Single Word Change in Book of Mormon Speaks Volumes

By Peggy Fletcher Stack, The Salt Lake Tribune
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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: This is just another item in the long list of changes to the book of Mormon and other sacred Mormon documents that have become necessary as more evidence points to the fact that Joseph Smith was a fiction writer rather than a prophet of God. What amazes me is that millions would rather follow the teachings of a certified liar than to repent of their false faith and turn to the Biblical Jesus. But I guess Mit Romney and others devoted to this false faith love the idea that they will someday be a Mormon god on another planet, but then they probably believed in Santa Clause too.

Large and small Doubleday editions of the Book of Mormon.
(Al Hartmann / The Salt Lake Tribune)

Posted: 6:31 AM- The LDS Church has changed a single word in its introduction to the Book of Mormon, a change observers say has serious implications for commonly held LDS beliefs about the ancestry of American Indians.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe founder Joseph Smith unearthed a set of gold plates from a hill in upperstate New York in 1827 and translated the ancient text into English. The account, known as The Book of Mormon, tells the story of two Israelite civilizations living in the New World. One derived from a single family who fled from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. and eventually splintered into two groups, known as the Nephites and Lamanites.

The book's current introduction, added by the late LDS apostle, Bruce R. McConkie in 1981, includes this statement: "After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians."
The new version, seen first in Doubleday's revised edition, reads, "After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians."

LDS leaders instructed Doubleday to make the change, said senior editor Andrew Corbin, so it "would be in accordance with future editions the church is printing."

The change "takes into account details of Book of Mormon demography which are not known," LDS spokesman Mark Tuttle said Wednesday.

It also steps into the middle of a raging debate about the book's historical claims.

Many Mormons, including several church presidents, have taught that the Americas were largely inhabited by Book of Mormon peoples. In 1971, Church President Spencer W. Kimball said that Lehi, the family patriarch, was "the ancestor of all of the Indian and Mestizo tribes in North and South and Central America and in the islands of the sea."

After testing the DNA of more than 12,000 Indians, though, most researchers have concluded that the continent's early inhabitants came from Asia across the Bering Strait.

With this change, the LDS Church is "conceding that mainstream scientific theories about the colonization of the Americas have significant elements of truth in them," said Simon Southerton, a former Mormon and author of Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA and the Mormon Church.

"DNA has revealed very clearly how closely related American Indians are to their Siberian ancestors," Southerton said in an e-mail from his home in Canberra, Australia. "The Lamanites are invisible, not principal ancestors."

LDS scholars, however, dispute the notion that DNA evidence eliminates the possibility of Lamanites. They call it "oversimplification" of the research.

On the church's official Web site, lds.org, it says, "Nothing in the Book of Mormon precludes migration into the Americas by peoples of Asiatic origin. The scientific issues relating to DNA, however, are numerous and complex."

Mormon researcher John M. Butler and DNA expert further argues that "careful examination and demographic analysis of the Book of Mormon record in terms of population growth and the number of people described implies that other groups were likely present in the promised land when Lehi's family arrived, and these groups may have genetically mixed with the Nephites, Lamanites, and other groups. Events related in the Book of Mormon likely took place in a limited region, leaving plenty of room for other Native American peoples to have existed."

In recent years, many LDS scholars have come to share Butler's belief in what is known as the "limited geography" theory. By this view, the Nephites and Lamanites restricted their activities to portions of Central America, which would explain their absence from the general American Indian genetics.

Kevin Barney, a Mormon lawyer and independent researcher in Chicago, welcomes the introduction's
word change.

"I have always felt free to disavow the language of the [Book of Mormon's] introduction, footnotes and dictionary, which are not part of the canonical scripture," said Barney, on the board of FAIR, a Mormon apologist group. "These things can change as the scholarship progresses and our understanding enlarges. This suggests to me that someone on the church's scripture committee is paying attention to the discussion."

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The LDS Church has changed a single word in its introduction to the Book of Mormon, a change observers say has serious implications for commonly held LDS beliefs about the ancestry of American Indians. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe founder Joseph Smith unearthed a set of gold plates from a hill in upperstate New York in 1827 and translated the ancient text into English. The account, known as The Book of Mormon, tells the story of two Israelite civilizations living in the New World. The change "takes into account details of Book of Mormon demography which are not known," LDS spokesman Mark Tuttle said Wednesday. It also steps into the middle of a raging debate about the book's historical claims. Another said: "Without the Book of Mormon, I wouldn't understand that the Savior not only suffered for my sins, but He can heal my pains and sorrows." And yet another: "I would not know that we have prophets to lead us." Immersing ourselves regularly in the truths of the Book of Mormon can be a life-changing experience. My dear brothers and sisters, I testify that the Book of Mormon is truly the word of God. It contains the answers to life's most compelling questions. It teaches the doctrine of Christ. It expands and clarifies many of the plain and precious truths that were lost through centuries of time and numerous translations of the Bible. From the Book of Mormon we learn about the gathering of scattered Israel. We know why we are here on earth.
In the Book of Mormon, Lamanites are described as having received a "skin of blackness" to distinguish them from the Nephites. The "change" in skin color is often mentioned in conjunction with God's curse on the descendants of Laman for their wickedness and corruption: "And he had caused the cursing to come upon [the Lamanites], yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity." One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated. That view was buoyed by passages such as 2 Nephi 30:6, which in early editions of the Book of Mormon The truth of the Book of Mormon and its divine source can be known today. God invites each of us to read the book, remember the mercies of the Lord and ponder them in our hearts, "and ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true." Most of the manuscript disintegrated or became otherwise unreadable due to water damage between 1841 and 1882, as a result of being placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in Nauvoo, Illinois. Most of the surviving pages were later archived in the historian's office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. The extant original manuscript has been published in The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text, ed.