The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon

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Abstract
Scholars have long recognized that a number of ancient cultures shared a traditional doctrine of the Two Ways that could be used to instruct youth and others in the right way to live their lives. While the language of the Two Ways surfaces on occasion in both the Old and New Testaments, the doctrine is not developed or explained in any detail in the Bible. However, noncanonical texts of the Greco-Roman period display a highly developed and stylized form of the doctrine in both Jewish and Christian traditions. The earliest known version of these stylized forms of the doctrine occurs in non-biblical writings such as Hesiod and some early Persian texts, but does not surface in the writings of biblical peoples until after the exile. While LDS scholar Hugh Nibley often noted in his voluminous writings that the Book of Mormon writers also used the Two-Ways doctrine, no one has yet undertaken a comparison of the Nephite teaching with these others. Because the Nephite prophets often referred to their central teaching of the gospel or doctrine of Christ as “the way” or “the right way,” I have undertaken this study to determine the extent to which their approach depends on any of these historical versions and to explore the ways in which their teaching may offer original explanations or formulations. An examination of twelve prominent occurrences of the doctrine of the Two Ways in the Book of Mormon shows that it is fully consistent with biblical examples, but that it goes far beyond them in providing background explanations for the doctrine of the Two Ways as the Nephite prophets adapt it to the gospel revealed to them by Jesus Christ.

Further, these passages display no familiarity with the stylized rhetorical form of the doctrine that characterizes the non-canonical Jewish and Christian texts of the Greco-Roman period.

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This way of seeing things surfaces explicitly in various texts and is known among scholars as the Doctrine of the Two Ways. In this article, Noel Reynolds shows that the Book of Mormon writers did retain most elements of the earliest biblical teaching, but with enriched understandings and original formulations of the Doctrine of the Two Ways in their prophetic teachings. He documents twelve exemplary passages in the Book of Mormon that explicitly refer to two paths or ways and assesses the extent to which these follow or vary from each other or from Jewish and Christian models. Categories: Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is said to be a record of two ancient Jewish civilizations that migrated to America. The Jaredites left Babylonia during the building of the Tower of Babel in approximately 2,250 B.C. After establishing a civilization in America that lasted two thousand years. They eventually succumbed to corruption and apostasy and were judged by God and destroyed. Lehi and his son Nephi led these righteous Jews. This group eventually divided into two warring camps, the Nephites and the Lamanites and spread throughout North and South America. The Lamanites were cursed with dark skin because of their evil deeds and were the forefathers of the American Indians.{2}.