

Colophon in Revelation and First Nephi, LeGrand Baker

The Book of Revelation seems to me to be divided into four parts.

Part I: the surface text colophons.

A colophon is a devise that an author uses to identify himself. It gives his name, states his purpose, and gives his authority for writing. A modern example is the beginning of a will: I, John Doe, being of sound mind and body, make the following disposition of my property [that's the colophon. The body of the document then does what he said he will do:] "Guess what? I was smart enough to spend it all before I died!"

A colophon may also be at the end of a document: "I am Mormon, I am the general of the Nephite armies" – that sort of thing. The Book of Mormon is full of beginning and ending colophons.

An excellent – and obviously ancient – example is the first verse of the Book of Mormon. It is a perfect colophon.

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

Since the invention of printing, we have used title pages of books in place of colophons. Title pages give all the same information: The title (that should suggest what the book is about), the name of the author, and the name and place of the publisher. In your scriptures, for example, the name and place of publication is the book's statement of authority. If you had a copy of the Book of Mormon that was published by something called the Anti-Mormon Institute in Rome. You wouldn't read it because you would not trust them to not changes in the text. In their eyes, their publication would not be scripture.

The ancients had a similar problem, but not a similar solution. Anyone could write saying that he is a prophet and is telling you what god told me to say. So the problem, if one lived two thousand years ago, was this: Someone hands me a scroll that claims to be the words of a prophet. It was copied from a scroll that was copied from another copy. I admit there may be problems in the copying, but how am I going to know that the original author was a prophet. The answer is in the colophon – but not the surface text colophon – rather, in one that is hidden in a subtext that only the "initiated" will be able to read. So that's what the prophets often did. The simplest – probably the most efficient – way was to give you a quick review of the "mysteries of godliness." Nephi's subtextual colophon is one of the most straightforward. He does not teach you anything about the temple, that is not his objective. He only wants you to know that he knows. His subtextual colophon is in the first 6 verses of the Book of Mormon. It is in three acts – just as the story is always in three acts – pre-mortal, mortal, next-world.

ACT ONE

1 I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father;

ACT TWO - LONELY WORLD

and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

NEPHI'S NOTE TO THE READER: He says this entire book is going to be written in two coexistent languages: one will be understandable to the world ("Egyptians"), the other will only exist for those who understand "the learning of the Jews."

2 Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.

NEPHI GIVES HIS TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE: There is only one way one can make a statement true with one's hand - and that is not to write it, because what one writes can be false. It is what one does with the hand: for example when one is in a court of law, one is asked to raise one of his hands as evidence that his testimony is true:

3 And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

QUICK RUN THROUGH OF HIS MAJOR IDEAS:

KINGSHIP:

4 For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah,

PRIESTHOOD:

(my father, Lehi,

SACRED SPACE:

having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days);

ASSIGNMENT and COVENANTS:

and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.

PRAYER

5 Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord,

THE VEIL (Brian, look up "Shechinah" in your Bible dictionary. The Shechinah is the cloud

through the Lord put his finger in the Brother of Jared story.)
there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him;

ACT THREE

and he saw and heard much.

That is the first subtextual colophon in the Book of Mormon. It is also my own not-too-good example of subtextual writing. I wrote it carefully enough that you could show this note to any non-member you wished, and they could not read in it any of the things you read, because for them, the things you read are simply not even there. There is also an ending colophon in Moroni 10 that tells the same story, but tells it quite a bit differently.

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COLOPHONS IN REVELATION: Surface text colophons.

In John's Book of Revelation, there are three colophons. Two are in the surface text, the third is subtextual.

The first introduces his revelation of the Saviour in chapter one: 1:1-2.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The second is 1:9-10.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

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Part II

The subtextual colophon is found in the letters. If one reads the first half of each of the letters they will walk one through the temple. If one reads the second half of each of the letters, they will tell what the temple is about.

Part III

After the letters, John addresses the saints in his day to promise them that their sacrifices are worth while even though they see the church going into apostasy, and things (including their own lives) look pretty dismal.

Part IV

In chapter 12 John starts over at the beginning. From 12 on to the end is (as far as I can tell) the revelation Nephi told us about where John was shown our whole history – also in three acts. It begins with the war in heaven where the devil draws 1/3 of the “stars” after him. (That’s the only place in the scriptures where we learn that it was 1/3, by the way). The book ends with a description of the celestial world where all who are there may eat freely of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the waters of life. The last chapters of Revelation are some of my favorite parts of the Bible.

Joseph Smith once said the Book of Revelation was one of the plainest in all the Bible – but then the Prophet Joseph had already seen the movie, so he understood the plot.

Love you
LeGrand