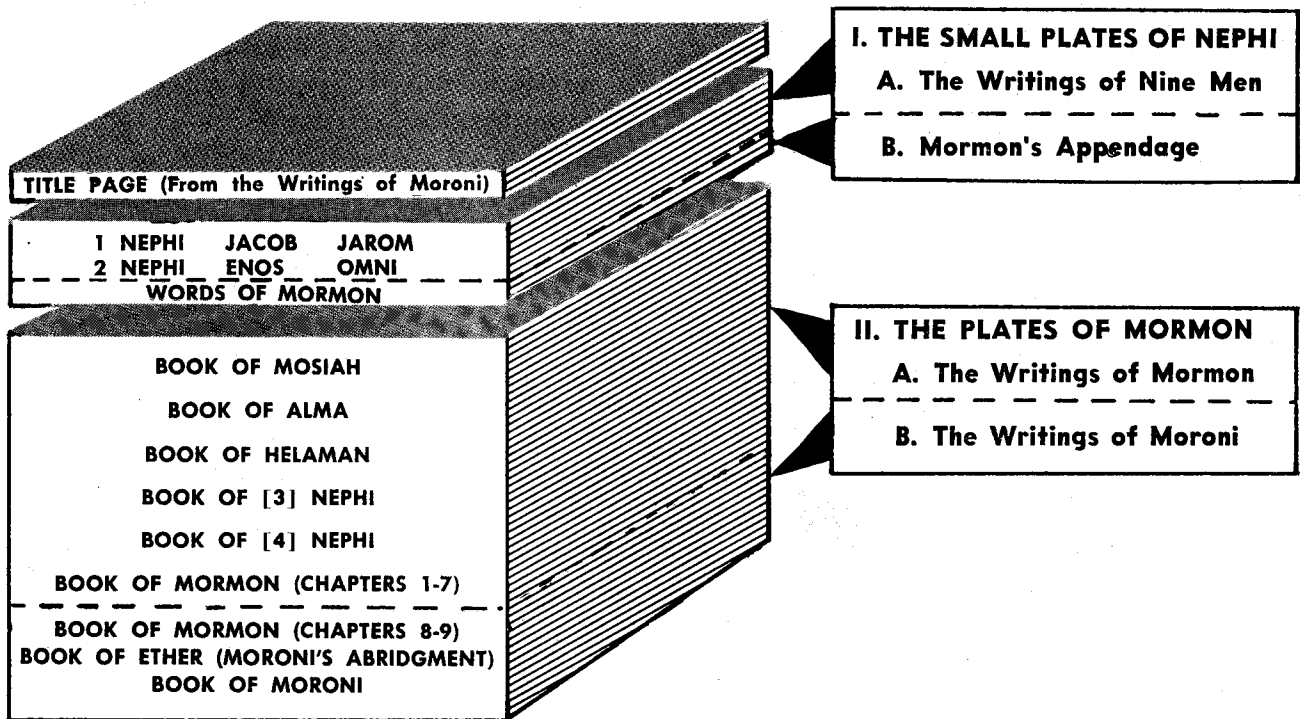


STORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES

*An Analysis of the Sources and Structure
of the Sacred Record*



By

ELDIN RICKS

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PREFACE

Elder Eldin Ricks, my colleague in the Division of Religion at Brigham Young University, is a close student of the Book of Mormon. He has written helps of great value to the teacher of the Nephite record. Now he favors us with a study of the formation of the sacred volume that should prove of great interest. It is a useful addition to our Book of Mormon literature and I recommend the study of it by teachers and students alike.

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STORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES

An Analysis of the Sources and Structure of the Sacred Record

The Large Plates of Nephi

The fourth century A. D. was a century of crisis in ancient America. It was a century of conflict between the Nephites and Lamanites, two rival factions that had inhabited the Western World for nearly a thousand years. During this tumultuous period a Nephite prophet, named Mormon, became custodian of a certain great record, engraved on sheets of metal, that had been handed down by his ancestors from their beginnings as a nation.¹ We refer to this record as the *Large Plates of Nephi*. Mormon explains, as follows, the circumstances surrounding his appointment to add the history of his generation to the *Large Plates of Nephi*:

“And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe; Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age to go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people. And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; *and ye shall engrave on the plates of*

*Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.”*²

In due time Mormon did as he was instructed. He obtained the *Large Plates of Nephi* from their repository in the Hill Shim and engraved on them the history of his times. This history turned out to be the tragic tale of his nation's downfall. When he was finished with his work the *Large Plates of Nephi* included the books of Lehi, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, [3] Nephi, [4] Nephi, and Mormon. Altogether they spanned Nephite history from about 600 B. C. to 385 A. D.

The Book of Lehi section of the plates deserves special consideration.³ In Joseph Smith's preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon he explains the loss of the first 116 manuscript pages of his translation and identifies the lost part as an abridgment of the Book of Lehi. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 10, verse 41, we learn, in addition, that this missing portion extended to the reign of King Benjamin. It may then be said that the Book of Lehi covered Nephite history from the time of Lehi, who left Jerusalem about 600 B. C., to the opening of the Book of Mosiah, which, for practical purposes, was B. C. 130.⁴

It is noteworthy that during the early part of

²Mormon 1:2-4. Italics are ours.

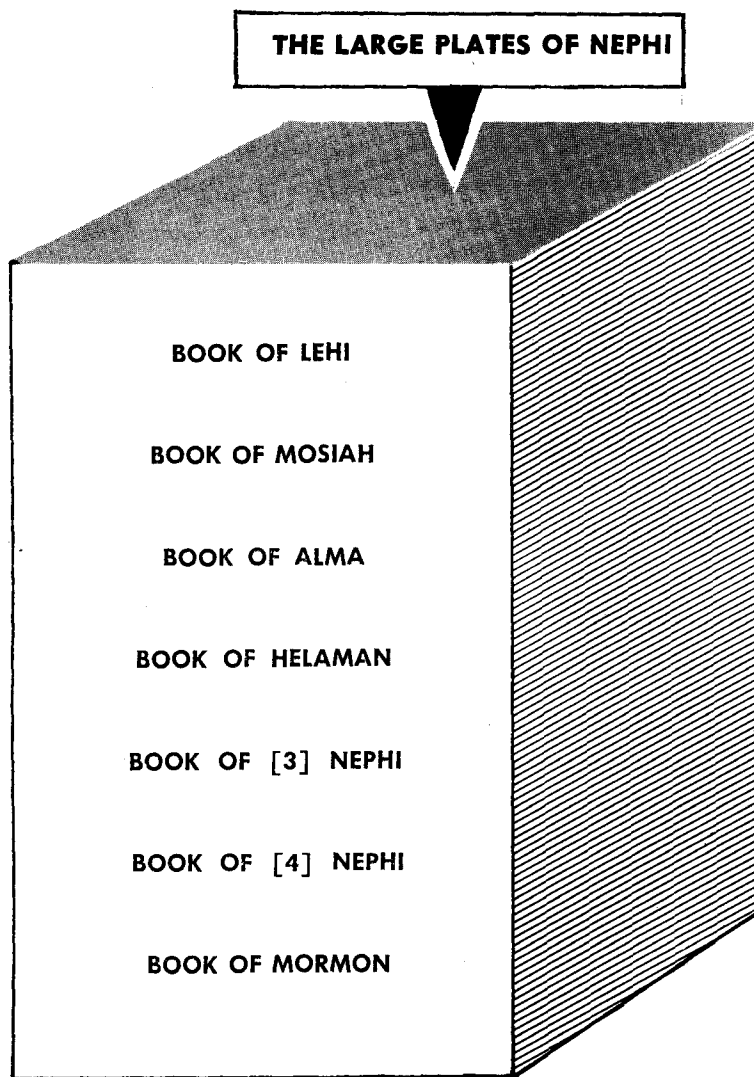
³The Book of Lehi name may have originated with Lehi's journal or record that Nephi transcribed at the first of his *Large Plates of Nephi* (1 Nephi 19:1).

⁴Since Lehi, himself, lived but a fraction of this extensive period (2 Nephi 4:12) the Book of Lehi—like the later books of Alma, Helaman, and [4] Nephi—necessarily comprised the writings of a number of historians.

¹1 Nephi 9:2-4 and 19:1-4; 2 Nephi 5:28-29, 33; Jacob 3:13 and 7:26; Omni, v. 11; Words of Mormon, vs. 10-11; Mosiah 1:16; Alma 37:1-2; 3 Nephi 5:10 and 26:7; Mormon 1:1-4, 2:17-18, and 6:6.

Nephite history, which means during the Book of Lehi period, the *Large Plates of Nephi* formed a political and civil history, "an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions"⁵ of the nation. In time, however, the secular character of the record was altered to include religious history also. This change came about at least as early as the time of Mosiah II—perhaps earlier. Especially significant in

this shift may have been the refusal of Nephihah I, the second chief Judge of the Nephite republic, to accept the record,⁶ from which time forth it stayed in the hands of the prophets. The point we wish to stress is that, whereas the Book of Lehi portion of the *Large Plates of Nephi* was mainly a secular history, the rest of the record was religious as well as secular. This fact assumes importance later in our story.



⁵1 Nephi 9:4. Compare Jacob 1:1-3 and Jarom, v. 14.

⁶Alma 50:37-38.

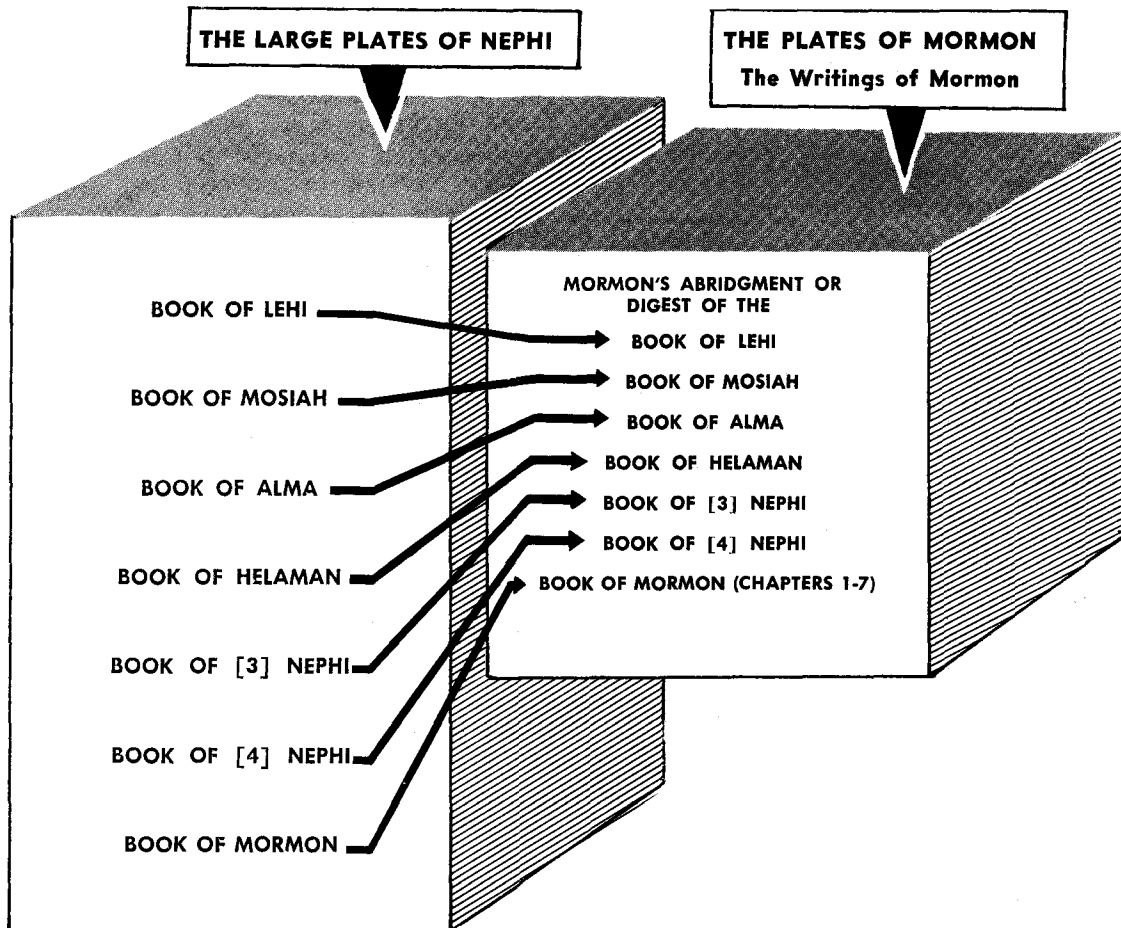
The Plates of Mormon — a Digest of the Large Plates of Nephi

At or near the close of his literary efforts on the *Large Plates of Nephi* Mormon received the inspiration to write a small digest of the entire record. For this purpose he formed a separate metal volume. We judge that he did so in some degree of secrecy as he employed no craftsmen to make it but constructed it, he says, "with mine own hands."⁷ On these plates, which we call the *Plates of Mormon*, he carefully engraved, in his own words and style of writing, a summary of the entire history of his ancestors. He even summarized the history of his own generation that he had personally inscribed at the end of the *Large Plates of Nephi*.⁸ In the midst of his condensation of Third Nephi he paused to make the following explanation of his work:

"And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have

gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to their faith, should make a record of these things which have been done—Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time. Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day; And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes. . . . I am Mormon, and a pure descendent of Lehi. . . ."¹⁰

In a later period Joseph Smith was to receive and translate the Plates of Mormon—the abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi—but not the original Large Plates of Nephi. This fact should be kept clearly in mind as we proceed.



⁷3 Nephi 5:11.

⁸Mormon 2:18 and 5:9.

⁹Mormon's abridgment of his own history apparently comprises Mormon, chapters 1-5. Chapters 6 and 7, which contain an account of the fateful outcome of the Hill Cumorah battle,

were written after the *Large Plates of Nephi* were buried (Mormon 6:6) and, hence, strictly speaking, could not have been part of the abridgment. For convenience, however, in the diagrams presented herein, we represent Mormon's abridgment of his own history as embracing Mormon, chapters 1-7.

¹⁰3 Nephi 5:14-17, 20.

The Small Plates of Nephi

One day while Mormon was working on his digest he discovered in his library of ancient records a little volume of the prophetic writings of his early forefathers.¹¹ An examination of its contents revealed that it had been started by the same Prophet Nephi who originally formed the *Large Plates of Nephi*. Because of its brevity we call it the *Small Plates of Nephi*. When Joseph Smith received the *Plates of Mormon* the *Small Plates of Nephi* were attached to them. It is important, therefore, that we know something about them.

Soon after the arrival of the original colony from Jerusalem, probably about 590 B. C., the young Prophet Nephi was commanded by the Lord to prepare a record for the history of his people. This was the *Large Plates of Nephi* that we have already discussed. Then, about twenty years later, the Lord commanded him to prepare the *Small Plates of Nephi* as an exclusive religious record. His explanation of this new task is found in 2 Nephi 5:28-33 of the translated *Small Plates of Nephi*.

“And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem. And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far. And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people. Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things. And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God. And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates. And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates.”

In the fulfillment of the religious purpose of the *Small Plates of Nephi* the record may be said to be

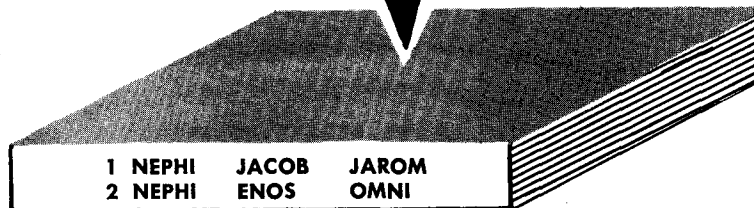
indebted to an ancient volume that the original colony brought with them from Jerusalem. This earlier work, which we know of as the *Brass Plates of Laban*, evidently set the pattern for the Nephite practice of preserving their most precious writings on metal. Also it appears to have established the language pattern for at least some of these works.¹² Most especially the influence of the *Brass Plates of Laban* is to be noted in respect to the contents of the plates we are discussing. Of the 132 pages (English language edition) that comprise the translation of the *Small Plates of Nephi* nearly forty-five pages are directly or indirectly related to the *Brass Plates of Laban*. About thirty-one pages are quoted from them verbatim.

A singular aspect of the *Small Plates of Nephi* is that (in terms of the translated work) Nephi and his brother, Jacob, inscribed 125½ of its 132 pages, and the seven record keepers who followed them during the next three hundred years or so averaged less than a page each. Nor were they necessarily lacking in things prophetic to engrave on the plates. Jarom, for instance, one of the seven, alludes to his prophecies and revelations¹³ but does not relate them.

He rather indicates that his primary purpose in reference to the plates was simply to preserve the family genealogy.¹⁴ Why they did not add more metal sheets to the book in order to write as extensively as they chose, we can only guess. Very likely they looked up-

on the volume as pre-eminently the private work of the two illustrious prophet brothers of the original colony and, in consequence, felt that it would be presumptuous to altar the character of their work by adding to its pages. Whether or not this be the correct explanation, since they had no revelation authorizing them to enlarge it with more sheets they let it strictly alone. The last writer, Amaleki, merely comes to the end of the volume with the abrupt announcement that “. . . these plates are full. And I make an end of my speaking.” Thereafter religious as well as secular history was entered upon the *Large Plates of Nephi*.

THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI The Writings of Nine Men



¹¹Words of Mormon, v. 3.

¹²Mosiah 1:4. Compare 1 Nephi 1:2 and Mormon 9:32-33.

¹³Jarom, v. 2.

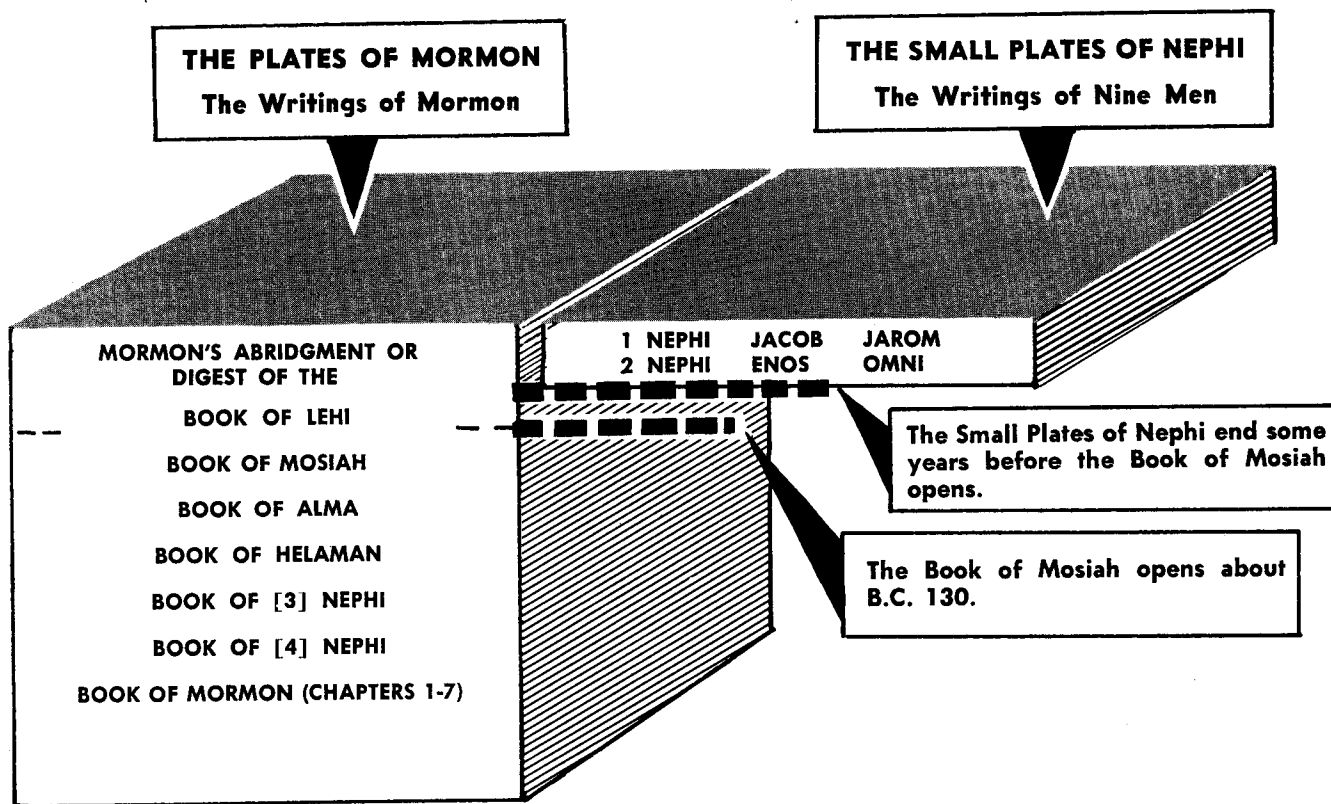
¹⁴Jarom, v. 1. Compare Omni, v. 1.

The Book of Lehi and the Small Plates of Nephi

Mormon's purpose in writing a synopsis of his ancestors' great history was, in the words of his son Moroni, "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations."¹⁵ In view of such a lofty religious goal we are not surprised to find that his abridgment (that is, the part that we have in translated form) abounds in prophecies, missionary experiences, doctrinal discourses, and miraculous happenings. Even the fascinating stories of war, political upheaval, and such that he selected to condense and pass on to us carry some faith-promoting lesson. Nor was it hard to draw such items from the combined secular and religious portion of the *Large Plates of Nephi*, which means from the Book of Mosiah to the end. It must have been considerably more difficult, however, to glean illustrations from the Book of Lehi portion of the plates in support of his objective; for, as we have already observed, the Book of Lehi was almost exclusively a political and civil record. We can well

appreciate his satisfaction, therefore, when, just as he was nearing the close of his abridgment of the Book of Lehi,¹⁶ he discovered the *Small Plates of Nephi* and learned that they formed a religious work of the Book of Lehi period. The thing that pleased him about the plates, he says, was their "prophecies of the coming of Christ."¹⁷ And no wonder. This was exactly the kind of evidence for the messiahship of Jesus that he was seeking for his own record. What was he to do? Could he discard his abridgment of the Book of Lehi and substitute the *Small Plates of Nephi*?

Before we consider what Mormon finally did with the volume that he found we should note that the *Small Plates of Nephi*, which had been kept by a private line of record keepers, extended from the time of Nephi to the *early* reign of King Benjamin. In contrast, the Book of Lehi, which had been written by an entirely different line of record keepers,¹⁸ extended from the time of Nephi to the *late* reign of the same King Benjamin.¹⁹



¹⁵Title page.
¹⁶See discussion on pages 3 and 4, and then compare Words of Mormon, v. 3.
¹⁷Words of Mormon, v. 4.
¹⁸Jarom, v. 14; Omni, v. 11.

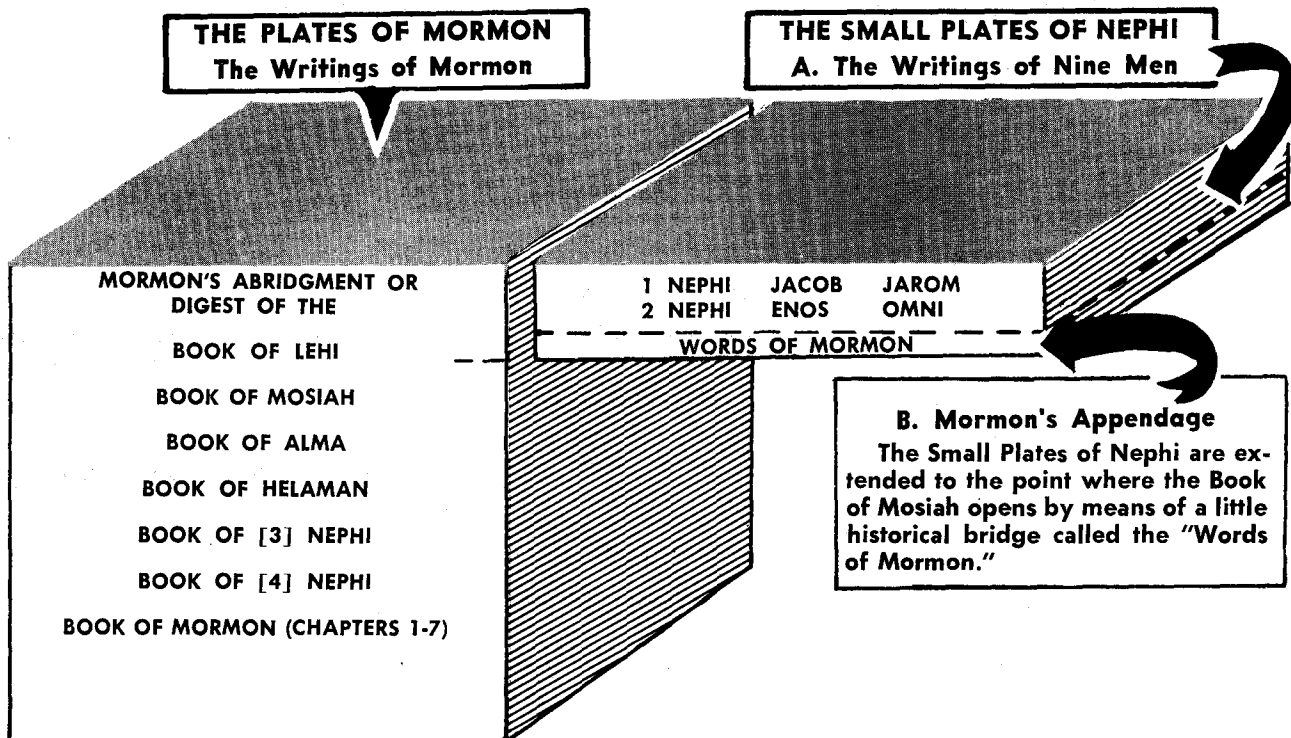
¹⁹That the Book of Lehi ended in the late reign of King Benjamin is based on the necessary assumption that it closed at the point where the next book, the Book of Mosiah, begins; and the Book of Mosiah begins only shortly before Benjamin's retirement from the throne (Mosiah 1:9; 2:30).

Mormon Adds a Tiny Historical Bridge to the Small Plates of Nephi

To learn what Mormon did with the *Small Plates of Nephi* we must now turn to an intriguing little section that he wrote late in life. The year was 385 A.D., and Mormon was seventy-four.²⁰ It was then that he took the *Small Plates of Nephi*, that he had found earlier, and added a little appendage to the end of them,²¹ and entitled it, the Words of Mormon. The opening verse betrays the late period of his writing, "And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record which I have been making into the hands of my son Moroni, behold I have witnessed almost all the destruction of my people, the Nephites" (verse 1). Quite plainly the months or years of careful composing and tedious engraving of his abridgment were at an end when he inscribed these lines.

Interestingly enough, after explaining in this appendage how he had earlier found the precious little record (verse 3), why he treasured it (verse 4), and how he now felt impressed to include it with his own metal book (verses 6-7), he proceeded, in a few short paragraphs, to give the highlights of King Benjamin's reign. There can be but one explanation for his adding this historical appendage to the ancient *Small Plates of Nephi*. It was necessary as a bridge

between the point in the early lifetime of King Benjamin where the *Small Plates of Nephi* end and the point in the later lifetime of Benjamin where the Book of Mosiah begins. It was necessary, that is, if the *Small Plates of Nephi* were to serve as a possible substitute for, or complete historical supplement to, the secular Book of Lehi. Perhaps from Mormon's point of view his action, then and there, made the Book of Lehi the supplement and the *Small Plates of Nephi* the real history of the early period; for by integrating the *Small Plates of Nephi* with the Book of Mosiah he now had a continuous record of the religious writings of his people from the days of the Prophet Nephi down to his own day. Nor did he rely upon his memory for the data to fill the gap between the two records. As he shifts from the explanatory part of his Words of Mormon to the history part he announces, "And now I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record, which I take from the plates of Nephi . . ." (verse 9). We understand this simply to mean that he returned to his basic source book, the *Large Plates of Nephi*, to obtain the information for the historical notes that comprise the little bridge that follows in verses 9-18. (Note especially verse 16.)



²⁰Mormon was born about 311 A.D. See Mormon 2:2.
²¹Notwithstanding the fact that Amaleki, the last writer of the original *Small Plates of Nephi*, closed the volume with the words, ". . . and these plates are full. And I make an end of my speaking" (Omni, v. 30), we are still obliged to conclude that Mormon added his "Words of Mormon" to the *Small Plates of Nephi*. Whether he did so on a cover sheet,

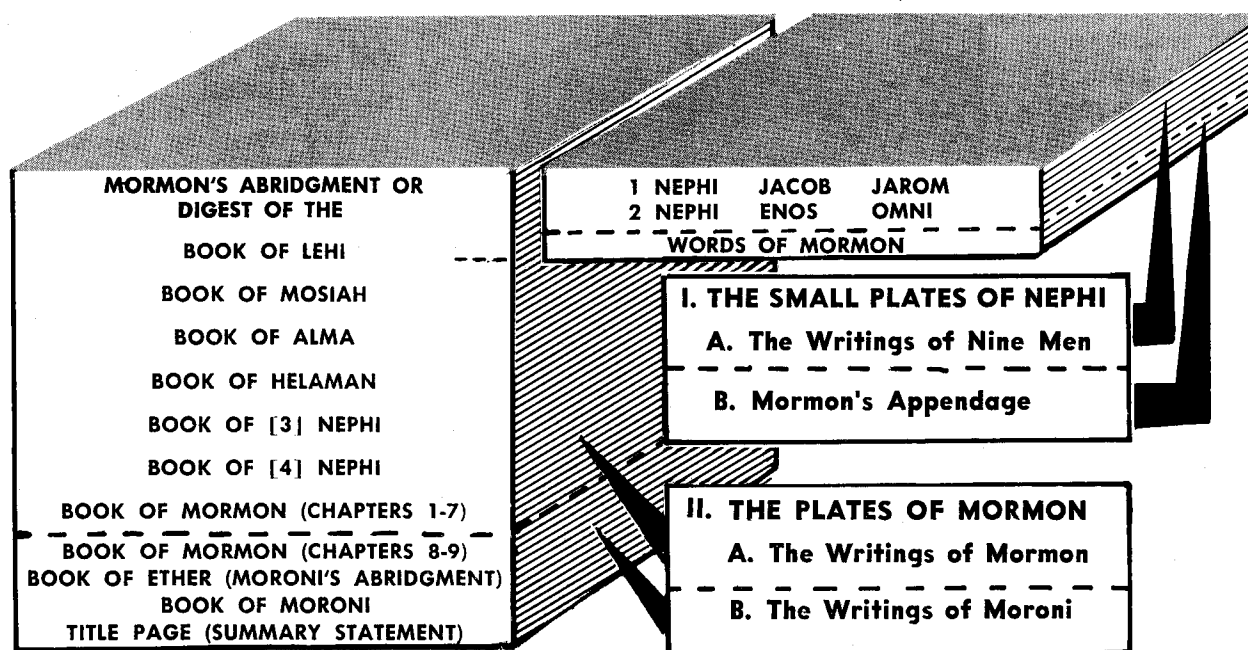
which may have been employed to protect the sacred engravings, or whether he simply inserted an extra leaf or found and utilized a little unused space at the end of the record, there can be little question but that he added his appendage to the original *Small Plates of Nephi*. This seems to be confirmed by his statement, "Wherefore, I chose these things to finish my record upon them . . ." (Words of Mormon, v. 5).

Moroni's Contribution to the Sacred Record

After Mormon had bridged the historical gap between the two records—and just before the Hill Cumorah massacre crushed the Nephite nation forever—Mormon deposited the *Large Plates of Nephi* in the Hill Cumorah and passed on to his son, Moroni, the *Plates of Mormon* together with the *Small Plates of Nephi*.²² Then for sixteen years the record is strangely silent. Suddenly, about 401 A.D., Moroni writes a little postscript to his father's account lamenting his nation's downfall, his father's death, and his own intense loneliness.²³ Intermittently during the next twenty years he made other contributions to the record. At length, when he ceased to write, about 421 A.D., he had made four distinct additions to the volume. These were: (1) Certain reflections and

prophecies that comprise chapters eight and nine of Mormon; (2) The Book of Ether, a thumb-nail sketch or abridgment of the record of a long extinct nation, called the Jaredites, whose ruins the Nephites discovered about B.C. 121;²⁴ (3) The Book of Moroni, a miscellany of epistles, exhortations and other items pertaining to the discipline and doctrine of the Nephite Church; (4) a descriptive summary statement that modernly forms the title page of the translated volume.²⁵

Whether Moroni attached the *Small Plates of Nephi* to the top or the bottom of the *Plates of Mormon* or inserted them somewhere in between is a matter of conjecture. No attempt is made herein to illustrate the several possibilities.



²²Mormon 6:6.

²³Mormon 8:1-6 ff.

²⁴Ether 1:1-2 and Mosiah 8:7-9 ff.

²⁵See page 14.

The Sealed Plates

An air of mystery surrounds the final development in the history of the formation of the sacred record. Sometime during the thirty-six year period that followed the Hill Cumorah battle of 385 A.D. Moroni added another group of plates to the compilation. We call these the *Sealed Plates*. Moroni addressed specific instructions to the latter-day translator of the Book of Mormon not to attempt to translate this section.²⁶ The contents of this record will be revealed when the world is spiritually prepared, Moroni affirmed; but that day still lies ahead. He speaks of the section as follows:

“And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen; and they were forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he should be lifted up upon the cross. . . . And after Christ truly had showed himself unto his people he commanded that they should be made manifest. And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth. Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared. Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters,

according to the commandment of the Lord. For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord. And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I mani-

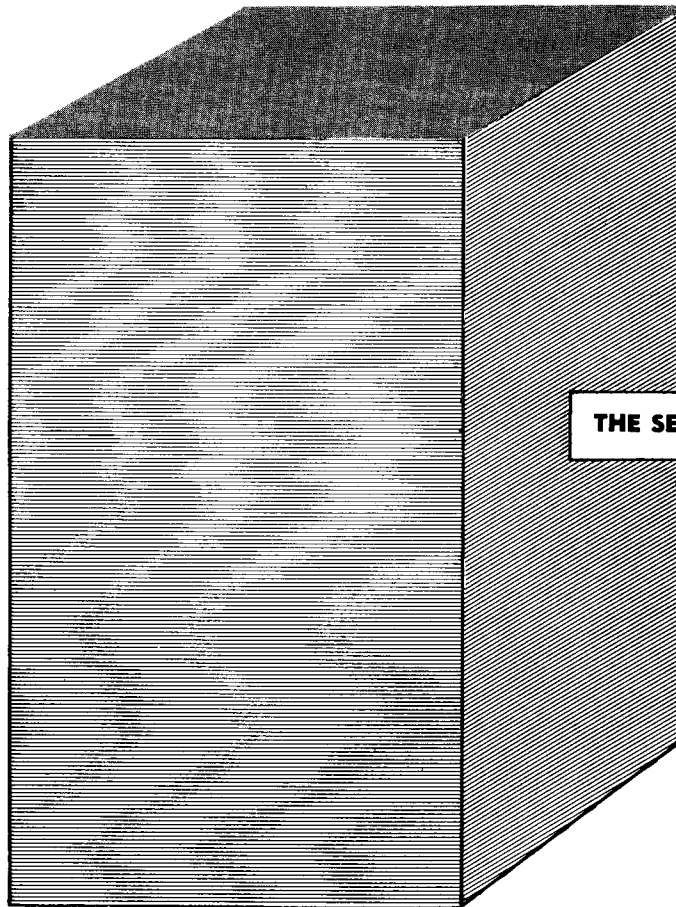
fest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.”²⁷

About all that we can glean from the Book of Mormon concerning the contents of the *Sealed*

Plates is that they contain “a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof.”²⁸ Whether other matters are included we do not know.

As far as can be determined Joseph Smith did not leave on record any statement as to how the so-called *Sealed Plates* were sealed or what proportion of the total collection they con-

stituted. He simply says of the combined plates that, “The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed.”²⁹ George Q. Cannon says that, “All the sheets were bound together by three golden rings that passed through one edge, and three smaller rings fastened the other edge of about one-third, so that this part was sealed.”³⁰ Orson Pratt, who had the advantage of close association with Joseph Smith, affirms that the sealed portion comprised “about two-thirds” of the whole.³¹



THE SEALED PLATES

²⁶Ether 5:1.

²⁷Ether 4:1-7.

²⁸2 Nephi 27:7.

²⁹Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 537.

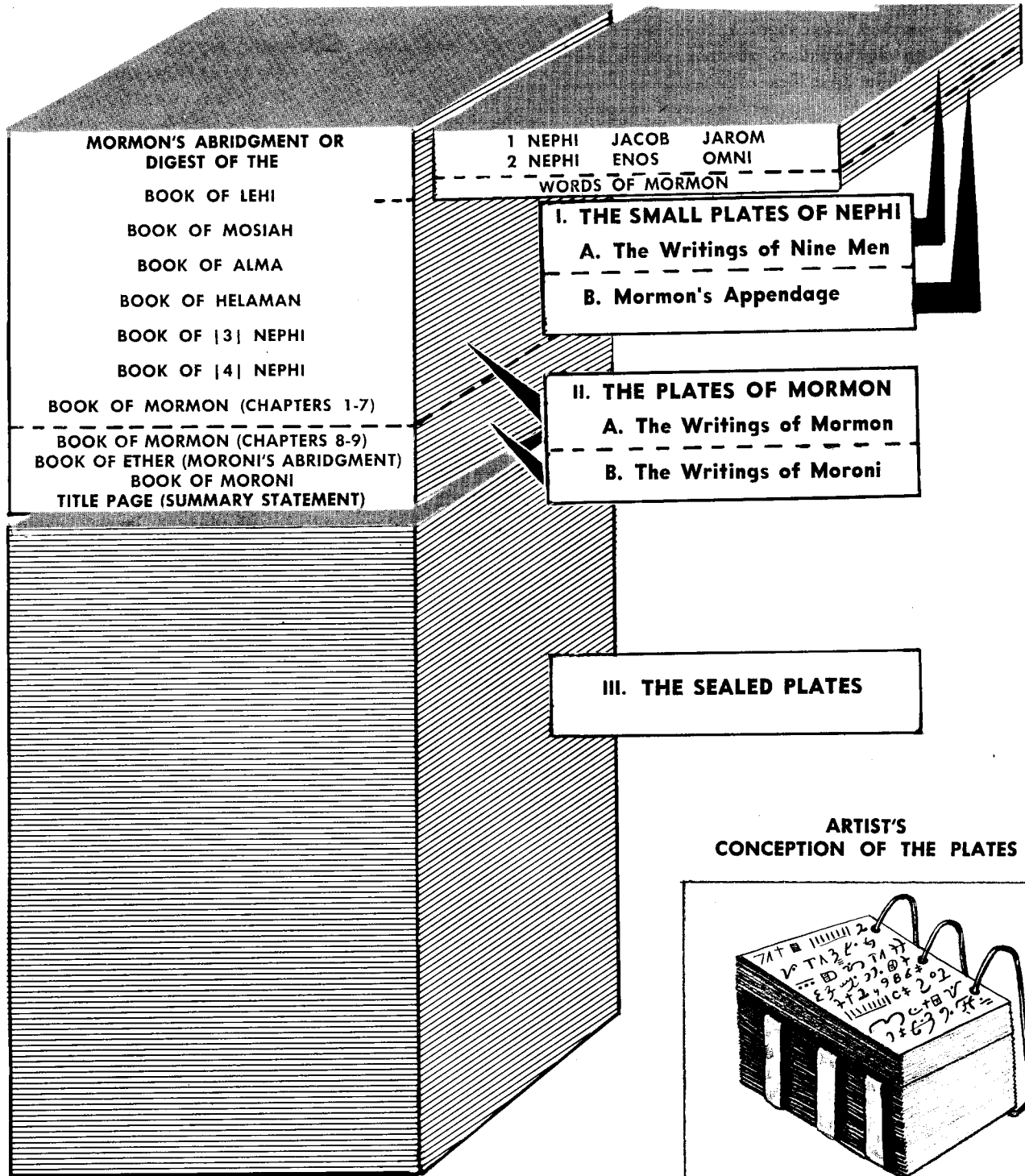
³⁰George Q. Cannon, *Young People's History of Joseph Smith*, p. 25.

³¹*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, p. 347; Orson Pratt, *Remarkable Vision*, p. 6.

The Completed Record

When Moroni was finished with his literary labors he deposited the combined plates in the Hill Cumorah.

The entire compilation comprised the *Small Plates of Nephi*, the *Plates of Mormon*, and the *Sealed Plates*.



Joseph Smith Receives and Translates the Sacred Record

For fourteen hundred years the Book of Mormon plates lay undisturbed in the Hill Cumorah. Then important things began to happen. Joseph Smith narrates these occurrences as follows:

“On the evening of the 21st of September, A.D. 1823, while I was praying unto God, and endeavoring to exercise faith in the precious promises of Scripture, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room, indeed the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire; the appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body; in a moment a personage stood before me surrounded with a glory yet greater than that which I was already surrounded. This messenger proclaimed himself to be an angel of God, sent to bring the joyful tidings that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled, that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand for the Gospel in all its fullness to be preached in power, unto all nations that a people might be prepared for the Millennial reign. I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of His purposes in this glorious dispensation.

“I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country and shown who they were, and from whence they came; a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people, was made known unto me; I was also told where were deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgment of the records of the ancient Prophets that had existed on this continent. The angel appeared to me three times the same night and unfolded the same things. After having received many visits from the angels of God unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22nd of September, A.D.

1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands.

“These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold, each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, and much skill in the art of engraving.”³²

The reader will recall that when Mormon was ready to turn the plates over to his son, Moroni, just before the Hill Cumorah battle, he was prompted to add a little historical bridge to the *Small Plates of Nephi* and include those plates intact with his own *Plates of Mormon*. His inspiration was now remarkably verified, for when Joseph Smith received the plates he first translated Mormon’s abridgment of the Book of Lehi. Then his assistant, Martin Harris, lost the 116 page translation of this section.³³ Although the Prophet was filled with despair at this apparent tragedy we may suppose that his despair turned to joy when he learned that the sacred *Small Plates of Nephi* (with Mormon’s appendage thereto) covered the same period of history as the more secular Book of Lehi and was “more particular concerning the things”³⁴ which the Lord intended should be brought to the knowledge of the human family in our generation. (Evidently the Lord chose this device as a means of teaching him and all adherents of the Book that He knows the end from the beginning and that His marvelous work cannot be thwarted.) When the Prophet finished his translation of the *Small Plates of Nephi* he returned to the *Plates of Mormon* and translated the rest of Mormon’s abridgment but stopped short of the *Sealed Plates*, for he was not permitted to translate them.

³²Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 4, pp. 536-537. Compare Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith, 2:30-60.

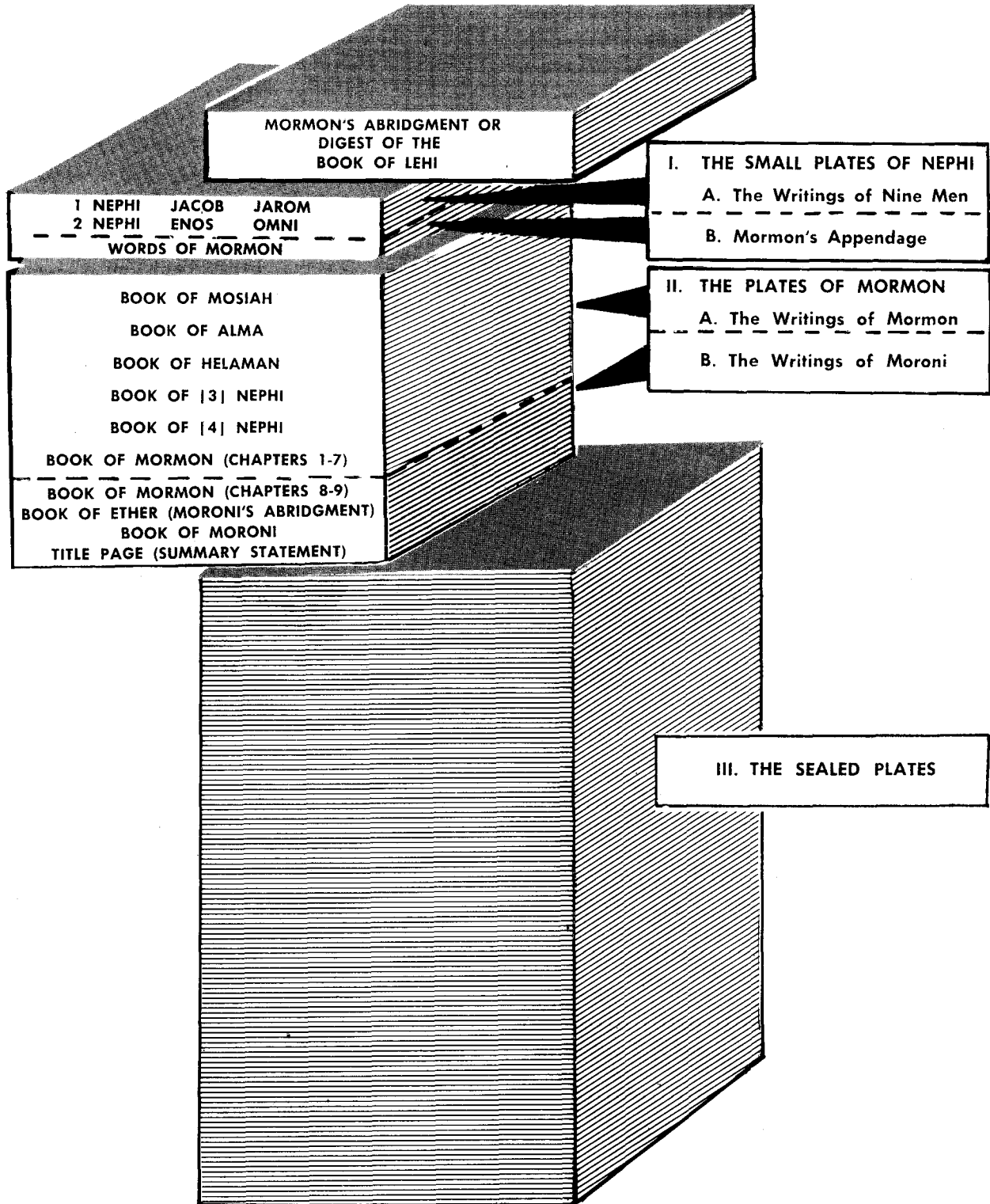
³³Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 56.

³⁴Doctrine and Covenants 10:41 ff.

Portion of the Record Extracted for Publication

The diagram below represents (in black) the portion of the plates that was included—and (in red) the portion of the plates that was not included—in the published Book of Mormon. It also represents

the substitution of the translated text of the *Small Plates of Nephi* for Mormon's abridgment of the Book of Lehi.



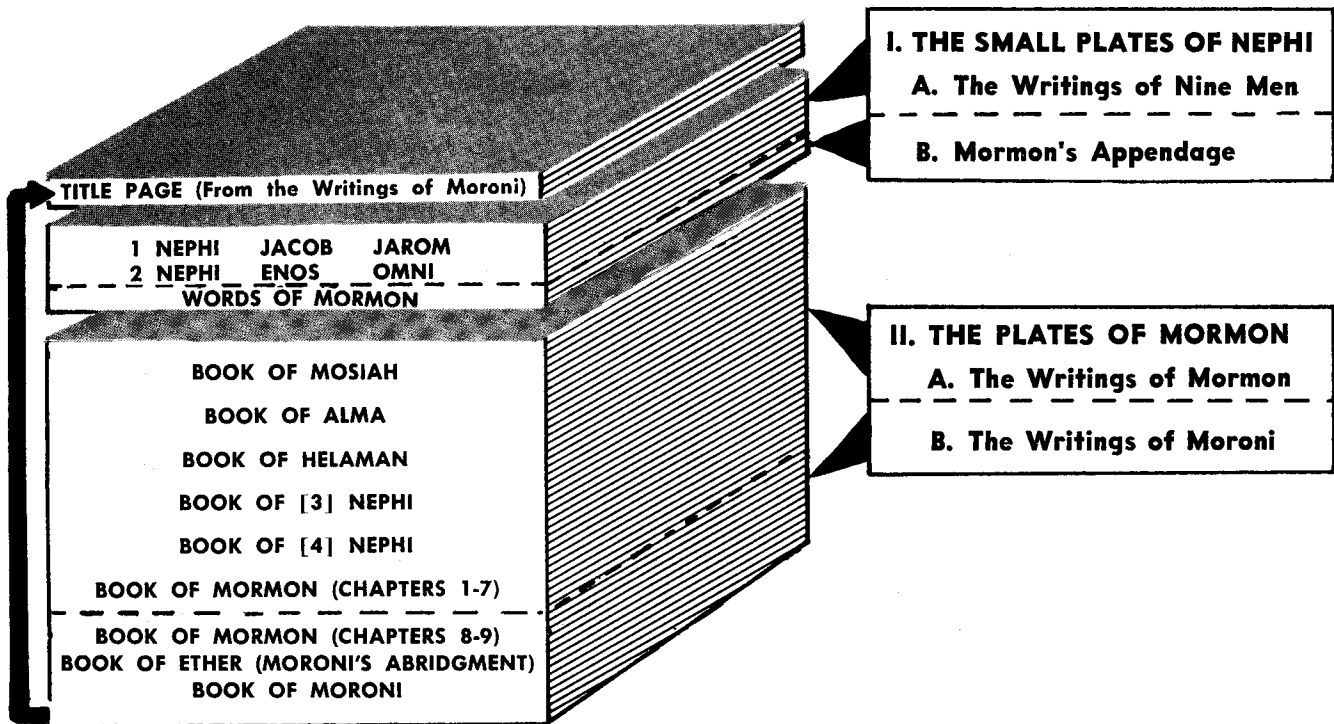
The Title Page

Joseph Smith utilized Moroni's summary statement, that he found at the end of the plates, as the title page of the translated volume. He explains this action in his journal:

"I wish to mention here that the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record

which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title-page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation. . ."³⁵

The finished translation, therefore, included, in order, the title page, the *Small Plates of Nephi*, and all of the *Plates of Mormon* except the Book of Lehi.

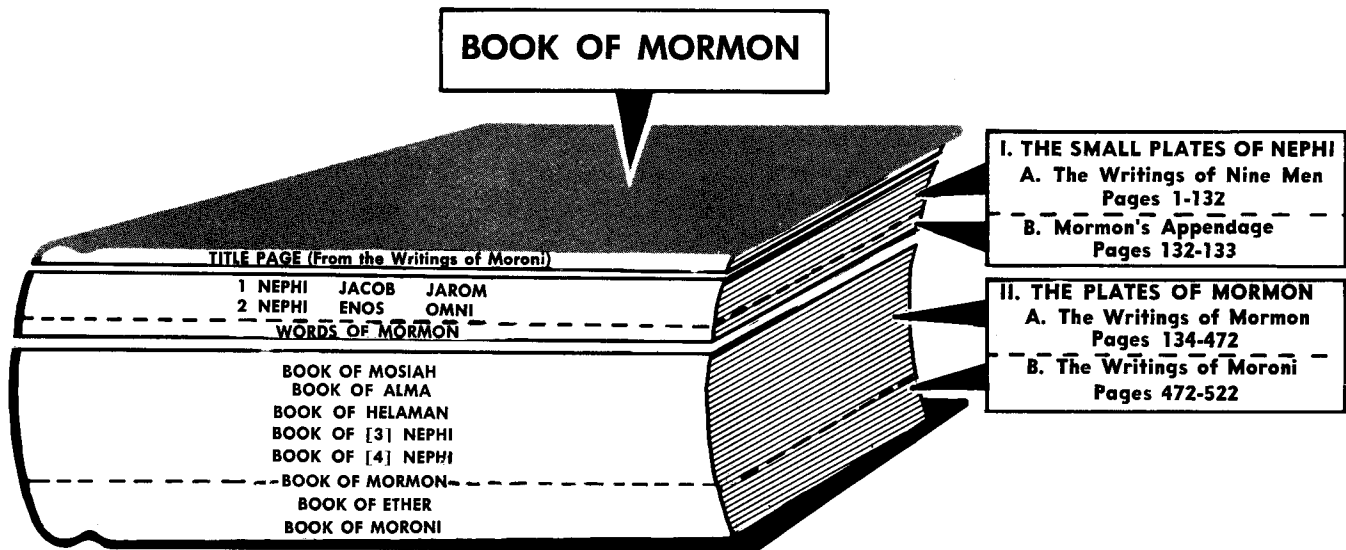


³⁵Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 71.

The Published Book of Mormon

When the Book of Mormon first appeared in published form in 1830 it had 114 chapters. In 1879 Orson Pratt divided it into 239 chapters and formed the present verse arrangement as an aid to reference work. At the same time the prefixes, "Third" and "Fourth," were attached to the two Book of Nephi titles from the *Plates of Mormon* to distinguish them from the First Book of Nephi and the Second Book of Nephi of the *Small Plates of Nephi*. In 1920 chapter sub-headings were added, and the present format, style of type, paging, etc., were adopted.

Thus we come to the end of our story. But is it the end? Today through the medium of the printing press and thousands of missionary emissaries this volume, so carefully and lovingly prepared by ancient Nephite prophets, goes forth to the far corners of the earth. It bears fresh new evidence to a world that has forgotten God—to a world contemplating its own destruction—that "JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD manifesting himself unto all nations."³⁶ Its mission will be achieved when "every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess"³⁷ that Jesus is the Christ. The story is only well begun.



³⁶Title page.
³⁷Romans 14:11.

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE?

1. The Prophet Mormon lived during the century A.D. (p. 3).
2. After Mormon added the history of his own times to the *Large Plates of Nephi* the great record contained seven book divisions. The name of the first of these was, and the name of the last was (p. 4).
3. The seven book digests that Mormon wrote on the *Plates of Mormon* were: 1..... 2.....
3..... 4..... 5.....
6..... 7..... (p. 5).
4. When the important *Small Plates of Nephi*, which formed a religious record, came to an end religious as well as secular history was entered upon (p. 6).
5. It appears that Mormon, who was preparing a record of the great religious lessons of his nation, wanted the sacred *Small Plates of Nephi* to serve as a possible substitute for his digest of the secular Book of Lehi but was faced with a problem. The *Small Plates of Nephi* ended in the early reign of King Benjamin, and the Book of Lehi ended in the late reign of the same King Benjamin. In order to extend the *Small Plates of Nephi* to the point reached by the Book of Lehi (which was to the opening of the Book of Mosiah) Mormon appended a few historical notes pertaining to Benjamin's life and times. This appendage is called (p. 8).
6. The books of the *Small Plates of Nephi*, counting Mormon's late appendage as the last book, were the following: 1..... 2.....
3..... 4..... 5.....
6..... 7..... (p. 8).
7. Mormon passed his *Plates of Mormon* and the *Small Plates of Nephi* to his son, Moroni, who added to the *Plates of Mormon* the following writings: Chapters 8 and 9 of, an abridgment or book digest of, then, and finally (p. 9).
8. After Moroni finished out his father's book the *Plates of Mormon* contained the following sections or books: 1..... 2.....
3..... 4..... 5.....
6..... 7a.....
7b..... 8.....
9..... 10..... (p. 9).
9. Moroni also added to the collection a group of plates that he sealed so that they could not readily be opened. We call this set of plates simply (p. 10).
10. Altogether, the plates that Joseph Smith received comprised three major groups or sets. These were:
....., and
..... (p. 11).
11. Joseph Smith was not permitted to translate the *Sealed Plates* and his assistant, Martin Harris, lost the translation of Mormon's abridgment of the Book of Lehi. The two sets of plates that we may say, therefore, were chosen for publication were and the greater part of (p. 13).
12. Joseph Smith utilized Moroni's summary statement, which he found at the end of the plates, as the of the translated volume (p. 14).
13. Not counting the title page, our present Book of Mormon is a translation of the following (p. 15):
 - I. THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI
 - A. The Writings of Nine Men (pp. 1-132)
 - 1..... 2..... 3.....
 - 4..... 5..... 6.....
 - B. Mormon's Appendage (pp. 132-133)
 - 7.....
 - II. THE PLATES OF MORMON
 - A. The Writings of Mormon (pp. 134-472)
 - 8..... 9..... 10.....
 - 11..... 12..... 13a.....
 - B. The Writings of Moroni (pp. 472-522)
 - 13b..... 14..... 15.....