INTERPRETER

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The Sibling Scandals of the Resurrection

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I've recently picked Stephen T. Davis's *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* up again.[1] It's an impressive book that had a pivotal effect on my thinking when it first appeared. Davis, the Russell K. Pitzer Professor of Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College in California, argues that "Christians are within their intellectual rights in believing that Jesus was raised from the dead."[2] "The thesis of the book," he explains, "is that the two central Christian resurrection claims — namely, that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead and that we will all be raised from the dead — are defensible claims."[3]

Reading it now, certain elements in *Risen Indeed* seem to me to shed light on the task, nature, and challenges of apologetics more generally.

Davis explains that he's not doing what he calls "hard apologetics," in which the attempt is to prove a religious claim true. Rather, he's doing "soft apologetics," trying to demonstrate that a religious claim is plausible, reasonable, and defensible. This appears to me a very important distinction.

Moreover, I judge that this is what the evidentiary situation will sustain with regard to the fundamental and crucial claims of Christian theism in general and the claims of the Restoration in particular — and I strongly suspect that this is exactly where the evidentiary situation is divinely intended to remain,

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1   Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

2   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 1.

3   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, vii.

pending Judgment Day. If the evidence for those claims were as conclusive as a proof in geometry, no meaningful intellectual freedom would remain to us. There can be no "opinions" as to whether, say, triangles ABC and DEC are congruent, once a valid proof demonstrating that they *are* congruent has been provided and accurately understood. Personal, subjective reactions to the matter are irrelevant at that stage.

Likewise, if God were to reveal himself directly and conclusively, he would destroy our freedom, so overwhelming would that revelation be. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (d. 1855) expresses this point memorably in his *Philosophical Fragments*, by means of a parable about a king and a maiden. How can the king reveal his love to a maiden of humble parentage — given the huge gulf between them of rank, status, and wealth — without effectively coercing and crushing her? Would her affections, if she seemed to return them, be genuine or sincere? His dilemma is, "Not to reveal oneself is the death of love, to reveal oneself is the death of the beloved." The only choice finally open to the king is to court the maiden indirectly, by descending to her station, by taking on the character of a servant. (Think in this regard, as Kierkegaard intends that you should, of the coming of the mortal Son of God.)[4] But this is no mere costume change. In order to be convincing as a servant, the king must really *act* as one.[5]

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4   The term *condescension*, as it appears in 1 Nephi 11:16 ("Knowest thou the condescension of God?"), doesn't mean, as it typically does in modern English, to patronize, or to act in a smugly superior way. As documented in Noah Webster's great 1828 American dictionary, Joseph Smith's contemporaries understood the word to mean "Voluntary descent from rank, dignity or just claims; relinquishment of strict right; submission to inferiors in granting requests or performing acts which strict justice does not require."

5   See Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* (Johannes Climacus), edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 26–30.

So the evidence for the claims of Christianity and of Mormonism isn't coercive. The facts permit and even, to some extent, warrant skepticism.

I've long been fascinated, however, even intrigued, by the realization that evidence that I find very impressive is often completely dismissed by others whose reasoning abilities don't seem obviously defective and who don't seem deficient in character. (I'm omitting from the discussion those who simply, consciously or not, prefer a life of godless, or effectively godless, sin. Such people exist. I'm personally acquainted with quite a number of them — apatheists, one wit has called some of them — but they aren't my concern here. Their resistance to faith and commitment won't likely be overcome by an essay or an argument.)

I have in mind as a representative specimen of the issue I'll be discussing a specific individual, a bright and articulate lapsed Latter-day Saint, who simply cannot understand why I find the testimonies of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon so very forceful. He sees no significant evidentiary value whatever in what they have to say. By contrast, I absolutely cannot understand his failure to grasp the implications of their transparently sincere eyewitness accounts. We talked past each other so long that we finally abandoned the effort.

Based upon many years of observation, it's obvious to me that decisions regarding what evidence we will permit to count in our thinking about politics, religion, and other weighty topics are made within a much broader context than this or that specific argument. Stephen Davis, having effectively come to the same conclusion, articulates the matter in a helpful way. "All people interpret their experience within a certain philosophical framework," he writes.

> The philosophical assumptions of many people preclude a belief in the existence of God and the possibility

of miracles. Such people presumably reject the res-
urrection not because the evidence for it, considered
neutrally, is weak. It would seem closer to the truth to
say that their commitment to naturalism gives them
a perspective on the resurrection such that the evi-
dence for it *must* be weak. Surely if the resurrection
were not essentially miraculous (if it were, say, more
like the event of the crucifixion), few rational persons
would doubt it. Naturalists reject the resurrection pri-
marily because it does not fit with their worldview.
The essentially miraculous nature of the resurrection
impels them to discount the evidence for it despite
their inability to explain what *did* happen or how the
disciples came to believe in the resurrection.[6]

Very few people deny the historicity of the crucifixion
of Jesus. (I'll shortly comment briefly on those who do.) His
execution under Pontius Pilate involves nothing intrinsically
miraculous or divine; it is without controversy that the Romans
crucified thousands upon thousands of quite ordinary mortals.
Analogously, there's no mystery about the fact that a marble
figure of Brigham Young is permitted to stand in the United
States Capitol's National Statuary Hall as a representative of the
State of Utah: His achievements were public and widely recog-
nized and admired, and, although they're certainly susceptible

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6   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 18–19. On pages 10–11, Davis defines the term
miracle as follows: "A miracle is an event E that (1) is brought about by God
and (2) is contrary to the prediction of a law of nature that we have compelling
reason to believe is true. That is, the law predicts that, given the circumstances
preceding E, some event other than E will occur; E occurs because God causes
E to occur; and no other law of nature or set of laws of nature could have helped
us to have predicted, given the circumstances, that E would have occurred.
Now it is important to note that the occurrence of an event like E, irregular and
unpredictable as it is, does not vitiate natural laws. Science is not overturned,
because natural laws describe and predict not whatever happens but whatever
happens in a regular and predictable way."

of a religious interpretation and appreciation, they don't typically entail controversial miracle-claims. By contrast — the hypothetical is moot, of course, since he never even came to Utah — placing a statue of Joseph Smith in the Capitol would probably never be allowed, because the very essence of his claim to recognition involves accounts of miracles that must either be accepted or flatly denied.

Here again, Stephen Davis is helpful:

> A *soft miracle*, let us say, is a miraculous event that religious skeptics can consistently agree has occurred; it is just that they will disagree with religious believers on its cause and meaning. That is to say, they can affirm that the event occurred but deny that it is a miracle … If after having been diagnosed to be suffering from a terminal and untreatable cancer, Jones is found to be well and free of cancer after having prayed and fasted, this may well constitute a soft miracle. Skeptics can consistently agree that Jones was gravely ill but now is well; they will simply deny that Jones's recovery was due to God or that it violated any natural laws. A *hard miracle*, on the other hand, is one that is very difficult for religious skeptics to explain naturalistically, and so skeptics will not want to allow that it has occurred at all. The resurrection of Jesus appears to be a hard miracle: it does not seem likely that skeptics would be able to affirm that it occurred (at least not in the manner in which it is described in the Gospels) without abandoning their religious skepticism. The strategy of consistent skeptics must accordingly be to argue that the event did not in fact occur.[7]

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7   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 11–12.

A soft miracle is a highly improbable event that neither I nor the experts (the doctors, in my above example) can explain; but I can at least *imagine* a possible naturalistic explanation, or can rationally imagine that there is one. If what appears to be a soft miracle is in fact a miracle, however, the true explanation of the event must be that it was caused by God (as in the case of the hard miracle). A hard miracle, on the other hand, is an event that is so highly improbable that I cannot even imagine a plausible naturalistic explanation of it.[8]

The transmission of the Bible to us from the ancient world is, at best, a soft miracle in Davis's sense. Unbelievers can accept — cannot plausibly deny — that it comes from the ancient world. But they need not admit divine involvement in that process. Good naturalistic accounts of how the ancient biblical writings reached us are easily available. The situation with the Book of Mormon is very different. It's very difficult to imagine how the semiliterate farm boy Joseph Smith could have obtained and translated a record from the Pre-Columbian Americas without divine assistance, so unbelievers in miracles generally (or in Joseph's prophetic claims in particular) must deny that it originated in antiquity. And they must, if they are to be taken very seriously, explain how, in fact, it was created in modern times.

"The nonbelievers," writes Davis of those who deny the resurrection of Christ,

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8   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 12. A good example of a "soft miracle" as Davis defines the term is the Nephite victory, under Moroni, over the Lamanites led by Zerahemnah. Moroni ascribes the outcome of the battle to God, whereas Zerahemnah, an unbeliever, credits Moroni's own superior military preparations. (See Alma 44:1–10.) Both are plausible explanations.

are probably convinced of their position not primarily because of evidence or arguments in its favor but because it is entailed by the worldview that they accept. Let's call that worldview *naturalism* and define it in terms of the following four statements:

1. Nature alone exists. The word *nature* is difficult to define precisely, but let us say that it is the sum total of what could in principle be observed by human beings or be studied by methods analogous to those used in the natural sciences. ("Nature" could also perhaps be defined as a sum total of that which consist of matter/energy — i.e., as the physical realm. For our purposes it will not matter which definition we choose.) Accordingly, naturalism excludes God, or least the theistic God.

2. Nature is eternal. Nature is an uncreated thing; there is no moment in time when it does not exist; nature is not contingent.

3. Nature is uniform. There are no nonnatural events (e.g., miracles); rather, nature is regular, continuous.

4. Every event is explicable. In principle, at least, any event can be explained in terms of nature or natural processes (i.e., by explanatory methods similar to those used in the natural sciences).[9]

The person to whom I've alluded above, with whom I've discussed the evidentiary value of the testimonies of the Book of Mormon Witnesses, isn't, so far as I'm aware, an atheist. However, practically speaking, he's an atheist with regard to the claims of Mormonism. For reasons extrinsic to the particular matter of the Witnesses, he has concluded that God is and was absent from the fundamental events of the Restoration.

9   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 17–18.

Hence, in this matter at least, Stephen Davis's remarks about naturalism are entirely apt, even in his case.

Some have taken their commitment to naturalism so far that they actually deny the historical existence of Jesus, which seems to me, and to virtually everybody else who has given the matter serious and sustained attention, an obvious bridge too far. The view is a minority one, and, in a sense, scarcely worth much attention. But it seems to be spreading a bit, so I've decided to address it.

Consider, for example, the case of the extraordinarily prolific Bart Ehrman. Currently James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a respected New Testament scholar, he's published a number of academic works as well as, by my count, at least four *New York Times* bestsellers.

Formerly a fundamentalist Protestant and biblical inerrantist but unable to square that position with his studies, he moved during graduate school to liberal Christianity. Today, though, he reports, "I am an agnostic with atheist leanings," and his popular books have criticized basic traditional Christian views of Jesus and the Bible.

Given that background, it's likely that many nonbelievers, hearing that an upcoming book of his would pose the question *Did Jesus Exist?*, expected him to answer "No." If they did, though, they've surely been disappointed. The subtitle to his book is *The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*, and that is what he seeks to set forth.[10]

Ehrman says in *Did Jesus Exist?* that he urgently wanted to get to the topic of how Jesus came to be seen as divine, and he promises that his next book will be devoted to that subject.

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10   Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013).

As, in fact, it now has been.[11] Already in this volume, though, he offers some hints (scarcely surprising to those familiar with his work and similar New Testament scholarship) of what he intended to argue but explains that, to his surprise, he felt obliged to deal first with a more pressing prior issue: Before debating who Jesus really was, we have to decide whether he ever even lived.

Every week, Ehrman reports, he receives two or three emails asking whether Jesus actually existed. "When I started getting these emails, some years ago now, I thought the question was rather peculiar and I did not take it seriously. Of course Jesus existed. Everyone knows he existed. Don't they?"

But, clearly, they don't. So he looked into the matter and discovered a whole "literature," as it were, dedicated to arguing that Jesus is a mythical figure, no more real, historically speaking, than Zeus or Frodo. He knew, of course, that the notion that Jesus was mere fiction had been the dominant view in the officially atheistic Soviet Union for decades, but he was surprised to learn that it's now become the majority view in some areas of the West, including parts of Scandinavia.

Professionals in the field of New Testament and early Christian studies ignore this body of "mythicist" writing, Ehrman says. (If pressed, almost all regard it — to the extent that they've ever thought of it at all — as the work of hobbyist cranks.)[12] None of those who have produced it, he observes,

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11   Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014) has now appeared. So has at least one reply: Michael F. Bird, Craig A. Evans, Simon J. Gathercole, Charles E. Hill, and Chris Tilling, *How God became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—A Response to Bart D. Ehrman* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014). Jewish scholar Daniel Boyarin's *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012) also offers an interesting if indirect counterpoint to Ehrman's arguments.

12   They might likely say the same thing, of course, about Latter-day Saint apologetics. But I've met very few non-Mormon scholars (at most, one or two) who have had even a nodding acquaintance with Mormon apologetic writing.

are scholars trained in the New Testament and early Christian history holding relevant academic appointments at mainstream institutions. Of the scholars with the appropriate professional background and employment, he says, "none of them, to my knowledge, has any doubts that Jesus existed. … The view that Jesus existed is held by virtually every expert on the planet."

Now obviously, and as Ehrman expressly admits, the sheer fact that the consensus of experts overwhelmingly — indeed, essentially unanimously — declares that Jesus was a real historical person doesn't prove that he actually was. Nor does it, as such, refute the "mythicists." Consensus opinion has often been (and will often be) wrong. That's why he wrote his book. In clear, accessible prose, it lays out a series of arguments for an authentically historical Jesus. Ehrman has, he says, "no vested interest in the matter."

> "I am not a Christian, and I have no interest in promoting a Christian cause or a Christian agenda." "My life and views of the world would be approximately the same whether or not Jesus existed. My beliefs would vary little. The answer to the question of Jesus' historical existence will not make me more or less happy, content, hopeful, likable, rich, famous or immortal. But as a historian I think evidence matters. And the past matters. And for anyone to whom both evidence and the past matter, a dispassionate consideration of the case makes it quite plain: Jesus did exist."

Some time ago, I read the online claim, from yet another disaffected Latter-day Saint (this one quite prominent in the news over the past several years), that Jesus probably didn't exist. It's a matter of faith, he said. (He's said the same thing on several occasions.)

But he's wrong. It's not. Bart Ehrman is living proof that it's a matter of historical evidence, not of faith. And Professor

Ehrman is not alone.[13] "Jesus existed," Ehrman writes, "and those vocal persons who deny it do so not because they have considered the evidence with the dispassionate eye of the historian, but because they have some other agenda that this denial serves. From a dispassionate point of view, there was a Jesus of Nazareth."

So much for a small band of rather idiosyncratic extremists in the unbelieving camp. In fairness, though, I need to put on record the fact that it's not only unbelievers who make decisions about how to weigh various arguments and facts on the basis of their overall worldviews. Doing so, while it always risks becoming dogmatic closed-mindedness on the one hand or uncritical credulity on the other, is inescapable and, indeed, within limits, necessary:

> Similarly, believers probably find their position convincing not primarily because of evidence or arguments in its favor but because it dovetails with the worldview they accept. Let's call that worldview *supernaturalism*. (I am not arguing that one must consciously be a supernaturalist or must consciously convert to supernaturalism *before* one can accept that the resurrection of Jesus occurred.) We can define supernaturalism in terms of an affirmation of the following four statements:
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> 1. Something besides nature exists — namely, God.

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13   There is also now, for example, Maurice Casey's (typically) rather crotchety and argumentative *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). Casey was, until his death on 10 May 2014, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Languages and Literature at the University of Nottingham, in the United Kingdom. He described himself as "completely irreligious" (39) and said that he "left the Christian faith in 1962" (37), but his new book subjects those who deny the existence of Jesus to a withering (not to say contemptuous) critique.

2. Nature depends for its existence on God.
3. The regularity of nature can be and occasionally is interrupted by miraculous acts of God.
4. Such divine acts are humanly quite unpredictable and inexplicable.[14]

The most serious contemporary criticisms of the Book of Mormon and of Mormonism more broadly tend to come not from self-proclaimed orthodox (i.e., usually Evangelical) Christians, but from self-identified atheistic materialists or naturalists. The Utah-based historian Dale Morgan, largely forgotten today but still much admired in certain small contemporary circles, wrote a 1945 letter to the believing Latter-day Saint historian Juanita Brooks. In it, he identifies the fundamental issue with unusual candor:

> With my point of view on God, I am incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, be they however so convincing. If God does not exist, how can Joseph Smith's story have any possible validity? I will look everywhere for explanations except to the ONE explanation that is the position of the church.[15]

In *Risen Indeed*, Stephen Davis remarks that

> believers point to something of an embarrassment in the position of those who do not believe in the

14   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 18. On pages 28–34, Davis seeks to refute the notion that history must be done on the basis of naturalistic assumptions and cannot admit the supernatural—an idea that, he shows, has been adopted even by some theologians. (I'm well aware, by the way, that the term *supernatural* is at least slightly problematic, and particularly so for Latter-day Saints. Its problems, though, don't affect the present argument in any substantial way, so I leave consideration of them for another time and place.)

15   Dale Morgan to Juanita Brooks, dated 15 December 1945 at Arlington, Virginia. Transcribed in John Phillip Walker, ed., *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 84–91. The quoted passage occurs on page 87.

resurrection: their inability to offer an acceptable alternative explanation of the known facts surrounding the resurrection of Jesus. The old nineteenth-century rationalistic explanations (hallucination, swoon theory, stolen body, wrong tomb, etc.) all seem to collapse of their own weight once spelled out, and no strong new theory has emerged as the consensus of scholars who deny that the resurrection occurred.[16]

A similar situation obtains, in my judgment, with regard to the Book of Mormon and certain other elements of the Restoration. While, for instance, this or that aspect of the Book of Mormon can, hypothetically, be accounted for by means of something within Joseph Smith's early nineteenth-century information environment, a fully comprehensive counterexplanation for Joseph's claims remains promised but manifestly unprovided. Critics have disagreed over the nearly two centuries since the First Vision about whether Joseph was brilliant or stupid, whether he was sincerely hallucinating or cunningly conscious of his fraud, whether he concocted the Book of Mormon alone or with co-conspirators (their own identity either hotly debated or completely unknown), whether he was a cynical atheist or a pious fraud defending Christianity, and so forth.

Sometimes, indeed, individual critics haven't settled these questions within their own minds, and their books and articles alternate back and forth between incompatible answers. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."[17]

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16   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 16.

17   1 Kings 18:21.

In an exchange with a vocal atheist ex-Mormon quite a few years ago, my friend and colleague William Hamblin asked what I regard as a basic and, in the end, unavoidable question: Assuming, for the sake of the argument, that Joseph Smith never had any golden plates pertaining to the Book of Mormon — which was that particular atheist's position — did Joseph understand that he didn't have any plates, or did he imagine that he did?

The two options seem to me to exhaust the possibilities. I cannot see, for example, how the approach of the non-Mormon historian Ann Taves to what she terms "the contentious issue of the materiality of the golden plates" can ultimately sustain itself. "The golden plates," she correctly observes, "take us straight into one of the most interesting challenges: taking the whole range of evidence and views on contentious claims into account and making our way through them as scholars in as transparent a fashion as possible." "I am setting up the 'puzzle' of the golden plates," explains Professor Taves, "with a claim that each 'side' holds dear — that is, that Joseph Smith was not a deceiver or deluded and that there were no ancient golden plates. Setting it up that way provides an intellectual challenge, but one that reflects a religious studies approach at its best."[18]

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18   See Ann Taves and Spencer Fluhman, "Mormon Studies in the Academy: A Conversation Between Ann Taves and Spencer Fluhman," *Mormon Studies Review* 1 [*sic*] [2013]: 9–16. Her way of looking at the question accords comfortably with the rather ecumenical or nonsectarian "religious studies"/"Mormon studies" orientation recently adopted by the newly repurposed Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship and fostered, among other places, in its relaunched *Mormon Studies Review* at Brigham Young University. (Blair Hodges, the Maxwell Institute's public communications specialist since late 2012 and now its acquisitions and development editor for Mormon studies book titles, approvingly cites Catholic writer Massimo Introvigne's contention that most scholars are more interested in questions about the "meaning, historical function, and consequences" of elements of Mormon belief than in arguing about whether golden plates really existed." [Blair Dee Hodges, "Mormon Studies: A Bibliographic Essay," *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (*sic*) (2013): 227-228.]) In that same issue of the Maxwell Institute's flagship journal, Notre Dame

Unfortunately for her enterprise, though, if I understand it correctly, it's not even slightly likely that the two opposing claims can be coherently reconciled. Any truce on the matter is very unlikely to prove stable. Those who deny the existence of the plates will have to posit that he was either detached from reality or a fraud. And those disposed to deny that he was mad or a liar will feel obliged — as they should — to respond.

The famous trilemma posed by C. S. Lewis regarding Christ in his *Mere Christianity* offers, I think, a rather close analogy:

> I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.[19]

In Professor Hamblin's case — assuming that Joseph Smith had no golden plates, was he or was he not aware that he didn't? — his discussion partner responded rather indignantly

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historian Thomas Tweed links the supposed plates of the Book of Mormon with "magic and the occult." (Thomas Tweed, "Beyond 'Surreptitious Staring': Migration, Missions, and the Generativity of Mormonism for the Comparative Translocative Study of Religion," *Mormon Studies Review* 1 [*sic*] [2013]: 20.)

19 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 52.

that he refused to be imprisoned within such simplistic and juvenile thinking. But, offended dignity aside, the question does eventually need to be answered by anybody who purports to offer an alternative account of the rise of Mormonism. Refusal to do so reminds me of the technique, essential (even definitional) to guerrilla or partisan warfare theory, of constant attack and retreat, of refusal to occupy — and, thus, to be obliged to hold and defend — territory. The problem is that, in order ultimately to win the war, guerrilla fighters eventually need to seize and hold territory. And, in order to do this, they need to transform themselves into more conventional armies ("regularization," Mao Zedong called it), to stake out their own territorial claims — which then requires them to defend their holdings against attacks.[20]

The matter is really remarkably similar to the dilemma posed by the supposed resurrection of Christ, as Professor Davis describes that challenge: "If the disciples knew that Jesus was not really risen, they were charlatans. If they believed he was risen when in fact he was not, they were dupes."[21] There seems no easy third way.

This is vitally important because, as Stephen Davis declares, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the decisive disproof of all forms of deism that exclude divine activity from the created universe: it shows that God *can* act in history, and has."[22] And much the same challenge is posed by the Book of Mormon and the narrative of the Restoration: If Joseph Smith's fundamental

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20   I discuss this aspect of guerrilla warfare theory and practice in Daniel C. Peterson, "The Gadianton Robbers as Guerilla Warriors," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, eds. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 146–173. The essay is available online at http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1108&index=9.

21   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 15–16.

22   Davis, Risen Indeed, 25.

claims are true, they show that God acted not only in ancient history, but in modern times.[23]

Some have tried to find a third way, attempting to accept the resurrection while deliteralizing or "demythologizing" it — i.e., to retain it while denying its historicity — and some, on a much smaller scale, have recently been trying to do the same with the Book of Mormon and the prophetic claims of Joseph Smith.

 "It is impossible to use the electric light and the wireless," the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann (d. 1976) famously announced,

> and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of daemons and spirits. We may think we can manage it in our own lives, but to expect others to do so is to make the Christian faith unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world.[24]

Other theologians, unwilling to surrender the pleasant story of the resurrection of Jesus but equally unwilling or unable to take it as literal and historical fact, have hurried to

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23   See Doctrine and Covenants 20:8–12.

24   Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1960), 5. One is reminded immediately of John Stuart Mill's brief discussion, in his classic 1859 essay *On Liberty*, of "the remarkable phenomenon of Mormonism." "Much might be said," he wrote, "on the unexpected and instructive fact, that an alleged new revelation, and a religion founded on it … is believed by hundreds of thousands, and has been made the foundation of a society, in the age of newspapers, railways, and the electric telegraph." (John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Stephen Collini [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 91.) Mill's attitude toward Joseph Smith and Mormonism is quite negative, but it seems a bit churlish and ungrateful to complain, since, admirable and pioneering libertarian that he was, he was raising his voice to defend the right of the Latter-day Saints to be left alone so that they could live according to their faith.

find other happy meanings in it. "Talk of the resurrection of Jesus," wrote Willi Marxsen (d. 1993)

> is an interpretation designed to express the fact that my faith has a source and that source is Jesus. … Jesus is risen in that His offer meets us today and in that, if we accept it, He gives us this new life.[25]

> All the evangelists want to show that the activity of Jesus goes on. … But the authors start from a reality. They came to believe in Jesus after Good Friday. They express this in pictorial terms. But what they want to say is simply: "We have come to believe."[26]

But to believe in *what*, precisely?

"What actually happened on that first Easter morning," the Anglo-American theologian Norman Perrin (d. 1976) rather incomprehensibly explains, "is that it became possible to know Jesus as ultimacy in the historicality of the everyday."[27] Thomas Sheehan is every bit as opaque himself, when he tells his readers that the notion that Jesus "was raised" merely means that he "was taken up (in whatever fashion) into God's eschatological future."[28] Simon Peter, Sheehan writes, came to believe that "Jesus was now living in God's future."[29]

"When the liturgy says 'The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!,'" Robert Scuka says,

> this is not to be understood as a claim about the personal destiny of Jesus. Rather, it is a way of acknowledging the

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25   Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1970), 143, 184.

26   Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, 77, 156.

27   Norman Perrin, *The Resurrection according to Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 78.

28   Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity* (New York: Random House, 1986), 111.

29   Sheehan, *The First Coming*, 113.

participant's own experience of the life-giving power of the Spirit that is understood to derive from Jesus, an experience of being liberated from the bondage … of self-preoccupation, and of being freed to live in joyful acceptance of the gift that is life. … [It] has less to do with anything that is thought to have happened to Jesus himself than it does with the Christian's experience of liberation from bondage that *is* new life.[30]

However, Stephen Davis, trained in Anglo-American analytic philosophy, a tradition that prizes precision in concept and clarity of expression, isn't very patient with this sort of talk: "Does this manner of speaking make any sense at all?" he asks. "What does it mean to be living 'now' 'in the future'?"[31]

In other words, reductive theorists say that "Jesus is risen" means, first, something like "Jesus still has influence on us today" or "We have a vivid sense that 'he is still with us' in our memory of him" or "Jesus' life and teachings still guide and influence our lives today" or "Our lives have been transformed and liberated by Jesus." Second, the words "Jesus is risen" constitute — so they say — an invitation to others to live life in a Christ-like or Christian way. That is the meaning of the Christian proclamation of the resurrection.[32]

There is, of course, nothing even remotely wrong with being influenced or feeling liberated by Jesus, nor with remembering him or being guided by his teachings. Quite the contrary. But to reduce his resurrection to merely our subjective feelings — to interpret it as something that happens to us rather than as something that happened to him — is to create quite a different

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30   Robert F. Scuka, "Resurrection: Critical Reflections on a Doctrine in Search of a Meaning," *Modern Theology* 6 (October 1989): 79–80.

31   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 36 note 26.

32   Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 37.

religion than the historic Christian faith. And it may well, someday, earn the rebuke that the late American poet, critic, and double Pulitzer-Prize-winning novelist John Updike warns us about in his "Seven Stanzas at Easter":

> Make no mistake: if He rose at all
>
> it was as His body;
>
> if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the molecules reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
>
> the Church will fall.
>
> It was not as the flowers,
>
> each soft spring recurrent;
>
> it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled eyes of the eleven apostles;
>
> it was as His flesh: ours.
>
> The same hinged thumbs and toes,
>
> the same valved heart
>
> that — pierced — died, withered, paused, and then regathered out of enduring Might
>
> new strength to enclose.
>
> Let us not mock God with metaphor,
>
> analogy, sidestepping, transcendence,
>
> making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the faded credulity of earlier ages:
>
> let us walk through the door.
>
> The stone is rolled back, not papier-maché,
>
> not a stone in a story,
>
> but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow grinding of time will eclipse for each of us
>
> the wide light of day.
>
> And if we will have an angel at the tomb,
>
> make it a real angel,
>
> weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair, opaque in the dawn light, robed in real linen

spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,

for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,

lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are embarrassed by the miracle,

and crushed by remonstrance.[33]

Latter-day Saints, too, need to resist the transformation of the faith that moved their spiritual ancestors from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, from Missouri to Illinois, from Illinois to the Great Basin West, and from the Great Basin West around the world into mere metaphor, analogy, or parable. The materiality of the golden plates, brute fact, was, I think, partly intended to defend against precisely that.

The plates, and the Book of Mormon, are intended to force a choice. And they have, in fact, done so since the earliest days of the Restoration. The rather naïve account of a "Mrs. Palmer," who grew up not far from the family of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith, speaks with simple eloquence of the Prophet Joseph Smith's character, but also illustrates the way in which the Book of Mormon obliged even people of good will to decide, for or against his prophetic claims. Joseph's initial vision could be dismissed as merely a subjective dream. The Book of Mormon, however, could not:

> My father owned a farm near that of the Smith family, in New York. My parents were friends of the Smith family, which was one of the best in that locality — honest, religious and industrious, but poor. … My father loved young Joseph Smith and often hired him to work with his boys. I was about six years old when he first came to our home. I remember going into the field on an afternoon to play in the corn rows while my

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33   John Updike, *Collected Poems, 1953–1993* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 20–21.

brothers worked. When evening came, I was too tired to walk home and cried because my brothers refused to carry me. Joseph lifted me to his shoulder, and with his arm thrown across my feet to steady me, and my arm about his neck, he carried me to our home.

I remember the excitement stirred up among some of the people over Joseph's First Vision, and of hearing my father contend that it was only the sweet dream of a pure minded boy. One of our church leaders came to my father to remonstrate against his allowing such close friendship between his family and the "Smith Boy," as he called him. My father defended his own position by saying that Joseph was the best help he had ever found. …

Not until Joseph had had a second vision and begun to write a book which drew many of the best and brightest people of the churches away did my parents come to a realization of the fact that their friend, the churchman, had told them the truth. Then, my family cut off their friendship for all the Smiths, for *all* the family followed Joseph. Even the father, intelligent man that he was, could not discern the evil he was helping to promote.

My parents then lent all the aid they could in helping to crush Joseph Smith; but it was too late. He had run his course too long. He could not be put down.

There was never a truer, purer, nobler boy than Joseph Smith, before he was led away by superstition.[34]

Those of us who believe in Joseph's divine calling don't, of course, grant that he was "led away by superstition." We

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34   Cited in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, eds., *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974), 1–2.

might think, though, that those who abandon his claims for a metaphorical Book of Mormon — a stance that makes an ambiguous hash not only of the book itself but of the claimed appearances of the presumably fictional Nephite prophet Moroni in the nineteenth century — are choosing a different religion than that taught by the prophet and apostles and embraced by the Saints. And that's to say nothing about those who, going still further, want us to jettison our belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ and to affirm only that Jesus is "now living in God's future," that he is knowable, today, "as ultimacy in the historicality of the everyday."

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Getting into the Meat of the Word of Wisdom

A. Jane Birch

Abstract: *In verse 13 of the Word of Wisdom, the Lord tells us, "it is pleasing unto me that they [flesh of beasts and fowls of the air] should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine" (D&C 89:13). Judging from the variety of interpretations this single verse has inspired, it would appear to be deeply enigmatic. Interestingly, most interpretations have been put forward with little supporting evidence. This article is the first comprehensive analysis of the diverse explanations for D&C 89:13 that have been suggested since 1833. In this article, I attempt to analyze these various interpretations in light of the available evidence.*

Short as it is, the dietary counsel in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants is far from straightforward, as evidenced by the wide variety of interpretations it has inspired since God revealed it to Joseph Smith in 1833. In contrast, what it means to "keep the Word of Wisdom," to meet the worthiness standard set by the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is relatively clear: abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, and harmful drugs. Although there is much more to the revelation in D&C 89, the Church has provided no other binding interpretations, leaving members to decide whether and how to respond to the remaining counsel.

Amongst the verses left without official interpretation is a pair that may be as well known for their relative neglect as any other in modern-day scripture:

> Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly;
>
> And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine. (D&C 89:12–13)

Judging from the variety of interpretations elicited by these verses, they are deeply enigmatic. This is especially true of verse 13. While a variety of writers have attempted various interpretations of this verse, what stands out is the contradictory nature of the diverse explanations. There is no consensus of opinion. This may be one reason why, historically, one popular approach to this verse has been to ignore it altogether.[1] Others who have attempted an explanation have frequently made no effort to support their claims with credible evidence.

To date, no one has collected the diverse explanations for D&C 89:13 or attempted to analyze them in light of the available evidence, so that is what I propose to do in this article. My purpose is not to provide a definitive resolution to the meaning of this verse; that, I believe, would require a prophetic voice. But where scholarship may fall short of prophetic clarity, it can help us clear out some of the weeds that have grown up in the absence of prophetic pronouncements. In this case, where we cannot be sure what this verse means, we can be reasonably sure of what it does not mean.

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1   The lds.org Gospel Topics "Word of Wisdom" entry, for example, does not even quote verse 13. Accessed April 12, 2014, http://www.lds.org/topics/word-of-wisdom.

For example, one inexplicably popular understanding of D&C 89:13 has been that the comma inserted between the words *used* and *only*, beginning with the 1921 edition of the D&C, *changed* the meaning of the text. The implication of this theory is that the true meaning of the verse is revealed only by eliminating the errant comma: God is pleased if we do *not* restrict ourselves to eating meat only in times of winter, cold, or famine.[2] In a previous article, I demonstrated why this "errant comma theory" should not be considered among the valid contenders for a legitimate interpretation of D&C 89:13.[3] In short, the comma added in 1921 did not *change* the meaning of the verse; Church leaders have always read the word *only* to mean *except*, with or without the comma. However, the meaning of the word *only* changed over time, making the added comma useful to helping modern readers retain the original sense of that word.

In this article, I will explore the other major (as well as some of the minor) interpretations of this verse and suggest why some of these explanations may be more plausible than others.

Approaches to Understanding D&C 89:13

If the "errant comma theory" is not plausible, what does D&C 89:13 mean? Verse 13 seems to suggest a further restriction of meat consumption beyond the admonition in verse 12 to consume it "sparingly." But what is that restriction? A literalist interpretation of D&C 89:13 would take it at face value: it is pleasing to God if we do not use the flesh of beasts or fowls of the air, except in times of winter, cold, or famine. This

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2   Note that while I will often use the word *meat*, the text actually refers to "flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air." The terms are not necessarily equivalent.

3   A. Jane Birch, "Questioning the Comma in Verse 13 of the Word of Wisdom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 10 (2014): 133–49.

straightforward interpretation has, in fact, been the one most commonly used by Latter-day Saints who have examined this verse, and it was the only one used for well over 100 years after the revelation was given.[4] This, of course, did not translate into widespread practice. And while abiding by this counsel has never been made a standard for Church worthiness (LDS leaders had a hard enough time convincing members to give up alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea), this interpretation was taken for granted by most Latter-day Saints who addressed the Word of Wisdom up through about the 1940s.

But even this literalist interpretation becomes complicated when we consider the meaning of "times of," "winter," "cold," and "famine." "Famine" might be the easiest to interpret as it is intuitively clear why God would sanction the use of meat during periods when his children are threatened by starvation (see D&C 49:19, 21). But what definition of "winter" does this verse refer to? Is "winter" defined by the meteorologists, the calendar, or the weather? The average temperature of the winter season varies widely across the globe, from comfortably mild, and even warm, to bitter cold. Some countries are never cold and thus never experience winter at all. With modern heating in homes and cars, do people with these commonplace comforts truly experience winter? If it is cold outside, but we are in well-heated homes and offices, is it a "time of cold" for us? What is the difference between "winter" or "cold" and "times of" winter or cold?

Questions like these help us see why it can be difficult to interpret passages from the Word of Wisdom without some understanding of God's intent in giving us these particular edicts. Surprisingly, this is equally true for other admonitions found in Section 89. While the twentieth-century Church made the standard for "keeping the Word of Wisdom" clear,

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4   This is based on my own analysis of the Word of Wisdom literature from 1833 to 2014.

most passages in D&C 89 are open to varying interpretations, which are influenced by what we assume to be God's purposes for the revelation.

For example, most Latter-day Saints who have addressed the Word of Wisdom have assumed that one important reason why the Lord gave these particular admonitions was for our physical well-being. This assertion has logically led to the assumption that the advice in Section 89 is (or will be) verified by modern science, and the assumption that science can help us better understand the Word of Wisdom has then impacted the interpretation of almost every verse. For example, once caffeine was identified as a stimulant in coffee and tea, this fact led many Saints to suggest that these passages implied we should abstain from anything with high levels of caffeine, including, most famously, cola drinks. Clearly, as the Church has recently taken pains to point out,[5] the Word of Wisdom does not mention caffeine *per se*, but this line of reasoning is logical if one assumes that the Word of Wisdom is primarily a guide to better physical health and that science, therefore, should be able to help us understand its meaning and application. If the Lord had other purposes in mind, those purposes would likely lead to different lines of reasoning and alternative possible interpretations.

Below I discuss the various interpretations of verse 13 that have been proposed throughout its history, most of which assume a particular purpose for this counsel. I will deal first with explanations based on the assumption that verse 13 is primarily intended to promote physical health, and secondly discuss non-health–related explanations.

5 See "Mormonism in the News: Getting It Right, August 29," accessed April 12, 2014, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/ mormonism-news--getting-it-right-august-29.

Health-Related Explanations

Although it has rarely been treated as simply a guide to better health, LDS Church leaders and members have consistently extolled this purpose of the Word of Wisdom. They have pointed to the fact that it was given for our "temporal salvation" (v. 2), that it explicitly tells us what is good and not good for our bodies (vv. 7–16), and that it includes promises appearing to relate to physical health (vv. 18, 20). Equally persuasive to many Latter-day Saints are the compelling links between the advice in D&C 89 and what science says about healthy dietary practices.

If the Word of Wisdom is a health guide, it is logical to assume that the guidelines are or will be verified by science. Not surprisingly, the majority of Latter-day Saints who have addressed the Word of Wisdom have been quite eager to show how the admonitions in D&C 89 are in perfect harmony with cutting-edge science. Of course the science they cite is, at best, a reflection of the nutritional thought of their time, much of which now appears quite dated since science continues to evolve, sometimes quite dramatically.

Below are some of the theories that have been used as explanations of the Lord's counsel on meat consumption in verse 13 in light of its impact on our physical health. I will be questioning whether any of these explanations are compelling enough to provide useful insight into this verse.

Theory: Consuming meat in the winter and cold, rather than in the heat and summer, is better for human health.

Historically, the most common explanation for why the Lord counseled the Saints to not eat meat, except in times of winter or cold, has been that this is better for the human body.

Not all of these explanations were tied to scientific evidence. For example, in 1865 one author asserted:

> The eating of much flesh in a warm climate, besides other evils, produces drowsiness, which leads to the breaking of another commandment … which teaches us to "arise early."[6]

By far the most frequent reason given for why it is better if meat is eaten in the cold rather than the heat is the claim that meat warms the body. For example, one author writes, "Meat builds heat, so if you are out in the cold a lot and need the extra heat for your body you can get it by eating meat."[7] Similarly, another author cites contemporary experts in claiming, "In summer or hot weather [meat] is 'too heating.'"[8]

While this explanation has its roots in a pre-modern understanding of the human body and was first employed long before any scientific reasoning was used to support it, there is a scientific basis for this assertion, which later authors (including contemporary ones) have used. The scientific backing comes from the fact that consuming protein produces more heat than fats or carbohydrates because of the higher thermic effect of protein (also known as "diet-induced thermogenesis" or "specific dynamic action"). The "thermic effect of food" is the energy used by the body to process food and is one factor in maintaining the body's temperature. Protein produces a thermic effect of 20–30%, meaning that 20–30% percent of a food's protein calories are spent to metabolize the protein. The thermic effect of carbohydrate is 5-10%. The thermic effect of

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6   E. C. Brand, *The Word of Wisdom* (San Francisco: n.p., 1865).

7   Doris T. Charriere, *Hidden Treasures of the Word of Wisdom* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes, 1978), 51.

8   Leah D. Widtsoe, *How to Be Well* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing, 1943), 71.

fat is a mere 0–3%.[9] These facts suggest a theoretical possibility that higher protein consumption might help keep the body warm, and many Latter-day Saint writers have cited these facts to demonstrate the wisdom of D&C 89. But ultimately there is no evidence that increased protein or meat consumption results in a discernible difference in maintaining body temperature in comparison to other sources of calories.

In an exhaustive 350-page study commissioned by the U.S. military entitled *Nutrition Needs in Cold and in High-Altitude Environments*, no evidence was found that macronutrient needs change in cold weather; nor was any evidence found to support the idea of increasing meat consumption in winter or cold. In fact, because the energy allowance for military personnel is higher in the cold but the total amount of protein needed remains relatively constant, "the percentage of calories to be contributed by protein is significantly lower."[10] Long-term studies of human subjects specifically testing the potential of protein to increase thermoregulation concluded that *carbohydrates* helped humans maintain "a higher core temperature during cold exposure than did fat or protein."[11]

A second study commissioned by the U.S. military to investigate the nutritional needs of military personnel in hot environments produced over 550 pages of analysis, none of which recommend *decreasing* meat or protein consumption in warm weather. In fact, at one point it suggests a "slight increase in protein may be required for work in hot environments."[12]

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9   Klass R. Westerterp, "Diet Induced Thermogenesis," *Nutrition & Metabolism* 1/5 (2004): 1–5.

10   Committee on Military Nutrition Research, Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, *Nutritional Needs in Cold and High-Altitude Environments*, ed. Bernadette M. Marriott and Sydney J. Carlson (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1996), 24.

11   Committee on Military Nutrition Research, *Nutritional Needs in Cold*, 285–86.

12   Committee on Military Nutrition Research, Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, *Nutritional Needs in Hot Environments*, ed. Bernadette M.

Humans eat food, not specific macronutrients, and studies show that "when people consume mixed meals, the relative SDE [specific dynamic effect] impact of protein, carbohydrate, or fat becomes indistinguishable."[13]

A second, far less common, rationale used to explain the wisdom of increasing meat consumption in the winter is that "meat has more calories than fruits and vegetables, which some individuals may need fewer of in summer than winter."[14] People do tend to consume more calories in the cold, and most studies suggest there is an increased energy need in cold weather.[15] The problem with this interpretation, however, is that humans can obtain energy (calories) from any food source; there is nothing special about meat calories (although under certain limited conditions, animals may be available where plants are not; this condition will be dealt with later in this article).

Caloric (energy) density depends on factors like the amount of water, fiber, and fats in food. Meat can be roughly two to ten times more calorically dense than vegetables, fruits, or whole grains, but some plant foods (like nuts, seeds, vegetable oils, and many plant-based processed foods) can be two to four times more calorically dense than meat. An extra 300 calories of beef, chicken, or pork delivers no more calories to the body than an extra 300 calories of fruits, vegetables, and grains. In addition, studies indicate that when people eat more foods with lower energy density, they typically eat less because these foods provide greater satiety.[16]

Marriott (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1993), 45.

13   Committee on Military Nutrition Research, *Nutritional Needs in Hot Environments*, 109.

14   *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual Religion 324 and 325* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 210.

15   See previously cited studies commissioned by the U.S. military.

16   Gordon M. Wardlaw and Anne M. Smith, *Contemporary Nutrition*, 6th ed. updated (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 38–40.

The majority of the LDS authors who have addressed the question of meat consumption and human health have dwelt largely and often exclusively on the hazards of making meat more than a moderate portion of the diet, regardless of the season. Several have pointed out that at the time D&C 89 was revealed, Americans were known to consume a relatively large quantity of meat.[17] Living in a land of rich abundance, Americans have almost always been able to consume a significantly higher quantity of meat as compared to other countries.[18] In the 2000s, meat consumption in the U.S. hit a record high.[19] Consequently, one can readily find criticisms and cautions against heavy meat consumption throughout American history, up to the present day. Many LDS writers have relied on various critiques of meat consumption in their own explanations of why the Lord would caution us to consume meat "sparingly" and only in times of winter, cold, or famine.

The following are some of the reasons historically cited by Latter-day Saints as to why immoderate meat consumption can be detrimental to the human body. The popularity of some of these reasons has waxed and waned, but surprisingly none of them has gone totally out of favor, though not all would be championed by current mainstream scientific research. The first few points, for example, are currently less controversial than some of the others:

- Higher meat consumption is strongly associated with many chronic diseases, especially heart disease.
- High meat consumption crowds out other healthy foods and their nutrients.

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17   See, for example, Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective." *Dialogue* 14/3 (Fall 1981): 47–65.

18   Vaclav Smil, "Eating Meat: Evolution, Patterns, and Consequences," *Population and Development Review* 28/4 (2002): 599–639.

19   United States Department of Agriculture, *Agriculture Fact Book 2001–2002* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office Superintendent of Documents, 2003), 15.

- Meat contains an unhealthy amount of saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Excess meat protein is hard on the liver and kidneys.
- High meat consumption has a negative effect on the acid–alkaline balance of body.
- Meat is high in uric acid (associated with gout and kidney stones).
- Meat is more subject to "putrefactive and other disturbances."
- Meat is hard for humans to digest.
- Meat is overly "stimulating" to the human body.

The assertion that meat consumption is deleterious to health is an ancient concept, and it was preached by a few prominent people in Joseph Smith's day.[20] Today, very few mainstream nutritionists would argue for high meat consumption; current dietary advice counsels cutting back on meat. A number of experts assert that higher levels of meat consumption lead to obesity and a large variety of bodily ailments, particularly chronic illnesses such as heart disease, strokes, and cancer (among the top causes of death in America).[21]

But what about the advice to abstain from consuming meat, except during times of winter or cold? Is there a rationale for this counsel on a health basis? On the one hand, there are experts who feel the evidence for limiting our consumption of meat beyond the standard of "sparingly" is very compelling. On the other hand, there doesn't appear to be strong evidence that consuming meat in the winter or cold has health advantages over consuming it in the summer and heat (assuming both are done sparingly).

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20   Bush, "Word of Wisdom," 53–54.

21   See, for example, Joan Sabate, "The Contribution of Vegetarian Diets to Health and Disease: A Paradigm Shift?" *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 78(suppl) (2003): 502S–07S.

Nevertheless, it is self-evident that abstaining from all meat consumption during certain parts of the year (spring, summer, and fall) and sparingly at other times (winter or cold) would lead to overall less meat consumption than consuming meat sparingly year round, and, according to some experts, this would be better for our health.[22] However, we might legitimately ask, "Would the Lord provide an *arbitrary* distinction between the seasons simply in order to decrease the total amount of meat we consume?" If not, what logical rationale might there be for the obvious distinction made in verse 13?

> *Theory: Plant foods are not as available in the winter or cold, so meat is needed to supplement the diet.*

Several editions of the LDS Church Educational System *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* state, "Before fruits and vegetables could be preserved, people often did not have enough other food to eat in winter."[23] Actually, humans have known for thousands of years how "fruits and vegetables could be preserved," but this interpretation at least implies that meat is more necessary in conditions in which plant foods are scarce. This is more of a survival strategy than a health claim, but scarce food resources are a threat to health.

Before the era of modern transportation, mechanical refrigeration, and year-round stocked grocery stores, the human diet was tied to the cyclical nature of the farm. People ate seasonally. Most plant foods were harvested during late summer and fall. From this harvest, people preserved a variety of plant foods for the winter and cold months, but this supply

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22   See, for example, Carrie R. Daniel, Amanda J. Cross, Corinna Koebnick, and Rashmi Sinha, "Trends in Meat Consumption in the USA," *Public Health Nutrition* 14/4 (2010): 575–583.

23   *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual Religion 324 and 325*, 210. Similar arguments are used by others. See, for example, Lora Beth Larson, "The Do's in the Word of Wisdom," *Ensign*, April 1977, 46.

(depending on its size) could run out, causing a "hunger gap" between the time the supplies ran out and the earliest harvest in spring. The flesh of animals was used not just for taste and variety, but also as a useful supplement to the diet to provide adequate calories. Animals were routinely slaughtered in the late fall, preserved, and consumed until the supply ran out. It was hoped that the next harvest would be available by that time.[24]

According to this interpretation of the Word of Wisdom, eating the flesh of animals during winter and cold would serve a function similar to eating meat during a famine or times of "excess hunger" (v. 15). Winter and cold are times when nonplant foods may be scarce, and humans without supplementary animals foods could face hunger. In fact, the similarity between verses 13 and 15 of Section 89, both of which describe when it is appropriate for humans to use the flesh of animals, suggests a close relationship between these verses. The parallel construction could indicate that they are referring to the same conditions:

only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine. (v. 13)

only in times of famine and excess of hunger. (v. 15)

As writers on the Word of Wisdom frequently point out, the Word of Wisdom does not require a total vegetarian diet.[25] Together with all that the earth produces, the Lord has ordained the flesh of animals for humans (D&C 49:19; 89:12), so that his children might always have "in abundance" (D&C 49:19). Although the Lord cautions that the flesh of animals

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24   James E. McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University, 2007).

25   Interestingly, the book most often cited to bolster this claim is one that promotes a near-vegetarian diet. See John A. Widtsoe and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Word of Wisdom: A Modern Interpretation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1937), 137.

should not be used when there is "no need" (D&C 49:21; JST Genesis 9:11), clearly the Lord would sanction the consumption of animal flesh in times of need. While in our day, the plant foods we have access to provide more than enough abundance, there certainly are times and places where this has not been the case. As John and Leah Widtsoe point out in their influential book on the Word of Wisdom, even though animal flesh is not an ideal source of nutrition, "meats have the power to sustain life for a time if nothing else is eaten."[26]

However, the suggestion that meat is more needed in times when plant foods are scarce does not explain why it is pleasing to God if we avoid consuming the flesh of animals during times *other* than winter or cold.

Theory: Before the era of mechanical refrigeration, meat spoiled easily so it was prudent to abstain from eating meat except in times of winter or cold.

Another relatively common explanation of verse 13 (dating from at least the early 1940s to the present day) is the idea that since the early Saints did not have the convenience of modern-day refrigeration, the Lord counseled them to consume meat only in times of winter or cold, when the meat would not spoil as quickly. The implication is that since "modern refrigeration now makes it easy for us to eat meat safely in any season" this counsel is no longer relevant to us.[27]

It is true that many food-borne illnesses derive from meat, and temperature is a critical and well-recognized factor that can lead to spoiling. The early Saints would no doubt have appreciated the convenience of mechanical refrigeration, but the hypothesis that God would instruct humans to eat meat

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26   Widtsoe and Widtsoe, *The Word of Wisdom*, 217.

27   Melanie Douglass, R.D., *Losing It: Life Is Better When You Feel Good* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 8.

only in times of winter or cold to reduce the chances of them consuming it spoiled faces several challenges.

The likelihood of eating spoiled meat has to do with *how* meat is handled and not *when* it is consumed. Warm weather complicates the handling of meat, but eating either properly prepared fresh meat or properly preserved meat is no more dangerous or unhealthy in one season than another. Likewise, both fresh and preserved meats are dangerous in any season if they are not properly prepared.[28] Spoilage is a year-round problem, even in modern times, and there are a variety of factors (in addition to heat) that determine whether meat will spoil: animal feed and hygiene, slaughtering techniques, cross-contamination, food handling and preparation, and other factors.[29] Keeping raw meat cold, while clearly an important factor in preventing or postponing most types of spoilage, does not prevent all types of spoilage.[30] And while there are additional risks when the weather is warm, this is true with plant-based foods as well.[31]

Before mechanical refrigeration, there were fewer ways to keep the flesh of animals cold enough to thwart decay for long periods of time. If there were no means to reduce the temperature of the meat to a safe level, slaughtered animals had to be either consumed or preserved within a necessarily short time frame, but this was by no means an insurmountable obstacle, especially given that the timing of the slaughter is also controlled by humans.[32]

Whether or not spoilage can be detected without instruments, spoiled meat can quickly make a person very sick

28   Gordon M. Wardlaw and Anne M. Smith, *Contemporary Nutrition*, 6th ed. updated (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 529–40.

29   R. A. Lawrie, *Lawrie's Meat Science*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: Woodhead, 1998), 119–25.

30   Lawrie, *Lawrie's Meat Science*, 143–211.

31   Wardlaw and Smith, *Contemporary Nutrition*, 538.

32   McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating*, 79–81.

and can even lead to death, a clear incentive for avoiding it. Humans who are prone to eating spoiled meat would not last long. Fortunately, spoiled meat often looks, smells, and tastes bad. Meat was too prized to allow it to spoil on a frequent basis, and techniques for preserving it were established hundreds, even thousands of years before the 1830s. Such preservation techniques included adding sugar, salting, drying, dehydrating, smoking, pickling, fermenting, and brining.[33]

If helping the Saints avoid meat spoiled by excess heat was the Lord's reasoning for verse 13, it was particularly ineffectual. There is no evidence that the early Saints changed their behavior in light of this counsel, at least not to the extent that any known illness or death was prevented by following this admonition. Indeed, the early Saints were no doubt at least as well aware as their fellow Americans of the need to handle meat carefully and as well versed in the various techniques to preserve animal flesh when it could not be consumed immediately. What the early Saints could have used, however, was revelation on the importance of water safety, sanitation, and waste removal, all of which would have greatly curbed the devastating impact of infectious diseases, which were rampant during the 19th century. In fact, some LDS authors have noted that, contrary to the Word of Wisdom, the habit of consuming "hot drinks" could have protected the early Saints because the temperature of the water would more likely kill some of the bugs that caused such harm.[34] No doubt cholera can be more deadly than caffeine or even spoiled meat.

While it remains true that warm weather complicates the handling of meat, it appears to be a stretch to suggest that D&C 89:13 was specifically designed to address this issue. In fact, it is only since the invention of mechanical refrigeration that this particular explanation for verse 13 became popular, too late to

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33   Lawrie, *Lawrie's Meat Science*, 143–211.

34   Bush, "The Word of Wisdom," 60.

have done the early Saints any good. The Word of Wisdom says nothing about properly preserving meat, refrigeration, or the conditional nature of this counsel.

In contrast to the abundance of scientific data to support the value of not consuming the flesh of animals beyond the level of "sparingly," there appears to be no evidence that it would be better for human health to consume the flesh of animals during certain seasons of the year rather than others. The only exception is when conditions such as cold or winter make plant foods so scarce that animal flesh is needed to sustain life. It is possible that other health-related evidence will surface in the future, either via science or continuing revelation. In the meantime, I will now take a look at the variety of non-health–related explanations of the Word of Wisdom to see if they shed light on D&C 89:13.

Non-Health–Related Explanations

While it might be unprecedented for a Latter-day Saint to claim that the Word of Wisdom has *no* bearing on physical well-being, there might also be a danger in assuming it is primarily a health code that will be unequivocally confirmed by scientific research.[35] If we believe the two are inextricably linked, the danger is that when scientific assertions seem to contradict the counsel in the Word of Wisdom, our loyalty to it might diminish, even if the science later proves to be wrong. If science tells us caffeine is bad for our health, this might strengthen our resolve to abstain from tea and coffee. But what happens when science uncovers beneficial aspects to caffeine or links the consumption of tea, coffee, and even alcohol to positive

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35   Paul Y. Hoskisson is one scholar who believes the Word of Wisdom should not be viewed as a health code. His research suggests that "during the Kirtland and Missouri period, the Word of Wisdom in general was never promoted as a health code." "The Word of Wisdom in Its First Decade," *Journal of Mormon History* 38/1 (Winter 2012): 140.

health benefits? Along parallel lines, experts leading the small but growing interest in low-carb and so-called "Paleo" diets marshal their own lines of evidence to assert the health benefits of meat consumption, sometimes even at dramatically high levels. If we believe there is "scientific proof" that consuming more meat is good for us, might our commitment to the Word of Wisdom as a health code call on us to rethink our interpretation and implementation of related verses?

But what if the Word of Wisdom is not (or is not primarily) a health code? If this is true, whether or not the specific counsel given in the Word of Wisdom benefits human health is less important, and changes in our scientific understanding will not dramatically change our appreciation of this revelation.

A majority of the historical explanations of verse 13 assume that since obeying the Word of Wisdom results in greater physical health that verse 13 must contribute in some way toward that purpose. But regardless of whether the Word of Wisdom as a whole should be understood as a health code, it is possible that verse 13 may serve another function. One clue to the meaning of verse 13 might lie in the sole reason the Lord gives in the verse itself for abstaining from meat except during certain times. The Lord says it is "pleasing" to him. Why would it be pleasing to God for us to abstain from eating meat except at certain times? Clearly he may be pleased that we are healthy, but might there be other reasons for not consuming the flesh of animals that go beyond our physical well-being that are pleasing to him? What other explanations are possible, and how might they impact our interpretation of verse 13?

Theory: The LDS understanding of our stewardship over the earth and its creatures suggests we consume meat only when necessary.

The first biblical mention of animal flesh as a source of food is the Lord's instruction to Noah after the Flood subsided and he and his family left the ark. God had given Adam and Eve herbs and fruit for meat (Genesis 1:29), but now God tells Noah "every moving thing that liveth shall be for meat" (Genesis 9:3). Joseph Smith added a qualification to this injunction in 1830, three years before the Word of Wisdom was revealed:

> And surely, blood shall not be shed, only for meat, to save your lives; and the blood of every beast will I require at your hand. (JST Genesis 9:11)

The following year, in a revelation given in May 1831, Joseph Smith warned that while the flesh of animals is ordained for the use of man, "wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need" (D&C 49:21).

These and other scriptural injunctions may be one reason why many Latter-day Saints have associated the counsel given in the Word of Wisdom with human stewardship over animals and the injustice of slaughtering them without cause. Certainly the assertion that it is wrong to kill animals unnecessarily has been a strong and consistent theme throughout much of Church history.[36] Historically, it is the second most frequently cited reason (next to better health) for why the Saints should eat meat "sparingly."[37]

Might the Lord's love and concern for his animal creations be a reason why it is "pleasing" to him that we restrict meat consumption? Some LDS scholars have noted that the LDS doctrine concerning animals is fairly unique among Christian religions in declaring that they, like humans, are eternal beings

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36 See, for example, Gerald Jones, "Concern for Animals as Manifest in Five American Churches: Bible Christian, Shaker, Latter-day Saint, Christian Scientist and Seventh-Day Adventist" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1972).

37 This is based on my own analysis of the Word of Wisdom literature from 1833 to 2014.

(D&C 77:2–3), that they are "living souls" (Moses 3:19) who will be "resurrected and glorified" in God's presence, and that they have "an external existence and man is held accountable by God for his treatment of them."[38]

LDS scholar Hugh Nibley suggests that the use of the word *sparingly* in D&C 89:12 means "sparing God's creatures." He goes on to say, "The family who needs a deer to get through the winter have a right to that. The Lord will not deny them, but he is also pleased with those who forbear."[39] Apostle Lorenzo Snow said, "We have no right to slay animals or fowls except from necessity, for they have spirits which may some day rise up and accuse or condemn us."[40] Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith explained, "Although there was no sin in the shedding of their blood when required for food … to take the life of these creatures wantonly is a sin before the Lord. It is easy to destroy life, but who can restore it when it is taken?"[41]

How might this perspective help us interpret D&C 89:13? In the context of animals being ordained for the use of man, to slaughter them for food appears to be appropriate under at least these conditions.

- for meat, to save your lives (JST Genesis 9:11)
- when there is a "need" (see D&C 49:21)
- in times of famine and excess of hunger (D&C 89:13, 15)

In light of these restrictions, it may be pleasing to God if the flesh of animals is not used, except in times of necessity, when it is important for our survival. This would suggest that

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38   Jones, "Concern for Animals," 58, 144.

39   Hugh Nibley, "Word of Wisdom: Commentary on D&C 89," accessed April 12, 2014, http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1044&index=1.

40   Dennis B. Horne, ed., *An Apostle's Record: The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon* (Clearfield, UT: Gnolaum Books, 2004), 424.

41   Joseph Fielding Smith, "Is It a Sin to Kill Animals Wantonly?" *Improvement Era*, August 1961, 568.

"times of winter, or of cold, or famine" may refer to times when we would go hungry unless animal foods were included in our diet. This is a frequent theme in the Word of Wisdom literature. Apostle John Henry Smith said:

> The revelation says that meats are to be used sparingly and that it will please the lord if they are only used in times of famine and excessive cold. Animal life is to be properly guarded and not wantonly sacrificed to the appetite of man. His use of it must be limited to times of scarcity or those seasons of extreme cold when it may be necessary.[42]

Two other themes related to stewardship come out of the literature on the Word of Wisdom: stewardship of the environment and stewardship over the resources we have at our disposal, particularly our financial resources. Neither of these themes is as clear and consistent in LDS writings on the Word of Wisdom as the theme of stewardship over animals, but each introduces concepts that have potential bearing on our interpretation of D&C 89:13.

Stewardship over personal resources intersects with the Word of Wisdom in LDS literature through the claim that spending money on meat is wasteful because meat is a more expensive form of calories. It is true that poor people have always eaten significantly less meat than the wealthy because of the higher cost of meat.[43] Some Latter-day Saints have suggested that, like money spent on alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea, money spent on meat could be more profitably spent on more nutritious foods, in service to others, or in building

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42 John Henry Smith, "The Word of Wisdom," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 46 (March 1884): 170.

43 Smil, "Eating Meat," 606–08.

the kingdom of God.[44] If this reasoning is part of the rationale behind the Word of Wisdom, it too may suggest that, except in times of necessity, humans may be wise to devote their financial resources to more significant causes.

The concept of stewardship over the earth ties into the discussion of meat consumption because of the relatively negative impact meat production has on the environment. Substantially more energy, land, water, and other resources are required to produce animal versus plant foods.[45] Scientists argue that our current rate of meat consumption is unsustainable and that the poor of the world disproportionally bear the weight of the negative environmental costs.[46] Reducing meat consumption would have a positive effect on factors such as energy use, clean water and air, forest deforestation, land degradation, and declining biodiversity.[47] It would also free up more resources to provide for those who go without, for whom the Lord seems particularly concerned (see D&C 49:19–21). Among a few Latter-day Saints, these arguments suggest a benefit to reserving the consumption of meat for times of need.[48]

However, while the depth of the secular literature addressing the connection between meat production and the environment

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44   See, for example, John Brown, "Word of Wisdom," *Young Woman's Journal* 6/5 (February 1895): 225.

45   David Pimentel and Marcia Pimentel, "Sustainability of Meat-based and Plant-based Diets and the Environment," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 78(suppl) (2003): 660S–63S.

46   Physicians for Social Responsibility, "Health Implications of Global Warming: Impacts on Vulnerable Populations," accessed April 12, 2014, www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/vulnerable-populations.pdf. See also D&C 49:19–20.

47   Henning Steinfeld et al., *Livestock's Long Shadow*: *Environmental Issues and Options* (Rome: United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, 2006).

48   I devote a few pages to this topic in Jane Birch, *Discovering the Word of Wisdom: Surprising Insights from a Whole Food, Plant-based Perspective* (Provo, UT: Fresh Awakenings, 2013), 83–86. There are other examples, but I have not found a longer treatment of this topic in the LDS literature.

is broad and compelling, the topic is surprisingly rare in LDS literature. This is not due to a lack of LDS writers exploring the profound ways that humans are intimately connected with and responsible for the environment.[49]

Many Latter-day Saints have written with eloquence and conviction on the sacred nature of the earth and the compelling ways LDS doctrine should move us to embrace our stewardship over a planet that depends on us, even as we depend on it. Even the Church, via its newsroom, has recently (2013) come out with a statement on "Environmental Stewardship and Conservation."[50] Environmental stewardship themes are present throughout LDS history, especially in the last quarter century, but this literature is rarely linked to discussions of meat consumption. As in the secular literature, the link between meat consumption and environmental stewardship appears more frequently in LDS writing promoting healthy eating than in the environmental stewardship literature.[51]

Nevertheless, insofar as this rationale is valid, it might suggest another reason the Lord would be pleased if his children chose plant foods over animal foods (except in times of need).

Theory: Spirituality is deepened when humans cease their enmity toward the animal kingdom.

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49   For examples taken from LDS Church leaders, see Richard D. Stratton, ed., *Kindness to Animals and Caring for the Earth* (Portland: Inkwater, 2004). For some contemporary LDS writers, see *Stewardship and the Creation: LDS Perspectives on the Environment*, ed. George B. Handley, Terry B. Ball, and Steven L. Peck (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2006).

50   LDS Newsroom, "Environmental Stewardship and Conservation," accessed April 12, 2014, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/environmental-stewardship-conservation.

51   In addition to previously cited Birch, *Discovering the Word of Wisdom*, another example is Scott A. Johnson, *The Word of Wisdom: Discovering the LDS Code of Health* (Springville, UT: CFI, 2013), 67.

Discussions of the spiritual blessings that come from obedience to the Word of Wisdom play a profound role in its history. Writers frequently dwell on these points at length, often emphasizing that spiritual, rather than physical, blessings are the most desirable benefits of keeping the Word of Wisdom.

What have been the rationales used to explain why obeying the Word of Wisdom results in spiritual blessings and how might they apply to D&C 89:13? Not surprisingly, the most straightforward rationale has been that the Word of Wisdom is a commandment from God, and obedience to any commandment brings spiritual blessings. The fact that Section 89 is introduced as a "principle with a promise" (v. 3) is often mentioned, along with the explicit blessings stated in verses 18–21.

Clearly the rationale that "obedience brings blessings" would apply to D&C 89:13. In the verse itself the Lord explicitly states that it is pleasing to him for us to follow this admonition, and the promises at the end of the section (vv. 18–21) appear to apply to all of the counsel given in Section 89, which would include verse 13. But simply obeying the counsel in verse 13 may not help us understand it. Because we don't have a tradition of believing God routinely gives commandments to the entire Church for the sole purpose of asking the Saints to make sacrifices that have no other rationale than to test their obedience, we are left to believe there might be another connection between the wording of this verse and the promised blessings.

In discussing the connection between what we eat and spiritual blessings, Latter-day Saints have often pointed to the intimate connection between our bodies and our spiritual well-being to explain why to the Lord cares so deeply about our physical health. There are countless examples in the LDS

literature connecting spiritual blessings to physical health.[52] However, while there is ample evidence that most of the admonitions in the Word of Wisdom, including eating meat sparingly, can have a profound effect on physical health, thus far, as I have demonstrated, there is no evidence that suggests eating meat at certain times of the year versus other times of the year has a specific value for enhancing human health. So, in terms of evidence, it is hard to see how this line of reasoning helps us to connect verse 13 with the promised spiritual blessings.

There is, however, an approach to this scripture that not only suggests a link between obedience and spiritual blessings, but also adds evidence to an interpretation of verse 13 that I have already explored. This line of reasoning, used by various Latter-day Saints, claims there is a deep interconnection between the human spirit and the treatment of animals. It suggests that the killing of innocent animals when they are not needed for our survival has a profound impact on the human soul. President Joseph F. Smith was one of the proponents of this view. He was an emphatic advocate of "Humane Day," an institutionalized LDS program of kindness toward animals that lasted over 20 years (1897–1918).[53] Here is just one of many statements he made:

> We are a part of all life and should study carefully our relationship to it. We should be in sympathy with it, and not allow our prejudices to create a desire for its destruction. The unnecessary destruction of life begets a spirit of destruction which grows within the soul. It lives by what it feeds upon and robs man

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52   Here is one example among many, from President Ezra Taft Benson, "There is no question that the health of the body affects the spirit, or the Lord would never have revealed the Word of Wisdom .… That which affects our bodies also affects our souls." "In His Steps," *Ensign*, September 1988, 5.

53   Jones, "Concern for Animals," 92–120.

of the love that he should have for the works of God.

 … The unnecessary destruction of life is a distinct spiritual loss to the human family .… Love of nature is akin to the love of God; the two are inseparable.[54]

The idea that cruelty to animals has a brutalizing effect on human character and leads to cruelty to other humans is an ancient one,[55] and it has been a tradition that runs deep through LDS thought.[56] For example, while traveling with Zion's Camp, Joseph Smith "exhorted the brethren not to kill a serpent, bird, or an animal of any kind during our journey unless it became necessary in order to preserve ourselves from hunger." He explained:

Men must become harmless, before the brute creation; and when men lose their vicious dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play with the serpent in safety.[57]

Heber C. Kimball stated, "There is nothing in the spirit of love that will kill or destroy unnecessarily."[58] These are a few of the statements made by Church leaders about the relationship between the human spirit and how humans treat animals. They may have added significance in our day, when it is clear

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54   Joseph F. Smith, "Humane Day," *Juvenile Instructor* 53/4 (April 1918): 182–83.

55   See Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History* (London: Grub Street, 2000).

56   See compilation of quotes in both Stratton's *Kindness to Animals and Caring for the Earth* and Jones's, "Concern for Animals."

57   B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904), 2:71.

58   Heber C. Kimball, 13 December 1857, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:128.

that humans do not need the flesh of animals to sustain life or maintain excellent health.[59]

Following this line of reasoning may suggest we could interpret verse 13 to mean it is pleasing to God that we not slaughter animals except when needed for food, or as Hyrum Smith and others pointed out, in times (like famine) when the animals would die anyway.[60] According to this reasoning, ceasing enmity toward animals will lead to a greater depth of spirituality, sensitivity, and charity in the hearts of the Latter-day Saints and help prepare the earth for the Millennium. As Hyrum Smith preached:

> [God] has appointed the word of wisdom as one of the engines to … remove the beastly appetites, the murderous disposition and the vitiated taste of man; to restore his body to health, and vigour, promote peace between him and the brute creation.[61]

These are clear spiritual blessings that could be directly linked to the counsel in D&C 89:13. However, while this may be is one plausible interpretation of verse 13, this reading is not clearly explicit in the wording of Section 89.

Theory: Careful, constrained food consumption based on divine guidance helps sanctify the daily ritual of mealtime and sets us apart as a people.

Two remaining explanations for the specific admonitions of the Word of Wisdom include (1) sanctifying the daily consumption of food by providing divine directions to guide practice and (2) setting the Latter-day Saints apart as a people.

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59   "Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets," *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 109/7 (July 2009): 1266–82.

60   Hyrum Smith, "The Word of Wisdom," *Times and Seasons* 3/15 (June 1, 1842): 801.

61   H. Smith, "The Word of Wisdom," 800.

If these were not intended purposes of the Word of Wisdom, they do appear to be notable results.

LDS historian Paul Peterson describes how the Jewish dietary code has worked to sanctify the practice of daily food consumption for observant Jews:

> For reasons largely having to do with holiness rather than health or hygiene, many Jews follow [an] intricate and complex dietary system—one they consider to be divinely sanctioned and one that closely governs and limits what foods they eat.
>
> … Jews believe that obeying such laws promotes holy living. "Jews who keep these laws," as noted by scholar Louis Jacobs, "introduce a spiritual element into their lives, even into the satisfaction of hunger, the most basic and animal-like of all human appetites. By means of the dietary laws one's everyday life becomes nobler and purer."[62]

The fact that the Word of Wisdom has not done the same for the Latter-day Saint community, Peterson suggests, may be because we have neglected the counsel of D&C 89 that goes beyond the proscriptions of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea. Peterson claims that if Latter-day Saints were to pay more attention to the counsel given in D&C 89 that the Word of Wisdom could function in a similar way in the Latter-day Saint community:

> There are also scriptural and prophetic models for viewing the entire revelation in a more holistic way by our combining the physical with the spiritual—by our viewing the eating of foods that God has prescribed as a spiritual act or event. Indeed, if Latter-day Saints chose

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62   Paul H. Peterson, "The Sanctity of Food: A Latter-day Saint Perspective," *Religious Educator* 2/1 (2001): 33.

to pursue this path, it would be somewhat analogous to Jewish attitudes.

… Although such a view is hardly widespread in the Latter-day Saint community, it is scripturally supportable. For example, why couldn't Latter-day Saints, by avoiding the food and drink God has placed off limits and by eating only those foods they believe God has singled out as being especially good for mankind, gain greater reverence for life and increased appreciation for the Lord? My suspicion is that in the future, some Church members will do so and thus come to regard eating as much more than just a practical necessity.

To concern oneself with eating foods the Lord has prescribed and to consider eating prescribed foods as an act of holiness are both attitudes that could be understood as logical results of living in divine harmony with the earth God has created.[63]

While the Word of Wisdom may presently not work to sanctify the daily food consumption for most Latter-day Saints, it does serve another purpose that is analogous to observant Jews: it sets the Latter-day Saints apart as a distinct people. Some scholars suggest that the dietary codes given to ancient Israelites may have been at least partly for this purpose. After all, many health-related explanations of these ancient dietary restrictions have tended to fail by scientific standards[64] (as, some would claim, do some of the health-related Word of Wisdom restrictions[65]). Clearly the Jewish dietary code has traditionally

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63   Peterson, "The Sanctity of Food," 40–42.

64   Marvin Harris, "The Abominable Pig," in *Food and Culture*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (London: Routledge, 2007), 67–79.

65   Heather May, "What Science Says about Mormonism's Health Code," accessed June 8, 2014, http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/54897327-78/health-coffee-disease-tea.html.csp.

set them apart as a people, and the LDS commitment to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea has had this same effect. According to scholars, the LDS adherence to the Word of Wisdom is one of the factors that most distinguishes Latter-day Saints in the eyes of those not of their faith.[66]

How might this reasoning about the purpose of the Word of Wisdom relate to our understanding of D&C 89:13? Currently meat consumption by Latter-day Saints is not remarkably different from other omnivorous populations.[67] A dramatic drop in meat consumption among LDS people would significantly impact what most of us eat and thus force us to reconsider how we approach our meals. If the Lord's counsel and advice played a more central role in how and what we ate, this could possibly lead us to experiencing mealtimes as a more sanctifying, spiritual experience. The fact that our eating habits would also be more in harmony with our stewardship of the earth and its animal creatures could also lead to increased spiritual sensitivity to the connection between what we eat and the sacred nature of the world around us.

Even more certainly, dramatically cutting meat consumption would mark the Latter-day Saints even more as a unique people. There is no doubt that a largely meat-free LDS food culture would be in sharp contrast to the ways of the world. In addition, it might also have a sharp and dramatic effect on our health. According to experts who document the correlation between low levels of meat consumption and remarkably lower

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66   Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986), 270.

67   Lester E. Bush, Jr. *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 67. Note also that Mormons are often used as a control group in studies of Seventh-day Adventist because both groups avoid alcohol and tobacco, but while many (not all) Adventists are vegetarian, Mormons are not significantly different from the general population in being omnivorous. See the series of studies cited in "Do Vegetarians Live Longer Than Health Conscious Omnivores?" accessed June 8, 2014, http://healthylongevity. blogspot.com/2014/02/death-by-veggiephobia.html.

levels of all major chronic illnesses,[68] the health of a generally meat-free LDS population might dramatically set the LDS people apart as a very distinct and peculiar group indeed.

Other Possible Themes That Could Bear on Verse 13

I have not, of course, covered every rationale used to explain the Word of Wisdom and its impact on our interpretation of verse 13. In fact, one of the most important rationales used to explain why this section is important in our day is the one given by the Lord in the Word of Wisdom itself:

> Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation— (D&C 89:4)

While this theme plays a prominent role in the LDS literature on the Word of Wisdom, relatively little of this has been linked to the advice on meat consumption. However, much of the reasoning that has been employed to suggest why the "evils and designs … in the hearts of conspiring men" affects our food supply could also apply to meat consumption, where the profit motive (to name just one influence) has had an enormous impact on how animals are raised and slaughtered, and therefore on the quantity and quality of the meat modern humans consume.[69] Nevertheless, insofar as this impacts human health, it is still not clear that this has a bearing on verse 13. And insofar as this impacts our stewardship over animals and the earth, I have already explored this dimension.

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68   T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell, *The China Study* (Dallas: Benbella, 2006).

69   See John Robbins, *The Food Revolution: How Your Diet Can Help Save Your Life and Our World* (San Francisco: Conari, 2001).

Nevertheless, I believe there could well be other aspects of verse 3 that impact our understanding of verse 13.

The Word of Wisdom literature also contains extensive discussions of how the *addictive* properties of prohibited substances in the Word of Wisdom curtail our liberty as individuals and block the reception of the Holy Ghost. It is possible that the strongly addictive nature of these substances and the impact this has on the free exercise of human agency plays an important role in why the Lord warns against their use. There is evidence that meat, like most calorically dense foods, also has addictive qualities,[70] and if this claim is correct, this may also explain why the Lord recommends curtailing its use, except in times of need.

Many other less-frequently used rationales for the Word of Wisdom have also been discussed in LDS literature, rationales that I will not have space to explore here. I'll conclude with just one other example that I find particular intriguing. It is the reasoning that Brigham Young employs as he relates the well-known account about the coming forth of the Word of Wisdom. Here are the passages just before and after that account, ones that are rarely mentioned:

> When the school of the prophets was inaugurated one of the first revelations given by the Lord to His servant Joseph was the Word of Wisdom .… The prophet commenced to teach them in doctrine to prepare them to go out into the world to preach the gospel unto all people, and gather the elect from the four quarters of the earth … . The prophet began to instruct them how to live that they might be the better prepared to perform the great work they were called to accomplish. [Here

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70   Neal Barnard, *Breaking the Food Seduction: The Hidden Reasons behind Food Cravings—and 7 Steps to End Them Naturally* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003), 61-74.

Brigham tells the well-known story of the brethren smoking and spitting, Emma complaining, and Joseph praying and receiving the Word of Wisdom.]

So we see that almost the very first teachings the first Elders of this Church received were as to what to eat, what to drink, and how to order their natural lives, that they might be united temporally as well as spiritually. This is the great purpose which God has in view in sending to the world, by His servants, the gospel of life and salvation. It will teach us how to deal, how to act in all things, and how to live with each other to become one in the Lord.[71]

How might learning what to eat and drink help us "order [our] natural lives," unite us "temporally as well as spiritually," teach us "how to act," and prepare us to accomplish the Lord's purposes as we "gather the elect" in preparation for his coming?

Conclusion

Whatever the interpretation various LDS people have of verse 13 of the Word of Wisdom, in general this verse appears to have had little impact on our general food habits.[72] One reason Latter-day Saints may ignore it (and even come up with reasons to dismiss it) may be that we have found it difficult to believe this verse can be taken at face value. Is this verse really that ambiguous and difficult to interpret?

One factor that might have elevated the difficulty of interpreting this verse could be the American love affair with meat consumption. Meat is the staple of the standard U.S.

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71   Brigham Young, "School of the Prophets," 8 February 1868, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:209.

72   Rick B. Jorgensen, "Not By Commandment or Constraint: The Relationship Between the Dietary Behaviors of College-Aged Latter-Day Saints and Their Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2008).

diet. It is something we love to eat, something we are told is important to our health, and something that our ancestors have consumed (in varying quantities) since the Paleolithic time period. Meat is even enshrined in all of the various USDA food guidelines produced during the last century. Not just in the U.S., but in most other countries (developed or undeveloped, modern or ancient), meat has been and remains a powerful sign of prosperity, power, and prestige. It has also been an important symbol of "manliness" and "machoism."[73] It can be hard for humans to look objectively at something they love.

Is the LDS attitude toward meat any different? For all the many occasions when Latter-day Saints enjoy meals together, how often does meat play an important role, no matter the season or temperature? As LDS youth grow up in this culture, when would they have reason to question how much or when meat is consumed? Speaking from personal experience as a lifelong meat-eating member of the Church, I don't remember my love of meat ever being challenged or my being asked to seriously consider whether it was in harmony with the Word of Wisdom.

The thought that a Latter-day Saint should restrict meat consumption for any reason beyond cost, personal taste, or unusual health concerns is not part of the Mormon mindset. Up until recently, most Americans were taught and believed that the daily consumption of meat was actually essential to health. Considering this mindset may help us understand why it has been so difficult for Latter-day Saints to interpret this verse. Any of the straightforward interpretations may simply clash too harshly with our traditional prejudices and practices. Perhaps as Latter-day Saints we have automatically assumed that verse 13 of the Word of Wisdom simply cannot mean what

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73   Jeffery Sobal, "Men, Meat, and Marriage: Models Of Masculinity," *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment* 13 (2005): 135–58.

it appears to mean and, given no official interpretation, we have simply ignored it. But beyond ignoring this verse of scripture, some have actually rewritten it—as the case of the "errant comma theory" shows. When someone asked Apostle Richard L. Evans whether the commandments should be rewritten, he replied: "No! They should be reread."[74] Might it be time for Latter-day Saints to reread and rethink this verse?

Clearly the Lord ordained the use of animal flesh for human consumption, at least in times of need. He has warned against forbidding the use of "meats" and explained that they are part of the abundance of this earth with which he has blessed his children. While it is clear that Section 89 includes the pointed admonition to use the flesh of animals "sparingly," it is interesting that the counsel to use it only during times of winter, cold or famine is prefaced simply with the explanation that this is "pleasing" to the Lord. Combined with the fact that Section 89 was given "not by commandment or constraint" (D&C 89:2), might this suggest that this verse was not intended to be binding on all Latter-day Saints but rather is counsel we may follow should we specifically desire to please the Lord?

While warning against individual faddish interpretations, Church leaders have also consistently spoken about the "spirit of the Word of Wisdom" and the need for individuals to seek personal revelation in interpreting it in order to make practical decisions for themselves and their families. Regardless of whether it was given for health reasons, for spiritual reasons, for the animals or the environment, it is clear that the Word of Wisdom counsel on consuming the flesh of animals is more relevant in our present day than at any other time in human history. There is no doubt that for some people in former times (and even now for a few in distant locations of the world) meat has been a necessity. It is only during our time that it is clear

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74   Ewart A. Swinyard, "Wisdom in All Things," *New Era*, September 1974, 45.

that meat, for the vast majority of us, is simply a luxury. We now know that meat is optional as far as nutrition goes. It may taste good; it may be convenient; it may be socially acceptable; it may supply useful nutrients; but it is not a "need." Living in a day when we have more than enough other options to supply our daily need, decreasing our meat consumption can be beneficial to our health, to the environment, and naturally to the animals. In light of these benefits, it remains to be seen whether individual Latter-day Saints will reconsider the advice in D&C 89:13.

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"War of Words and Tumult of Opinions": The Battle for Joseph Smith's Words in Book of Mormon Geography

Neal Rappleye

Review of John L. Lund. *Joseph Smith and the Geography of the Book of Mormon*. The Communications Company, 2012. 209 pp. + xviii, including index.

> In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?
>
> –Joseph Smith Jr.[1]

Over the years, a plethora of theories have been advanced regarding the geography of the Book of Mormon.[2] No doubt that many Latter-day Saints who have inquired on the

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1   Joseph Smith—History 1:10.

2   For discussion and overview of a variety of different models, see John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 38–206; Michael R. Ash, *Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One's Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt*, 2nd edition (Redding, California: FairMormon, 2013), 174–78. Also see the "Book of Mormon/Geography/All models by name table," in the FairMormon Answers database, http://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Mormon_geography/All_models_by_name_table (accessed May 11, 2014). For some history of thought on Book of Mormon geography, see Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 7–35; Matthew Roper, "Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon: Historical Antecedents and Early Interpretations," *FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004): 225–276; Joseph L. Allen and Blake J. Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, rev. ed. (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2011), 371–399.

subject have felt much like the young Joseph Smith: caught between a "war of words and tumult of opinions," he or she wonders "What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together?" And how is one to know; how does one go about trying to judge between the competing views?

Perhaps ironically, the words of Joseph Smith himself have become a primary battleground in recent years. Though some have been using statements from Joseph Smith (or attributed to Joseph Smith) to try and bolster their geographic model for decades, only in recent years has the question of what Joseph Smith did or did not say (and if anything he said was revelation) become a focal point in the debate. This began around 2007, when Rod Meldrum produced a DVD version of a presentation he had been giving on the Book of Mormon, DNA, and geography. Included in this presentation was a segment on Joseph Smith's views, concluding that "Joseph knew" exactly where events in the Book of Mormon had taken place.[3] Two years later, Meldrum would produce a five-disc set, *Book of Mormon Evidence*. The second disc in this set expanded on Meldrum's original presentation of Joseph Smith's views, once again concluding that "Joseph knew."[4] Meldrum would also author/co-author two books that included sections claiming that Joseph Smith knew where the Book of Mormon lands were located.[5] In his presentations, Meldrum adamantly insists that

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3   Rod L. Meldrum, *DNA Evidence for Book of Mormon Geography: New Scientific Support for the Truthfulness of the Book of Mormon*, DVD (2007), section 3.

4   Rod L. Meldrum, *Book of Mormon Evidence*, 5 DVD set (2009), disc 2. This presentation can be viewed online in five segments, at http://www.firmlds. org/video_gallery.php, videos 11–15. Further references will use these videos.

5   Bruce H. Porter and Rod L. Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises: The Book of Mormon & the United States of America* (Mendon, New York: Digital Legend, 2009), 91–118; Rod L. Meldrum, *Exploring the Book of Mormon in America's Heartland: A Visual Journey of Discovery* (Melona, New York: Digital Legend, 2011).

Joseph Smith identified the "heartland" of the United States as the place where Book of Mormon events took place, and that he knew this by revelation.

Also in 2007, John Lund began to promote the idea that Joseph Smith explicitly identified Zarahemla, the narrow neck, Bountiful, and other Book of Mormon sites as being in Central America.[6] Lund, like Meldrum, insisted such identifications were based on revelatory knowledge that Joseph Smith had. The crux of Lund's claims rests on some editorials published in the *Times and Seasons* of which the authorship is in dispute. Lund believes that he has established that Joseph Smith did indeed write the relevant editorials, but he only touched on this research in his 2007 book.[7] This research is the focus of Lund's 2012 work, *Joseph Smith and the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, under review here.

Meanwhile, in 2010 Matthew Roper of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship extensively examined the claims Meldrum made regarding Joseph Smith's knowledge of Book of Mormon geography.[8] After thorough analysis of all the primary sources Meldrum's argument hinges on, Roper concluded that such claims are not founded on a firm foundation.

> The preponderance of evidence does not support the claim that Joseph Smith's revelations included details about Book of Mormon geography, but rather suggest that this, as with many other questions, was an issue in which Joseph Smith, as time allowed him to give it

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6   John L. Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon: Is This the Place?* (The Communications Company, 2007), 19–36.

7   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 17–18, 31–32.

8   Matthew Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 15–85, esp. 51–70.

attention, followed the dictates of his own judgement and expressed his own opinion.[9]

At the same time, Roper also discussed the *Times and Seasons* editorials, and mentioned ongoing research that he and others were involved in that suggested that Joseph Smith had indeed written the editorials in question.[10] This research, recently published, will be further discussed below.

As can be seen from the above, several researchers, with several different approaches, have entered the battle for Joseph Smith's words on Book of Mormon geography. As Lund's book focuses on the *Times and Seasons* editorials, that is the battlefield we will explore here. I strongly recommend Roper's already mentioned work on the other primary sources. Before reviewing the research that suggests Joseph Smith was responsible for the relevant editorials, some historical context on the *Times and Seasons* and the editorials is in order.

A Brief History of the *Times and Seasons*

The *Times and Seasons* was the Church's premier periodical during the Nauvoo era, running from November 1839 to February 1846. It started out as a monthly publication for about the first year, and then began printing an issue on a bi-weekly basis until it was discontinued completely. It was launched by the prophet's brother, Don Carlos Smith, but the editorship of the paper for the first couple of years was somewhat turbulent. In March 1842, Joseph Smith became the editor, and remained so until October of that same year, after which John Taylor

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9   Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 84.

10   Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 75–83. Also see Paul Fields, Matthew Roper, and Atul Nepal, "Wordprint Analysis and Joseph Smith's Role as Editor of the *Times and Seasons*," *Insights* 30/6 (2010): 1–2.

(with some assistance from Wilford Woodruff until April 1844) became the editor for the remainder of the paper's history.[11]

Both Lund and Roper discuss the history of the *Times and Seasons* and how Joseph Smith came to be the editor.[12] Late 1841 into 1842, the editorship was in the hands of Ebenezer Robinson and Gustavus Hill. According to Roper, "In the fall of 1841, the Prophet began expressing concerns about Robinson and Hill's ownership and operation of the paper. By this time, most of the Twelve had returned from Great Britain, and Joseph was increasingly anxious to place someone else in charge of the paper."[13] Meetings were held in November of that year to address the concern, but it appears no action was taken until early in 1842. At that time Joseph Smith received a revelation that instructed the Twelve to "take in hand the editorial department of the *Times and Seasons*" (pp. 47, 53).[14]

Different parties seem to see different significance in this. In his video presentations, Meldrum presents this as evidence that Joseph Smith was *giving up* the editorial responsibilities to the Twelve, and hence would no longer be involved. After quoting the revelation, Meldrum states, "Certainly, Joseph Smith would have done exactly as the Lord indicated and *turned over* the responsibility for the *Times and Seasons* to the Twelve."[15] But at this point, Joseph Smith did not have editorial responsibilities

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11   See Reed C. Durham Jr., "Times and Seasons," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillam, 1992), available online at http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Times_and_Seasons (accessed May 14, 2014).

12   Lund does so in a two-columned format that is meant to imitate the format of the actual *Times and Seasons* newspaper (see pp. 52–56). Cf. Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 75–81.

13   Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 75.

14   Also cited in Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 76. The revelation can be found in *History of the Church*, vol. 4:503.

15   See approx. min. 1:45–1:55 in video 14 at http://firmlds.org/video_gallery.php (accessed May 14, 2014), transcription, punctuation, and emphasis all mine.

or even *ownership* of the paper to "turn over" to anybody. The revelation was not for Joseph to "turn over" anything, but to have the Twelve *take over* the editorial department from Robinson and Hill. Brigham Young had to pay a handsome price to secure the press and then turn it over to the Church.[16] It is *after* the Twelve take over that Joseph Smith is then appointed as editor-in-chief of the paper, evidently being so appointed by the Twelve (p. 53).[17] Thus, Lund sees this as signaling that "the *Times and Seasons* now became an official Church publication" (p. 54). For Lund, that the Lord would intervene with the editorship of the paper via a revelation is a sign that this was a highly significant channel for Church-sanctioned information (p. 47).

Lund appears to be on the right track here. Rather than being evidence of a hands-off approach from Joseph Smith in the editorial department, as Meldrum would have it, it provides evidence of a very hands-on approach. Joseph was paying attention to what appeared in the *Times and Seasons*, was concerned enough about its content to seek guidance from the Lord on the matter, and in turn the Lord actually gave a revelation, thus signifying just how important the venue truly was to the Saints and to the Lord. When Joseph Smith announced his editorship of the paper, he was sure to include a denouncement of the previous issues:

> This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the

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16   See Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 76–77.

17   Cf. Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 77.

publication, or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision.[18]

Under those circumstances, it is hard to imagine Joseph taking his editorial responsibilities casually, thus not noticing, and letting stand, several editorials that contradicted any previous revelation he may have had on Book of Mormon geography (or any other subject, for that matter). He declared full responsibility for "all papers having [his] signature." Contra Meldrum, this is not just for individual *articles* having his signature,[19] but rather the paper as a whole, which would feature a signature block from Joseph Smith at the end of each edition of the paper, as was customary for editors to do during this time period (see pp. 57–58).

In light of the above, it seems that, regardless of who actually *wrote* the now-controversial editorials on Book of Mormon geography, to insist that Joseph Smith was not aware of them or did not approve of them seems tenuous, at best. But the case gets worse for those who wish to distance the prophet from these writings.

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18 Joseph Smith, "To Subscribers," *Times and Seasons* 3/9 (March 1, 1842): 710. All issues of the *Times and Seasons* can be read online at http://lib.byu.edu/collections/mormon-publications-19th-20th-centuries/t/#times-seasons.

19 Immediately after quoting Joseph Smith's announcement of his editorship, placing emphasis on the line "and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward," Meldrum states, "One of the very interesting things that we find the historical documents is that none of these editorials that indicate a Mesoamerican setting for the Book of Mormon were actually signed by Joseph Smith himself." (See approx. min. 2:21–2:38 of video 14 at http://firmlds.org/video_gallery.php). Meldrum thus insinuates that Joseph Smith is not "responsible" for these articles. But Joseph Smith's signature block does appear at the end of those editions, and it is that signature for the whole paper to which Joseph is referring when he declares responsibility for "all papers having my signature henceforward."

Joseph Smith and the Central America/Book of Mormon Editorials

Editorials and other material associating the Book of Mormon with Central America—and specifically using the findings of John Lloyd Stephens and Fredrick Catherwood—appeared in the *Times and Seasons* before, during, and after Joseph Smith's tenure as editor of the paper. These appear across a span of more than three years. "Before, during, and after his editorship," Lund points out, "Joseph was not opposed to correcting an error" (p. 83). As noted above, when Joseph was dissatisfied with the editorship of the paper, he had it taken over by the Twelve, who subsequently appointed him as editor. In addition to this episode, Lund points to other instances where Joseph Smith took action to correct what was printed in the *Times and Seasons*, both during and after his editorship of the paper (pp. 83–84). However, Lund notes, "There were no objections by Joseph to any of the several editorials that specifically mention Stephens and Catherwood before, during, or after his editorship" (p. 70).

It is very hard to imagine that over a wide time span, that included several months in which Joseph himself was the responsible editor, Joseph never noticed or objected to repeated articles contradicting any given revelation. This becomes clear with a brief review of the editorials on Central America and the Book of Mormon from before, during, and after Joseph Smith's tenure as editor.

Before…

Early in the year 1841, while Joseph's younger brother Don Carlos was still the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, an article entitled "American Antiquities—More Proofs of the Book of Mormon," was published, which, after a brief editorial introduction, reprinted a report from the *New York Herald*

Weekly, on lectures given by Stephens and Catherwood.[20] The title of the article itself makes the explicit connection between these finds and the Book of Mormon. Though this appeared the same year Joseph expressed concern over the editorship of the *Times and Seasons*, that was not until later in the year, *after* Don Carlos had passed away (in August, per Lund, p. 53) and the editorial chair passed into the hands of Robinson. There is presently no evidence that Joseph disapproved of his brother's work as editor of the paper.

During…

It is actually during Joseph Smith's tenure as editor that we see a proliferation of editorials on the Book of Mormon and Central America. This fact, on its face and independent of any question of authorship, ought to be taken as evidence of Joseph Smith's approval of such content in the paper. The following five articles, some signed "ED.," some unsigned, appeared during Joseph's time as editor (March–October 1842):

- "Traits of the Mosaic History," *Times and Seasons* 3/16 (June 15, 1842): 818–820 (signed ED.)
- "American Antiquities," *Times and Season* 3/18 (15 July 1842): 858–860 (signed ED.)
- "Extract from Stephens' 'Incidents of Travel in Central America,'" *Times and Seasons* 3/22 (September 15, 1842): 911–915
- "Facts Are Stubborn Things," *Times and Seasons* 3/22 (September 15, 1842): 921–922
- "Zarahemla," *Times and Seasons* 3/23 (October 1, 1842): 927–928

Notice that the first two are signed "ED." for "Editor." Lund claims, "Assistant editors did not sign as editor, unless the editor read, approved, and authorized him to do so" (p. 53).

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20 "American Antiquities—More Proofs of the Book of Mormon," *Times and Seasons* 2/16 (June 15, 1841): 440–442.

Unfortunately, there is no documentation by Lund to support this assertion, a regrettably common occurrence throughout the book. Nonetheless, in the absence of concrete historical evidence to the contrary, these logically should be attributed to Joseph Smith, as he was the editor at the time. Meldrum and others have sought to circumvent such common sense conclusions by pointing out,

> …some issues had an article written by Joseph and another article accredited to "ED." in the same issue. In other words, there were two authors, one was Joseph, the other was "ED." or editor within the same issue. Had Joseph written both articles, wouldn't they have both been attributed to him?[21]

While it is true that there are articles signed as ED. and others directly signed by Joseph Smith, careful attention to *genre* quickly answers this objection. Editorials are *always* either signed ED. or simply unsigned, never signed by the Editor's name. Other writings from Joseph which were not written as a part of his editorial responsibilities were signed by his name. These include personal correspondences, notices, affidavits, and other writings made in his capacity as prophet, mayor, lieutenant general, etc. (rather than his role as editor). This is meticulously documented by Lund in "Addendum Five" (pp. 149–161).[22]

When was Joseph Smith in Hiding?

The typical excuse for not attributing the three unsigned articles to Joseph Smith, which are the most explicit in connecting the

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21   Rod L. Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?" at The FIRM Foundation website, March 15, 2012, online at http://firmlds.org/feature.php?id=21 (accessed May 15, 2014).

22   Cf. the expanded version, "Web Addendum Five," online at http://drjohnlund.com/ (accessed May 15, 2014).

Book of Mormon to Central America via the work of Stephens and Catherwood, is that he was in "hiding" at the time, and therefore *could not* have written the editorials. Rod Meldrum, for example, claims that Joseph Smith was in hiding from August 8, 1842, through October 20, 1842. Thus, they are not written or authorized by Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith's life, in the words of one historian, is a "biographer's dream."[23] It is well documented by primary sources, many of which are first-hand. This means claims like this can be checked against a rich historical record. Probably Lund's most important contribution to this discussion is his meticulous documentation of Joseph Smith's whereabouts during his time as editor of the *Times and Seasons*, pertinent selections of which are provided in "Addendum Nine" (see pp. 179–187).[24] Drawing on that documentation, Lund forcefully responds to this charge:

> That is blatantly false. Joseph was in Nauvoo for the October 1, 1842 editorial naming Zarahemla as being geographically situated in Guatemala. He was in Navuoo before and during the time of the publication of the September 15, 1842 editorials naming the narrow neck of land as being in Central America. Joseph Smith was home from August 20, 1842, until October 7, 1842, when, at 8:20 p.m., he left for Father Taylor's farm about fifty miles from Nauvoo. (p. 164)

In addition, when Joseph was in hiding, he "was never more than a few miles from his home in Nauvoo" (p. 164). Joseph still preformed many of his responsibilities. It is even

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23 Larry E. Morris, "Joseph Smith and Interpretive Biography," *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 359.

24 Cf. the expanded version, Web Addendum Nine," online at http://drjohnlund.com/ (accessed May 15, 2014), which lays out the activities of Joseph Smith for virtually every day from March 1, 1842–November 16, 1842.

documented that, while hiding, he proofread a segment of his history in preparation for its printing in the next issue of the *Times and Seasons*, and a copy of that issue was sent to him, which he read (pp. 164–165), while on another occasion, still in hiding, he drafted a notice to be published in the *Times and Seasons* (p. 186).[25] So, *even if* he were hiding at the time of the Central America/Book of Mormon editorials (which he was not), the evidence suggests that he would have still been aware of and involved in the publishing of the paper.[26]

Not only was Joseph Smith not hiding at this time, but Matt Roper demonstrates that both Woodruff and Taylor were ill around the time the September 15, 1842, issue was published.

> Significantly, both Woodruff and Taylor were seriously ill during this time. "I commenced work this day," Woodruff recorded on 19 September, "for the first time for 40 days." This means that Woodruff had been absent from the printing office for more than five weeks previous to 19 September. On 21 September the Prophet recorded that he had also met with John Taylor, "who is just recovering from a severe attack of sickness" and that he counseled Taylor "concerning the printing office." The two met again two days later. We do not know how long Taylor had been ill, but the fact that the two had been seriously ill suggests that

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25 More details on this are available in Lund, "Web Addendum Nine," 13, entries for October 11 and 15, 1842, plus n. 6.

26 There are items in the same issues of the *Times and Seasons* that are signed by Joseph Smith, a fact which Meldrum well knows (see approx. min 11:00 in video 14 at http://firmlds.org/video_gallery.php, accessed May 14, 2014). The implications should be obvious: one cannot insist that Joseph Smith simply could not have written for the *Times and Seasons* while in hiding when known writings of Joseph Smith appear in those issues of the *Times and Seasons*. Hiding or not, Joseph Smith could and did write for those issues of the paper.

the Prophet may have had to bear additional editorial burdens at that time.[27]

This may indicate that Joseph Smith *alone* was handling the editorial responsibilities for the September 15, 1842, edition, in which two of the Central America/Book of Mormon articles appear. Regardless, however, Joseph met multiple times with Taylor between the September 15 and October 1, 1842, editions, leading Roper to conclude, "Regardless of who wrote the *Times and Seasons* articles linking the Book of Mormon to Central America, Joseph Smith could not have been unaware of what was being written. Indeed, even if those articles were written by John Taylor or Wilford Woodruff, clearly Joseph knew what was being written."[28]

After…

After Joseph Smith, John Taylor was appointed the editor of the *Times and Seasons*. Under his editorship, Central America and the works of Stephens and Catherwood once again were highlighted in the pages of the newspaper. In May 1843, a letter introducing the Kinderhook plates was published in the *Times and Seasons*. In a rather long editorial preface to the letter, John Taylor speaks of the ancient ruins of Mexico and Central America as evidence of the Book of Mormon.[29] A few months later, the following appeared in an editorial by Taylor:

> This is a work that ought to be in the hands of every Latter Day Saint; corroborating, as it does the history of the Book of Mormon. There is no stronger circumstancial [sic] evidence of the authenticity of the

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27   Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 78. For the meetings with Taylor, see Lund, "Web Addendum Nine," 12.

28   Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 78.

29   "Ancient Records," *Times and Seasons* 4/12 (May 1, 1843): 185–186.

latter book, can be given than that contained in Mr. Stephens' works.[30]

Later still, early in 1844, in an editorial preface introducing an article reprinted from the *Texas Telegraph*, Taylor once again invoked the Stephens and Catherwood volume as evidence of the Book of Mormon.[31] All of these were published prior to Joseph Smith's martyrdom.

After the prophet's death, the *Times and Seasons* published a letter from his younger brother, William Smith, addressed to W. W. Phelps. In the letter, dated November 10, 1844, William calls the *Times and Seasons* "the columns of the Prophet," despite the fact that Joseph Smith had been dead for over four months and had not been the editor of the paper for two whole years. This suggests that the paper was nonetheless closely associated with the prophet, and views expressed in the paper were likely taken as representative of his own even after he was no longer the editor of the paper. More to the point, in this same letter, William Smith frequently and freely connects the ruins explored by Stephens and Catherwood with the Book of Mormon.[32]

So the frequent use of the ruins in Central America discovered by Stephens and Catherwood continued after Joseph Smith's time as editor, several times while the prophet was still alive. This in a paper that, even after his death, was still being taken as representative of him, as the William Smith letter indicates. Granted, Joseph was busy with a lot more to do than check up on the *Times and Seasons*, but it is nonetheless curious that this was repeated over and over again, without correction, in a paper that served as an important voice for the

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30 "Stephens' Work on Central America," *Times and Seasons* 4/22 (October 1, 1843): 346.

31 "Ancient Ruins," *Times and Seasons* 5/1 (January 1, 1844): 390–391.

32 William Smith to W. W. Phelps, November 10, 1844, *Times and Seasons* 5/23 (December 15, 1844): 755–757.

Church at the time, much as the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines do today, as Lund points out (pp. 47–50). Not only is there no evidence that Joseph disapproved of this connection, or that he felt it contrary to any revelation from God, but there is good evidence to suggest that he, in fact, supported associating the Central American ruins with the Book of Mormon. Not the least of that evidence is the fact that he probably wrote the five editorials that appeared under his editorship (as discussed below).

Joseph Smith and John Taylor: Trusted Friend, or Rogue Apostle?

Before addressing the question of authorship, however, there is one more point I will explore. Those who want to disassociate Joseph Smith from excitement over the Central American ruins frequently turn to John Taylor (often with Wilford Woodruff as an accomplice) as the culprit. He was assistant editor under Joseph Smith, similar editorial commentary appeared under his own editorship (as mentioned above), and the Bernhisel letter (to be discussed later) appears in his handwriting. Meanwhile, Wilford Woodruff was the one who brought Stephens' books into Nauvoo in the first place, worked in the printing office while Joseph Smith was editor, and was assistant editor under Taylor.

Even if it were true that Taylor and Woodruff, and not Joseph Smith, were responsible for all the enthusiasm for the Central American ruins, there remains an absence of any evidence that Joseph Smith was not on board. In fact, the evidence suggests that he was.

First, there is the fact that when Joseph stepped-down from his position as editor-in-chief of the *Times and Seasons*, he personally chose John Taylor to takeover. Joseph Smith had this to say when he did:

I have appointed Elder John Taylor, who is less encumbered and fully competent to assume the responsibilities of that office, and I doubt not but that he will give satisfaction to the patrons of the paper. As this number commences a new volume, it also commences his editorial career.

<div align="right">

Joseph Smith[33]

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Joseph felt Elder Taylor was "fully competent" to serve as the paper's editor, an opinion no doubt based on whatever editorial or writing tasks Taylor fulfilled on behalf of Joseph as his assistant editor. If Taylor wrote the editorials from September and October 1842, as some suggest, then Joseph's overall vote of confidence only a month later would suggest that he supported the editorial direction Taylor had taken.

A year later, and one month after Taylor had published an editorial on Central American ruins and the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith wrote a letter to address the Saints through the *Times and Seasons*, encouraging them to subscribe to it rather than secular newspapers of the day. The whole letter serves as a clear endorsement of the editorial direction of the paper and closes declaring, "[W]hen you support my friends, you support me." The "friends" he is speaking of are obviously Taylor and Woodruff, who are currently responsible for the paper, and whom he addresses at the beginning of the letter.[34] This marks a second opportunity for Joseph Smith to correct the misguided speculations of these rogue apostles, and yet it marks his second ringing endorsement of Taylor's (and Woodruff's) editorial choices.

Now we come to the Bernhisel letter. John Bernhisel was a Bishop of the Church back in New York in 1841, when John Lloyd Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America,*

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33   "Valedictory," *Times and Seasons* 4/1 (November 15, 1842): 8.

34   "To the Saints," *Times and Seasons* 4/24 (November 1, 1843): 376–377

Chiapas, and Yucatan was published. He purchased copies of the two-volume set and sent them back to Nauvoo as a gift to the prophet Joseph Smith. Wilford Woodruff picked them up from Bernhisel on his way back to Nauvoo from his mission in Great Britain. Woodruff recorded in his journal that on his way to Nauvoo, he read from the volumes and was thrilled, as he felt it provided strong evidence for the Book of Mormon. It is likely he delivered them to the prophet with excitement.[35] Joseph Smith sent a letter back to Bernhisel thanking him for the gift. The letter reads:

> I received your kind present by the hand of Er [Elder] Woodruff & feel myself under many obligations for this mark of your esteem & friendship which to me is the more interesting as it unfolds & developes many things that are of great importance to this generation & *corresponds with & supports the testimony of the Book of Mormon*; I have read the volumes with the greatest interest & pleasure & must say that of all histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country it is the most correct luminous & comprihensive.[36]

Because this letter is in the handwriting of John Taylor, Meldrum and others feel that they can dismiss it as not representing Joseph Smith's views, but rather Taylor's. But Joseph Smith commonly had his letters, and even his journal entries, written out by scribes, and if we held all such documents with this same level of skepticism then scarcely a thought at all could be attributed to the prophet himself (see the similar

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35 All this history, including quotation from Woodruff's journal, is documented in Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 71–73.

36 Joseph Smith to John Bernhisel, November 16, 1841, as cited in Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 74; emphasis added.

point made by Lund, pp. 17–19). To me, the fact that the letter, signed "Joseph Smith," is written in Taylor's hand suggests that Joseph trusted Taylor to accurately record and express his (Joseph's) own views on the book. This would not be likely if Joseph's feelings towards it—and its relationship to the Book of Mormon—were dramatically different from Taylor's.

These three lines of evidence—the two endorsements of Taylor's editorial work, and his being trusted to pen the letter to Bernhisel—come to together to paint a picture of Taylor as Joseph Smith's trusted friend, with whom he shared an excitement over recent archaeological finds thought to be related to the Book of Mormon, not some rogue apostle spinning theories contrary to what Joseph knew by revelation.

Some Additional Historical Considerations

Lund points out that the list of people who accepted the Central American ruins found in Stephens' book as evidence of the Book of Mormon includes many of Joseph Smith's closest associates, including Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Orson Hyde (p. 75). To that list can be added the Pratt brothers, Orson and Parley, as documented by Roper.[37] Two of Joseph Smith's brothers (Don Carlos and William Smith) have already been mentioned. It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain that this association was contrary to Joseph Smith's revelatory knowledge when so many of his closest associates are apparently unaware of the contradiction.

Authorship of the 1842 Editorials

Addressing the issue of authorship for the five editorials on Central America and Book of Mormon during the time of Joseph Smith's editorship, Meldrum insists "that their authorship is historically unknown," and that "official Church

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37 Roper, "Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon," 244–245, 251–252.

historians claim that they simply do not know who authored those articles."[38] There are two interesting points about this approach. First, if the authorship is "unknown," then, logically, we cannot be certain Joseph Smith did *not* write them. So long as the authorship remains unknown, it cannot be asserted, as Meldrum often does, that these editorials were not written by Joseph Smith or do not represent his views. This is problematic, since Meldrum wants to insist that Joseph Smith knew by revelation that *only* the so-called "heartland" of the United States is where the Book of Mormon took place. Until Joseph Smith is definitively ruled out as author of these editorials, such a position cannot be maintained.

This leads to the second point: Meldrum and his followers seem content to leave the question of authorship in the realm of the "unknown." But what is unknown is not necessarily *unknowable*, and the good historian will seek to know the currently unknown. Whatever else might be said of Lund's work, he has at least made the attempt to resolve this vexing historical question.

Meldrum himself understands, in principle at least, that the authorship *can* be discovered by analyzing the style of writing. In his 2009 video presentation, he asserts, "In other words, when they would write, they would use specific words, and they had certain patterns that they would write [in], and so articles that are signed 'Ed.,' if you take a look at the linguistics, many times could be determined who it was that wrote those articles."[39] However, neither Meldrum nor his supporters has attempted a rigorous analysis of the style and linguistics to assess authorship. Instead, he commonly offers up two points of style he feels are at odds with Joseph Smith's writing

38 Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?"

39 See approx. min. 5:03–5:23 in video 14 at http://firmlds.org/video_gallery.php (accessed May 14, 2014), transcription, punctuation, and brackets all mine.

style: (1) frequent use of the first-person plural (we, us, our) throughout the editorials; and (2) reference to Joseph Smith in the third-person.[40]

Lund responds to both of these points. On the first, he notes that the "Editorial We" was very common in the 19th century, even citing a source that states that this was a "near universal" practice (p. 58). This appears to, again, boil down to a genre issue. Joseph Smith may not have typically written in the first-person plural in, say, his personal correspondence (Meldrum compares the editorials to the style of a letter in his video presentation),[41] but it seems likely that in his capacity as editor, he would follow the standard stylistic conventions of the day. Lund also points out that it was common practice of the day to refer to oneself in the third-person (p. 55–56). Unfortunately all the examples he attributes to Joseph Smith are also miscellaneous unsigned items from the *Times and Seasons* during Joseph Smith's editorship.[42] While one would generally assume that Joseph, as the editor, was the responsible author, the nature of these materials gives Meldrum and others the same wiggle room they appeal to with the editorials in question. In any event, these two points hardly constitute an insurmountable case against Joseph Smith's authorship.

Meanwhile, Lund has taken the challenge to find the author of these editorials very seriously. Taking the authorship of the two signed editorials as a given (p. 49), Lund subjected the three unsigned editorials, from the September 15 and October 1, 1842, editions, to what he calls an "Author Identification

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40   See, for example, Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?", where both of these points are raised, or in the video clip reference above.

41   See approx. min. 10:52–12:15 in video 14 at http://firmlds.org/video_gallery.php (accessed May 14, 2014).

42   Due to a misattribution, I was not able to look up one of the references.

Study" (pp. 87–104).[43] As early as 2007, Lund reported having used seven different discriminators, and gave details on three of them.[44] In a brief summary of that earlier study, Lund reported, "All seven author discriminators identified conclusively Joseph Smith was the author of the editorials in question."[45]

In 2012, Lund used 11 different discriminators (nine "objective," two "subjective") to create an author profile for the *Times and Seasons* editorials, and then compared that against the same discriminators in the known writings of Joseph Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and John Taylor. Table 1 shows the results for the nine "objective" discriminators.[46]

Table 1: Nine Authorship Discriminators Compared Between Joseph Smith, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and the *Times and Seasons*.

Discriminators	*Times & Seasons*	Joseph Smith	John Taylor	Wilford Woodruff
(1) Words Exclusive to One Author	(Based on words in the articles)	13	0	0
(2) Probable First and Only Time Word Use	(Based on words in the articles)	2/906	13/906	35/906
(3) Average Vocabulary Size (per 906 words)	300	297	372	364
(4) Most Likely to Use a Word	(32 key words extracted from articles)[47]	23/32	7/32	2/32
(5) Average Sentence Length	36	40	25	22

43   Cf. "Web Addendum Four," online at http://drjohnlund.com/ (accessed May 15, 2014).

44   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 17–18.

45   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 18.

46   For full explanation of the discriminators, one will have to consult Lund, either his book or web addendum.

Discriminators	*Times & Seasons*	Joseph Smith	John Taylor	Wilford Woodruff
(6) Closest Match to non-contextual Word Usage Frequency	(Based on frequency in articles of 13 non-contextual words)	11/13	3/13	4/13
(7) Percentage of Sentences ≤ 10 Words	8%	10%	26%	22%
(8) Percentage of Sentences ≥ 100 Words	4%	6%	1%	0.333%
(9) Percentage of Rhetorical Questions	4%	5%	15%	5%

Based on this data, plus his two "subjective" discriminators (for 11 in all), Lund concludes:

> The results of the eleven separate author identification tests were overwhelmingly clear in identifying Joseph Smith as the one who authored the editorials in question. The comprehensive Author Identification Study confirmed Joseph Smith's authorship of the September 15, 1842, and October 1, 1842, editorials in the *Times and Seasons*. (p. 103)

He also declares that the results "conclusively sustained Joseph Smith as the author of these editorials" (p. 103). Such strongly worded pronouncements regarding the results of the study can be found throughout the book. Here are just a few more examples:

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47 Lund actually reports using 86 key words, of which Joseph Smith was the most likely to use 68 of them. However, the results are not reported from Woodruff and Taylor. In "Addendum Four" (pp. 143–146), he does provide a table with a 32-word sample of his larger pool and provides the numbers I used in this table.

> There can be no equivocation when faced with convincing evidence that Joseph Smith did indeed author the foregoing editorial. The convincing evidence is the comprehensive Author Identification Study that will be reported on in detail. (p. 38)

> It is a simple matter; do the facts support Joseph's authorship? Did Joseph Smith author and/or approve these editorials? The overwhelming evidence from the comprehensive Author Identification Study is that he did. (p. 38)

> The conclusive results of the comprehensive Author Identification Study…. (p. 40)

There can be little question that the data, as presented by Lund, strongly supports Joseph Smith's authorship of the *Times and Seasons* editorials. However, there are some methodological flaws that suggest greater caution is warranted. First, there is the question of just how strong these discriminators really are. They are not the kind of discriminators usually used in statistical analyses meant to determine authorship attribution. This evokes the question of whether or not they are powerful enough discriminators to distinguish between one author and another. As Lund presents the data, they certainly seem to clearly distinguish between authors, but Lund provides no control group or test cases.

Usually studies of this type include a control group or test cases, where samples from the candidate authors are tested against writings of known origins, both other samples of their own and samples from other candidate and non-candidate authors, to determine whether the selected discriminators can successfully identify the authorship of those writings. Usually only after a method has been shown to successfully discriminate between authors above 90 or 95 percent of the time does the

researcher proceed to demonstrate results of their study. Nothing like this appears in Lund's study. How often does, say, discriminator 4 or 5 successfully identify the author of a 900- to 1000-word block? What is the discriminating power of each discriminator individually, and then what is their power collectively? Lund reports massive sample sizes from each candidate author (p. 89). He needs to divide up those samples into 900- to 1000-word blocks and then run some tests on some of those blocks to see how often each of those discriminators can successfully identify the author of those word blocks.

Another problem has to do with sample size—not the size of the candidate author samples, but rather the size of sample the *Times and Seasons* editorials allows us to collect. There are only 906 words when all three are combined. Generally speaking, 900–1000 words are a sufficient sample size, but when they are being compared against a vastly larger sample, such as the three runs of 35,000-word samples (for each candidate author), for a total of over 105,000 words per author (p. 89), the results can be skewed. This is another reason this huge sample needs to be broken down into word blocks of comparable size (900–1000 words), after which the discriminators need to be applied to each word block.

This sample size problem becomes evident when reading about the necessary sample required to accurately gauge average sentence length (ASL). Lund explains:

> To create a credible base to measure "Average Sentence Length" required a sample of at least 15,000 words per author. To insure a solid sample base 35,000 words per author were used. To replicate the study and to establish a margin of error for each candidate author, three separate samples of 35,000 words per author were gathered. Combined, the three samples totaled more

than 106,000 words per author. This was seven times the amount necessary for a valid sample! (p. 96)[48]

While this was obviously meant to really impress the reader, Lund appears oblivious to the obvious problem this creates. If 15,000 words are required to establish an ASL for a given author, then the 906 words of our unidentified *Times and Seasons* author are woefully inadequate to the task. In multiplying the sample size for all the candidate authors, Lund may help us be more confident in the ASL of each candidate, but it does nothing to assure us that the ASL of the *Times and Seasons* articles accurately represents that author's ASL. This problem can be illustrated by looking at the individual ASLs of each editorial, conveniently provided by Lund in "Addendum Seven" (pp. 167–172). They are 21, 46.5, and 46.3. Notice that there is a wide variance between one of the articles, with an ASL of 21, and the other two much closer to that of Woodruff and Taylor than Joseph's. It is precisely because there can be these kind of wide variances that proper sample sizes are important.

Finally, there is the problem of assessing just what the probabilities actually are. We are never really told. There are frequent examples of things like this, used when explaining discriminator 2:

Depending on the topic and the context of an article, such as a technical paper, it is possible to use a word or two that one might not use in any other context. One of three "Probable First and Only Times [PFOT] Uses" would be permissible as an acceptable error factor. Four to six PFOT uses become mathematically extremely

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48   The necessary sample size for all his other discriminators is never given, but it is inferred on p. 89 and 103 that similar sample sizes are required for all the other discriminators. As an aside, when a discriminator requires larger sample sizes in order to accurately discriminate between authors it is usually (though not always) a sign that it is a weak discriminator.

improbable. Seven to ten PFOT uses (10/906) or one word every 91 words was sufficient to eliminate any candidate author in an editorial of 906 words. (p. 93, brackets added)

This sounds reasonable, but given its claims to mathematical improbabilities, one cannot help but wonder on what basis these claims rest. How do we know that four to six PFOT are "mathematically extremely improbable"? What tests were run to determine that seven to ten PFOT is enough "to eliminate any candidate author" of a 906-word block? This ties back into the power of the discriminators and whether they can *really* discriminate between authors, and if they can do so for small samples of approximately 900–1000 words.

Some of the additional material provided in the web addendum partially answers or addresses these problems, but none of them are completely resolved for all the provided indicators. While it would be a bit extreme to say that these flaws render Lund's data analysis completely useless, it does make it rather questionable. Lund's analysis certainly favors Joseph Smith as author, but to what degree of certainty, we cannot tell. To some, this uncertainty probably does render Lund's analysis worthless. What can be said for it is that it is more thorough and rigorous than Meldrum's attempts to dismiss Joseph Smith's authorship essentially on the grounds of two discriminators (which are even less well understood than Lund's), and no apparent sample size.

The Wordprint Studies of Roper et al.

Fortunately, another statistical word analysis of these articles was just recently published, this one along the lines of more conventional stylometric, or "wordprint," studies. As previously mentioned, Matt Roper began reporting on the preliminary results of this study in 2010, but the results were

finally published a few months ago (as of this writing).[49] Roper, with Paul J. Fields (a research consultant who specializes in statistical analysis) and Atul Nepal (a doctoral student with experience in both statistical and textual analysis), applied a "discriminant analysis" to all five Central American editorials that were published while Joseph Smith was editor. The authors explain:

> This technique finds combinations of features (discriminant functions) that can categorize (discriminate) items into known classes, just as plants or animals can be categorized into species based on distinguishing features. The discriminant functions can be used to classify a new item of unknown group membership into its appropriate group based on its features.[50]

In addition to the five Central American editorials, the authors also created separate groups of text composed of other editorials appearing in the *Times and Seasons* during Joseph Smith's editorship, including writings explicitly signed by Joseph Smith (these were not mixed with the Central American editorials). They then collected 29 1000-word blocks from the known writings of Joseph Smith, 30 from John Taylor, and 24 from Wilford Woodruff to form the samples with which to compare the Central American editorials (as well other *Times and Seasons* editorials). The authors state that in selecting these samples, they tried to stay as close to the editorial genre as possible, and also remain close in time to 1842 (since an authors style can change over time). Finally, they selected 70

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49 See Matt Roper, Paul J. Fields, and Atul Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22/2 (2013): 84–97.

50 Roper, Fields, and Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," 92.

non-contextual words to serve as their discriminators. "Using these words," they explain, "as the distinctive literary features for the candidate authors, we developed a set of discriminant functions that could classify each writing sample as belonging to the correct author over 98 percent of the time."[51]

The results are summed up, with graphs, in their article.[52] What they found was that items appearing in the *Times and Seasons* signed by Joseph Smith were clearly written by him. Unsigned editorials also strongly clustered around Joseph Smith's writing style, while editorials signed "Ed." were closest to Joseph Smith's style as well, though also pulled somewhat in the direction of John Taylor. This may suggest some collaboration between Joseph and Taylor, with Joseph as the primary author (consistent with their roles as editor and assistant editor). Finally, the Central American/Book of Mormon editorials were closest in style to Joseph Smith, though they also indicate some evidence of John Taylor's influence. They thus concluded:

> Our analysis suggests that the editorials on the Central America ruins and the Book of Mormon, published during Joseph Smith's tenure as editor of the *Times and Seasons* show a strong alignment with his personal writing style and the editorials to which he signed his name. Consequently, the evidence points to Joseph Smith as the author of the Central America editorials.[53]

But they also to point out, "We need not presume that the five Central America editorials were the work of only one author. The evidence is more supportive of a collaborative effort

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51 Roper, Fields, and Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," 92. Quote, plus all other information reported in this paragraph, can be found on this page of their paper.

52 Roper, Fields, and Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," 93–96.

53 Roper, Fields, and Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," 94.

within the *Times and Seasons* office between Joseph Smith and John Taylor."[54] Joseph Smith would remain the primary author, however, and regardless of whether Joseph wrote the articles independently or with help from his assistant editor, it remains problematic for Meldrum's claims regarding Joseph Smith's revelatory knowledge. Roper et al. explain, "Even if the Central America editorials were a collaborative work, that still does not reduce the authoritative nature of the statements in the articles since Joseph clearly stated that he took full responsibility for what was published in the paper under his editorship."[55]

This rigorous statistical analysis from Roper et al. strongly suggests that Joseph Smith was the author (or at least the primary author) of the editorials connecting Central America to the Book of Mormon. Lund's study, while problematic, can be used to supplement their work with additional indicators of Joseph Smith's authorship. While the Roper et al. study stands on its own, it helps to have complimentary work, conducted independently, corroborating their finds. Lund's authorship study, thorough but flawed, is probably the second most important contribution of his book.

The Reaction from the Heartland

Of Lund's study, Meldrum dismissively said it is "based solely on comparing word usage of several early brethren of the Church." He proceeds with even more dismissive remarks:

> It is simply an attempt to link the articles in question to the Prophet Joseph, because these few unsigned and unknown authored articles make up the last remaining historical hope for Mesoamerican theorists to shore up their collapsing speculations that Joseph Smith

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54 Roper, Fields, and Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," 94.

55 Roper, Fields, and Nepal, "Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins," 96.

abandoned his earlier revelations wherein he indicated a North American setting.[56]

It was, however, Meldrum himself who has insisted that by analyzing the style and linguistics of the author of these editorials can be determined. Stylometrics merely represents the use of statistical tools to achieve that end, and to do so as rigorously and objectively as possible.

When Meldrum was informed of the preliminary report from Roper et al., before the full study was published, he responded:

> All your word print analysis is showing is that data can be manipulated if so desired, all done in an effort to mislead people and make false claims that this somehow "proves" that Joseph Smith was the author and had changed his mind from his own claims of revelation on the matter and had abandoned his these [sic] revelatory statements.… The analysis was done by Mesoamericanists for Mesoamericanists… and it is a shameful disgrace of so-called scholarship.[57]

All that without even being able to examine the study or its results.[58] Just a month earlier, however, when debating a critic of Mormonism, Meldrum appealed to wordprint analysis in defense of the Book of Mormon. "There was no statistical

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56   Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?"

57   Email from Rodney Meldrum to Louis Midgley, October 4, 2011. First ellipses mine, second ellipses in original. I thank Midgley for sharing this with me.

58   It is doubtful Meldrum even read the preliminary report, since he told Midgley, in the email quoted earlier, "Enough wasted time for another several months. I'm sorry, but I most likely will find better and more productive things to do with my time than pour [sic] over the articles you published." In other words, reading research that challenges Meldrum's theories is a waste of time, and it is a foregone conclusion — before that work is even published — that it is all just deceitful, Mesoamericanist propaganda.

word count analysis back then [when the Book of Mormon was published], yet it has been shown by such analysis that the B[ook] o[f] M[ormon] was written by multiple authors, as it claims."[59] The kind of statistical analysis employed by Roper et al. is the same kind that has been used to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon has multiple authors.[60] By dismissively brushing it off as "manipulating" data in one case, while using it to support his point in another, Meldrum has set up a double standard.

Meldrum should take the evidence from both Lund and Roper for Joseph Smith's authorship of these editorials seriously and, if he can, engage it with his own scholarly analysis. At present, Meldrum's reaction is not that of a serious scholar who is genuinely interested in understanding and resolving this historical question, but rather that of an ideologue protecting his pet theory from potentially harmful data.

What Historians Think

In responding to Lund, Meldrum claims, "The fact still remains that official Church historians claim that they simply do not know who authored those articles."[61] Be that as it may, unknown is not the same thing as *unknowable*, as already pointed out. But still, it seems Meldrum is mistaken on this point. Lund points out that editorials during Joseph Smith time as editor of the *Times and Seasons* were accepted as representing Joseph Smith's words, and hence used as such in the 2007 Joseph

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59   Richard Packham and Rod L. Meldrum, "Is the Book of Mormon Historically Accurate," part 4, September 7, 2011 at PublicSquare, online at http://www.publicsquare.net/book-mormon-historically-accurate/ (accessed May 17, 2014).

60   For some history of wordprinting the Book of Mormon, highlighting all the major studies, see Matthew Roper, Paul J. Fields, G. Bruce Schaale, "Stylometric Analyses of the Book of Mormon: A Short History," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21/1 (2012): 28–45.

61   Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?"

Smith Priesthood/Relief Society manual (p. 47–48, 82).[62] For this volume, the Church Curriculum Department used a rubric provided by the Church History Department to assess the likelihood that a document was written by Joseph Smith.[63] Lund sees this as a "semi-official" endorsement of Joseph Smith's authorship on the part of the Church (p. 39, 196 n.68).

Meldrum reproduces an email from someone at the Church History Library to support his claim regarding the view of "official Church historians." But the email does *not* say that the author of the editorials is unknown, but only that the views expressed therein "should not be taken as a *prophetic* statement by Joseph Smith."[64] This is entirely true, even if Joseph Smith is the author (see below).

Lund mentions several others who attributed these editorials to Joseph Smith, including Joseph Fielding Smith, Larry Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon,[65] Sydney B. Sperry, Hugh Nibley, Dan Ludlow, John A. Widstoe, B.H. Roberts, and even John Taylor (pp. 49, 71, 74, 196 n.70)—who *must* be considered a primary source on this question, as he was in position to know who wrote the articles. If it were not for the fact that some want to co-opt Joseph Smith to prop up their pet theories regarding Book of Mormon geography, there would be little

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62   See *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 559.

63   This is described in Ron Barney, "The Reliability of Mormon History Produced by the LDS Church," presentation given at the 2009 FairMormon Conference, online at http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2009-fair-conference/2009-the-reliability-of-mormon-history-produced-by-the-lds-church (accessed May 17, 2014).

64   Email from Sherry Smith, LDS Church History Library, March 14, 2012; emphasis mine, reproduced in Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?"

65   Meldrum is quite fond of Cannon's work on the Zelph incident. See approx. min. 9:26–10:43 in video 12 at http://firmlds.org/video_gallery.php (accessed May 14, 2014)

dispute that the Central American/Book of Mormon editorials were representative of Joseph Smith's views on the subject.

Significance: Joseph Smith, Geography, and Method

It can no longer be denied that, at the very least, Joseph Smith was involved enough to know what was being published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, and that he never had a retraction published, and never put a stop to such editorials, which continued to be published up through 1844. The combination of historical and statistical evidence reviewed above makes it virtually impossible to maintain that Joseph Smith did not write the 1842 Central American/Book of Mormon editorials. The question now arises: so what? So what if Joseph Smith associated Central American ruins with Book of Mormon cities?

For Lund, the implications are huge. He insists that there was "no room in the serious Church newspaper for wild speculations" (p. 50), and hence the editorials should be seen as "definitive statements" (p. 24), "prophetic utterance" (p. 38), and "a major doctrinal pronouncement" (p. 83) with "historic consequences" (p. 74). Perhaps Lund was just being hyperbolic, but I feel that he has overblown the significance here. Yes, they are important—they serve as evidence that Joseph Smith was interested in Book of Mormon geography, open to new information on the topic, and willing to compare present knowledge with the text to look for correlations. For some, this could provide a model for how to go about doing Book of Mormon geography.[66] They also *devastate* the claim made by Meldrum that revelatory knowledge from Joseph Smith rules out Mesoamerica as the lands of the Book of Mormon. But Lund seems to have made the same mistake Meldrum does, just from the other side—that Joseph Smith "knew," based on

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66   See David A. Palmer, *In Search for Cumorah: New Evidences for the Book of Mormon from Ancient Mexico* (Springville, Utah: Horizon, 1999), 21–22.

revelatory knowledge, that the primary Book of Mormon lands were in Mesoamerica. Such a claim would be as overstated as Meldrum's, and stems from a similarly misguided methodology for doing Book of Mormon geography. A discussion and critique of both Lund's and Meldrum's methods will bear this out and reveal the inherent problems in their approaches.

Methodology and Priority of Evidence

The study of Book of Mormon geography has long been riddled by amateurs and hobbyists with a disregard for method and theory. The result has been a cornucopia of diverse schemes. All who engage in this enterprise understand this, but (unsurprisingly) few see themselves as contributing to the problem.

About a year ago, I set out to explore different Book of Mormon geographies, paying specific attention to matters of method. What I discovered was that outside of John Sorenson and a small handful of others,[67] there was very little attention devoted to method. What little I did find was largely reactive to (but not substantially engaging with) Sorenson's work: new

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67   For Sorenson's work on methods, see John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 1–95; Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 209–367; John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Map* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000); John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex: Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2013), 1–115. Other serious methodological discussion can be found in F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1988), though Hauck's method is flawed. See the review, John E. Clark, "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 20–70; reprinted with revisions in *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 13–43, a quality discussion of methodology in on its own. Also see William J. Hamblin, "Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 161–197; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: An Analytical & Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2007–2008), 1:327–356.

challengers to the "Mesoamericanists" realizing the need to dethrone Sorenson via a new, alternative method, and some who like the Mesoamerican setting, but don't like the specific configuration Sorenson's method leads to. There are also some who are reacting to the "Heartlanders." For the most part, these have failed to provide more than a superficial discussion of method, and the alternatives they have proposed are not new, fresh, or innovative, but instead are the old, stale, out-of-date ideas Sorenson was combating decades ago, repackaged in fancy garb.

In general, there are three types of evidence: (1) the so-called "prophetic" evidence, coming from either prophetic passages in the Book of Mormon, or things said by Joseph Smith or another modern-day prophet; (2) anthropological evidence, i.e., archaeological, cultural, linguistic, or even genetic data from ancient America; (3) geographic evidence—the actual lay of the land, geologic, topographic, and hydrologic information, etc. Most researchers will engage all three types of evidence, but how much weight is given to evidence from each category can make a major different. There is also the issue of which evidence is looked at *first*, or given *priority*. It is this evidence that tends to be determinative—that is, the evidence looked at first will define the general area the researcher designates as "Book of Mormon lands," after which the other forms of evidence are typically engaged (selectively) in a supporting role in order to back-up the already decided upon location. Thus, I have found it helpful to group all the different methods into three broad categories:

> **1. Prophetic priority**: Those who use statements from leaders of the Church, or prophetic passages from the Book of Mormon, first to determine the general (and in some cases, specific) location of Book of Mormon lands. From there, some blend of anthropological evidence

and geographic evidence will also be advanced to support the identified area.

2. Anthropological priority: Those who use archaeological, cultural, or, in some cases, genetic data to find the lands of the Book of Mormon. Afterward, the geographic passages in the Book of Mormon (sometimes used only selectively) will be interpreted in ways that agree with this designated location, and selected statements from Church leaders supporting the identification will (sometimes) also be utilized.

3. Geographic priority: Those who first consult passages of the Book of Mormon containing geographic information (sometimes comprehensively, other times only a select handful), and propose Book of Mormon lands based on how well the features of physical geography fit the criteria derived from the text. After finding the best fit, the anthropological data will also be compared, and statements from Church leaders may also be used to enhance the argument.

Obviously, not all that fall into one group are exactly the same, and the degree of rigorousness varies within each grouping. Nonetheless, this schema proves useful for comparing methods by identifying methods which share the same, or similar, priorities.

Lund and Meldrum both use prophetic priority methods, but they come to radically different conclusions due to emphasis on different sources for "prophetic" insight and their different uses of other forms of evidence. The pitfalls of the prophetic priority approach can be illustrated by looking at each of their methods in turn.

Lund's Method…

It might be easy to confuse Lund's method as one of geographic priority. After all, in his book *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon: Is This the Place?*, he has a chapter on "Mapping the Lands of the Book of Mormon,"[68] in which he quotes John E. Clark, approvingly, as saying, "Dealing with geography is a two-step exercise. An internal geography must first be deduced from clues in the book, and this deduction must then become the standard for identifying a real world setting."[69] Lund refers to maps of the "internal geography" as "templates," and explains, "Somewhere in Mesoamerica, this template or map is going to fit with some adjustments."[70] Notice here that *Mesoamerica* is a pre-determined conclusion. Before turning to the text of the Book of Mormon and seeking a geographic correlation to the real world, Lund has already decided that Mesoamerica is the right place.

There is some *other priority* at work here. Lund hints at this when he explains that he created his Book of Mormon maps based on "internal information given in the Book of Mormon *plus* the insights added by Joseph Smith."[71] It is through Joseph Smith's "added insights" (in the *Times and Seasons* articles) that Mesoamerica is identified as the right place. "Joseph Smith identified the general area where Stephens and Catherwood traveled in Guatemala near Copán and Quiriguá as the Land of the Zarahemla. Joseph's statement qualifies Mesoamerica as a fixed point for Zarahemla."[72] Before mapping the Book of Mormon lands, Lund places "angelic and

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68   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 53–64.

69   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 53, quoting from an audio-recording of John E. Clark.

70   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 57.

71   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 57, emphasis mine.

72   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 56. Lund's use of "fixed points" is also a popular technique among Book of Mormon geographers. This technique has its own set of problems that I will not go into in the present article.

prophetic considerations" above all else as he goes point by point through various Book of Mormon places he feels Joseph Smith identified.[73]

Lund pursues this same methodology in his latest book. Lund explains:

> I am an advocate for Mesoamerica or southern Mexico and Central America as the primary American lands for the Book of Mormon. This bias results from two "Supreme Sources." One "Supreme Source" is the actual and verifiable words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The other "Supreme Source" is the Book of Mormon itself. (p. 6)

Which of these "supreme sources" takes priority? "The key to Book of Mormon geography will always be Joseph Smith" (p. 27).

The pitfall of nearly every method that prioritizes the "prophetic" evidence is that there really isn't any such thing. Joseph Smith had no revelations on Book of Mormon geography, and neither has any other prophet. In a moment of true irony, Meldrum identifies this flaw in Lund's method:

> For Lund to proclaim, as he has done in his article, that Joseph Smith stated that Zarahemla was in Guatemala is exaggerated, unsubstantiated and possibly untrue. If Lund's claims were true, why wouldn't Church leadership simply adopt that position and come out in open endorsement of Lund's "Book of Mormon lands?" Yet the fact stubbornly remains that the Church is officially neutral on the subject.[74]

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73 Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 19–36.

74 Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?" The irony, of course, is in the fact that Meldrum uses a prophetic priority method, claiming that "Joseph knew" and identified Book of Mormon lands. Hence, the question can just as quickly be turned around on him: "If [Meldrum's] claims

Ignoring, for the moment, the fact that Meldrum is susceptible to this *exact* same criticism, he nonetheless makes an important point in regard to Lund's claims. Lund, of course, realizes both that the Church has no official position[75] and that Joseph's statements, in the *Times and Seasons* or elsewhere, are not revelations. But he insists, "Joseph Smith's opinion about the geography of the Book of Mormon is more important than the opinions of others" (p. 7). Lund explains his reasoning thus:

> There are and will be sincere LDS scholars who disagree with the basic premise that Joseph Smith is an unimpeachable source…. Relegating Joseph's statements to opinion gives them permission to pursue their own theories about the geography of the Book of Mormon…. Obviously, I have taken a different stance in regards to the statements of Joseph Smith. Without declaring every word that Joseph wrote or spoke as revelation, there is still merit in sustaining Joseph's opinion over that of someone less acquainted with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.
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> Joseph Smith *is* an unimpeachable source for most Latter-day Saints. Independent of being a Prophet, he was a Seer, whose insights alone qualify his opinion to be held in higher esteem and given greater weight than even the most ardent scholar of the Book of Mormon. He was, by vision, a first person witness of the society of the Nephites and Lamanites. Therefore, I have taken the position that the statements made by Joseph Smith

were true, why wouldn't Church leadership simply adopt that position and come out in open endorsement of [Meldrum's] 'Book of Mormon lands?' Yet the fact stubbornly remains that the Church is officially neutral on the subject."

75   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, xv.

and the angel Moroni will have preeminence over the opinions of others.[76]

In a similar statement found in his 2012 work (pp. 13–14), Lund goes further, claiming not just that Joseph Smith "witness[ed]… the society of the Nephites and Lamanites," but rather that he saw "by angelic visitation and panoramic visions the original inhabitants of this continent and the geographical lands upon which they dwelt" (pp. 13–14). Lund thus argues that while Joseph Smith did not necessarily receive a revelation explaining where Book of Mormon lands were, he had visions wherein he saw Book of Mormon life and lands, and thus when he saw the images and read the descriptions from Stephens and Catherwood, they were familiar to him from his visions (pp. 13–17, 76–79).[77] "He instantly recognized the architecture, the Maya temples, the stone monuments, and the ruins because of Catherwood's detailed drawings."[78] Hence, "Joseph's many visions of the primary American events in the Book of Mormon were given physical presence when two explorers named Stephens and Catherwood's [sic] discovered evidences of a high civilization in Central America" (p. 65). In Lund's view, then, Joseph's commentary in the *Times and Seasons*, though not revelation itself, is opinion based on revelatory knowledge: it wasn't revealed to Joseph Smith that it *was* Zarahemla, but to Joseph (who saw Zarahemla in vision) it certainly *looked* like it.

The basis for Lund's argument is that (a) Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's mother, reported Joseph telling the family stories wherein he related details about the lifestyle, material culture, and architecture of Book of Mormon peoples (pp. 14–15), details the prophet probably learned through the many visions he had from Moroni (pp. 15–16), and (b) Joseph Smith saw the

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76   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 11, emphasis in original.

77   Also see Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 20–22.

78   Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 22.

hill where the plates were deposited so vividly that he was able to go it, and recognize it (pp. 15, 76–77), and therefore would probably recognize other locations from his visions.

Without denying that it is *possible* that when Joseph Smith saw the drawings of Catherwood in Stephens' books he at least vaguely recognized them as similar to what he saw in vision, I am unconvinced by Lund's argument. It is true that Joseph Smith was able to find the New York Hill Cumorah due the vision he saw of it, but there is no documentation that Joseph Smith saw any other Book of Mormon location with such specificity. He certainly never *said* that the buildings he saw in Stephens' books were the same (or similar to) ones he saw in vision. Furthermore, there was good reason for such detail to be given for the New York hill—namely, Joseph had to actually go there! No similar reason exists for him to see other Book of Mormon places with the same degree of detail. Joseph had the same vision, showing him where the plates were, no less than four times in a matter of hours, and then visited the actual place shortly thereafter (essentially *right* after the fourth vision of the place), while Joseph only saw *drawings* (accurate though they may be) of Mesoamerican ruins, and that more than a decade after the visions he had. Clearly, the two cases are not the same. As such, I see no justification for assuming, as Lund does, that Joseph knew the ruins explored by Stephens and Catherwood were Nephite (or Lamanite) based on any kind of revelatory knowledge.

This argument also has the potential to cut the other way. Lund, along with (necessarily) most Mesoamerican proponents, believes in the "two-Cumorah theory," that is, that the original Hill Cumorah, where the extermination wars of the Book of Mormon were fought, is located in Mesoamerica (pp. 25–26, 127–141).[79] But Joseph Smith's contemporaries

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79   Also see Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 36–41. For the standard scholarly treatments on the topic, see Palmer, *In Search for Cumorah*;

(and some would argue Joseph himself) frequently associated the hill in Manchester, New York, with the hill in the Book of Mormon.[80] Just as with the Central American ruins, whether Joseph made such an identification or not is irrelevant because he never corrected others who did. If Joseph Smith really saw "the very events and the geographical settings" (p. 15) of Book of Mormon history as vividly as Lund maintains he did, why didn't he ever correct his close associates who claimed that the final battles took place in New York? This silence from Joseph Smith is as much a challenge to Lund's claims as his failure to denounce the Central American/Book of Mormon editorials is for Meldrum's.

Other than that, Lund's argument that for "most Latter-day Saints" Joseph Smith is an "unimpeachable" source on Book of Mormon geography (p. 13) is little more than an appeal to popularity. Such popular acceptance is, itself, worth questioning. Notice how John E. Clark handles this same piece of information.

Most Mormons fall into a more subtle error that also inflates Joseph's talents; they confuse translation with

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Sydney B. Sperry, "Were There Two Cumorahs?," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 260–268; John E. Clark, "Archaeology and the Cumorah Question," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 13/1–2 (2004): 144–151. Also see the debate on the topic between Hedges (for the New York hill) and Roper (two-Cumorah advocate): Andrew H. Hedges, "Cumorah and the Limited Mesoamerican Theory," *Religious Educator* 10/2 (2009): 111–134; Matthew P. Roper, "Plausibility, Probability, and the Cumorah Question," *Religious Educator* 10/2 (2009): 135–158; Andrew H. Hedges, "Problems with Probability: A Response," *Religious Edicator* 10/2 (2009): 159–162. For my response to this debate, see Neal Rappleye, "Cumorah, Cumorah, Where Art Thou, Cumorah?" at *Studio et Quoque Fide: A Blog on Latter-day Saint Apologetics, Scholarship, and Commentary*, August 14, 2012, online at http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/2012/08/cumorah-cumorah-where-art-thou-cumorah.html (accessed May 22, 2014).

80   There is no firsthand account of Joseph Smith ever calling it Cumorah. The earliest documented reference to the New York hill as that of the Book of Mormon is from Oliver Cowdery in 1835. See Palmer, *In Search for Cumorah*, 20.

authorship. They presume that Joseph Smith knew the contents of the book as if he were its real author, and they accord him perfect knowledge of the text. This presumption removes from discussion the most compelling evidence of the book's authenticity— Joseph's unfamiliarity with its contents. To put the matter clearly: Joseph Smith did not fully understand the Book of Mormon. I propose that he transmitted to readers an ancient book that he neither imagined nor wrote.[81]

When we hold Joseph Smith's opinion about the Book of Mormon up as irreproachable, we play right into our critics hands, mistakenly granting the assumption that he is the book's author. A translator, however, does not necessarily know a book like an author would. Hence, as Clark points out, when careful examination of the Book of Mormon text reveals that Joseph Smith did not understand the particular details of, say, its geography,[82] that strongly suggests that he is not the author, but rather that the book is what it claims to be—an ancient record which Joseph translated.

Clark, also points out the dangers of uncritically accepting the opinions of Joseph Smith as authoritative on this issue.

The dangerous area is where opinion is thought to clarify ambiguities in the text, of which there are many. The minimal fact that various statements are attributed to Joseph Smith that place cities in different lands suggests that he continued to be interested throughout

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81   John E. Clark, "Archaeological Trends and Book of Mormon Origins," in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2006), 85.

82   See John L. Sorenson, "How Could Joseph Smith Write So Accurately about Ancient American Civilization?" in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 267–269.

his life in the location of Book of Mormon lands and, consequently, that it remained an open question for him. If he knew where they were, why did he continue guessing? Should we not be similarly open-minded today? Do we go with the Prophet's early statements or his later statements?[83]

Opinions, then, whether they be a prophet's or a scholar's, should only be regarded as more superior to others when they prove consistent with the text and withstand careful scrutiny. In choosing to uncritically privilege Joseph's opinions, Lund runs the risk of allowing them to trump the certain knowledge of Book of Mormon authors, which is also an element of Meldrum's method.

Meldrum's Method…

Although Meldrum also employs a prophetic priority method, his takes a fairly different form. Meldrum, writing with Bruce Porter, sets the stage for presenting his "new" method of Book of Mormon geography by quoting George Q. Cannon, who stated that the Book of Mormon "was not written to teach geographical truths."[84] Meldrum then explains, "The Book of Mormon is a comprehensive record of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the 'prophecies and the promises' to and for those who are led by the 'hand of the Lord' to the land of promise. It was not written nor intended as a geographical text."[85]

As such, Meldrum proposes that we make what he calls the "prophecies and promises" contained in the Book of Mormon the primary evidence for determining the location of Book of Mormon lands. All in all, Meldrum sees a hierarchy of four

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83   John E. Clark, "Evaluating the Case for a Limited Great Lakes Setting," *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 28.

84   Quoted in Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 9.

85   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 11.

categories of evidence, two types of "spiritual" evidence, and
two types of "physical" evidence:

1. Book of Mormon prophecies and promises
   testified of in relation to the Promised
   Land and the people associated with it.
2. Inspired and revealed statements of the
   Prophet Joseph Smith on geography.
3. Physical "real world" evidence, such as
   correlating civilizations in the correct time
   frame, archaeological findings as described
   within the text, cultural lifestyles, genetic
   relationships and linguistic ties.
4. Geographical indicators or passages
   contained within the Book of Mormon.[86]

According to Meldrum, these categories of evidence are
arranged "in an order of credibility and strength to qualify as
a viable source to determine a setting for the 'Promised Land'
described in the Book of Mormon."[87] He then claims that this
arrangement comes *not* from himself, but is demanded by the
Book of Mormon: "The Order or hierarchy of witnesses to
be used are not the author's arbitrary selection but are rather
determined by the Book of Mormon itself."[88] For this, Meldrum
appeals to the title page and declares, "The Title Page [of the
Book of Mormon] sets the primary standard for the witnesses
to be used in the research for a geographical setting for the
Book of Mormon."[89]

The essence of this argument is as follows: (1) the Book
of Mormon was not written, as President Cannon said,
for geography, but (2) was written to reveal the prophecies
and promises to the Lamanites, thus (3) the proper way to

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86   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 14-15.
87   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 15.
88   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 16.
89   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 17.

determine the geography of the Book of Mormon is to use these prophecies and promises. "Therefore," writes Meldrum, "these prophecies about 'remnant' and 'Gentiles' upon this land becomes a primary witness and testimony that should *supersede any geographical passage* in the search for a setting for the Promised Land."[90]

While Meldrum may, on the surface, appear to have a point, the reality is that his methodology leads to logical absurdities. First, it must be stressed that Meldrum's method and hierarchy are *not* mandated or determined by the Book of Mormon, and the title page sets no kind of standard for doing Book of Mormon geography research. The title page says nothing about Book of Mormon geography research. As Meldrum himself quoted President Cannon, "The Book of Mormon is *not* a geographical primer. It was not written to teach geographical truths."[91] As such, it provides no standards for seeking such truths or doing such research, and *anyone* who is trying to determine Book of Mormon geography, regardless of whether they privilege the "prophecies and promises" or the actual geographic details in the text, is using the book in an unintended way.

However, someone who uses the geographic details may not be misusing those *details*.[92] The prophecies and promises in the Book of Mormon were not given with anything about the physical setting of the events in mind. Meanwhile, the passages with geographic details obviously *were* given with the contours of the physical setting in mind. The purpose of giving the details, it would seem, is to allow the reader to orient themselves and understand the things that are going on. V.

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90   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 17, emphasis added.

91   Quoted in Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 9, I have altered the emphasis given to this quote from that found in *Prophecies and Promises*.

92   Notice, that this is not the purpose of the whole Book of Mormon, rather the narrow purpose of the textual details about geography. What else would be the point of those details?

Garth Norman, an archaeologist who has researched Book of Mormon geography for over 40 years, puts it this way: "Book of Mormon scribes were not primarily concerned about historic details…. On the other hand, Mormon gave very specific geographic details at times… that could have no other purpose than to paint the landscape where these events occurred."[93] The production of an internal map (discussed further below) is an attempt to do precisely that—get oriented to what the landscape was like and make sense of the movements that are going on in the text. Such maps are helpful in this way, regardless of any kind of real world setting.[94] Thus, the logical and appropriate thing to do if you want to understand the physical setting of Book of Mormon events is to look at the way the Book of Mormon authors described that setting, for those details were most likely given for the very purpose of helping the reader understand the geographical surroundings. If geography is the purpose for going to the text, then the *only* logical thing to do would be to read the geographical content.

Second, Meldrum's methodological hierarchy is extremely problematic. He makes use of the prophecies about the promised land without attempting to understand how the Nephites conceptualized the promised land and its accompanying prophecies at all. The proper understanding of the Nephites' concepts of promised land seriously undercuts Meldrum's attempt to limit the Book of Mormon to certain modern political boundaries.[95] Lund's own approach to these prophecies could be better, but at least seems to get the gist of

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93   V. Garth Norman, *Book of Mormon—Mesoamerican Geography: History Study Map* (American Fork, Utah: ARCON/Ancient America Foundation, 2008), iix.

94   See Sorenson's *Mormon's Map*, for example.

95   For how the Nephites conceptualized the Promised Land, see Steven L. Olsen, "Prospering in the Land of Promise," *FARMS Review* 22/1 (2010): 229–245; Steven L. Olsen, "The Covenant of the Promised Land: Territorial Symbolism in the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 137–154.

it right (pp. 22, 26–29).[96] What's more, as already pointed out, there are no prophetic statements made by Joseph Smith on the matter.[97] We can turn Meldrum's own argument against him here: "If [Meldrum's] claims were true, why wouldn't Church leadership simply adopt that position and come out in open endorsement of [Meldrum's] 'Book of Mormon lands?' Yet the fact stubbornly remains that the Church is officially neutral on the subject."[98]

This leaves only criteria 3 and 4, which, stripped of the first two "prophetic" criteria, are essentially an anthropological priority method. When trying to figure out Book of Mormon geography, Meldrum gives the *least* weight to actual geography. Kevin Christensen proposes a very interesting hypothetical question which serves to illustrate the inherent problems with this kind of approach.

> Suppose that in the ongoing Book of Mormon historicity debate we could swap currently plausible solutions for current problems. That is, suppose we had better evidence for metals and horses, a scrap of recognizably reformed Egyptian script, and even some profoundly unlikely DNA that somehow pointed directly to 600 BC Jerusalem. At the same time, suppose we did not have a unique fit for the river Sidon, nor an archaeologically suitable Cumorah, nor the rise and fall of major cultures at the right time (Olmec and Preclassic), nor a Zarahemla candidate that explained various circumstances in the text (physical, geographic, and

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96   Also see Lund, *Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon*, 43–51, esp. 45–47.

97   I refer readers again to Roper's thorough review of Meldrum's claims in this regard. Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 51–70.

98   Meldrum, "Did Joseph Smith Identify Zarahemla in Guatemala?" That the Church has no official position is also stated in Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, xviii.

linguistic), nor evidence of a major volcanic eruption at the right time, nor fortifications of the right kind, nor a candidate for the Waters of Mormon complete with a submerged city, nor a good candidate for the Gadianton movement, nor the other abundant cultural details that Sorenson, Gardner, Clark, and others have detailed…. Given that exchange of current solutions for current puzzles, would the present case for New World Book of Mormon historicity be stronger or weaker?[99]

A look at the kind of evidence to which Meldrum appeals reveals that this is the kind of exchange Meldrum is asking us to make in shifting our sights from Mesoamerica to the Heartland. But is having artifacts (that might be explained in other ways) really more compelling than having an accurate physical setting made of geographic features (such as a river Sidon and hill Cumorah) that are relatively stable and essentially unchanging? John E. Clark, who is a professional archaeologist, has explained:

It has been my experience that most members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, when confronted with a Book of Mormon geography, worry about the wrong things. Almost invariably the first question that arises is whether the geography fits the archaeology of the proposed area. This should be our second question, the first being whether the geography fits the facts of the Book of Mormon—a question we all can answer without being versed in American archaeology. Only after a given geography reconciles all of the significant geographic details given in the Book of Mormon does the question of archaeological and historical detail merit attention. The Book of

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99 Kevin Christensen, "Hindsight on a Book of Mormon Historicity Critique," *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 167.

Mormon must be the final and most important arbiter in deciding the correctness of a given geography; otherwise we will be forever hostage to the shifting sands of expert opinion.[100]

The archaeological and scientific picture can change dramatically as fresh finds shed new light. If we prioritize archaeology, we will, as Clark puts it, "be forever hostage to the shifting sands of expert opinion." Meanwhile, the geographic details remain constant. Hence, while anthropological data is important and cannot be ignored (it still should be the "second question," as Clark says), it must take a backseat to the dictates of the land.

All of the scientific and archaeological evidence marshaled by Meldrum is controversial, at best,[101] but leaving that aside, the artifacts and DNA to which he appeals are irrelevant if mountains, rivers, valleys, hills, lakes, and seas aren't where the authors of the text said they were. If it is deemed less important for the physical setting to fit the text, then we might as well place the events back in the Middle East, where we know the DNA and the artifacts will confirm an Israelite presence. "It will do no good to find evidences in Alaska for the Nephites," John Sorenson explains, "if the Nephites were not in Alaska, anymore than to find evidence in Tibet. We need to be in the right place and in the right time period if we are going to use…

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100   Clark, "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," 21; reprinted in *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 13-14.

101   For discussion of some of the artifacts Meldrum likes to use, see Brant A. Gardner, "This Idea: The 'This Land' Series and the U.S.-Centric Reading of the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 147-154. Though this review is not directed toward Meldrum, it is a critique of Wayne May, who is a cohort of Meldrum's, and they both use this evidence. For the scientific claims, see Gregory L. Smith, "Often in Error, Seldom in Doubt: Rod Meldrum and Book of Mormon DNA," *FARMS Review* 22/1 (2010): 17–161.

archaeological evidences, or linguistic evidence."[102] The logical absurdity of having any other form of evidence "supersede any geographical passage," as Meldrum put it, is that you can end up with a geography that contradicts the physical setting described by Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni, and other writers—the only ones who truly and undeniably knew what the physical environment of the Nephites was like.

The Strength of Geographic Priority

My critique of Lund and Meldrum is intended to make clear the weaknesses of prophetic priority methods, and also illuminate why the only legitimate method to follow is one that starts with the geographic details.[103] There is no genuine prophetic information revealing the specific location of Book of Mormon lands, and without knowing the correct geographic region, we simply cannot know what cultural and archaeological information is actually relevant to the text (and such data is always incomplete). Absent a solid geographic setting, cultural details can easily be cherry-picked from anywhere in a way that makes them seem to fit the text. We must first have a location, "Only when we have an idea of that can we know which historical traditions or archaeological sequences can be compared most usefully with Mormon's text."[104]

It should be quickly pointed out, however, that just as there are different variations on "prophetic priority" methods, so too with geographic priority methods. Sorenson, Clark,

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102   John L. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon in Ancient America," (FARMS Transcript, 1994), 6.

103   For a detailed critique of one version of the "anthropological priority" (which I was, at the time, calling "archaeological priority"), see Neal Rappleye, "Models and Methods in Book of Mormon Geography: The Peruvian Model as a Test-Case," *Interpreter* (blog), January 28, 2014, at http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/models-and-methods-in-book-of-mormon-geography-the-peruvian-model-as-a-test-case/ (accessed May 26, 2014).

104   John L. Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 188.

Roper, Brant A. Gardner, and William J. Hamblin all advocate similar methods, and hence (unsurprisingly) have more or less accepted Sorenson's model.[105] Other advocates of geographic priority methods include Lawrence Poulsen, V. Garth Norman, Krik Magleby, F. Richard Hauck, and David A. Palmer.[106] What is fascinating is that, although their methods are quite diverse, and their models differ sometimes considerably, they all agree that *only* Mesoamerica can fit the geographic details in the text. As far as I am aware, *all* major practitioners of a geographic priority method have converged on Mesoamerica as the *only* region in which the textual details fit.

With the above in mind, consider Meldrum's criticisms of this type of method. Meldrum claims, "Over the last few years the majority of geographical theorists have reached a consensus on how to begin the development of a map for Book of Mormon geography."[107] Meldrum explains,

> Using this method, proposed Book of Mormon theories have ranged from North to South America, from Granada across an entire ocean to find a home on the Malay Peninsula or Southeast Asia. They have ranged in extent from the entire western hemisphere to a geography encompassing a restricted distance of less than two hundred miles. Each investigator applied the same method of using Book of Mormon geographic

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105   For their works detailing this, see note 67. On Roper, see quote below.

106   See, respectively, Lawrence Poulsen, *Lawrence Poulsen's Book of Mormon Geography*, online at http://bomgeography.poulsenll.org/ (accessed May 26, 2014); Norman, *Book of Mormon—Mesoamerican Geography*; Capitan Kirk (Kirk Magleby), "Book of Mormon Model," at *Book of Mormon Resources*, July 28, 2012 (updated October 2, 2013), online at http://bookofmormonresources. blogspot.com/2012/07/book-of-mormon-model.html (accessed May 26, 2014); Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*; Palmer, *In Search for Cumorah*.

107   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 5.

passages, and each came to a completely different conclusion.[108]

Hence, "The method of using the geographical passages from the Book of Mormon as a primary source to create a hypothetical map has resulted in multiple theories and conflicting interpretations."[109] Forcing the conclusion, "The geographical passages lack enough clear information to make a determination, or the method of using these selected passages must be viewed as having severe shortcomings or even insurmountable flaws."[110]

There are several problems with this conclusion, however. First, the so-called methodological "consensus" is a fiction. There is a group of LDS scholars (Clark, Gardner, Roper, Hamblin, to name a few) who all agree that Sorenson's *method* is the best—and they, consequently, also agree that Sorenson's *model* is the best. But among practitioners of Book of Mormon geography, as demonstrated above, there is no such agreement in *either* method *or* model. Among some of the several methods at work prior to Meldrum's arrival are several "prophetic priority" methods not unlike his own.[111]

Second, strictly speaking, the use of a comprehensive "hypothetical map," or "internal map," to correlate the text to the land has only been fully practiced and published by

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108   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 8.

109   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 8.

110   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 8-9.

111   Long before the "Heartland" theory was the "Limited Great Lakes" models, which clearly shares an intellectual heritage with that of the Heartlanders. In making their case, they often rest their general selection of the land on the same Book of Mormon prophecies, and on statements from Joseph Smith (plus other leaders), just as Meldrum does. See, for example, Duane R. Aston, *Return to Cumorah: Piecing Together the Puzzle Where the Nephites Lived* (Salt Lake City, UT: Publishers Press, 1998), 5 (appeals to Joseph Smith for location of Cumorah), 8–20 (makes case for NY Cumorah using many of the same early Church history sources used by Meldrum), 14, 137–141, 159–160 (all appeals to the same Book of Mormon promises as Meldrum).

Sorenson, with Clark and Gardner echoing him on this matter. Hence, such a method has, quite successfully, led to only one model. Third, Meldrum makes no attempt to distinguish between those who have made limited and highly selective uses of the geographic data in the text from those who have made fairly comprehensive use of hundreds of passages in the Book of Mormon.

Failing to recognize the methodological diversity that exists, and the varying levels of rigorousness in which these methods are applied, Meldrum simply has the wrong answers to his own question, "If the Book of Mormon had sufficient geographic information to positively produce a cohesive internal map, why would there exist so many different geographies?"[112] The correct answer to Meldrum's question is most people are not making comprehensive use of the Book of Mormon data in creating an internal map. Roper has correctly explained Meldrum's (and Porter's) error:

> Porter and Meldrum wrongly attribute the abundance of Book of Mormon geographical models to the practice of constructing an internal geography based upon the Book of Mormon text (p. 11). Yet the truth is that much of the diversity of opinion on the question is due to the *failure* of most proponents to *do so*. Only after this first exercise is done in a thorough and comprehensive manner can one then proceed to the secondary issue of how this internal picture may or may not correlate with a particular real-world setting.[113]

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112   Porter and Meldrum, Prophecies and Promises, 9.

113   Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 26. The parenthetical page number is to Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 11.

In a work cited by Meldrum, Sorenson himself described the reason for the diversity of opinion in Book of Mormon geography:

At least eighty versions of a Book of Mormon map have been produced. *Most start with the writer confidently identifying some American area as the center where the Nephites lived and then distributing cities, lands, or other features named in the text to more or less agree with the original "solution."* Ideas have ranged from identifying the promised land as the entire hemisphere to limiting the scene to a small portion of, say, Costa Rica or New York. Few of these writers have been knowledgeable about the range of elements that would go into a comprehensive and critical statement of the geography (such as language distributions, ecological zones, or archaeological finds). The result has been tremendous confusion and a plethora of notions that holds no promise of producing a consensus.[114]

Contrast this to Meldrum's claim, quoted earlier, that all these different views were created using "the same method," i.e., Sorenson's "internal map" method. Sorenson echoed this same point in his most recent tome:

Heretofore the study of Book of Mormon geography has mainly consisted of making more or less random guesses as to one modern location or another where events portrayed in the Book of Mormon supposedly took place. For the most part, such unsystematic studies have been undertaken after examining only *some* of the 600 references to geography found in the text. That is, a typical investigator peruses a map of the Americas, finds what he or she intuits to be a

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114   Sorenson, *Mormon's Map*, 5, emphasis added.

correlation, then proceeds to select from the Book of Mormon statements thought to support his correlation of choice.[115]

Sorenson's and Roper's diagnosis is much closer than Meldrum's to my own observations, as I have looked at the methods of several theorists.

Adding to such observations, I have noticed that the use of any of several different, independently generated internal maps (with varying degrees of detail) to try to identify Book of Mormon lands would consistently lead to Mesoamerica.[116] Hence, Meldrum overstates the issue when he says that such maps "are often highly inconsistent with each other in their conclusions."[117] All major theorists using geographic priority methods have converged on Mesoamerica as the *only* location that fits the criteria in the text, though most do *not* form an independent "internal map."

This is all important because the premise upon which Meldrum proposes his "new" prophetic priority method is that the "old" geographic priority (and specifically the internal map) method has failed to produce consistent results. "If the system is working," Meldrum insists, "one should expect to see the same result, each time a substantiated premise is repeated. This should continue to hold true when exposed to all relevant evidence and witnesses."[118] He concludes his critique by saying,

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115   Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 17.

116   To view several such maps, see Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 54–55, 80, 103, 104, 121, 123, 125, 148, 173, 179, 190, 202–203; Stephen L. Carr, "A Summary of Several theories of Book of Mormon Lands in Mesoamerica," at http://www.bmaf.org/conference/2008/stephen_carr (accessed June 27, 2014). I invite interested and dedicated readers to try and situate any one of these internal maps somewhere in the real world and see if they can plausibly find a location that meets the criteria better than Mesoamerica. Then repeat the exercise with all the others.

117   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 6.

118   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 4.

"An effective method of discovery should tend to limit the number of possible solutions to a problem, not encourage more of them."[119] By this standard, geographic priority methods *have* been successful in limiting results exclusively to Mesoamerica.

Conclusion

I have ranged, at times, far from the specific content of Lund's book. This has been done because his book is part of a larger conversation on Book of Mormon geography, particularly on Joseph Smith's views and their evidentiary value, and the evidence and methods to be applied to such an endeavor. Rather than narrowly engage Lund's book alone, I have sought to examine the broader discussion of these highly relevant issues. While this obviously does not delve into all the different issues and different perspectives available, this broader engagement has now prepared us to reach some conclusions on the value of Lund's book.

On the matter of what Joseph Smith's views were in relation to Book of Mormon geography, Lund makes an important contribution. Specifically, he helps us assess a historical conundrum regarding the authorship of certain *Times and Seasons* editorials from 1842. His thorough documentation of Joseph Smith's whereabouts settles, definitively, whether Joseph Smith was around Nauvoo to write the editorials or not. He was, and there is evidence to confirm he was involved with the editing and printing of the paper during that period. Added historical analysis by Matt Roper further strengthens this point. Therefore, Meldrum and others simply *cannot* continue to claim Joseph was in hiding at the time and thus could not have written or would not have been aware of the editorials. This, by itself, has major implications, because it means, minimally, that Joseph was aware of what was being published

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119   Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 12.

and never corrected it—a problematic fact for anyone insisting that Joseph "knew" it was in the United States "heartland."

Lund's statistical word study, though problematic in a number of respects, does give us some data that suggests (but does not definitively prove—Lund overstates his evidence here) that Joseph Smith was the author of the editorials in question. When used in conjunction with the more rigorous wordprint studies of Roper et al., it becomes virtually certain that Joseph was the primary author of these editorials. The *onus probandī* (burden of proof) is now on Meldrum and others who wish to continue to maintain that Joseph Smith was not the author of the editorials, as Lund correctly points out (pp. 40, 103). In light of present evidence, it seems impossible to insist that Joseph Smith had any revelatory knowledge that limited the lands of the Book of Mormon to the United States.

Such marks the useful contributions of Lund's work to the overall battle over Joseph Smith's words—a battle which, at present, it seems the "Mesoamericanists" are winning, at least for the time being. From there, however, it is evident that Lund engages in a methodology for finding Book of Mormon lands that is as misguided as Meldrum's, and is susceptible to the same weaknesses. In critiquing the methods employed by both Lund and Meldrum, it becomes apparent that the battle for Joseph Smith's words is just tangential skirmish. The crucial battlefield is over what the Book of Mormon actually says about its own geography, and the Mesoamericanists have been winning on that front all along.

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Understanding Nephi
with the Help of Noah Webster

Loren Blake Spendlove

Abstract: *Dictionaries, especially Noah Webster's 1828* American Dictionary of the English Language, *can be useful and informative resources to help us better understand the language of the Book of Mormon. This article compares definitions of words and phrases found in the book of 1 Nephi, using Webster's 1828 dictionary and the* New Oxford American Dictionary *as references. By comparing these two dictionaries, we can see how word usage and meanings have changed since the original publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. We can also gain a greater appreciation of the text of the Book of Mormon in a way that its first readers probably understood it.*

Some time ago I decided to read Charles Dickens' famous story *A Christmas Carol*. Published in 1843, it tells the fictional account of the amazing transformation of a selfish and greedy miser — Ebenezer Scrooge — into a loving and generous man. Although I was able to follow the story well enough, there were certain words and phrases that challenged my understanding, requiring me to consult the Internet and dictionaries for clarification. In one scene, Mrs. Cratchit entered the room "with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into

the top."[1] When I read this, several things popped out at me. First, having never seen a pudding that was "like a speckled cannon ball, so hard and firm," I wondered what it could be. Second, what was a *quartern*? Finally, what did *bedight* mean?

From various sources on the Internet, I learned that Mrs. Cratchit's "cannon ball" was actually plum pudding and would probably be considered cake by Americans.[2] I also learned that the "plums" in this pudding were probably raisins. One of the definitions for *plum* at that time was "a grape dried in the sun; a raisin."[3] A quartern, as it turns out, is a quarter of a pint, or a half of a cup.[4] Today, this word is considered archaic and is no longer used.[5] So, a "half of half-a-quartern" of brandy would actually be 1/16th of a pint, or 1/8th of a cup. Finally, although considered archaic today,[6] *bedight*, during Dickens's time, meant "to adorn; to dress; set off with ornaments."[7]

Dictionaries are wonderful tools that can help us understand the meaning of words and phrases, especially those from a particular time and culture. Dictionaries can also allow

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1   Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* (London: Bradbury and Evans,1858), 57; http://books.google.com/ books?id=f8ANAAAAQAAJ.

2   Heather Sheire, "English Plum Pudding aka Christmas Pudding aka Cake," *Livin' the Pie Life*, December 11, 2010, http://www.livinthepielife. com/2010/12/english-plum-pudding-aka-christmas- pudding-aka-cake/. Also see "Plum Pudding," at Dickens and Christmas, http://charlesdickenspage.com/ christmas.html; and Alicia, "Read//Eat: Plum Pudding From 'The Christmas Carol,'" *Yes and Yes: Because Yes is More Fun than No*, December 5, 2013, http:// www.yesandyes.org/2013/12/recipe-plum-pudding-a-christmas-carol.html.

3   Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828, Original Facimile Edition* (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 2010), s.v. "plum." Webster did not paginate this text, but the volume and signature numbers are printed at the bottom of every fourth leaf.

4   Webster, s.v. "quartern."

5   *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1429, s.v. "quartern."

6   Oxford, 147, s.v. "bedight."

7   Webster, s.v. "bedight."

us to see how word usage and meanings change over time. If I had not consulted a dictionary while reading *A Christmas Carol*, I still would have been able to picture in my mind the flaming dessert with the holly on top, but I would have missed many of the nuances of the story. A "half of half-a quartern" is a paltry amount of brandy. It is possible that Dickens intended by this measurement to show that, in spite of their poverty, the Cratchits were still able to celebrate Christmas festively, although meagerly.

First published in 1830, the Book of Mormon can pose many of the same challenges to our modern minds as Dickens's famous Christmas story. When readers study the Book of Mormon, many of the subtleties and nuances can be missed if they do not understand how particular words and phrases were used at the time of the book's initial publication.

Before delving into the body of this paper, it is necessary to cite the primary sources that I have used and their notations in order to prevent any confusion on the part of the reader:

1. First, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, edited by Royal Skousen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009). I refer to this source as "earliest text." Unless otherwise stated, I have used this edition as my source for all Book of Mormon words and citations.

2. The Book of Mormon published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2013). I refer to this source as "LDS."

3. Noah Webster's first edition of *American Dictionary of the English Language*, republished in facsimile edition by the Foundation for American Christian Education (2010). This text is a facsimile copy of Webster's two-volume *American Dictionary of the English Language*, which was originally published in 1828. I refer to this source as "Webster." I have utilized this dictionary in an attempt to understand the usage of English words and

> phrases in America at the time of the translation and initial publication of the Book of Mormon.

4. Finally, the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, third edition, published by the Oxford University Press (2010). I refer to this source as "Oxford." I used this dictionary as a source for definitions of English words and phrases as currently used in America.

Fortunately for our study of the Book of Mormon, in 1828, proximate with the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, Noah Webster published a dictionary of the English language as it was spoken and understood in post-colonial America. Webster published his first dictionary, *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language,* in 1806 at the age of 48.[8] On April 14, 1828, he published his updated and expanded second dictionary, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, in New Haven, New York.[9] Two days earlier, and 100 miles southeast of New Haven, Martin Harris arrived at the Joseph Smith Jr. farm in Harmony, Pennsylvania, to act as Joseph's scribe for the translation of the Book of Mormon.[10]

While it is unknown if Joseph Smith Jr. owned, came in contact with, or was otherwise influenced by Webster prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon, it is reasonable to assume that this dictionary accurately reflected the common understanding of English words and phrases in use at that period of time and geographic locale. It is credibly certain, however, that Oliver Cowdery, a key participant in the translation and printing of the Book of Mormon, did consult and quote from a dictionary on at least one occasion prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon. Oliver, responding on behalf of Martin

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8   "About Us," Merriam-Webster Online, http://www.merriam-webster.com/info/noah.htm.

9   Webster, original title page.

10   Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 1:20; https://byustudies.byu.edu/ hc/hcpgs/hc.aspx.

Harris to an inquiry about the question of Joseph's authorship of the Book of Mormon, wrote the following on November 9, 1829:

> Your first inquiry was, whether it was proper to say, that Joseph Smith Jr., was the author? If I rightly understand the meaning of the word author, it is, *the first beginner, or mover of any thing, or a writer* [emphasis added]. Now Joseph Smith Jr., certainly was the writer of the work, called the book of Mormon, which was written in ancient Egyptian characters, — which was a dead record to us until translated. And he, by a gift from God, has translated it into our language. Certainly he was the writer of it, and could be no less than the author.[11]

The italicized portion of Oliver's letter reads like a citation from a dictionary. In fact, several sources for this likely citation are possible, including Webster. Published in London in 1755, but widely circulated in America, Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* included the following for the word author: "1. The first beginner or mover of any thing; he to whom any thing owes its original. 2. The efficient; he that effects or produces any thing. 3. The first writer of anything; distinct from the *translator* or *compiler* [emphasis in original]. 4. A writer in general."[12]

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11 Oliver Cowdery to Cornelius Blatchly, November 9, 1829, *Gospel Luminary* 2/49 (December 10, 1829): 194. Transcribed in Robin, "1829 Mormon Discovery Brought to you by … Guest Erin Jennings," *The Juvenile Instructor*, August 21, 2012, http://www.juvenileinstructor. org/1829-mormon-discovery-brought-to-you- by-guest-erin-jennings.

12 Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language: In which the words are deduced from the originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers, (London: W. Strahan, 1755), 186, s.v. "author," example sentences (between definitions) silently removed. Online at: http://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/?page_id=7070&i=186.

In 1797, John Walker published his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* in London with a similar but shortened definition: "The first beginner or mover of any thing; the efficient, he that effects or produces any thing; the first writer of anything; a writer in general."[13] Interestingly, he omitted the phrase "distinct from the *translator* or *compiler*" from his definition. This dictionary underwent many publications, including one in New York in 1825, which incorporated the identical definition for the word author, and which would have been readily accessible to Oliver.[14] Webster, also available to Oliver in 1829, defined author as: "1. One who produces, creates, or brings into being; as God is the *author* of the Universe. 2. The beginner, former, or first mover of any thing; hence, the efficient cause of a thing. It is appropriately applied to one who composes or writes a book, or original work, and in a more general sense, to one whose occupation is to compose and write books; opposed to compiler or translator."[15] While maintaining similar wording to Johnson and Walker, Webster added new definitions and restored Johnson's interpretation of a translator or compiler as distinct from that of an author.

Webster has been cited in many LDS scholarly papers as a useful source to aid our understanding of the Book of Mormon. A quick search of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship website (http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu) yielded 44 results containing the phrase "American Dictionary of the English Language." All but two of those results referenced Webster's 1828 dictionary. However, even with all of this attention, I was unable to find any published papers that made

13   John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 2nd ed., (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797), s.v. "author." Online at: http://books.google.com/books?id=DnwCAAAAQAAJ.

14   John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, (New York: Collins and Hannay, 1825), s.v. "author." Online at: http://books.google.com/books?id=QSMLQWoIXJEC.

15   Webster, s.v. "author."

a systematic comparison between Webster and our modern (Oxford) understanding of English words and phrases as they appear in the Book of Mormon.

My purpose in conducting this study was to discover how usage and definitions of words and phrases from the Book of Mormon differed from its initial publication in 1830, using Webster as my source of definitions, to our present time, using Oxford as my modern source. I decided to restrict the scope of this study to the words of Nephi as found in 1 Nephi. I chose not to include chapters 20 and 21 of 1 Nephi for two reasons. First, those chapters are essentially the words of Isaiah, not Nephi. Second, the English usage in those chapters is more closely aligned with language from the 1611 kjv bible, which would render any comparisons to Webster's 1828 dictionary of limited value.

I operated from two fundamental suppositions in my research. First, the meanings of words and phrases are prone to change over time. While some of these changes may be subtle, others can be very significant. Second, if we are not familiar with words and phrases in the context and culture in which they were originally understood, we may not be able to fully grasp the message they were intended to convey. Included in this second supposition is the belief that the Lord revealed the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith Jr. in a language that he and others of his time understood and with which they felt comfortable. Also included in this supposition is the belief that if the Book of Mormon had been revealed in our day for the first time, the word usage would have been adapted to fit our current understanding and usage of the language.

In the body of this paper, I have provided a limited number of examples of definitional changes of words and phrases. A complete listing of observed changes is included in the annexed table. One example of a definitional variation is our modern understanding of the phrase "by and by," an expression used

five times in the Book of Mormon. According to Oxford, this idiom means "before long; eventually."[16] Webster defines this as "a phrase denoting nearness in time; in a short time after; presently; soon."[17] While these two definitions are similar in that they both refer to a future event, the immediacy of Webster's definition is missing from Oxford.

A more significant change can be found in the phrase "to fall down." Both Oxford and Webster include the sense of collapsing, sinking, or coming to the ground. Additionally, Webster includes "to prostrate one's self in worship" and "to bend or bow as a suppliant,"[18] definitions not given in Oxford. An added meaning is given in Oxford: "to be shown to be inadequate or false; fail."[19] In Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life, Nephi tells us that his father saw four distinct groups of people. In his description of one of these groups, he states that when they arrived at the tree they "fell down and partook of the fruit" (1 Nephi 8:30). While it is possible that this group simply collapsed to the ground from exhaustion and fatigue, it is most probable that the individuals prostrated themselves in worship upon recognizing the significance of the tree. Most certainly, this was not an act of inadequacy, falsehood, or failure, as the modern definition could indicate. The idea that "fell down" should be understood as "prostrate oneself in worship" is given credence by an incident that occurred while building the ship in Bountiful. Nephi stretched out his hand to his brothers and the Lord shook them. Nephi wrote that when this happened the brothers "*fell down* before me, and were about to *worship* me" (1 Nephi 17:55).

Nephi, in the first verse of the Book of Mormon, describes his parents as "goodly." Contrary to the belief of many modern

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16   *Oxford*, 240, s.v., "by."
17   Webster, s.v., "by."
18   Webster, s.v., "fall."
19   *Oxford*, 623, s.v., "fall."

readers, *goodly* does not mean *good* in the contemporary sense. Oxford defines this word as meaning "considerable in size or quantity."[20] Oxford also defines the word as meaning "attractive, excellent or admirable,"[21] but only in archaic usage. Webster defined this word as: "1. Being of a handsome form; beautiful; graceful; 2. Pleasant; agreeable; desirable; 3. Bulky; swelling; affectedly turgid."[22] It is reasonably certain that Nephi did not describe his parents as "goodly" because they were large people or because they were beautiful. Nephi's intended meaning must have been closer to Webster's second definition, "pleasant; agreeable; desirable," which strongly aligns with Oxford's archaic usage of "excellent or admirable." In this example, using Oxford's modern definition would lead us to significantly misunderstand this passage.

The Lord told Lehi that his sons were to "take daughters to wife that they might *raise up* seed unto the Lord in the land of promise" (1 Nephi 7:1). Interestingly, while allowing the word "raise" to be used with plants and animals, Webster does not use it with children or families, with one exception. Webster includes "to give beginning of importance to; to elevate in reputation; as, to raise a family."[23] Raise, in this sense, however, refers to elevating the family in the eyes of the world rather than to the nurturing or rearing a family as the phrase is used today. In support of this latter meaning, one of Oxford's definitions for raise is to "bring up (a child)," followed by the example sentence: "He was born and raised in San Francisco."[24] But, Lehi did not just use the word "raise" — he used "raise

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20   *Oxford*, 747, s.v., "goodly."

21   *Oxford*, 747, s.v., "goodly."

22   Webster, s.v., "goodly," examples omitted.

23   Webster, s.v. "raise." Definition 17 uses the phrase "to raise a family." Definition 28 identifies the usage of the word with plants and animals. Webster includes that the word *raise* "in New England is never applied to the breeding of the human race, as it is in the southern states."

24   *Oxford*, 1442, s.v. "raise."

up." Webster gave us a possible meaning for that phrase: "To rebuild. *They shall raise up the former desolations. Is. Lxi* [Isaiah 61]."[25] So, it is possible that instead of "raising" children, in the contemporary sense of the word, the Lord's intention was for Lehi's family to "rebuild" seed unto the Lord in the land of promise or, in other words, to rebuild the Lord's people. This interpretation makes sense in light of the fact that the people of Jerusalem had just been destroyed or carried away captive into Babylon.

During his vision of the Tree of Life, we are told that Lehi and others "partook of the fruit" of the tree (1 Nephi 8:12; 8:24; 8:30). According to Oxford, the phrase "partake of" means "to eat or drink (something)."[26] Webster, on the other hand, includes no such definition. Instead, Webster defines partake as: "to take a part, portion or share in common with others; to have a share or part; to participate; usually followed by of, sometimes less properly by in."[27] In other words, "partaking of" something, according to Webster, was a communal act where, as part of a group, one shared things in common with the others in the group. Webster's usage is consistent with Moroni's when he tells us that the members of the church "did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus" (Moroni 6:6). Echoing these words of Moroni, we are still instructed that, "It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus" (D&C 20:75). Partaking of the sacrament, then and now, is not merely an act of eating and drinking nor something to be performed in isolation. Rather, it is an act in which we "take a part, portion or share in common" of the body and blood of Jesus Christ with our fellow Saints.

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25   Webster, s.v. "raise," definition 5.

26   *Oxford*, 1277, s.v., "partake."

27   Webster, s.v. "partake," definition 1.

In 1 Nephi 2:11 and 17:20, we are told that Laman and Lemuel blamed their father for leading them out of the land of Jerusalem because of the "foolish imaginations" of his heart. Oxford defines foolish as "lacking good sense or judgement; unwise."[28] It defines imagination as: "The faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses."[29] Compiling these two words together, we could understand from Oxford that Laman and Lemuel thought that their father Lehi lacked good sense and was someone who unwisely carried out new ideas or concepts. Webster, while agreeing with these definitions, offers additional insights. Included in Webster's definition of foolish is "wicked; sinful; acting without regard to the divine law and glory, or to one's own eternal happiness." For imagination, Webster includes "contrivance; scheme [plan] formed in the mind."[30] Webster defines contrivance as "artifice; plot; scheme."[31] So, with these definitions in mind, it is very possible that Laman and Lemuel were actually accusing their father not just of being an unwise dreamer but of creating a wicked plot to lead them far away with the purpose of depriving them of happiness.

This idea, that Laman and Lemuel felt that their father had created a wicked scheme, is bolstered by other passages in 1 Nephi. Immediately after accusing their father of having "foolish imaginations," Laman and Lemuel complained to Nephi that "these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance; yea, and we might have been happy" (1 Nephi 17:21). In the verse that follows, the brothers accused Lehi of wrongfully judging the Jews, whom they claimed were a "righteous people" (1 Nephi 17:22). After the death of Ishmael,

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28 *Oxford*, 674, s.v. "foolish."

29 *Oxford*, 868, s.v., "imagination."

30 Webster, s.v. "imagination," definition 3.

31 Webster, s.v. "contrivance," definition 3.

Laman revolted against his father and against Nephi. Laman said that Nephi, whom he also accused of being "like unto our father" (1 Nephi 17:20), had planned to "lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure" (1 Nephi 16:38).

Laman and Lemuel also accused Lehi of being a "visionary man" (1 Nephi 2:11). Oxford defines visionary in mostly positive terms: "thinking about or planning the future with imagination or wisdom. Of, relating to, or able to see visions in a dream or trance, or as a supernatural apparition."[32] Only in the archaic sense does it imply a negative meaning: "(of a scheme or idea) not practical."[33] As a noun, Oxford positively defines *visionary* as "a person with original ideas about what the future will or could be like."[34] However, Webster's definition of *visionary* is not as flattering. As an adjective, it meant: "affected by phantoms; disposed to receive impressions on the imagination. Imaginary; existing in imagination only; not real; having no solid foundation." As a noun Webster defined *visionary* as, "1. One whose imagination is disturbed. 2. One who forms impracticable schemes; one who is confident of success in a project which others perceive to be idle and fanciful."[35] It can be seen that Laman and Lemuel, contrary to the modern definition of the word, did not intend the use of the word visionary as a compliment, but, rather, as an insult.

Early on in the Book of Mormon, we are told that Lehi "dwelt *at Jerusalem* in all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4). Although Nephi did not give us a precise location where Lehi lived, his later words suggest that it was somewhere outside of Jerusalem itself. Following their first attempt to acquire the plates of brass

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32   *Oxford*, 1933, s.v. "visionary."
33   *Oxford*, 1933, s.v. "visionary."
34   *Oxford*, 1933, s.v. "visionary."
35   Webster, s.v. "visionary."

from Laban, Nephi convinced his brothers to "*go down* to the land of our father's inheritance" and get "gold and silver and all manner of riches" that they had left behind, and to use these to barter with Laban for the plates (1 Nephi 3:16). Webster, I believe, can help explain why "at Jerusalem" could have been an appropriate phrase when describing where Lehi lived, even though he may not have lived "in Jerusalem." Webster's definition for "at" states that: "In general, *at* denotes <u>nearness</u>, or *presence*; as *at* the ninth hour, *at* the house; but it is <u>less definite than *in* or *on*</u>; <u>*at* the house, may be *in* or *near* the house</u>. It denotes also <u>towards</u>, *versus*; as, to aim an arrow *at* a mark" [underlining added, emphasis in original].[36] Oxford does not include any such clarifying explanation. Instead, its definition is much more specific: "Expressing location or arrival in a particular place or position."[37] As defined by Webster, *at Jerusalem* could very well be described as *near Jerusalem*.

Similarly, critics of the Book of Mormon often point out what they consider to be a glaring flaw in the text — the use of the phrase "at Jerusalem" when speaking of the birth of Jesus.[38] Alma, in preaching to the members of the church in Gideon, said that Jesus would "be born of Mary *at Jerusalem*, which is the land of our forefathers" (Alma 7:10). The Bible, on the other hand, says that "Jesus was born *in Bethlehem* of Judaea" (Matthew 2:1). While Jerusalem and Bethlehem are geographically near to each other — less than six miles or nine kilometers apart — they are, and always have been, discrete communities. Recently, although wrongly, Stephen Webb wrote that "the Book of Mormon places the birth of Jesus *in Jerusalem* [emphasis added], much to the delight of biblical

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36   Webster, s.v. "at."

37   *Oxford*, 100, s.v. "at."

38   Daniel C. Peterson, "A Scholar Looks at the Evidences of the Book of Mormon," (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1995), 14–16. Online as "Evidences of the Book of Mormon," http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=925.

fundamentalists who use such discrepancies to score debating points."[39] Unaware of Webster's definition of "at" and given the Oxford definition, it is understandable how someone could arrive at the conclusion that *at Jerusalem* was intended by Nephi to mean *in Jerusalem* rather than *near Jerusalem*.

In a final example of definitional changes, Laman accused Nephi of working "many things by his *cunning arts*" in order to deceive the others in the group (1 Nephi 16:38). Oxford defines cunning as "having or showing skill in achieving one's ends by deceit or evasion."[40] While Webster includes similar definitions for cunning, it also indicates that these "senses occur frequently in our version of the scriptures, but are nearly or quite obsolete."[41] Instead, Webster primarily defines cunning as "knowing; skillful; experienced; well-instructed. It is applied to all kinds of knowledge, but generally and appropriately, to the skill and dexterity of artificers, or the knowledge acquired by experience."[42]

Oxford defines *the arts* as "the various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance" and *arts* as "subjects of study primarily concerned with human creativity and social life, such as languages, literature, and history (as contrasted with scientific or technical subjects)."[43] Webster's definition is much more expansive:

> 1. The disposition or modification of things by human *skill*, to answer the purpose intended. In this sense art stands opposed to nature. 2. Arts are divided into *useful or mechanic, and liberal or polite*. The *mechanic*

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39   Stephen H. Webb, "Mormonism Obsessed with Christ," *First Things* (online), February 2012, http://www.firstthings.com/article/2012/01/mormonism-obsessed-with-christ.

40   *Oxford*, 422, s.v. "cunning."

41   Webster, s.v. "cunning."

42   Webster, s.v. "cunning."

43   Oxford, 89, s.v. "art."

arts are those in which the hands and body are more concerned than the mind; as in making clothes and utensils. These arts are called trades. The liberal or polite arts are those in which the mind or imagination is chiefly concerned; as poetry, music and painting. 3. *Skill, dexterity, or the power of performing certain actions, acquired by experience, study or observation* [Emphasis added].[44]

Given these definitions from Webster, it would be reasonable to conclude that Laman did not accuse Nephi of using some type of creative trickery to deceive them. Rather, he most likely felt that Nephi was using skills or knowledge that he had acquired, possibly his knowledge of metallurgy, to deceive them.

Comparing definitions from Webster and Oxford or other modern dictionaries enables us to see how word usage and meanings have shifted since the early 19th century. As shown in the preceding examples, using Webster as a tool in our study of the Book of Mormon can help modern-day readers appreciate the text in a way that the first readers most likely understood it, which will enhance personal study.

The attached table includes the complete list of 164 words and phrases from 1 Nephi in which changes or variations in definition were encountered between Webster and Oxford. Not all of these are substantive. In fact, a few may be considered somewhat whimsical. For example, Webster defines "wroth" as "very angry; much exasperated" and then adds: "an excellent word and not obsolete."[45] I included this word, along with others like it, because, even though Oxford considers its usage archaic today, it was "an excellent word and not obsolete" at the time of the original publication of the Book of Mormon.

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44   Webster, s.v. "art."

45   Webster, s.v. "wroth."

In the first and second columns of the table, I have listed the chapter, verse, and relevant text of the Book of Mormon verse under study. I do not always cite the entire verse due to space limitations. I bolded and underlined the word(s) of interest in the verse. These scriptural passages do not always represent the first occurrence of the word(s) in the text but often do. In the third column, I provided possible alternate wording, based on definitions from Webster, in order to enhance understanding of the text. In the fourth column, I have shown the definitional differences between Webster (identified as "W" in the table) and Oxford ("O" in the table). In this column, I have underlined key terms and definitions. Furthermore, I identified 35 definitional changes and variations that I considered to be the most significant, which are marked with an asterisk (*) underneath the chapter and verse in the first column. Finally, my own comments have been given in italics.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
11:27	And after that he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and **abode** upon him in the form of a dove.	rest, tarry, stay, remain	**ABIDE**, v. W: 1. To rest, or dwell. 2. To tarry or stay for a short time. 3. To continue permanently or in the same state; to be firm and immovable. 4. To remain, to continue. *O does not include these definitions, except to say that the archaic usage includes to live or dwell.*
4:19	I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body, yea, even every whit; and I did gird on his armor **about** my loins.	around, encircling	**ABOUT**, prep. W: literally, around, on the outside.] Around; on the exterior part or surface. W: **AROUND** 1. About; on all sides; encircling; encompassing. O: *definition of about does not include the sense of being around or encircling.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
17:7	And it came to pass that after I Nephi had been in the land Bountiful for the space of many days, the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying: **Arise**, and get thee into the mountain. And it came to pass that I **arose** and went up into the mountain and cried unto the Lord.	ascend, get up, be active, begin to act	**ARISE**, v. W: 1. To ascend, mount up or move to a higher place. 5. To revive from death; to leave the grave. 6. To begin to act; to exert power; to move from a state of inaction. 8. To be put in motion; to swell or be agitated. 9. To be excited or provoked. 10. To emerge from poverty, depression or distress. 11. To appear in a particular character; to enter upon an office. 12. To begin sedition, insurrection, or mutiny. 13. To invade, assault or begin hostility; followed by against. *O does not include these definitions.*
18:23	And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days, we did **arrive** to the promised land.	come to the shore, reach	**ARRIVE**, v. W: 1. <u>Literally, to come to the shore, or bank. Hence to come to or reach in progress by water, followed by at.</u> 2. To come to or reach by traveling on land. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
16:38 *	Now he saith that the Lord hath talked with him, and also that angels hath ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lieth unto us. And he telleth us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning **arts** that he may deceive our eyes, thinking perhaps that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness.	skills	**ART**, n. W: 1. <u>The disposition or modification of things by human skill, to answer the purpose intended. In this sense art stands opposed to nature.</u> 2. <u>Arts are divided into useful or mechanic, and liberal or polite. The mechanic arts are those in which the hands and body are more concerned than the mind; as in making clothes and utensils. These arts are called trades.</u> The liberal or polite arts are those in which the mind or imagination is chiefly concerned; as poetry, music and painting. 3. Skill, dexterity, or the power of performing certain actions, acquired by experience, study or observation. *O excludes "useful or mechanic" arts in its definition.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
16:10	And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning and went forth to the tent door, and to his great **astonishment** he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship,	amazement, confusion, fear, surprise	**ASTONISHMENT**, n. W: Amazement; confusion of mind from fear, surprise or admiration, at an extraordinary or unexpected event. O: great surprise
1.4 *	– my father Lehi having dwelt <u>at</u> Jerusalem in all his days –	near to, towards	**AT**, prep. W: [primarily denotes presence, meeting, nearness, direction towards.] In general, at denotes <u>nearness, or presence</u>; as at the ninth hour, at the house; but it is <u>less definite than in or on</u>; at the house, may be in or near the house. O: expressing location or arrival in a particular place or position. W *defines the word in broader terms than O. When Nephi states that his father "dwelt at Jerusalem," this could mean in or near Jerusalem.*
1.8 *	And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the <u>attitude</u> of singing and praising their God.	position, posture	**ATTITUDE**, n. W: 1. In painting and sculpture, the posture or action in which a figure or statue is placed; the gesture of a figure or statue; such a disposition of the parts as serves to express the action and sentiments of the person represented. 2. <u>Posture; position of things or persons</u>. *These definitions refer to physical posture, with only hints to the sentiments or feelings of the person or object representing a person.* O: a settled <u>way of thinking or feeling about someone or something</u>, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior. *O's focus is on thoughts and feelings as opposed to physical posture.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
13:32	Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that state of **awful** wickedness which thou beholdest they are in because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the lamb which hath been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou has seen.	fearful, dreadful	**AWFUL**, adj. W. 1. That strikes with awe [fear mingled with admiration or reverence]; that fills with profound reverence; as the awful majesty of Jehovah. 2. That fills with terror and dread; as the awful approach of death. 3. Struck with awe; scrupulous. O: 1. <u>Very bad or unpleasant. Extremely shocking; horrific, [attributive] used to emphasize the extent of something, especially something unpleasant or negative, (of a person) very unwell, troubled, or unhappy.</u> 2. archaic, inspiring reverential wonder or fear. *W does not include the underlined definitions.*
7:17	O Lord, according to my faith which is in me, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren? Yea, even give me strength that I may burst these **bands** with which I am bound.	cords, restraints	**BAND**, n. W: 1. A fillet; <u>a cord; a tie; a chain; any narrow ligament with which a thing is bound, tied or fastened,</u> or by which a number of things are confined together. O: archaic: a thing that restrains, binds, or unites.
18:7	And now my father had **begat** two sons in the wilderness;	fathered	**BEGET**, v. W: 1. To procreate, <u>as a father or sire</u>; to generate; as, to beget a son. O: (<u>typically of a man, sometimes of a man and a woman</u>) bring (a child) into existence by the process of reproduction.
1:17	**Behold**, I make an abridgment of the record of my father upon plates which I have made with mine own hands.	look, see, pay attention, take notice. An exclamation often without any significant meaning.	**BEHOLD**, v. W: 1. to look; to direct the eyes to an object. 2. <u>To fix the attention upon an object; to attend; to direct or fix the mind</u>. O: archaic or literary, see or observe (a thing or person, especially a remarkable or impressive one). *In addition to indicating that the word is archaic, O defines this word strictly in a physical sense, whereas W defines the word more broadly.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
17:20	Yea, he hath led us out of the land of Jerusalem, and we have wandered in the wilderness for these many years. And our women have toiled being **big with child**,	pregnant (any stage of pregnancy)	**BIG**, adj. W: 1. Bulky; protuberant; pregnant, applied to females. Big, in the sense of pregnant, is followed by with; as, big with child. The use of , big of child, is not good English. O: Archaic, in a late stage of pregnancy.
7.8	Behold, thou art mine elder brethren, and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts and so **blind** in your minds that ye have need that I, your younger brother, should speak unto you?	dark, lacking light, depraved	**BLIND**, n. W: 4. Dark; obscure; not easy to be found; not easily discernible; 6. In scripture, blind implies not only want of discernment, but moral depravity. *O does not include these definitions.*
17:46	Yea, and ye know that by his word he can cause that rough places be made smooth and smooth places shall be broken up.	opened, plowed, harrowed up	**BREAK**, v. W: To break up, to dissolve or put an end to. 1. To open or lay open; as, to break up a bed of earth. 2. To plow ground the first time, or after lying long unplowed; a common use in the U. States. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
18:17	Now my father Lehi had said many things unto them and also unto the sons of Ishmael, but behold, they did **breathe out** much threatenings against anyone that should speak for me.	threaten, express	**BREATHE**, v. W: 2. To expire; to eject by breathing; followed by out; as, to breathe out threatening and slaughter. *While O includes to breathe out, it is used strictly as a physiological process and not as a threat of violence as in W.*
16:25	And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came unto my father; and he was truly chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord, insomuch that he was **brought down** into the depths of sorrow.	bring down (physical). Cast down, humble or abase (spiritual).	**BRING** down, v. W: to cause to come down; also, to humble or abase. *O does not include the underlined definition.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
19:11	The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be **carried up**.	extended, brought up	**CARRY**, v. W: 10. To extend or continue in time, as to carry a historical account to the first ages of the world; but usually with a particle, as to <u>carry up</u> or carry back, to carry forward. *It appears from W's wording that to carry up means to extend, while to carry back or carry forward are references to time. O does not include this definition.*
11:1	wherefore as I sat pondering in mine heart, I was **caught away** in the Spirit of the Lord,	snatched, taken suddenly, carried	**CATCH**, v. W: 8. <u>To snatch; to take suddenly</u>; as, to catch a book out of the hand. AWAY, adv. W: 4. With verbs, it serves to modify their sense and form peculiar phrases. *O does not include the underlined definition, nor does it include this explanation for away.*
16:39	yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them and did **chasten** them exceedingly. And after that they were **chastened** by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger.	correct, punish, afflict, purify	**CHASTEN**, v. W: 1. To correct by punishment; to punish; to inflict pain for the purpose of reclaiming an offender. 2. <u>To afflict by other means</u>. 3. <u>To purify from errors or faults</u>. O: 1(of a reproof or misfortune) have a restraining or moderating effect on. Archaic, (especially of God) discipline; punish.
2:20	And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you, a land which is **choice** above all other lands.	preferred, select, valuable, selected with care	**CHOICE**, adj. W: 1. <u>Worthy of being preferred; select; precious; very valuable</u>. 2. <u>Holding dear; preserving or using with care, as valuable; frugal</u>; as, to be choice of time or of advantages. 3. <u>Selecting with care, and due attention to preference</u>; as, to be choice of ones company. O: 1 (especially of food) of very good quality. 2 (of words, phrases, or language) rude and abusive.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
7:15	And now if ye have **choice**, go up to the land, and remember the words which I speak unto you, that if ye go, ye will also perish.	judgment or skill in giving a preference, determination of mind, vote	**CHOICE**, n. W: 1. The act of choosing; the voluntary act of selecting or separating from two or more things that which is preferred; or the determination of the mind in preferring one thing to another; election. 3. Care in selecting; judgment or skill in distinguishing what is to be preferred, and in giving a preference. 5. The best part of any thing; that which is preferable, and properly the object of choice. 6. The act of electing to office by vote; election. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
5:6	And after this manner of language did my father Lehi **comfort** my mother Sariah concerning us while we journeyed in the wilderness up to the land of Jerusalem to obtain the record of the Jews.	strengthen, cheer, enliven, reassure	**COMFORT**, v. W: 1. To strengthen; to invigorate; to cheer or enliven. 2. To strengthen the mind when depressed or enfeebled; to console; to give new vigor to the spirits; to cheer, or relieve from depression, or trouble. O: make (someone) feel less unhappy.; console; help (someone) feel at ease; reassure. *W appears to allow for the use of comfort even when the person is not depressed, unhappy, or in need of reassurance, while O seems to presuppose a state of unhappiness or apprehension.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
18:12 *	And it came to pass that after they had bound me, insomuch that I could not move, the compass which had been prepared of the Lord did cease to work;	instrument for directing the course at sea or in the desert	**COMPASS**, n. W: 5. An instrument for directing or ascertaining the course of ships at sea, consisting of a circular box, containing a paper card marked with the 32 points of direction, fixed on a magnetic needle, that always points to the north, the variation excepted. 7. An instrument used in surveying land, constructed in the main like the mariners' compass; but with this difference, that the needle is not fitted into the card, moving with it, but plays alone. This instrument is used in surveying land, and in directing travelers in a desert or forest, miners, etc. *O makes no distinction between the traditional magnetic compass (definition 7 of W) and the mariners' compass (definition 5 of W). Even though the Liahona, as Alma called it, probably was not a magnetic instrument, and varied from the construction of the modern magnetic compass (two spindles or needles versus one), it did fill the role of directing the course of the ship at sea and of the travelers in the desert.*
11:16 *	And he said unto me: Knowest thou the **condescension** of God?	voluntary descent, submission, kindness	**CONDESCENSION**, n. W: Voluntary descent from rank, dignity or just claims; relinquishment of strict right; submission to inferiors in granting requests or performing acts which strict justice does not require. Hence, courtesy. O: an attitude of patronizing superiority; disdain.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
14:2	And they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever. They shall be no more brought down into captivity, and the house of Israel shall no more be **confounded**.	mingle, perplex, shame, terrify, dismay, destroy	**CONFOUND**, v. W: 1. To mingle and blend different things, so that their forms or natures cannot be distinguished; to mix in a mass or crowd, so that individuals cannot be distinguished. 2. To throw into disorder. 4. To perplex; to disturb the apprehension by indistinctness of ideas or words. 5. To abash; to throw the mind into disorder; to cast down; to make ashamed. 6. To perplex with terror; to terrify; to dismay; to astonish; to throw into consternation; to stupify [sic] with amazement. 7. To destroy; to overthrow. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
17:48	In the name of the Almighty God I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the **consuming** of my flesh.	burning, destroying, devouring	**CONSUMING**, ppr. W: 1. Burning; wasting; destroying; expending; eating; devouring. O: **CONSUME**, v. 1. Eat, drink or ingest (food or drink). 2. Buy (goods or services). 3.Use up (a resource). 4. (esp. a fire) to completely destroy. 5. (of a feeling) absorb all the energy and attention of (someone). *W does not include the underlined definitions.*
9:4	And upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reigns of the kings and the wars and **contentions** of my people	struggles, violence, quarrels, debates	**CONTENTION**, n. W: 1. Strife; struggle; a violent effort to obtain something, or to resist a person, claim or injury; contest; quarrel. 3. Strife or endeavor to excel; emulation. 4. Eagerness; zeal; ardor; vehemence of endeavor. O: Heated disagreement. An assertion, especially one maintained in argument.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
14:7	a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other, either to the **convincing** of them unto peace and life eternal or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, unto their being brought down into captivity,	persuade, compel, convict, constrain, prove	**CONVINCE**, v. W: 1. To persuade or satisfy the mind by evidence; to subdue the opposition of the mind to truth, or to what is alledged [sic], and compel it to yield its assent. 2. To convict; to prove guilty; to constrain one to admit or acknowledge himself to be guilty. 3. To envince [sic]; to prove. 4. To overpower; to surmount; to vanquish. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
17:12	I will make that thy food shall become sweet, that ye **cook** it not.	prepare	**COOK**, v. W: 1. To prepare, as victuals for the table, by boiling, roasting, baking, broiling, &c. To dress, as meat or vegetables, for eating. 2. To prepare for any purpose. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
19:7	I say trample under their feet, but I would speak in other words — they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his **counsels**.	will, directions, truth, doctrines	**COUNSEL**, n. W: 7. In a scriptural sense, purpose; design; will; decree. 8. Directions of Gods word. 9. The will of God or his truth and doctrines concerning the way of salvation. *O does not include these definitions.*
19:10	yea, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and the God of Jacob yieldeth himself according to the words of the angel as a man into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up according to the words of Zenoch, and to be **crucified** according to the words of Neum,	rejected and despised, subdued, mortified	**CRUCIFY**, v. W: 1. To nail to a cross; to put to death by nailing the hands and feet to a cross or gibbet, sometimes anciently, by fastening a criminal to a tree, with cords. 2. In scriptural language, to subdue; to mortify; to destroy the power or ruling influence of. 3. To reject and despise. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
16:38 *	Now he saith that the Lord hath talked with him, and also that angels hath ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lieth unto us. And he telleth us these things, and he worketh many things by his **cunning** arts that he may deceive our eyes, thinking perhaps that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness.	skillful, curious (see curious below), deceitful, trickish	**CUNNING**, adj. W: 1. <u>Knowing; skillful; experienced; well-instructed. It is applied to all kinds of knowledge, but generally and appropriately, to the skill and dexterity of artificers, or the knowledge acquired by experience.</u> 2. <u>Wrought with skill; curious;</u> ingenious. (The foregoing senses occur frequently in our version of the scriptures, but are nearly or quite obsolete.) 3. Artful; shrewd; sly; crafty; astute; designing; 4. Deceitful; trickish; employing stratagems for a bad purpose. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
16:10 *	And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning and went forth to the tent door, and to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of **curious** workmanship,	Carefully made, elegant, artful, finished, singular	**CURIOUS**, adj. W: 1. Strongly desirous to see what is novel, or to discover what is unknown; solicitous to see or to know; inquisitive. 2. Habitually inquisitive; addicted to research or enquiry; as a man of a curious turn of mind; sometimes followed by after, and sometimes by of. 3. <u>Accurate; careful not to mistake; solicitous to be correct.</u>4. <u>Careful; nice; solicitous in selection; difficult to please.</u> 5. <u>Nice; exact; subtile [sic]; made with care.</u> 6. <u>Artful; nicely diligent.</u> 7. <u>Wrought with care and art; elegant; neat; finished;</u> 8. <u>Requiring care and nicety; as curious arts.</u> 10. Rare; singular. O: 1. eager to know or learn something; expressing curiosity, 2. strange; unusual. *Nephi describes the Liahona as "a round ball of curious workmanship." Curious, in this case, would have meant made with care, wrought with care and art, neat, finished, singular or remarkable. In other words, it was a well-crafted object that they had never before witnessed.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
7:1	And now I would that ye might know, that after my father Lehi had made an end of prophesying concerning his seed, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto him again saying that it was not meet for him Lehi that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take **daughters** to wife that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise.	women, female inhabitants	**DAUGHTER**, n. W: 1. The female offspring of a man or woman; a female child of any age. 2. <u>A daughter in law; a son's wife</u>. 3. <u>A woman; plu. female inhabitants</u>. 4. A female descendant; lineage of females. *O does not include the underlined definitions. In 1 Ne. 7:1 we are told that Lehi was instructed by the Lord that "his sons should take daughters to wife," without specifying whose daughters they should be. It is possible that the use of "daughters" in this verse is the same as W's "female inhabitants," or, in other words, women.*
16:38 *	Now he saith that the Lord hath talked with him, and also that angels hath ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lieth unto us. And he telleth us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts that he may **deceive** our eyes, thinking perhaps that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness.	mislead, cheat, frustrate, rob	**DECEIVE**, v. W: 1. To mislead the mind; <u>to cause to err</u>; to cause to believe what is false, or disbelieve what is true; <u>to impose on</u>; to delude. 2. To beguile; <u>to cheat</u>. 3. <u>To cut off from expectation; to frustrate or disappoint</u>. 4. <u>To take from; to rob</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions. In Alma 20:13 the father of Lamoni says, "Behold, [Nephi] robbed our fathers; and now his children are also come amongst us that they may, by their cunning and their lyings, <u>deceive</u> us, that they again may rob us of our property." Deceive, in this usage, fits with W's definition of to take from or to rob.*
14:7	a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other, either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal or unto the **deliverance** of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, unto their being brought down into captivity,	Definition W2 for 1 Ne 1:20; Definition W4 for 1 Ne 14:7; Definition W1 for Alma 14:26.	**DELIVERANCE**, n. W: 1. Release from captivity, slavery, oppression, or any restraint. 2. Rescue from danger or any evil. 4. The act of giving or transferring from one to another. 6. Acquittal of a prisoner, by the verdict of a jury. O: 1. the action of being rescued or set free. 2. a formal or authoritative utterance. *W allows for a much expanded use of the word than O.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
4:3	Now behold, ye know that this is true. And ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you. Wherefore can ye doubt? Let us go up. The Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to **destroy** Laban, even as the Egyptians.	kill (people). Also used in the heading to First Nephi where the Jews sought "to destroy his [Lehi's] life."	**DESTROY**, v. W: 5. To kill; to slay; to extirpate; <u>applied to men or other animals</u>. O: Kill (a sick, savage, or unwanted animal) by humane means. *Nephi, trying to encourage his brothers, said that "the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians." (1 Ne 4:3) Nephi did not just mean that the Lord could defeat Laban, but kill him, "even as [he killed] the Egyptians."*
14:3	yea, that great pit which hath been **digged** for the destruction of men shall be filled by those who **digged** it,	dug	**DIGGED**, v. W: pret. and pp. of dig. O: past and past participle, dug. *O identifies <u>dug</u> as the preterit and past participle of dig rather than digged.*
5:19	Wherefore he said that these plates of brass should never perish, neither should they be **dimmed** any more by time.	tarnished	**DIM**, v. W: 5. To render less bright; <u>to tarnish or sully;</u> as, to dim gold. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
4:3	And ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you. Wherefore can ye **doubt**?	fear, be apprehensive	**DOUBT**, v. W: 2. To fear; to be apprehensive; to suspect. *O does not include these definitions.*
8:4 *	But behold, Laman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you. For behold, methought I saw a dark and **dreary** wilderness.	gloomy and solitary	**DREARY**, adj. W: 1. Dismal; gloomy; as a dreary waste; dreary shades. <u>This word implies both solitude and gloom</u>. There is n*o indication of solitude in O. Dreary is only used twice in the Book of Mormon, both times to describe the conditions in which Lehi discovered himself at the beginning of the vision of the Tree of Life. Lehi said that he was in a "dark and dreary wilderness" and a "dark and dreary waste." In addition to being dark (gloomy), it appears that Lehi, except for the man dressed in the white robe, was alone, or at least felt that he was alone.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
18:18	Yea, their gray hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the **dust**; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.	grave, low condition	**DUST**, n. W: 1. Fine dry particles of earth or other matter, so attenuated that it may be raised and wafted by the wind; powder. 2. Fine dry particles of earth; fine earth. 3. Earth; unorganized earthy matter. 4. <u>The grave</u>. 5. <u>A low condition</u>. *O does not include these definitions.*
17:41	He sent fiery flying serpents among them. And after they were bitten, he prepared a way that they might be healed. And the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the **easiness** of it, there were many who perished.	lack of difficulty, ease, prompt compliance	**EASINESS**, n. W: Freedom from difficulty; ease. Easiness and difficulty are relative terms. 1. <u>Flexibility; readiness to comply; prompt compliance; a yielding or disposition to yield without opposition or reluctance.</u> 2. <u>Freedom from stiffness, constraint, effort or formality; applied to manners or to the style of writing.</u> 3. Rest; tranquillity [sic]; ease; <u>freedom from pain</u>. 4. <u>Freedom from shaking or jolting.</u> 5. <u>Softness.</u> *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
19:6	Nevertheless I do not write any thing upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred. And now if I do **err**, even did they **err** of old - not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the weakness which is in me according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.	wander, deviate, stray, ramble. mistake, commit error	**ERR**, v. W: 1. <u>To wander from the right way; to deviate from the true course or purpose.</u> 2. <u>To miss the right way, in morals or religion; to deviate from the path or line of duty; to stray by design or mistake.</u> 3. To mistake; to commit error; to do wrong <u>from ignorance or inattention. Men err in judgment from ignorance, from want of attention to facts, or from previous bias of mind</u>. 4. <u>To wander; to ramble.</u> *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
17:35	Behold, the Lord **esteemeth** all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God.	value, prize, repute, hold	**ESTEEM**, v. W: 1. <u>To set a value on, whether high or low; to estimate; to value.</u> 2. To prize; to set a high value on; to regard with reverence, respect or friendship. 3. To hold in opinion; to repute; to think. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
10:15	And after this manner of language did my father prophesy and speak unto my brethren, and also many more things which I do not write in this book; for I have written as many of them as were **expedient** for me in mine other book.	suitable, practical, proper	**EXPEDIENT**, adj. W: 1. Literally, hastening; urging forward. Hence, tending to promote the object proposed; <u>fit or suitable for the purpose; proper under the circumstances</u>. Many things may be lawful, which are not expedient. 2. Useful; profitable. O: (of an action) convenient and practical, <u>although possibly improper or immoral</u>. (of an action) suitable or appropriate. *Notice the lack of any sense of being "improper or immoral" in W.*
11:13 *	And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city Jerusalem and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth. And in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceeding **fair** and white.	beautiful, pleasing, unblemished, unspotted	**FAIR**, adj. W: 3. Pleasing to the eye; handsome or beautiful in general. 13. Frank; civil; pleasing; not harsh. 17. <u>Free from stain or blemish; unspotted; untarnished</u>. *Among its many definitions, O does include beautiful and gentle as archaic meanings, but it does not include the underlined definitions from W.*
2:1	For behold, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and saith unto him: Blessed art thou Lehi because of the things which thou hast done. And because thou hast been **faithful** and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life.	firm or constant in adherence to duties, true to one's word, conformed to the letter and spirit	**FAITHFUL**, adj. W: 1. <u>Firm in adherence to the truth and to the duties of religion</u>. 2. Firmly adhering to duty; of true fidelity; loyal; true to allegiance; as a faithful subject. 3. <u>Constant in the performance of duties or services; exact in attending to commands</u>. 4. Observant of compact, treaties, contracts, vows or other engagements; <u>true to one's word</u>. 5. <u>True; exact; in conformity to the letter and spirit</u>. 6. True to the marriage covenant. 7. Conformable to truth. 8. Constant; not fickle. 9. <u>True; worthy of belief</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
17:15	Wherefore I Nephi did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord, and I did exhort my brethren to **faithfulness** and diligence.	truth, strict performance of promises, vows and covenants	**FAITHFULNESS**, n. W: 1. Fidelity; loyalty; firm adherence to allegiance and duty. 2. Truth; veracity. 3. Strict adherence to injunctions, and to the duties of a station. 4. Strict performance of promises, vows or covenants; constancy in affection. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
17:55 *	And they **fell down** before me and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer them,	prostrate oneself in worship (see also 1 Nephi 8:30)	**FALL**, v. W: To fall down. (a) To prostrate one's self in worship. (b) To sink; to come to the ground. (c) To bend or bow, as a suppliant. O: fall down, be shown to be inadequate or false; fail.
2:5	And he did travel in the wilderness with his **family**, which consisted of my mother Sariah and my elder brethren, which were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.	household	**FAMILY**, n. W: 1. The collective body of persons who live in one house and under one head or manager; a household, including parents, children and servants, and as the case may be, lodgers or boarders. *O does not include the underlined persons in its definition.*
1:1 *	And having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless having been highly **favored** of the Lord in all my days,	aided, supported, regarded kindly, spared.	**FAVORED**, pp. W: 1. Countenanced; supported; aided; supplied with advantages; eased; spared. 2. Regarded with kindness; as a favored friend. O: preferred or recommended. *Unlike O, W does not focus on preferential treatment or feelings towards others.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
17:17 *	And when my brethren saw that I was about to build a ship, they began to murmur against me, saying: Our brother is a **fool**, for he thinketh that he can build a ship. Yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters.	idiot, wicked, weak	**FOOL**, n. W: 1. One who is destitute of reason, or the common powers of understanding; an idiot. 3. <u>In scripture, fool is often used for a wicked or depraved person; one who acts contrary to sound wisdom in his moral deportment; one who follows his own inclinations, who prefers trifling and temporary pleasures to the service of God and eternal happiness.</u> 4. <u>A weak christian; a godly person who has much remaining sin and unbelief.</u> *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
2:11 *	And this they said that he had done because of the **foolish** imaginations of his heart.	Ridiculous, wicked, sinful.	**FOOLISH**, adj. W: 4. Ridiculous; despicable. 5. In scripture, wicked; sinful; acting without regard to the divine law and glory, or to one's own eternal happiness. 6. Proceeding from depravity; sinful; as foolish lusts. *Both W and O agree that FOOLISH means to be void of understanding or sound judgment, or unwise. However, O does not contain the additional definitions above.*
8:30	But to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing **forwards** [forward in LDS]. And they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron. And they did press their way **forward**, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.	forward	**FORWARD**, adv. W: Forwards is also used, <u>but it is a corruption</u>. *O does not include the underlined clarification.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
8:1 *	And it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind and also of the seeds of **fruits** [fruit in LDS] of every kind.	plants (see also 1 Nephi 18:6)	**FRUIT**, n. W: 1. In a general sense, <u>whatever the earth produces for the nourishment of animals, or for clothing or profit</u>. Among the fruits of the earth are included not only corn of all kinds, but grass, cotton, flax, grapes and all cultivated plants. <u>In this comprehensive sense, the word is generally used in the plural</u>. 2. In a more limited sense, the produce of a tree or other plant; the last production for the propagation or multiplication of its kind; the seed of plants, or the part that contains the seeds; as wheat, rye, oats, apples, quinces, pears, cherries, acorns, melons, &c. O: the sweet and fleshy product of a tree or other plan that contains seed and can be eaten as food. *As shown above, W's definition is much more inclusive than O's.*
10:17	I Nephi was desirous also that I might see and hear and know of these things by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the **gift** of God unto all those who diligently seek him.	reward, bestowal	**GIFT**, n. W: 3. An offering or oblation. 4. A reward. 5. A bribe; any thing given to corrupt the judgment. *O does not include these definitions.*
6:1	AND now I, Nephi, do not **give** the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I **give** it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is **given** in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do not write it in this work.	write or speak, but only in certain circumstances.	**GIVE,** v. W: 2. To transmit from himself to another by hand, speech or <u>writing</u>; to deliver. *No similar definition exists in O. Nephi appears to use the words give and write interchangeably in 1 Nephi 6:1.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
11:28	And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people in power and great **glory**,	brightness, splendor	**GLORY**, n. W: 1. Brightness; luster; splendor. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
1:1 *	I Nephi having been born of **goodly** parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father.	pleasant, excellent	**GOODLY**, adj. W: Being of a handsome form; beautiful; graceful; 2. Pleasant; agreeable; desirable; 3. Bulky; swelling; affectedly turgid. O:1 considerable in size or quantity: 2 archaic attractive, excellent, or admirable.
18:18	Yea, their **gray hairs** were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.	white hairs	**GRAY**, adj. W: 2. White; hoary; as gray hair. We apply the word to hair that is partially or wholly white. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
16:2	Wherefore the **guilty** taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center.	wicked, corrupt	**GUILTY,** adj. w: Criminal; having knowingly committed a crime or offense, or having violated a law by an overt act or by neglect, and by that act or neglect, being liable to punishment; not innocent. 1. Wicked; corrupt; sinful. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
12:18	And a great and a terrible **gulf** divideth them, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God and Jesus Christ which is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record from the beginning of the world until this time and from this time henceforth and forever.	abyss, whirlpool, insatiable whirlpool	**GULF**, n. W: 1. A recess in the ocean from the general line of the shore into the land, or a tract of water extending from the ocean or a sea into the land, between two points or promontories; a large bay; A gulf and a bay differ only in extent. We apply bay to a large or small recess of the sea; but gulf is applied only to a large extent of water. 2. An abyss; a deep place in the earth. 3. A whirlpool; an absorbing eddy. 4. Any thing insatiable. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
8:10	And it came to pass that I beheld a tree whose fruit was desirable to make one **happy**.	prosperous, blessed	**HAPPY,** adj. W: 3. Prosperous; having secure possession of good. 5. Dextrous [sic]; ready; able. 6. Blessed; enjoying the presence and favor of God, in a future life. 7. Harmonious; living in concord; enjoying the pleasures of friendship. 8. Propitious; favorable. *O does not include these definitions.*
13:8	Behold, the gold and the silver and the silks and the scarlets and the fine-twined linen and the precious clothing and the **harlots** are the desires of this great and abominable church.	prostitute, idolater, rogue, cheat	**HARLOT**, n. W: 1. A woman who prostitutes her body for hire; a prostitute; a common woman. 2. In Scripture, one who forsakes the true God and worships idols. 3. A servant; a rogue; a cheat. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
2:18	But behold, Laman and Lemuel would not **hearken** unto my words. And being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts, I cried unto the Lord for them.	listen, give heed, observe, obey, comply with	**HEARKEN**, v. W: 1. To listen; to lend the ear; to attend to what is uttered, with eagerness or curiosity. 2. To attend; to regard; to give heed to what is uttered; to observe or obey. 3. To listen; to attend; to grant or comply with. O: archaic, listen. *W's definition is much more expansive than O's.*
9:2 *	And now as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold, they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the **history** of my people, for the plates upon which I	story, narration, observations	**HISTORY**, n. W: [History and story are the same word differently written.] 1. An account of facts, particularly of facts respecting nations or states; a narration of events in the order in which they happened, with their causes and effects. History

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	make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore they are called the plates of Nephi after mine own name.		differs from annals. Annals relate simply the facts and events of each year, in strict chronological order, without any observations of the annalist. History regards less strictly the arrangement of events under each year, and admits the observations of the writer. This distinction however is not always regarded with strictness. 2. Narration; verbal relation of facts or events; story. *The underlined definitions are not included in O.*
5:13	and also the prophecies of the **holy** prophets from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah,	godly, whole, perfect, pure	**HOLY**, adj. W: 1. Properly, whole, entire or perfect, in a moral sense. Hence, pure in heart, temper or dispositions; free from sin and sinful affections. Applied to the Supreme Being, holy signifies perfectly pure, immaculate and complete in moral character; and man is more or less holy, as his heart is more or less sanctified, or purified from evil dispositions. We call a man holy, when his heart is conformed in some degree to the image of God, and his life is regulated by the divine precepts. Hence, holy is used as nearly synonymous with good, pious, godly. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
2:11	And this they said that he had done because of the foolish **imaginations** of his heart.	scheme (plan)	**IMAGINATION,** n. W: 3. Contrivance; scheme formed in the mind; device. *O does not include these definitions.*
1:2	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.	Israelites	**JEW**, n. W: a Hebrew or Israelite. O: a member of the people and cultural community whose traditional religion is Judaism and who trace their origins through the ancient Hebrew people of Israel to Abraham. *It is interesting to note that W does not require that one be able to identify with Judaism as a religion, culturally or*

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			traditionally, in order to be a Jew. Neither W nor O require one to trace one's origins through Judah to be a Jew. The definitions for the words Hebrew and Israelite in W only require one to be a descendant of Jacob to be considered a Jew.
3.9 *	And I Nephi and my brethren took our **journey** in the wilderness with our tents to go up to the land of Jerusalem.	travel	**JOURNEY**, n. W: 1. <u>The travel of a day</u>. 2. Travel by land to any distance and for any time, indefinitely. 3. Passage form one place to another. 4. It may sometimes include a passing by water. O: an act of traveling from one place to another. *W's definition is much more expansive than O's. The underlined section may explain why Lehi took "three days' journey into the wilderness with his family" (1 Nephi heading).*
17:22	And we know that the people which were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people, for they kept the statutes and the judgments of the Lord and all his commandments according to the law of Moses; wherefore we know that they are a righteous people. And our father hath **judged** them and hath led us away because we would hearken unto his word; yea, and our brother is like unto him.	censure rashly, pass severe sentence, doom to punishment	**JUDGE**, v. W: 1. To try; to examine and pass sentence on. 2. <u>Rightly to understand and discern</u>. 3. <u>To censure rashly; to pass severe sentence</u>. 4. To esteem; to think; to reckon. 5. <u>To rule or govern</u>. 6. <u>To doom to punishment; to punish</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
2:9	O that thou mightest be **like unto** this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness.	like, similar to	**LIKE**, adj. W: 2. Similar; resembling; having resemblance. <u>Like is usually followed by to or unto, but it is often omitted</u>. *O does not include the underlined clarification in its definition.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
13:7	And I also saw gold and silver and silks and scarlets and fine-twined **linen** and all manner of precious clothing, and I saw many harlots.	cloth	**LINEN**, n. W. 1. Cloth made of flax or <u>hemp</u>. *O does not include hemp in its definition.*
18:6	we did go down into the ship, with all our **loading** and our seeds and whatsoever thing we had brought with us,	cargo	**LOADING**, n, W: A cargo; a burden; also, any thing that makes part of a load. *O does not include this definition.*
17:2	And so great was the blessings of the Lord upon us that while we did live upon raw **meat** in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children and were strong,	food, flesh	**MEAT**, n. W: 1. Food in general; any thing eaten for nourishment, either by man or beast. 2. The flesh of animals used as food. This is now the more usual sense of the word. *O indicates that the use of meat for all types of food is archaic.*
19:2	Wherefore the things which transpired before that I made these plates are of a truth more particularly made **mention** upon the first plates.	remarked, expressed	**MENTION**, n. W: A hint; a suggestion; a brief notice or remark expressed in words or writing; <u>used chiefly after make</u>. O: a reference to someone or something.
8:4	For behold, **methought** I saw a dark and dreary wilderness.	I thought, it appeared to me	**METHINKS**, v. W: It seems to me; it appears to me; I think. The word is not antiquated, but is not elegant. *O indicates that the usage is archaic.*
9:3 *	Nevertheless I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the **ministry** of my people.	actions, operation, service	**MINISTRY**, n. W: 1. Agency; service; aid; interposition; instrumentality. *O does not include the above definitions.* W: **AGENCY**, 1. The quality of moving or of exerting power; the state of being in action; action; operation; instrumentality.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
5:2	Behold, thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are **no more**, and we perish in the wilderness.	no longer, deceased, destroyed	**MORE**, n. W: No more, not continuing; existing no longer; gone; deceased or destroyed. O does not include the underlined definitions.
17:9	Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to **molten** that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shewn unto me?	melt	**MOLTEN**, W: past participle of melt. Obsolete. **MELT**, v. W: The old participle molten, is used only as an adjective. *W allowed molten to be used as an adjective. but not as a verb. O is in agreement.*
18:3	And I Nephi did go into the **mount** oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord shewed unto me great things.	hillock, hill or mountain	**MOUNT**: n. W: 1. A mass of earth, or earth and rock, rising considerably above the common surface of the surrounding land. Mount is used for an eminence or elevation of earth, indefinite in highth [sic] or size, and may be a hillock, hill or mountain. 2. A mound; a bulwark for offense or defense. O: 1a mountain or hill (archaic except in place names).
1:3	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.	my	**MY**, W: belonging to me; as, this is my book. Formerly, mine was used before a vowel, and my before a consonant; my is now used before both. *O also indicates that the use is archaic, but does not provide the clarification found in W.*

	1st Nephi Verse	**Alternate Words**	**Notes**
19:12 *	And because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God to exclaim: The **God of nature** suffers.	God of creation, Creator, Author of created things	**NATURE**, n. W: 1. In a general sense, whatever is made or produced; a word that comprehends <u>all the works of God</u>; the universe. 2. By a metonymy of the effect for the cause, nature is used for the agent, creator, author, producer of things, or for the powers that produce them. By the expression, "trees and fossils are produced by nature," we mean, they are formed or produced by certain inherent powers in matter, or <u>we mean that they are produced by God, the Creator, the Author of whatever is made or produced. The opinion that things are produced by inherent powers of matter, independent of a supreme intelligent author, is atheism. But generally men mean by nature thus used, the Author of created things, or the operation of his power.</u> *O does not mention the involvement or operation of God in nature, although it does mention Mother Nature and Mother Earth as synonyms (online edition).*
19:7	I say trample under their feet, but I would speak in other words: they do set him at **naught**, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels.	disregard, despise	**NAUGHT**, n. W: To set at naught, to slight, to disregard or despise. O: <u>archaic</u>, disregard or despise.
3:18	wherefore it **must needs** be that he flee out of the land.	must necessarily	**NEEDS**, adv. W: Necessarily; indispensably; generally used with must. *O agrees, but indicates that its usage is archaic.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
6:1	AND now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; **neither** at any time shall I give it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do not write it in this work.	nor, when neither appears in the second part of a negative sentence or clause.	**NEITHER**, W: Neither, in the first part of a negative sentence, is followed by nor, in the subsequent part. It is neither the one nor the other. But or would be most proper, for the negative in neither, applies to both parts of the sentence. It is often used in the last member of a negative sentence instead of nor, as in the passage above cited. <u>Ye shall not eat it , neither shall ye touch it. Here neither is improperly used for nor, for not in the first clause refers only to that clause, and the second negative refers only to the second clause</u> *No such explanatory note appears in O. See also 1 Nephi 2:12-13 and 1 Nephi 5:19.*
17:3	And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God, he doth **nourish** them and strengthen them and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he hath commanded them.	supply, feed, encourage, comfort, instruct	**NOURISH**, v. W: 3. To supply the means of support and increase; <u>to encourage</u>. 4. <u>To cherish; to comfort</u>. 5. <u>To educate; to instruct; to promote growth in attainments</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
15:15	Yea, at that day will they not receive the strength and **nourishment** from the true vine?	instruction, that which promotes growth	**NOURISHMENT**, n. W: 3. <u>Instruction, or that which promotes growth in attainments</u>. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
22:12	And they shall be brought out of **obscurity** and out of darkness, and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.	darkness, state of being unknown, humble condition	**OBSCURITY**, n. W: 1. <u>Darkness; want of light</u>. 4. <u>Illegibleness</u>. 5. A state of being unknown to fame; humble condition. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
3:25	And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property – that it was exceedingly great – he did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out and sent his servants to slay us that he might **obtain** our property.	keep (*limited use*)	**OBTAIN**, v. W: 2. <u>To keep; to hold</u>. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
4:31	And now I Nephi being a man large in stature, and also having received much strength **of** the Lord, therefore I did seize upon the servant of Laban and held him that he should not flee.	from, by means of	**OF**, prep. W: 1. From or out of; proceeding from, as the cause, source, means, author or agent bestowing. *O does not include this definition. See also 1 Nephi 18:12. "Prepared of the Lord," in this verse, would be better rendered "prepared by the Lord," as its source or author.*
13:41	Wherefore they both shall be established **in one**, for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.	in union, in a single whole	**ONE**, n. W: In one, in union; in a single whole. *O does not include this clarification.*
8:11 *	And it came to pass that I did go forth and **partook** of the fruit thereof and beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever had before tasted.	take or have a part, share, participate	**PARTAKE**, v. W: 1. <u>To take a part, portion or share in common with others; to have a share or part; to participate; usually followed by of</u>, sometimes less properly by in. 2. To have something of the property, nature, claim or right. 3. <u>To be admitted; not to be excluded</u>. O: (partake in) formal, join in (an activity). (partake of) be characterized by (a quality). (partake of) eat or drink (something). *W does not include eating or drinking in its definition, as does O. Rather, W defines partake as a communal act of sharing or participating with others. Partake in the Book of Mormon is always followed by "of" except in 1 Ne 8:13, which reads, "and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit." In this case "of" precedes partake, but the meaning is the same.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
17:46 *	And ye also know that by the power of his almighty word he can cause the earth that it shall **pass away**.	vanish, disappear	**PASS**, v. W: 3. <u>To vanish; to disappear; to be lost. In this sense, we usually say, to pass away</u>. O: Chiefly North American, die (used euphemistically).
4:34	Therefore if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father, thou shalt **have place** with us.	exist, be, have room, be part of the family	**PLACE**, n. W: To have place, to have a station, room or seat. 1. To have actual existence. *O does not include these definitions.*
16:38	And after that he hath led us away, he hath thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and **pleasure**.	approval, choice, favor, purpose, command, will, intention	**PLEASURE**, n. W: 3. Approbation. 4. What the will dictates or prefers; will; choice; purpose; intention; command. 5. A favor; that which pleases. 6. Arbitrary will or choice. *These definitions are not included in O.*
3:19	And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records that we might **preserve** unto our children the language of our fathers,	keep or defend from corruption, save	**PRESERVE**, v. W: 1. To keep or save from injury or destruction; <u>to defend from evil</u>. 2. <u>To uphold; to sustain.</u> 5. <u>To keep or defend from corruption</u>; as, to preserve.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
10:21 *	Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your **probation**, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever.	trial, examination, experience through suffering, temptation	**PROBATION**, n. W: 1. Trial; examination; any proceeding designed to ascertain truth; in universities, the examination of a student. 3. Moral trial; the state of man in the present life, in which he has the opportunity of proving his character and being qualified for a happier state. Probation will end with the present life. 5. In general, trial for proof, or satisfactory evidence, or the time of trial. O: the release of an offender from detention, subject to a period of good behavior under supervision. The process of period of testing or observing the character or abilities of a person in a certain role, for example, a new employee. *The underlined definition in O is not included in W. In all cases in W, probation is some form of trial [from try], not merely an observation of a person's character or abilities.* **TRIAL**, n. W: 1. Examination by a test ; experiment. 2. Experiment; act of examining by experience. 3. Experience; suffering that puts strength, patience of faith to the test; afflictions or temptations that exercise and prove the graces or virtues of men. 5. Temptation; test of virtue. 6. State of being tried.
1:1	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.	conduct, dealings	**PROCEEDING**, n. W: In the plural, a course of measures or conduct; course of dealings with others. O: an event or a series of activities involving a formal or set procedure.
1:4	and in that same year there came many prophets **prophesying** unto the people that they must repent or the	preach, explain, exhort	**PROPHESY**, v. W: 1. To utter predictions; to make declaration of events to come. 2. In Scripture, to preach; to instruct in religious doctrines; to interpret or

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
	great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.		explain Scripture or religious subjects; to exhort. O: say that (a specified thing) will happen in the future.
13:37 *	Yea, whoso shall **publish** peace – that shall **publish** tidings of great joy – how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be!	proclaim, utter, circulate, read aloud	**PUBLISH**, v. W: 1. To discover or make known to mankind or to people in general what before was private or unknown; to divulge, as a private transaction; to promulgate or proclaim, as a law or edict. 2. To send a book into the world; or to sell or offer for sale a book, map or print. 3. To utter; to put off or into circulation. 4. To make known by posting, or by reading in a church. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
13:25	Wherefore these things go forth from the Jews in **purity** unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.	cleanness (person), pure language (records), using proper words and phrases (records)	**PURITY**, n. W:1. Freedom from foreign admixture or heterogeneous matter. 2. Cleanness; freedom from foulness or dirt. 3. Freedom from guilt or the defilement of sin; innocence. 4. Chastity; freedom from contamination by illicit sexual connection. 5. Freedom from any sinister or improper views; as the purity of motives or designs. 6. Freedom from foreign idioms, from barbarous or improper words or phrases; as purity of style or language. *The underlined definitions are not included in O.*
18:8	And it came to pass that after we had all gone down into the ship and had taken with us our provisions and things which had been commanded us, we did **put forth** into the sea and were driven forth before the wind towards the promised land.	extend, send out	**PUT**, v. W: To put forth, to propose; to offer to notice. 1. To extend; to reach; as, to put forth the hand. 2. To shoot out; to send out, as a sprout; as, to put forth leaves. 3. To exert; to bring into action; as, to put forth strength. 4. To publish, as a book. *O does not include any similar phrases for put forth. But, it does allow the use of put with ships*: (of a ship or the people on it) proceed in a particular direction.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
7:1 *	And now I would that ye might know that after my father Lehi had made an end of prophesying concerning his seed, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto him again that it was not meet for him Lehi that he should take his family into the wilderness alone, but that his sons should take daughters to wife that they might **raise up** seed unto the Lord in the land of promise.	rebuild, build up, lift up	**RAISE**, v. *The definitions of raise are far too numerous in W and O to cite here, so a few examples will need to suffice.* W: 1. To lift; to take up; to heave; to lift from a low or reclining posture. 4. To build; as, to raise a city, a fort, a wall, &c. 5. <u>To rebuild. They shall raise up the former desolations</u>. (Is. lxi.) 17. To give beginning of importance to; to elevate into reputation; as, to raise a family. 28. To cause to grow; to procure to be produced, bred or propagated; as, to raise wheat, barley, hops, &c.; to raise horses, oxen or sheep. O: 5. bring up (a child): he was born and raised in San Francisco. Breed or grow (animals or plants). *Note that while O allows raise to be used with children, animals and plants, W limits its use to only animals and plants. W does allow for the phrase "to raise a family," meaning to raising it in importance and reputation rather than in the modern sense of to "bring up." Finally, W uses "raise up" to mean rebuild. So, in 1 Ne 7:1 we could substitute rebuild for raise up, the result being that, concurrent with the destruction of Jerusalem and its people, Lehi's family was to rebuild the people of the Lord in the land of promise.*
2:16 *	And behold, he did visit me and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore I did not **rebel** against him like unto my brothers.	oppose, revolt against, renounce authority of, rise up in arms against	**REBEL**, v. W: 1. to revolt; to renounce the <u>authority of the laws and government</u> to which one owes allegiance. Subjects may rebel by an open renunciation of the <u>authority of the government</u>, without taking arms; but ordinarily, rebellion is accompanied by resistance in arms. 2. to rise in violent opposition against <u>lawful authority</u>. O: rise in opposition or armed resistance to an established government or ruler; (of a person) resist authority,

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
			control, or convention; show or feel repugnance for or resistance to something. *O's definition is much more inclusive than W's, as W appears to limit the use of the term to rebellion against government or other lawful authority.*
7:7 *	And it came to pass that in the which **rebellion** they were desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem.	opposition, revolution, renunciation of authority, war	**REBELLION**, n. W: 1. An open and avowed renunciation of the <u>authority of the government</u> to which one owes allegiance; or the taking of arms traitorously to resist the <u>authority of lawful government</u>; revolt. Rebellion differs from insurrection and from mutiny. Insurrection may be a rising in opposition to a particular act or law, without a design to renounce wholly all subjection to the government. Insurrection may be, but is not necessarily, rebellion. Mutiny is an insurrection of soldiers or seamen against the authority of their officers. 2. Open resistance to <u>lawful authority</u>. O: an act of violent or open resistance to an established government or ruler; the action or process of resisting authority, control, or convention. *See notes for REBEL.*
3:3 *	For behold, Laban hath the **record** of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.	official or authentic account	**RECORD**, n. W: A register; an <u>official or authentic</u> copy of any writing, or account of any facts and proceedings, <u>entered in a book for preservation; or the book containing such copy or account</u>. Records are properly the <u>registers of official transactions, made by officers appointed for the purpose</u>, or by the officer whose proceedings are directed by law to be recorded. 2. <u>Authentic</u> memorial. O: a thing constituting a piece of evidence about the past, especially an account of an act or occurrence kept in writing or some other

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
			permanent form. The sum of the past achievements or actions of a person or organization; a person or thing's previous conduct or performance. *Of note is that W presupposes that the record contain an official or authentic account, and that it be recorded in a book.*
10:5 *	And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things concerning this Messiah of which he had spoken, or this **Redeemer** of the world.	one who pays a debt or buys a person out of bondage or captivity.	**REDEEMER**, n. W: 1. One who redeems or ransoms. **REDEEM** W: 1. To purchase back; to ransom; to liberate or rescue from captivity or bondage, or from any obligation or liability to suffer or to be forfeited, by paying an equivalent; as, to redeem prisoners or captured goods. O: **REDEEM**, archaic, buy the freedom of. *It is in this archaic sense that redeem and Redeemer are to be understood.*
1:19	And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them, for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations. And he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah and also the **redemption** of the world.	deliverance from captivity or bondage	**REDEMPTION**, n. W: 1. <u>Repurchase of captured goods or prisoners</u>; the act of procuring the <u>deliverance of persons or things from the possession and power of captors</u> by the payment of an equivalent; ransom; release. 2. <u>Deliverance from bondage</u>, distress, or from liability to any evil or forfeiture, either by money, labor or other means. 6. In theology, the purchase of God's favor by the death and sufferings of Christ; the ransom or deliverance of sinners from the <u>bondage of sin</u> and the penalties of God's violated law by the atonement of Christ. O: 1 the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil. 2 the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt. *W's definition is more expansive than O's as it includes deliverance from captivity or bondage.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
12:4	And I saw lightnings and I heard thunderings and earthquakes and all manner of tumultuous noises. And I saw the earth that it **rent** the rocks,	violently separate or split	**REND**, v. W: 1. To separate any substance into parts <u>with force or sudden violence</u>; to tear asunder; to split. 2. To <u>separate or part with violence</u>. O: Tear (something) into two or more pieces. <u>Archaic, wrench (something) violently</u>.
3:5	But behold, I have not **required** it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.	demand, insist, ask, request	**REQUIRE**, v. W: 1. To demand; to insist upon having; to claim as by right and authority; to exact; 2. To demand or exact as indispensable; to need. 3. <u>To ask as a favor; to request</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
8:5	And it came to pass that I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white **robe**. And he came and stood before me.	garment, clothing, attire	**ROBE**, n. W: 1. A kind of gown or long loose garment worn over other dress, particularly by persons in elevated stations. The robe is <u>properly a dress of state or dignity</u>, as of princes, judges, priests, &c. 2. A splendid female gown or garment. 3. <u>An elegant dress; splendid attire</u>. 4. <u>In Scripture, the vesture of purity or righteousness, and of happiness</u>. O: A long, loose outer garment. (often robes) A long, loose garment worn on formal or ceremonial occasions as an indication of the wearer's office or profession. A dressing gown or bathrobe.
18:9	behold, my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and also their wives began to make themselves merry, insomuch that they began to dance and to sing and to speak with much **rudeness**, yea, even that they did forget by what power they had been brought thither; yea, they were lifted up	coarseness, vulgarity, violence	**RUDENESS**, n. W: 1. A rough broken state; unevenness; wildness. 2. <u>Coarseness of manners</u>; incivility; rusticity; <u>vulgarity</u>. 3. Ignorance; unskillfulness. 4. Artlessness; coarseness; inelegance. 5. <u>Violence</u>; impetuosity. O: 1. lack of manners; discourteousness. 2. dated, roughness or simplicity.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
	unto exceeding **rudeness**.		
12:2 *	And it came to pass that I beheld multitudes gathered together to battle one against the other. And I beheld wars and **rumors** of wars and great slaughters with the sword among my people.	story, factual report	**RUMORS**, n. W: 1. Flying or popular report; a current story passing from one person to another without any known authority for the truth of it. 2. Report of a fact; a story well authorized. 3. Fame; reported celebrity. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
3:4	Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban and **seek** the records and bring them down hither into the wilderness.	search for, ask for, gain by any means possible	**SEEK**, v. W: 1. To go in search or quest of; to look for; to search for by going from place to place. 2. To inquire for; to ask for; to solicit; to endeavor to find or gain by any means. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
17:54	And it came to pass that I stretched forth my hand unto my brethren. And they did not wither before me, but the Lord did **shake** them, even according to the word which he had spoken.	make to tremble, throw down, remove the courage or resolution of	**SHAKE**, v. W: 1. To cause to move with quick vibrations; to move rapidly one way and the other; to agitate. 2. To make to totter or tremble. 3. To cause to shiver. 4. To throw down by a violent motion. 5. To throw away; to drive off. 6. To move from firmness; to weaken the stability of; to endanger; to threaten to overthrow. 7. To cause to waver or doubt; to impair the resolution of; to depress the courage of. 8. To trill. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
11:22	And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which **sheddeth** itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things.	scatter, diffuse	**SHED**, v. W: 1. To pour out; to effuse; to spill; to suffer to flow out. 2. To let fall; to cast. 3. To scatter; to emit; to throw off; to diffuse; as, flowers shed their sweets of fragrance. *O does not include the underlined definitions. Interestingly, Nephi equated the Tree of Life with the love of God and said that it "sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men." This reference to Tree of Life is very appropriate since trees cast*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
			their leaves and seeds which are then scattered by the wind.
1:15	for his soul did rejoice and his whole heart was filled because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had **shewn** unto him.	shown	**SHOW**, v. W: It is sometimes written shew, shewed, shewn, shewing. O: old-fashioned variant spelling of show.
7:4 *	And it came to pass that we went up unto the house of Ishmael, and we did gain favor in the **sight** of Ishmael, insomuch that we did speak unto him the words of the Lord.	eye, presence	**SIGHT**, n. O: dated, a person's view or consideration. *W does not include this definition. Sight in W is always related to physical sight. So, in 1 Ne 7:4, when Nephi states that "we did gain favor in the sight of Ishmael," he probably did not mean "in the view (or consideration) of Ishmael." Rather, he most probably meant "in the presence (or physical sight) of Ishmael."*
17:45	Ye are swift to do iniquity but **slow** to remember the Lord your God.	late, not ready	**SLOW**, adj. W: 1. Moving a small distance in a long time; not swift; not quick in motion; not rapid.2. <u>Late</u>; not happening in short time. 3. <u>Not ready</u>; not prompt or quick. 4. Dull; in active; <u>tardy</u>. 5. <u>Not hasty; not precipitate; acting with deliberation</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
1:1	I Nephi having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught **somewhat** in all the learning of my father.	to some degree	**SOMEWHAT**, adv. W: In some degree or quantity. O: To a <u>moderate</u> extent or by a <u>moderate</u> amount. *W does not specify to what degree, great or small, while O expresses a sense of moderation.*
2:10	And he also **spake** unto Lemuel, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord.	spoke	**SPEAK**, v. W: pret. spoke, [spake, nearly obs.] *At the time of W's printing in 1828, spake was nearly obsolete.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
9:3	Nevertheless I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates for the **special** purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.	particular, peculiar, appropriate	**SPECIAL**, adj. W: [This word and especial are the same.] 1. Designating a species or sort. 2. Particular; peculiar; noting something more than ordinary. 3. Appropriate; designed for a particular purpose. 4. Extraordinary; uncommon. 5. Chief in excellence. *While O includes similar meanings, it places primary emphasis on being "better, greater, or otherwise different from what is usual."*
22:6	Nevertheless, after that they have been nursed by the Gentiles, and the Lord hath lifted up his hand upon the Gentiles and set them up for a **standard**, and their children shall be carried in their arms and their daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders	ensign of war, staff with a flag of colors, model	**STANDARD**, n. W: 1. An ensign of war; a staff with a flag or colors. The troops repair to their standard. 2. That which is established by sovereign power as a rule or measure by which others are to be adjusted. 3. That which is established as a rule or model, by the authority of public opinion, or by respectable opinions, or by custom or general consent. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
2:16	And it came to pass that I Nephi being exceeding young, nevertheless being large in **stature**, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore I cried unto the Lord.	physical height	**STATURE**, n. W: The natural highth [sic] of an animal body. It is more generally used of the human body. O: A person's natural height. Importance or reputation gained by ability or achievement. *W does not include the underlined definition. W limits the usage of this word to physical height.*
17:22	And we know that the people which were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people, for they kept the **statutes** and judgments of the Lord and all his commandments according to the law of Moses;	laws, decrees	**STATUTE**, n. O: a written law passed by a legislative body. A rule of an organization or institution. Archaic (in biblical use) a law or decree made by a sovereign, or by God. *Interestingly, W does not include laws or decrees made by God as statutes.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
18:13	wherefore they knew not whither they should steer the ship, insomuch that there arose a great **storm**, yea, a great and terrible tempest, and we were driven back upon the waters for the space of three days.	violent wind, tempest	**STORM**, n. W: 1. A violent wind; a tempest. <u>Thus a storm of wind, is correct language, as the proper sense of the word is rushing, violence. It has primarily no reference to a fall of rain or snow. But as a violent wind is often attended with rain or snow, the word storm has come to be used, most improperly, for a fall of rain or snow without wind.</u> *The underlined clarification is not found in O.*
8:20 *	And I also beheld a **straight** and narrow path which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood.	unbending, direct, narrow	**STRAIGHT**, adj. W: [<u>It is customary to write straight, for direct or right, and strait, for narrow, but this is a practice wholly arbitrary, both being the same word.</u> Strait we use in the sense in which it is used in the south of Europe. Both senses proceed from stretching, straining.] 1. Right, in a mathematical sense; direct; passing from one point to another by the nearest course; not deviating or crooked. 2. <u>Narrow</u>; close; tight. [See strait, as it is generally written.] *O defines STRAIGHT as "without a curve or bend," while it defines STRAIT as "narrow," but archaic. O does not allow the two words to be used interchangeably. It is apparent that what we now consider to be two separate words was not necessarily the case in the early 1800's.*
8:32	And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain, and many were lost from his view, wandering in **strange** roads	foreign, unfamiliar, odd	**STRANGE**, adj. W: 1. <u>Foreign; belonging to another country.</u> 2. <u>Not domestic; belonging to others.</u> 3. New; not before known, heard or seen. 4. Wonderful; causing surprise; exciting curiosity. 5. Odd; unusual; irregular; not according to the common way. 6. Remote. [Little used.] 7. Uncommon; unusual. 8. Unacquainted. *O hints at the underlined meanings, but only remotely.*

	1st Nephi Verse	**Alternate Words**	**Notes**
18:17	And my parents being **stricken** in years and having suffered much grief because of their children, they were brought down, yea, even upon their sick beds.	advanced, far gone	**STRICKEN**, pp. W: 1. Struck; smitten. 2. <u>Advanced; worn; far gone</u>. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
13:29	and because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do **stumble**, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.	trip, err, fall, slide into error	**STUMBLE**, v. W: 1. To trip in walking or moving in any way upon the legs; to strike the foot so as to fall, or to endanger a fall. 2. <u>To err; to slide into a crime or an error</u>. 3. To strike upon without design; to fall on; to light on by chance. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
14:1	And it shall come to pass that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day, that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their **stumbling blocks**,	any cause of stumbling, that which causes to err	**STUMBLING BLOCK**, n. W: Any cause of stumbling; <u>that which causes to err</u>. O: a circumstance that causes difficulty or hesitation.
17:2	And so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of **suck** for their children and were strong, yea, even like unto the men.	breast milk	**SUCK**, n. W: The act of drawing with the mouth. 1. <u>Milk drawn from the breast by the mouth</u>. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
15:27	And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness. And so much was his mind **swallowed up** in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water.	engulf, absorb, occupy, employ, engage completely	**SWALLOW**, v. W: 1. To take into the stomach; to receive through the gullet or esophagus into the stomach. 2. To absorb; <u>to draw and sink into an abyss or gulf</u>. To ingulf [sic]; usually followed by up. 4. <u>To engross; to appropriate</u>. 5. <u>To occupy; to employ</u>. 6. <u>To seize and waste</u>. 7. <u>To engross; to engage</u>

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
			<u>completely</u>. 8. To exhaust; to consume. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
17:45	Ye are **swift** to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God.	quick, prompt, ready	**SWIFT**, adj. W: 1. Moving a great distance or over a large space in a short time; moving with celerity or velocity; fleet; rapid; quick; speedy. Swift is applicable to any kind of motion. 2. <u>Ready</u>; prompt. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
18:15	Wherefore they came unto me and loosed the bands which was upon my wrists, and behold, they had **swollen** exceedingly; and also mine ankles were much **swollen**, and great was the soreness thereof..	swelled	**SWOLLEN**, W: past participle of swell; irregular and obsolescent. The regular participle, swelled, is to be preferred. O: past participle of swell.
17:25	Now ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage, and ye know that they were laden with **tasks** which were grievous to be borne.	burdens or labor imposed by another	**TASK**, n. W: 1. Business <u>imposed by another, often a definite quantity or amount of labor</u>. 2. Business; employment. 3. Burdensome employment. *O does not include the underlined definition.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
18:13	wherefore they knew not whither they should steer the ship, insomuch that there arose a great storm, yea, a great and terrible **tempest**, and we were driven back upon the waters for the space of three days.	violent storm, hurricane, cyclone, typhoon	**TEMPEST**, n. W: 1. An extensive current of wind, rushing with great velocity and violence; a storm of extreme violence. We usually apply the word to a steady wind of long continuance; but we say also of a tornado, it blew a tempest The currents of wind are named, according to their respective degrees of force or rapidity, a breeze, a gale, a storm, a tempest; but gale is also used as synonymous with storm, and storm with tempest. Gust is usually applied to a sudden blast of short duration. A tempest may or may not be attended with rain, snow or hail. *O does not disagree with W. This word was included because of W's expressively descriptive definition.*
10:19	For he **that** diligently seeketh shall find, and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded to them by the power of the Holy Ghost as well in this time as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore the course of the Lord is one eternal round.	who (when referring to people)	**THAT**, W: 3. That is used as the representative of a noun, either a person or a thing. In this use, it is often a pronoun and a relative. <u>When it refers to persons, it is equivalent to who</u>, and when it refers to a thing, it is equivalent to which. O: <u>It is sometimes argued that, in relative clauses, that should be used for nonhuman references and who should be used for human references</u>: a house that overlooks the park, but the woman who lives next door. In practice, <u>while it is true to say that who is restricted to human references, the function of that is flexible</u>. It has been used for both human and nonhuman references since at least the 11th century. <u>In standard English, it is interchangeable with who in this context</u>. *W and O agree that the words who and that are interchangeable with each other when referring to a person, although O does concede that there are those who disagree with this position.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
18:17	Now my father Lehi had said many things unto them and also unto the sons of Ishmael, but behold, they did breathe out much **threatenings** against anyone that should speak for me.	declarations to inflict evil	**THREATENING**, n. W: The act of menacing; a menace; a denunciation of evil, or <u>declaration of a purpose to inflict evil on a person</u> or country, usually for sins and offenses. *O does not allow the use of this word as a noun (see threat).*
13:37	Yea, whoso shall publish peace – that shall publish **tidings** of great joy – how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be!	news, advice	**TIDINGS**, n. W: News; <u>advice</u>; information; intelligence; account of what has taken place, and was not before known. *O does not include the underlined definition.*
18:1 *	And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord and did go forth with me, and we did work **timbers** of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the **timbers** of the ship.	ribs, curving pieces of wood	**TIMBER**, n. W: 1. That sort of wood which is proper for building or for tools, utensils, furniture, carriages, fences, ships and the like. 5. <u>In ships, a timber is a rib or curving piece of wood, branching outward from the keel in a vertical direction. One timber is composed of several pieces united in one frame.</u> O: (usually timbers) a wooden beam or board used in building a house, ship, or other structure. *When Nephi states that "we did work timbers of curious workmanship," he is most likely referring to the ribs of the ship that branched upward from the keel, and not just to wood in general.*

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
17:48	And as they came forth to lay their hands upon me, I spake unto them, saying: In the name of the Almighty God I command you that ye **touch** me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh. And whoso shall lay their hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed, and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him.	hit, strike, try, afflict, distress	**TOUCH**, v. W: 1. To come in contact with; to hit or strike against. 2. To perceive by the sense of feeling. 3. To come to; to reach; to attain to. 4. To try. 5. To relate to; to concern. [This sense is now nearly obsolete.] 6. To handle slightly. 7. To meddle with. 8. To affect. 9. To move; to soften; to melt. 10. To mark or delineate slightly. 11. To infect. [Little used.] 12. To make an impression on. 13. To strike, as an instrument of music; to play on. 14. To influence by impulse; to impel forcibly. 15. To treat slightly. 16. To afflict or distress. *O does not include the underlined definitions.*
19:7	For the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul, others set at naught and **trample under** their feet, yea, even the very God of Israel do men **trample under** their feet. I say, **trample under** their feet, but I would speak in other words: they set him at naught and hearken not to the voice of his counsels.	treat with pride, contempt, triumph, scorn or insult	**TRAMPLE**, v. W: 1. To tread under foot; especially, to tread upon with pride, contempt, triumph or scorn. 2. To tread down; to prostrate by treading; as, to trample grass. 3. To treat with pride, contempt and insult. O: 1. tread on and crush. 1.1 (trample on/over) treat with contempt.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
2:5	And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea, and he **traveled** in the wilderness in the borders which was nearer the Red Sea. And he did **travel** in the wilderness with his family, which consisted of my mother Sariah and my elder brethren, which were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.	walk or journey with toil	**TRAVEL**, v. W: 1. To walk; to go or march on foot; So we say, a man ordinarily travels three miles an hour. [This is the proper sense of the word, which implies toil.] 2. To journey; to ride to a distant place in the same country; 3. To go to a distant country, or to visit foreign states or kingdoms, either by sea or land. 4. To pass; to go; to move. 5. To labor. [See Travail - to labor with pain; to toil.] 6. To move, walk or pass, as a beast, a horse, ox or camel. A horse travels fifty miles in a day; a camel; twenty. *The underlined definitions are not included in O.*
19:13	And as for they which are at Jerusalem, saith the prophet, they shall be scourged by all people, saith the prophet, because they crucified the God of Israel and **turned** their hearts **aside**, rejecting signs and wonders and the power and glory of the God of Israel.	avert, turn away	**TURN**, v. W: To turn aside, to avert. *This definition is not included in O.*
16:39	And after they were chastened by the voice of the Lord, they did **turn away** their anger and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food that we did not perish.	avert, turn from, discard	**TURN**, v. W: To turn away, to dismiss from service; to discard; as, to turn away a servant. 1. To avert; as, to turn away wrath or evil. O: turn someone away: refuse to allow someone to enter or pass through a place. *The underlined definition is not included in O.*
4:20	And after I had done this, I went forth **unto** the treasury of Laban.	to	**UNTO**, prep. W: a compound of un, [on,] and to; of no use in the language, as it expresses no more than to. I do not find it in our mother tongue, nor is it ever used in popular discourse. It is found in writers of former times, but is entirely obsolete.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
12:5 *	And it came to pass after I saw these things, I saw the **vapor** of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth.	smoke, fog, cloud	**VAPOR**, n. W: 1. In a general sense, an invisible elastic fluid, rendered aeriform by heat, and capable of being condensed, or brought back to the liquid or solid state, by cold. The vapor of water is distinguished by the name of steam, which see. 2. A visible fluid floating in the atmosphere. <u>All substances which impair the transparency of the atmosphere, as smoke, fog, etc. are in common language called vapors, though the term vapor is technically applied only to an invisible and condensible [sic] substance</u>, as in No. 1; fog, etc. being vapor condensed, or water in a minute state of division. vapor rising into the higher regions of the atmosphere, and condensed in large volumes, forms clouds. 3. Substances resembling smoke, which sometimes fill the atmosphere, particularly in America during the autumn. *O does not include the underlined clarification.*
14:1	And it shall come to pass that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day, that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in **very** deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks,	true, real	**VERY**, adj. W: True; real. O: <u>archaic</u>, real; genuine.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
2:11 *	Now this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel. For behold, they did murmur in many things against their father because that he was a **visionary** man and that he had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance and their gold and their silver and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said that he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart.	imaginative, impracticable, foolhardy, quixotic	**VISIONARY**, adj. W: 1. Affected by phantoms; disposed to receive impressions on the imagination. 2. Imaginary; existing in imagination only; not real; having no solid foundation; as a visionary prospect; a visionary scheme or project. O: 1 (especially of a person) thinking about or planning the future with imagination or wisdom. Archaic (of a scheme or idea) not practical. 2 of, relating to, or able to see visions in a dream or trance, or as a supernatural apparition. Archaic, existing only in a vision or in the imagination. *While O allows for this word to be used in positive or flattering ways, W does not. In fact, as a noun W includes the following two definitions of visionary:* 1. One whose imagination is disturbed. 2. One who forms impracticable schemes; one who is confident of success in a project which others perceive to be idle and fanciful.
17:1	And we did travel and **wade** through much affliction in the wilderness, and our women bare children in the wilderness.	move or pass with difficulty or labor	**WADE**, v. W: 1. To walk through any substance that yields to the feet. 2. To move or pass with difficulty or labor. *O does not include the underlined definition. For wade through, O includes "read laboriously through (a long piece of writing)."*
19:6 *	And now if I do err, even did they err of old – not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the **weakness** which is in me according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.	want of physical strength or steadiness. *Not a defect, failing or fault since the word is never found in the plural in the Book of Mormon.*	**WEAKNESS**, n. W: 1. Want of physical strength; want of force or vigor; feebleness. 2. Want of sprightliness. 3. Want of steadiness. 4. Infirmity; unhealthiness. 5. Want of moral force or effect upon the mind; as the weakness of evidence; the weakness of arguments. 6. Want of judgment; feebleness of mind; foolishness. 7. Defect; failing; fault; with a plural. O: 1 the state or condition of lacking strength.

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
			1.1 a quality or feature regarded as a disadvantage or fault. 1.2 a person or thing that one is unable to resist or likes excessively. 1.3 [In singular] (weakness for) a self-indulgent liking for.
16:11	And it came to pass that we did gather together **whatsoever** things we should carry into the wilderness and all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given unto us.	whatever	**WHATSOEVER**, W: a compound of what, so, and ever, has the sense of whatever, and is less used than the latter. Indeed it is nearly obsolete. Whatso, in a like sense, is entirely obsolete. *O indicates that the usage is archaic.*
5:20	And it came to pass that thus far I and my father had kept the commandments **wherewith** the Lord had commanded us.	with which	**WHEREWITH**, adv. W: 1. With which. 2. With what, interrogatively. *O indicates that the usage is archaic.*
2:5	And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea, and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders **which** are nearer the Red Sea. and he did travel in the wilderness with his family, **which** consisted of my mother Sariah and my elder brethren, **which** were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.	who (when referring to people)	**WHICH**, W: It does not in modern usage represent a person. *O does not express an opinion on this. LDS has corrected most of the improper occurrences of which, but some still remain. For example, "save it be those which are carried away captive into Babylon" (2 Ne 25:10), and "they are restored to that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel" (2 Ne 9:26).*
5:5	But behold, I have obtained a land of promise, in **the which** things I do rejoice.	which	**WHICH**, W: The which, by the which. The use of the before which, is obsolete.
8:11	Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was **white** to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.	pure, clean, sanctified	**WHITE**, adj. W: 3. Having the color of purity; pure; clean; free from spot; as white robed innocence. 4. Gray; as white hair; a venerable man, white with age. 5. Pure; unblemished. 6. In a scriptural sense, purified

	1st Nephi Verse	Alternate Words	Notes
			from sin; sanctified. *O does not include these definitions.*
13:37	Yea, **whoso** shall publish peace – that shall publish tidings of great joy – how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be!	whoever or whomever	**WHOSO**, n. W: Any person whatever. O: Archaic term for whoever.
13:11	And it came to pass that the angel saith unto me: Behold, the **wrath** of God is upon the seed of thy brethren.	just punishment, violent anger, vehement exasperation	**WRATH**, n. W: 1. Violent anger; vehement exasperation; indignation. 2. The effects of anger. 3. The just punishment of an offense or crime. O: Extreme anger (chiefly used for humorous or rhetorical effect).
4:4	Now when I had spoken these words, they was yet **wroth** and did still continue to murmur.	very angry	**WROTH**, adj. W: Very angry; much exasperated. [An excellent word and not obsolete.] O: archaic, angry.
13:13	And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it **wrought** upon other Gentiles, and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.	influenced, prevailed upon	**WROUGHT**, v. W: Wrought on or upon, influenced; prevailed on. *O only indicates that wrought is the archaic preterit and past participle of work.*

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Changes in the Book of Mormon

Royal Skousen

Author's preface: *I originally gave this presentation in August 2002 at the LDS FAIR conference held in Orem, Utah. A transcript of this paper, based on the 2002 version, appears online at www.fairmormon.org. Since then I have published updated versions of the first half of that original presentation. The most recent history of the Book of Mormon critical text project can be found in my article "The Original Text of the Book of Mormon and its Publication by Yale University Press", published in 2013 in* Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture, *volume 7, pages 57-96. Until now, I have not published a printed version of the second half of my original presentation, "Changes in the Book of Mormon."*

Abstract: *In that part of the original article (here presented with some minor editing), I first describe the different kinds of changes that have occurred in the Book of Mormon text over the years and provide a fairly accurate number for how many places the text shows textual variation. Then I turn to five changes in the text ("the five chestnuts") that critics of the Book of Mormon continually refer to. At the conclusion of the original article, I provide some specific numbers for the different types of changes in the history of the Book of Mormon text, including the number of changes introduced in* The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text, *the definitive scholarly edition of the Book of Mormon, published in 2009 by Yale University Press.*

Now we come to the big topic that so many people are exercised over: How many changes are there in the Book of Mormon text? I don't know for sure, and I'll tell you why it's

hard to count them. In my computerized collation of the two manuscripts and 20 significant editions of the Book of Mormon, I can count the number of places of variation. These are places where there's a textual variant. The variant itself can involve spelling, punctuation, words missing or added, a grammatical change, and so on. In all, there are about 105,000 places of variation in the computerized collation. For comparison, there are about 270,000 words in the Book of Mormon.

But even this number of variants, 105,000, is misleading. Suppose you have an example where the manuscripts have no punctuation, and the 1830 typesetter put in a semicolon and a later edition made it a colon; then even later the colon was made a period, but finally it was changed back to a semicolon. All of these changes are listed under one variant; it's a single place of variation, but within that variant there could be four or five changes. So the real issue, borrowing from Proverbs, is "with all thy counting get understanding".

Let us begin with the kinds of variants. The first one deals with bookkeeping or referencing: namely, the chapter and verse numbers. The word *chapter* and the chapter numbers are not original to the text of the Book of Mormon. As Joseph Smith was dictating, he apparently could see the end of a section; and whenever he would see that, he would tell the scribe to write the word *chapter*, which the scribe did. The level of ink flow for the word *chapter* is typically unchanged from the surrounding ink flow. But the numbers for the chapters were added later, almost always with heavier ink flow. In some cases, the wrong number was inserted. And in other cases, the word *chapter* ended up being put in the wrong place. For instance, when a section would end when a new book began, the word *chapter* was typically written at the very beginning of the book, right before the title of the book. Of course, this kind of error in the placement of *chapter* had to be corrected. And ultimately, versification was applied to the chapters. It turns out that there

are five versification systems in the history of the text. The RLDS editions have three of them, a different one in each of their first three editions (1874, 1892, and 1908). With each of these editions, the RLDS editors basically broke up their verses into smaller verses. The 1874 RLDS system, however, follows the 1852 LDS edition, for which Franklin Richards and his brother Samuel numbered the long paragraphs that derive from the paragraphs that were originally determined by the 1830 typesetter. In the 1879 LDS edition, however, Orson Pratt changed the original chapter system. He basically broke up the originally much longer chapters, so we end up with more than twice as many chapters as the original text had. And then he divided these new chapters into verses. The LDS text has retained Orson Pratt's revised system of chapters and its versification.

All of these changes in chapter breaks and the addition of verse numbers (five different ones) have led to a considerable amount of variation. And we have to count them all as changes in the text since the original text didn't have the word *chapter* or any chapter numbering, nor was there any versification.

We now turn to the accidentals. The term *accidental* is one that comes from Aristotle; it refers to distinctions which do not change the essence of something. In textual studies, *accidentals* refer to variants that change the form of the text but not the actual words (which are called *substantives*). Under the class of accidentals we include paragraphing, punctuation, the spelling of common English words (but not names), and capitalization.

Paragraphing: Paragraphing was added in the 1830 edition. The paragraphs have, in a sense, been replaced by versification but that is only because the typesetters have treated each verse as its own little paragraph, with the result that the text is continually being broken up, which makes it difficult to read the text in a flowing manner. One could insert the verse numbers

within larger paragraphs, but this has never been done in any of the standard editions of the Book of Mormon.

Punctuation: For the most part, punctuation should be treated as an accidental. You can basically read the Book of Mormon text without punctuation. In the original manuscript, we find evidence for only a few dashes in the book summaries (or prefaces); otherwise, there is no punctuation. The original text itself probably had no punctuation at all. The 1830 typesetter supplied the punctuation for the first edition. In a few places, his punctuation was probably wrong; some of these have been changed. But only rarely is there any substantive debate over whether the punctuation makes a real difference. The few places where the punctuation makes a difference in meaning should probably not be counted as accidentals. When a change in the punctuation makes a real difference in meaning, then we consider it under a different category, as a substantive change. But the vast majority of punctuation is merely accidental. And those who wish to count punctuation changes as changes in the text need to realize that every punctuation mark is a change because the original manuscript didn't have any except for a few dashes and those have all been changed in the printed editions. So every punctuation mark in the Book of Mormon stands for a change. Already, we are way beyond 3,913 changes, and yet we haven't got to many of any substance yet.

Spelling of common English words: We have variant spellings in the manuscripts and in the editions, such as *labor* versus *labour* (plus one instance of *labar* in the printer's manuscript) or *center* versus *centre* (plus some instances of *senter* and *sentre* in the manuscripts). The ampersand is typically used in the manuscripts but is always set as *and* or *And* in the printed editions. This substitution is a change in the accidentals. And *etc* was written as *&C* or *&c* in the manuscripts; so when it's typeset as *etc*, that's a change in the accidentals. And then we have misspellings, such as Oliver Cowdery's *intreague* for

intrigue and *cept* for *kept*. And we also count slips of the pen in the manuscripts as changes in the accidentals, such as *Nephi* being written as *Nehi* or *Nepi* – or *pass* as *pess* or *pss*. And then, of course, there are lots of typos in the printed editions, especially in the earlier ones.

Capitalization: There are many instances of variation in the capitalization. Some of the names were not always capitalized in the manuscripts. And we have considerable variation in the capitalization for common nouns in the manuscripts (such as *river* versus *River*). Over the years, editors have debated whether *deseret* should be capitalized or not. And one of the scribes in the original manuscript wrote the first person singular pronoun *I*, even *I*, as lowercase *i*. In fact, this scribe just didn't like capitalizing names either. And finally, we even have the question of whether a word should be in all caps or with regular capitalization (that is, with capitalization of only the first letter), such as when *Jehovah* occurs in the Isaiah quotation in 2 Nephi 22:2.

All this variation in the accidentals clearly shows that the transmission of the text is human rather than inspired; it has all the signs of human transmission. But the original revelation to Joseph Smith, I would argue, shows that the specific words and phrases, although subject to variation in the accidentals, were controlled for.

In contrast to the changes in accidentals, there are substantive changes, and these are the changes that should be counted. Under this category of substantives, we include changes in the actual words, including the forms of the words (such as singular versus plural for nouns, or present tense versus past tense for verbs), changes in phrases and sentences, and spelling changes that make a difference in the words. This last type includes names. Here are four names that the manuscripts are very clear should read differently than how they read in the current text: *Gaddianton*, *Morionton*, *Zenoch*, and *Kishcumen*

(rather than *Gadianton, Morianton, Zenock,* and *Kishkumen*). In other words, *Gaddianton* has two *d*'s; *Morionton* has all *o*'s; *Zenoch* is like *Enoch*; and the original *Kishcumen* appears to be morphologically related to the name of the city *Cumeni*. Oliver Cowdery just kept misspelling *Zenoch* as *Zenock* in the printer's manuscript, and ultimately the editions have ended up with *ck* rather than *ch*. And for some unknown reason, Oliver decided to change the three other names when he copied the text into the printer's manuscript.

Then there are also substantive spelling variants that involve homophones, cases where you have to figure out what word was intended. For instance, is the word *right* or *rite* when the current text in Alma 43:45 refers to "their rites of worship"? Another homophone case involves *straight* versus *strait*: Is it the one with the *gh* or the one without? does the word mean 'not crooked' or 'narrow'? Or how about *travel* versus *travail*? Oliver Cowdery pronounced both of them as *travel*. In fact, historically this is the common pronunciation for both words, and so we have to figure out in 2 Nephi 29:4 whether we have "the travels of the Jews" or "the travails of the Jews". You can't tell by the scribal spellings since the scribes mixed up all these homophonic pairs.

Next we have changes involving grammatical usage. The Book of Mormon has basically been edited from dialectal or archaic English into standard English (although retaining its biblical styling) – from Geneva Road English into BYU English. To be sure, a small amount of this editing is unintentional, especially when it took place when copying from the original manuscript to the printer's manuscript or when setting the 1830 edition from manuscript. But beginning with the 1837 edition, the grammatical editing was consciously done. It was an attempt to remove dialectal expressions that could be considered nonstandard, such as "they **was** angry with me" (Alma 9:32) and "and **them** that would not confess their sins …

the same were not numbered among the people of the church" (Mosiah 26:36).

The most significant type of grammatical change in the Book of Mormon has been to remove the Early Modern English that is characteristic of the King James Bible. The most prominent of these changes has been to replace *which* with *who* (or *whom* or *that*) when it refers to people. For instance, "our Father **which** art in heaven" was the original reading for the Lord's Prayer in 3 Nephi 13:9, also the reading in the King James Bible (in Matthew 6:9), but this phrase was edited by Joseph Smith to "our Father **who** art in heaven" for the 1837 edition. This use of *who*, of course, is what we would expect in modern English, at least with respect to the relative pronoun. Similarly, *because that* was changed in the 1837 edition to simply *because* (for instance, in 1 Nephi 2:11: "they did murmur in many things against their father **because that** he was a visionary man"). The archaic use of *that* after *because* is no longer standard, but it's in the King James Bible (for instance, in Luke 1:7: "and they had no child **because that** Elisabeth was barren"). Further, instances of the historical present tense have been removed from the Book of Mormon, such as the many instances of original *saith* rather than *said* (for example, when Amulek and Zeezrom are debating each other in Alma 11). In the biblical narrative, especially in the New Testament, there are many examples of the historical present tense (as in Matthew 4:19: "and he **saith** unto them: follow me"). This usage gives an immediacy to the narrative, but examples of it were largely removed from the Book of Mormon in the editing for the 1837 edition.

There are also many changes in phraseology. Earlier (in the first half of this presentation) I gave eight examples where the repeated *a* was omitted for conjoined adjectives (as in Omni 1:28, which originally read as "a strong and **a** mighty man"). Most of these examples involving changes in the phraseology were not the result of conscious editing. Nor would most of

them end up in a Book of Mormon translation. In fact, most of the grammatical changes wouldn't either. Very likely, the stylistic difference between *which* and *who* wouldn't show up when translating from English to any other language. Such a language would specify the appropriate relative pronoun since the difference between *which* and *who* is not a difference in meaning. Of course, there are substantive changes that alter the meaning, such as the accidental change in 1 Nephi 12:18 of "the **sword** of the justice of the Eternal God" to "the **word** of the justice of the Eternal God". Clearly this difference between *sword* and *word* would show up in translation, but this is about the most significant kind of change in meaning that one can find in the history of the Book of Mormon text.

Finally, we can identify some of Joseph Smith's substantive changes as clarifications. In his editing for both the 1837 and 1840 editions as well as for a third time in about 1842, Joseph Smith worked assiduously and carefully on the text for about the first 100 pages, but then the demands on his time apparently made it so that he could not continue doing the editing at that level of detail, and thus he fell back to doing a more pedestrian type of editing. At least for the two editions in 1837 and 1840, Joseph continued to edit, but more rapidly and restricting himself to removing the grammatical usage that would be clearly nonstandard.

Here are two early clarifications that Joseph Smith made in his own hand in the printer's manuscript when he edited the text for the 1837 edition. In 1 Nephi 2:6 he changed the word *beside* to the phrase "by the side of", thus replacing "in a valley **beside** a river of water" with "in a valley **by the side of** a river of water". Or in Lehi's account of his dream of the tree of life, in 1 Nephi 8:4, Joseph added the phrase "in my dream", thus changing "I saw a dark and dreary wilderness" with "I saw **in my dream** a dark and dreary wilderness". Adding this phrase is

not really necessary, but it's a clarification just in case you don't remember that Lehi was describing his dream.

Now we come to the chestnuts, five groups of changes that everyone seems to worry about. Note, first of all, that there aren't too many of these, especially when you compare the Book of Mormon text with other religious texts. The first one is the change in the 1837 edition of "the mother of God" to "the mother of **the Son of** God" (in 1 Nephi 11:18). With this first example, we can include three other instances in the first part of the text where Joseph Smith changed references from God to the Son of God – namely, in 1 Nephi 11:21, 1 Nephi 11:32, and 1 Nephi 13:40. I view these four changes as examples of clarification rather than doctrinal revision. They are found only in the first part of the text, that part where Joseph was inclined to clarify the phraseology. There are later passages where Joseph could have changed God to the Son of God, but he did not (as in Mosiah 16:15 and in Alma 11:38-39). Also with this group of changes we can add the change of *Jesus Christ* to *the Messiah* in 1 Nephi 12:18, another attempt at a clarification in the first part of the text. For all of these changes in referring to Christ, we can't be absolutely sure what was in Joseph Smith's mind. A lot of people have speculated regarding the theological or textual significance of these changes. Joseph made the changes, to be sure, but he didn't leave any notes or explanation. Perhaps he didn't like the Catholic sounding expression "the mother of God" in 1 Nephi 11:18 and that triggered the nearby changes to the other cases in 1 Nephi. In any event, I would argue that these changes are best interpreted as clarifications.

The second chestnut is the change in 2 Nephi 30:6 of "a **white** and a delightsome people" to "a **pure** and a delightsome people". There has been more ink shed (a mixed metaphor with some accuracy) on this one change than any other, and unfortunately most of the discussion has been an embarrassment. First of all, the textual evidence. This change from *white* to *pure* first

appeared in the 1840 edition. We presume that it was made by Joseph Smith, but we can't be sure. The change just shows up in the printed edition. It was probably not a typo or a misreading, simply because *white* and *pure* look so different. It was probably consciously done.

In preparing the 1981 LDS edition, the Church Scriptures Committee considered the 1840 reading and decided to change the standard text from *white* to *pure* based on the reasonable assumption that the 1840 change was made by Joseph Smith. In my mind, it is quite clear that there was no political motivation for the 1981 change. The committee was not trying to remove racism from the Book of Mormon text. The reason for this is that there are eight passages they did not touch – other passages that quite clearly could be identified as making the same preference for white skin, yet none of these were removed or edited. I would presume that the Brethren – they've never said why – looked at the 1840 text and decided that it was Joseph Smith's change – I think it probably was – and decided to follow that reading. It was a very conservative change and could hardly have been motivated by political considerations given the rest of the Book of Mormon text. We don't have the original manuscript for 2 Nephi 30:6, but the internal evidence suggests that *white* is the original reading, mainly because the word *white* co-occurs with *fair* and *delightsome* elsewhere in the text. Moreover, *white* refers to skin color six times in the text. It is true that *white* also co-occurs with *pure* (four times) but only when referring to a state of heavenly perfection, as in the resurrection. Ultimately, we don't know why the change was made by Joseph Smith in 2 Nephi 30:6. My belief is that Joseph could not figure out how Nephi's descendants ("the remnant of our seed") could become dark skinned, so Joseph proposed that they would become pure rather than white. The 1981 change, on the other hand, was probably made out of deference to Joseph's apparent decision to make the change in the 1840 edition.

The next chestnut appears to represent a scribal error, namely "the Son **of** the Only Begotten of the Father" (found as the earliest extant reading in Alma 5:48 and Alma 13:9). I suppose one could say that this difficult reading actually means that Jesus had offspring. In my mind, it's probably a scribal error. The original manuscript is not extant for either of these readings. The printer's manuscript is – and both readings are in the hand of the unknown scribe 2. I would argue that this scribe accidentally inserted an extra *of* in these two instances of "the Son / the Only Begotten of the Father". Joseph Smith removed the extra *of* in both cases in the 1837 edition and, in my view, quite correctly. These are probably just simple scribal errors.

The fourth chestnut involves the replacement of the name *Benjamin* with *Mosiah* in two places (in Mosiah 21:28 and Ether 4:1). Joseph Smith was apparently the one who changed the first instance (in the 1837 edition); Orson Pratt made the second one (in the 1849 edition). The problem has to do with how the chronology is interpreted in the book of Mosiah. The two original readings with *Benjamin* are very likely correct. Although *Benjamin* is unexpected, it appears that king Benjamin lived long enough to be still alive when Ammon and his men returned to Zarahemla with the people of king Limhi (in Mosiah 22).

The last chestnut deals with the question of whether the brother of Jared was a polygamist. The plural reading is still in our current text for Ether 1:41, where the Lord, in speaking to the brother of Jared, refers to "thy families". The original text, as found in the printer's manuscript, basically reads that the brother of Jared had a family and Jared had a family, and that the brother of Jared had friends, each one with a family, and Jared also had friends, each one also with a family. The 1830 typesetter apparently let his eye glance down to the next manuscript line, with the result that he accidentally set *thy family*

in the plural, as *thy families*. In other words, the plural reading for the brother of Jared is just a typo by the 1830 typesetter. The really sad aspect about this is that when the Church changes the reading back to the singular, there will be this outrage, this claim – absolutely false – that the Brethren are doing this in an attempt to remove polygamy from the text. This is perhaps one advantage for having an independent scholarly approach to the text of the Book of Mormon. The evidence is very clear that the actual text refers to the brother of Jared and his family – in the singular, not the plural.

Errors have crept into the text, but no errors significantly interfere with either the message of the book or its doctrine. These textual errors have never prevented readers of the Book of Mormon from receiving their own personal witness of its truth – that is, every sincere reader. In fact, as I have pointed out, errors have been helpful in studying the Book of Mormon text. We have discovered the systematic nature of the text because of the occasional error. How many other cases of systematic phraseology have not yet been discovered because in those cases the transmission has been error free? The errors in transmission help us find these systematic readings.

Ultimately, all of this worry over the number of changes is specious. There are many more variants per word in the New Testament text – and many more highly debated variants. Does this variation mean that the New Testament is false? that it is not God's word because humans have made errors in its transmission? The word of God still comes through both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon despite the occasional errors in transmission.

Types of Changes in the Book of Mormon Text

The following statistics are derived from my computerized collation of the two manuscripts of the Book of Mormon (the original and the printer's manuscripts) and 20 standard

editions of the Book of Mormon (fifteen LDS editions, from 1830 to 1981, the 1858 Wright edition, and four RLDS editions, from 1874 to 1953). This computerized collation will eventually be made available as volume 5 of the critical text of the Book of Mormon. The substantive changes in the history of the text are discussed in volume 4 of the critical text, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, published from 2004 to 2009 in six parts by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, now a part of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University. A complete list of all the grammatical changes in the text will be found in volume 3 of the critical text, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, slated for publication in the next couple of years. The appendix to the 2009 Yale edition of the Book of Mormon contains a list of 719 of the most important changes in the history of the text. Thirty of the more recently discovered significant changes are discussed in my article "Some Textual Changes for a Scholarly Study of the Book of Mormon", published in the December 2012 issue of *BYU Studies,* volume 51, number 4, pages 99-117.

In many cases, a place of variation will involve more than one type of textual variant, and each type may occur more than once. For example, in 1 Nephi 6:2 we have two spelling variants for *descendant* plus three times when *a descendant* was changed to *descendants* (originally in the 1852 LDS edition, then later in the 1874 RLDS edition and in the 1981 LDS edition) and twice when *descendants* was changed back to *a descendant* (in the second printing of the 1852 LDS edition and in the 1908 RLDS edition):

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we are [a desendant 0|a decendant 1|
a descendant ABCDEGIJLMNOPQRS|
descendants > a descendant F|
descendants HKT] of Joseph
```

In 1 Nephi 3:5, we have the following single variant in the punctuation, but it involves four changes:

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but behold I have not required it of them
[ 01|, ABCDGRT|; EFHIJKLMNPQS|: O]
but it is a commandment of the Lord
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The manuscripts have no punctuation after *them*, but the 1830 typesetter placed a comma there. The comma was changed to a semicolon in the 1849 LDS edition and in the 1874 RLDS edition, while the typesetter for 1907 LDS edition accidentally set the semicolon as a colon. Clearly, the overall number of changes will exceed 105,000.

accidentals	
adding the word *chapter*	273
adding chapter and verse numbers	9,677
paragraphing	1,420
punctuation	41,619
periods for numbers	6,620
spelling ampersands	15,577
spelling of *etc*	18
spelling of common English words	7,982
scribal slips in manuscripts	1,780
typos in editions	2,087
capitalization	19,455

106,508

substantives	
spelling of names	541
spelling of homophones	420
editing of the text	3,837
unintended changes in the text	5,567

10,355

conjectural emendations in the text	
Oliver Cowdery in the manuscripts	131
John Gilbert, the 1830 typesetter	167
Joseph Smith (1837 and 1840 editions)	217
Orson Pratt (1849 and 1879 editions)	17
Franklin and Samuel Richards (1852 edition)	17
German Ellsworth (1905 and 1911 editions)	8
James Talmage (1920 edition)	130
1981 scriptures committee	10
2009 Yale edition	139

substantive differences in the Yale edition	
compared against the 1981 LDS edition	4,632
non-grammatical differences	2,241
readings appearing for the first time	606
changes in the meaning of words	241
changes in the spelling of names	15
restored readings that make the text consistent	131
restored unique readings	34

Royal Skousen, professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, has been the editor of the Book of Mormon critical text project since 1988. Volumes 1, 2, and 4 of the critical text are published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University. In 2009, Skousen published with Yale University Press the culmination of his critical text work, The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text. *He is also known for his work on exemplar-based theories of language and quantum computing of analogical modeling.*

Big Trouble in River City: *American Crucifixion* and the Defaming of Joseph Smith

Craig L. Foster and Brian C. Hales

Review of Alex Beam. *American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church*. PublicAffairs, 2014. 352 pp.

Abstract: *On April 22, 2014, PublicAffairs, an imprint of a national publisher Persues Books Group, released* American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church, *authored by Alex Beam. Beam, who openly declared he entered the project without personal biases against Joseph Smith or the Latter-day Saints, spent a couple of years researching his work, which he declares to be "popular non-fiction" and therefore historically accurate. This article challenges both of these assertions, showing that Beam was highly prejudiced against the Church prior to investigating and writing about events leading up to the martyrdom. In addition, Beam's lack of training as an historian is clearly manifested in gross lapses in methodology, documentation, and synthesis of his interpretation. Several key sections of his book are so poorly constructed from an evidentiary standpoint that the book cannot be considered useful except, perhaps, as well-composed historical fiction.*

In the opening scene of *The Music Man*, several salesmen complain about a questionable salesman named Harold Hill:

SALESMAN 5:
What's the fellow's line?
SALESMAN 4:
What's his line?
CHARLIE:
He's a fake and he doesn't know the territory ….
SALESMAN 2:
No, the fellow sells bands, boys' bands. I don't know
how he does it but he lives like a king and he dallies
and he gathers and he plucks and shines and when the
man dances, certainly boys, what else? The piper pays
him! …
CHARLIE:
But he doesn't know the territory![1]

While Alex Beam is certainly not a fraud, and he doesn't sell musical instruments to boys' bands, perhaps the same could be said about him and his recent foray into Mormon history with *American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church*: He doesn't know the territory. He has a readable style and excellent sense of how to write an exciting story, but ultimately — when it comes to Mormon history — he just doesn't know the territory. This fact became painfully obvious as we read Beam's book.

American Crucifixion is not Alex Beam's first treatment of Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has touched upon the subject in the course of his work as a news reporter and columnist. Beam has had an impressive career in journalism, working for *Newsweek* and *BusinessWeek*, where he served for a time as Moscow bureau chief before finally joining *The Boston Globe,* where he has

1   Special thanks to Gregory L. Smith for his insight and advice. "Music Man Lyrics—Rock Island Lyrics," *MetroLyrics*, accessed June 26, 2014, http://www.metrolyrics.com/rock-island-lyrics-music-man.html

remained for more than a quarter century. Furthermore, he has authored two novels set in Russia and two works of non-fiction, *Gracefully Insane: Life and Death in America's Premier Mental Hospital* (2002) and *A Great Idea at the Time: The Rise, Fall and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books* (2008).[2]

Some reviewers of these books described "Beam of 'having an eye for definitive and damning details,'" but also objected to his "flippant, glib, and arrogant dismissal of weighty ideas." The books did not seem to be "fully researched."[3] It seems that in spite of not knowing the territory adequately, he rushed headlong into each book with confidence and strongly-held opinions.

This appears to have been the case with Beam's writings regarding Joseph Smith and Mormonism. In 1993, as Mitt Romney was gearing up for his failed senate campaign against Ted Kennedy, Beam described him as not only a successful businessman but "also a devoted father and church leader." He then went on to write, "No one has anything uncharitable to say about him, so naturally I am suspicious. Too smooth, I say. I can't get a grip on the man."[4]

In the ensuing years, Beam's suspicions apparently turned to dislike, and his column repeatedly indulged in needling personal shots at Romney. For example, while writing an

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2   *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Alex Beam," accessed July 7, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Beam.

3   Julie J. Nichols, "Beam, 'American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church,'" Association of Mormon Letters Discussion Board, Saturday, January 18, 2014, accessed June 10, 2014, http://forums.mormonletters.org/yaf_postst1624_Beam-American-Crucifixion-The-Murder-of-Joseph-Smith-and-the-Fate-of-the-Mormon-Church-reviewed-by-Julie-J-Nicho.aspx . Nichols's well-written review noted the "responses to Beam's earlier books" tended "to emphasize the entertaining, mildly sensationalist but not fully satisfying nature of the voice he brings to bear on his subjects."

4   Alex Beam, "The Gifted Amateurs," *The Boston Globe*, November 17, 1993, accessed June 27, 2014, http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/boston/doc/294815772.html.

article which criticized Bain & Co. as the "KGB of management consulting," Beam wrote that it was "a visage that no amount of Mitt Romney-esque Mormon do-goodery or smiley-faced female CEO-dom will ever wipe clean."[5] Elsewhere, while reporting on a 2009 Massachusetts Republican meeting at which Romney spoke, Beam described him as the "Hair Club for Men lifetime president."[6]

Whether Alex Beam had an interest in Mormonism before encountering Romney's political ambitions or whether it developed as a result of this encounter is not known. What is known is that Beam appears to have a good opinion of Mormons in general. In 2005, for instance, while discussing a potential Romney presidential run, he wrote:

> So what can Romney expect now, as he dips his toe into the presidential waters? No one is going to trash his religion unless they have to, meaning unless his candidacy shows signs of success. But I've already been pitched on a quirky column item about the funny garments Mormons wear while worshiping. How tasteful. Maybe I can make fun of Hasidic Jews' curly forelocks and the pope's curious headgear while I'm at it.[7]

Beam's opinion of Mormonism, however, is not as positive. In a 2007 article, "A Mormon President? I Don't Think So," he mentioned Mormon "doctrines and practices that most

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5   Alex Beam, "Worshipping the Worthy, But in Secret," *The Boston Globe*, August 27, 1997, accessed June 27, 2014, http://secure.pqarchiver.com/boston/doc/403878132.

6   Alex Beam, "Partying with the State's Other Party," *The Boston Globe*, October 30, 2009, accessed June 27, 2014, http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/boston/doc/405191113.html.

7   Alex Beam, "Are We Ready for a Mormon President?," *The Boston Globe*, July 21, 2005, as reprinted in *Worldwide Religious News*, accessed June 28, 2014, http://wwrn.org/articles/17957/.

Americans would view as strange," and then he discussed the PBS special called *The Mormons*, which covered difficult subjects, including what he identified as "the ultimate red herring, 'celestial marriage,' Joseph Smith's term for polygamy." Although he mentioned how "the church has gone to great pains to promulgate prophet Wilford Woodruff's 1890 declaration condemning polygamy," he also referred to HBO's *Big Love* and that *The Mormons* reported, "30,000 to 60,000 fundamentalist believers practice polygamy." Beam ended the column by mentioning that PBS claimed 75 million viewers a week and commenting cynically that if one-twentieth of the audience watched *The Mormons*, "That's almost four million men and women who will know more about the Mormon faith than Romney might wish them to know. It's bad math for the Mittster."[8]

Alex Beam's political reporting demonstrates what can only be described as a fixation on polygamy and a deep dislike of Joseph Smith. In an article titled "A Big Win for the Mormon Church," he spent almost the entire article discussing potentially embarrassing and challenging aspects of Mormon history: "For understandable reasons, Romney's campaign literature failed to mention that he hails from a distinguished band of American outlaws." Beam

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8   Alex Beam, "A Mormon President? I Don't Think So," *The Boston Globe*, accessed June 17, 2014, http://www.boston.com/ae/media/articles/2007/03/05/a_mormon_president_i_dont_think_so/. Jim Geraghty, ("Battlefront 2008," *National Review Online*, July 6, 2007, accessed June 17, 2014, http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/221511/battlefield-2008/jim-geraghty) took Beam to task for blurring the distinction between modern Mormon fundamentalism and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was not alone. Lowell Brown of *Article VI Blog*, in a post titled "Boy, the Boston Globe Thinks We Are Stupid," March 5, 2007, accessed June 17, 2014, http://www.article6blog.com/2007/03/05/boy-the-boston-globe-thinks-we-are-stupid/, complained about Beam's blurring the lines and suggested that "Beam is such a lazy journalist that he did not even go to the trouble of investigating the LDS Church's position on polygamy." Ironically, in another column Beam authored in 2011, he mentioned that "many Americans mistakenly believe that mainstream Mormons still practice polygamy. See Beam, "For the Love of Mormons," *The Boston Globe*, October 7, 2011, accessed June 28, 2014, http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/articles/2011/10/07/for_the_love_of_mormons/.

then explained how Romney's ancestors had moved to Mexico to avoid prosecution for practicing polygamy. He further wrote, "Around the turn of the 20th century, the Prophets and Revelators who lead the Mormon church grew weary of defending their extremely peculiar institution — polygamy — against federal power. They experienced a revelation, if you will: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."[9]

But Beam's strongest language regarding Joseph Smith and plural marriage is found in a review of John G. Turner's *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* for *The New York Times*. After introducing the subject, he then discussed bad history vs. good history and concluded Turner was "on the side of good history." His example of bad history was revealing:

> For over a century, the church cleaved to 'faith-promoting' histories about heroic Joseph and Brigham, and the evil Gentiles who persecuted them. As recently as 19 years ago, Salt Lake's guardians of the Saintly flame excommunicated several prominent writers and historians for what the old-line Soviets[10] would have called 'deviationist' points of view.[11]

9   Alex Beam, "A Big Win for the Mormon Church," *The Boston Globe*, November 14, 2012, accessed June 17, 2014, http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/11/14/the-great-mormon-etch-sketch/0pFVAp7Reis7fQyoM2QIlK/story.html. Demonstrating Beam's continued disdain for Mitt Romney and his family, his opinion piece claimed: "If ever there was a gathering of latter-day Beaver Cleavers, it would be the squeaky-clean Mitt Romney clan, whom we briefly came to know over the last six months."

10   Beam's repeated invocation of the USSR — Romney's "KGB" group at Bain, or history as Soviet-era deviationism — smacks of rhetorical overkill. Does he *really* mean to compare Bain to the murderous thugs that ran Soviet intelligence or compare a church's right to separate itself from members violating its standards to the brutal bureaucratic bloodsport of the Soviet Communist Party? Does he think the two are on any kind of equivalent moral plane? We know far less about the USSR than he does, and we find the comparison offensive, since it trivializes one of the great moral evils of the last century.

11   Alex Beam, "Latter-day Patriarch," *The New York Times*, October 19, 2012, accessed June 18, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/

After setting the stage by delineating Turner's good history vs. Soviet-style apologetic history, Beam then gently took Turner to task for not going far enough:

> Can a biographer be too fair? Perhaps. Turner's judiciousness on the hot-button subject of polygamy is squishy in the extreme. He successfully explains the 'elaborate theological edifice surrounding plural marriage' but overreaches when he describes Joseph Smith's seduction of the teenage servant girl Fanny Alger as the prophet's 'first well-documented nonmonogamous relationship.' The business was more sordid than that. Their hasty coupling occurred in a barn on a haymow and was witnessed by Joseph's wife Emma Hale Smith through a crack in the door, according to Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Emma Smith's biographers. Turner imbues their union with a dignity it doesn't deserve. More likely, it was a 'dirty, nasty, filthy affair,' as Joseph Smith's confidant Oliver Cowdery called it.[12]

By October 2012 Alex Beam had made his views known regarding both Joseph Smith and plural marriage. Whether he had read Don Bradley's excellent essay, "Mormon Polygamy before Nauvoo?: The Relationship of Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger," published almost two years before his Turner review, is not known. Bradley's essay reveals important new information regarding whether or not it was a plural marriage or a "dirty, nasty, filthy affair." But Beam either did not read or did not believe Bradley's findings.[13] In what proves a foretaste of his

books/review/brigham-young-pioneer-prophet-by-john-g-turner.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

12   Beam, "Latter-day Patriarch."

13   Don Bradley, "Mormon Polygamy before Nauvoo? The Relationship of Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger," in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy*, eds. Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster,

style regarding things Mormon, Beam invokes a late, second-hand, hostile witness (excommunicated apostle William McLellin) and then adds his own details ("hasty" coupling), which are nowhere in the documentary record. While this makes for vivid storytelling, it is not serious history — perhaps, dare we say it, it is even "bad history," though not an infraction we'd compare to a Stalinist show trial.

This avoidance of anything that might alter Alex Beam's pre-conceived notions of Joseph Smith, polygamy, and Mormon history illustrates his approach in *American Crucifixion*. Our review looks at the three areas of Beam's book that seemed to be the most problematic:

Polygamy

Shortly after the book came out, Brian C. Hales wrote a detailed analysis of how plural marriage is handled in *American Crucifixion*, which is included in this review. Beam addresses Joseph Smith's polygamy throughout the book, but particularly in Chapter 5: "Polygamy and Its Discontents." From a scholarly standpoint, the chapter suffers from multiple weaknesses. Beam relies predominantly on secondary sources, quotes disputable evidence without seeming to have verified its reliability, and ignores historical data that contradicts his position. Further, he promotes narrow and often extreme interpretations of available documents, going beyond the evidence in formulating his conclusions.

While later chapters in *American Crucifixion* are generally historically accurate, this chapter is historically problematic. Beam presents Joseph Smith in Chapter 5 as an adulterer, hypocrite, and fraud. When Joseph is later killed in a firestorm

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(Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 14–58. Brian C. Hales also addresses Smith's relationship with Fanny Alger, demonstrating that it was a plural marriage. Brian C. Hales, "Fanny Alger and Joseph Smith's Pre-Nauvoo Reputation," *Journal of Mormon History* 35/4 (Fall 2009): 112–90.

at Carthage, the reader may lament the extra-judicial act but feel that Joseph got no less than he deserved because Beam has portrayed Joseph as a scoundrel who probably merited death, even if the legal niceties weren't observed.

Beam's version of Nauvoo plurality reads like nineteenth-century anti-Mormon historical fiction. It is peopled with one-dimensional comic book characters who often behave illogically and immorally. He classifies his book as "popular non-fiction" and affirms that non-fiction works should be accurate and truthful.[14] Yet, in doing so Beam invokes a scholarly standard to which he simply doesn't measure up.

One of the greater weaknesses is Beam's tendency to repeat and rely upon secondary sources — Linda King Newell and Valeen Avery are quoted eight times; Richard Van Wagoner is quoted three times; and Richard Bushman, George D. Smith, Fawn Brodie,[15] and Todd Compton twice each. In addition, he cites Michael Quinn, Andrew Ehat, Robert Flanders, Marvin Hill, and Connell "Rocky" O'Donovan. Admittedly, plural marriage is a complex topic and citing the opinions of authors who have written books and articles on the subject is to be expected. However, Beam appears to have taken this practice to the extreme, unworried about the apparent risks. He does not leaven these authors' agendas and perspectives with his own, independent review of the primary source material. This would be akin to a political reporter who interviewed a variety of sources about a hotly-contested bill but never bothered to check the actual text of the bill.

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14   Alex Beam, interview between Alex and John Dehlin for *MormonStories* podcast, on June 9, 2014. Notes in possession of Brian C. Hales.

15   This count underestimates the influence of Brodie, however. As noted below (see footnote 51), Beam started his investigation of Joseph Smith by reading Brodie twice. It is small wonder, then, that he adopts her attitude and errors wholesale, ignoring more than a half century's worth of Mormon historiography in the process. George D. Smith's work likewise represents a reversion to Brodie's thesis and many of her errors.

What if the secondary sources are overly biased for or against Joseph Smith, or what if they misrepresent the reliability of some statement or conclusion? The secondary sources he quotes reflect just these sorts of weaknesses, which are only compounded when further filtered through Beam's storytelling. He becomes at best a tertiary source, which can tell us no more than the secondary sources upon which he uncritically and reflexively relies. One worries that he is simply finding in them what he already expects to find. Having located it, he looks and questions no further.

Unfortunately, the voice of plural marriage participants is almost entirely missing from Beam's reconstruction. The total number of primary sources referenced by Beam in Chapter 5 is nine,[16] with only one being an actual Nauvoo polygamist (Helen Mar Kimball).[17] The view of the Nauvoo polygamist is important, not only for balance but also for accuracy. At one point, Beam writes, "Smith's hypocrisy concerning polygamy was breathtaking" (102). Beam casually declares that Joseph Smith's hypocrisy was of "breathtaking" scope but does not tell us — if he knows — that Nauvoo polygamists could not detect it. Beam presents himself as an investigator possessing great discernment who, looking back more than 170 years, can detect "breathtaking hypocrisy" in Joseph's actions that apparently escaped Nauvooans such as Brigham Young, John Taylor, Eliza R. Snow, Zina Huntington, and other polygamy insiders. This reconstruction is less plausible because it is certain that most of those church members would not have stayed with

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16   Primary sources include the *History of the Church* (4), *Times and Seasons* (4), Nauvoo City Council Minutes (3), William Clayton's journal (2), Helen Mar Kimball's *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (1), Joseph Smith's journal (2), William Law's journal (2), Charlotte Haven's recollections (1), and a *Salt Lake Tribune* article (1).

17   The journals of Joseph Smith and William Clayton are quoted for historical events, but no discussion of the Prophet or Clayton's motives for entering plural marriage are included anywhere.

Joseph had they viewed him as Beam portrays. Even Fawn Brodie acknowledges: "The best evidence of the magnetism of the Mormon religion was that it could attract men with the quality of Brigham Young, whose tremendous energy and shrewd intelligence were not easily directed by any influence outside himself."[18] By ignoring the views of believing Nauvoo polygamists, Beam frees himself to reconstruct Joseph's actions unhampered by the reality experienced by those men and women. But Beam does this at the risk of creating historical fiction.

Polygamy — Documentary Problems

There are many problems and lacunae in Beam's approach to the primary sources, which address Nauvoo polygamy. We review only a few here.

1. Beam correctly writes that plural wife Mary Elizabeth Rollins reported that she was sealed to Joseph Smith for "time and eternity" (83).[19] What is not mentioned is that her declaration occurred after the temple sealing ceremonial language had been standardized to use this expression. However, when directly asked about her supposed polyandrous relationship in 1905, she clarified: "My husband did not belong to the Church. I begged him and pled with him to join but he would not. He said he did not believe in it, though he thought a great deal of Joseph …. After he said this, I went forward and was sealed to

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18   Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 126–27. Joseph Johnson writing in 1885 disagreed: "He [Brigham Young] must have been an idiot, or thought he was addressing idiots." Joseph Johnson, *The Great Mormon Fraud* (Manchester: Butterworth and Nodal, 1885), 17.

19   See, for example, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, affidavit, March 23, 1877, in Scott G. Kenney Collection, MS 587, Box 11, Folder 14, Marriott Library (photocopy of manuscript); Mary E. Lightner to A. M. Chase, April 20, 1904, quoted in J. D. Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed*, ([Lamoni, Iowa]:RLDS Church, 1911), 218-19.

Joseph *for eternity*" (emphasis added).[20] Several other evidences from Mary argue that this was a non-sexual, "eternity only" sealing.[21] However, this information is not provided, and Beam later asserts that "time and eternity" sealings included sexuality, so readers might conclude that Joseph and Mary had conjugal relations and that Joseph practiced sexual polyandry. To date, however, no unambiguous evidence in support of this claim has been provided by authors who argue that the Prophet engaged in polyandrous sexuality. Neither have any such advocates addressed the important contradictory evidences.[22]

2. When referring to the Joseph Smith–Fanny Alger union, Beam writes:

> Joseph had been confiding his thoughts about plural marriage to his most trusted confederates throughout the 1830s. It seems that Joseph was practicing polygamy without benefit of clergy during that time. (85)

By ignoring important evidence of a marriage ceremony between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger by mid-1835,[23] Beam portrays Joseph as an adulterer, not a polygamist, in the 1830s.

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20   Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, "Remarks" at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, copy of original signed typescript, MSS 363, fd 6, HBLL, BYU, 7.

21   See Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner to John Henry Smith, January 25, 1892, in George A. Smith Family Papers, MS 36, Box 7, Folder 12 (John Henry Smith, incoming correspondence),; Marriott Library; see also Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 1:421–37.

22   See Brian C. Hales, "Sexual Polyandry," Joseph Smith's Polygamy (website), accessed June 14, 2014, http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/faq/sexual-polyandry/.

23   Levi Ward Hancock, autobiography with additions in 1896 by Mosiah Hancock, 63, CHL; cited portion written by Mosiah, MS 570, microfilm. Andrew Jenson Papers [ca. 1871–1942], MS 17956; CHL, Box 49, Folder 16, Documents 1–2.

However, the evidences of a marriage are significant and deserve consideration by any serious scholar.[24]

3. Beam treats Benjamin Winchester's 1889 account accusing Joseph Smith of immorality as reliable (85). Benjamin did not reside in Nauvoo and was not a polygamy insider. He was a difficult personality and had a stormy relationship with Joseph Smith and the Quorum of the Twelve. Joseph once accused him of telling "one of the most damnable lies" about him.[25] He was reprimanded several times and eventually excommunicated.[26] These observations do not mean Winchester was inevitably unreliable, but his interactions with Joseph were limited, and it can be shown he had significant biases. As a primary witness against the Prophet, Winchester's believability would be greatly strengthened with additional supportive testimony, which Beam does not provide and which does not seem to exist.

4. Beam reports that Joseph's practice of polygamy was a poorly kept secret in the mid-1830s. He writes:

> In 1835, rumors of Mormon polygamy were so intense that the Saints' general assembly issued a statement asserting, "Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy, we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman but one husband." (85)

Beam falls into the antagonist's trap here because he cannot find any private or public complaints of polygamy against Joseph Smith or the Church in 1835 (or the years previous), so he

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24   See Todd Compton, "Fanny Alger Smith Custer: Mormonism's First Plural Wife?" *Journal of Mormon History* 22/1 (Spring 1996): 174–207.

25   "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Minutes of Meetings" on *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998).

26   Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 381.

must quote a denial issued by Church authorities as evidence.[27] Oliver Cowdery wrote in the *Messenger and Advocate* in 1836: "It would be a Herculean task to point out the innumerable falsehoods and misrepresentations, sent out detrimental to this society. The tales of those days in which Witches were burnt, and the ridiculous inconsistencies of those who directed the building of the funeral pyre, could be no more absurd than the every-day tales, relative to the conduct and professions of the 'Mormons.'"[28] We would challenge Beam to find any published or private accusation of polygamy against Joseph Smith or the Church during that period. The statement "rumors of Mormon polygamy were so intense" goes far beyond the evidence — it manufactures evidence where none exists. (And, by ignoring this fact, Beam — like the earlier sources he apparently follows — fails to consider what else may have actuated the statement made by the general assembly.)

5. Beam intimates that Joseph's practice of polygamy was well-known across the nation. He writes:

> Nonetheless, defectors and apostates were reporting Joseph's scandalous views to the world. "Old Joe's Mormon seraglio" quickly became a stock phrase in the nation's newspapers, despite the Saints' heated denials. (86)

By positioning this quote next to discussions from 1835 and 1838, Beam implies such claims were common during that era. However, this statement was first made by the notorious John C. Bennett in July of 1842. If Beam wants to defend Bennett as reliable, we would be happy to be respondents.[29] The eastern newspapers may have picked up Bennett's line (proof that gullible reporters eager for a salacious story are nothing

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27   See Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:173–77.

28   Oliver Cowdery, editorial, *Messenger and Advocate* 3/1 (Oct 1836): 395.

29   See the extended discussion in Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 515–74.

new), but they were also incredulous regarding Bennett's overall claims (while Beam's credulity proves that matters do not always improve with time).

6. Beam repeats a familiar but flawed story regarding Emma and one of Joseph's plural wives:

> In a famous incident, Emma is supposed to have surprised Joseph and another mansion lodger, the raven-haired poetess Eliza Snow, kissing on a second-floor landing. With her children begging her not to harm "aunt Eliza," Emma grabbed Snow by the hair, then threw her down the stairs and out into the street. (89)

Here Beam's scholarship approaches irresponsibility. He quotes Brodie and Newell and Avery but with less reservation than they expressed.[30] Importantly, he ignores several more recent analyses including Hales's, which shows that available documents are contradictory and describe impossible details.[31] For example, Beam states the alleged altercation occurred in the "mansion," but Eliza never lived in the Mansion House, and the physical description of the Homestead (where she did live for a time) stairwell demonstrates it could not have occurred there. Also, there is no evidence Eliza was ever pregnant.[32] Beam

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30 Newell and Avery write elsewhere, in material ignored by Beam, "Faced with a folk legend, with genuine documents that tell no tales, and dubious ones that contradict themselves and the contemporary accounts, perhaps it is best for us to respond as we must to many paradoxes of our history: consider thoughtfully and then place all the evidence carefully on the shelf, awaiting further documentation …." Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Linda King Newell, and Valeen Tippetts Avery, "Emma and Eliza and the Stairs," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22/1 (Fall 1982): 96.

31 See Brian C. Hales, "Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, and the Reported Incident on the Stairs," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10/2 (Fall 2009): 63–75.

32 Newell and Avery argue strongly against pregnancy in Eliza (compare footnote 30). Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1984), 136. Lorenzo Snow later stated, "My sister Eliza R. Snow, I believe, was just as good

addresses none of these issues, instead repeating secondary sources of dubious accuracy while ignoring the contrary data that even his flawed sources contain, apparently because it doesn't match the titillating and scandalous story he seems determined to tell.

7. Beam writes that Eliza admitted she had been "the Prophet's wife and lover" (89). He provides no documentation and obviously missed Eliza's 1877 letter to RLDS missionary Daniel Munns where she flatly denied having ever been Joseph Smith's "carnal" wife but freely acknowledged that there were "several ladies now living in Utah who accepted the pure and sacred doctrine of plural marriage, and were the bona fide wives of Pres. Joseph Smith."[33] During a June 9 interview with *MormonStories* podcaster John Dehlin, Laura Hales, wife of Brian Hales, addressed this lack of evidence for this statement during the question and answer period. Beam appeared nonplussed by the fuss regarding his use of the term "lover," which he admitted was an ill-chosen word to describe Eliza's relationship with Joseph. This speaks of his willingness to infuse dramatic prose into his text without regard to *documentary evidence.*

8. Beam also cites a "gentile visitor from Carthage" who asked Emma Smith her opinion regarding spiritual wives:

> "Mrs. Smith, where does your church get the doctrine
> of spiritual wives?" Emma's face flushed scarlet, the

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a woman as any Latter-day Saint woman that ever lived, and she lived in an unmarried state until she was beyond the condition of raising a family. She was sealed to Joseph Smith, the Prophet; but she had no children to bear her name among the children of men (emphasis added)." Lorenzo Snow, "Discourse, May 8, 1899 by President Lorenzo Snow," *Millennial Star* 61/35 (August 31, 1899): 548. Note that Snow and his audience would have regarded such a child as a great blessing and a source of prestige rather than as something shameful to be hidden.

33 Eliza R. Snow to Daniel Munns, May 30, 1877, Community of Christ Archives; emphasis in original.

guest reported, and her eyes blazed with fury. "Straight from hell, madam." (89)

Evidently, this is a favorite phrase because Beam quoted it in his talk at the annual Mormon History Association Meeting in June. Unfortunately, the quotation is questionable. It is from a 1916 periodical *The Bellman* in an article written by Eudocia Baldwin Marsh. There Ms. Marsh quotes her sister word-for-word in a conversation that allegedly occurred over 70 years earlier in the Nauvoo Mansion.[34] It is doubtful because the Smiths did not move into the Mansion House until August 31, 1843.[35] At that time, the plural marriages were kept very secret. The quote is very late and secondhand, and the likelihood that Emma would have admitted to the clandestine religious practice and condemned it as described is even less plausible. This report probably better reflects what later non-Mormons, like Eudocia, thought of the practice, but the chronology and described openness of the drama are implausible in many respects.

9. Beam quotes Don Carlos Smith as saying: "Any man who will teach and practice the doctrine of spiritual wifery will go to hell: I don't care if it is my brother Joseph" (89). The quote is from an 1890 recollection from apostate Ebenezer Robinson[36] and contradicts an account from Mary Ann West, who lived with Don Carlos' wife Agnes after his August 7, 1841, death in Nauvoo. West recalled in 1892: "She [Agnes] told me herself she was [married to Joseph Smith]…. She said it was the wish of her husband Don Carlos that she should marry him

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34   Quoted in Eudocia Balwin Marsh, "When the Mormons Dwelt Among Us," in *The Bellman*, April 1, 1916, 375.

35   Joseph Smith's diary entry for August 31, 1843 reads: "About these days was moving into the new house on the Diagonal corner…." (Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 411–12.)

36   Ebenezer Robinson, *The Return* 2/7 (July 1890): 302; see also 2/6 (June 1890): 287.

[Joseph]."[37] Either Beam's research was inadequate to uncover this additional credible and pertinent evidence, or he knew of it and his biases prompted him to not include it. Regardless, "spiritual wifery" was not a term Joseph used to refer to plural marriage.

10. Beam cites a popular notion that cannot be reliably traced to Joseph Smith or any subsequent leader: "The larger the family that gathered to greet the Second Coming, Joseph taught, the greater the heavenly exaltation of all concerned" (91). Joseph never encouraged men to marry as many wives as possible in the hope that each wife would bring "greater heavenly exaltation." This is speculation presented as a documented teaching.

11. Beam incorrectly states that Joseph Smith married Sylvia Session in early February 1842 (91–92). This interpretation portrays the Prophet as practicing sexual polyandry, but the timeline is not documentable and is contradicted by important evidences that had been published prior to Beam's beginning his research for the book.[38]

12. Beam states that Joseph Smith "did want to marry the Kimball's fourteen-year-old daughter" Helen Mar Kimball (92). This is going beyond the evidence. Every known account states that Heber C. Kimball, Helen's father, initiated the relationship. It is pure speculation to say Joseph "wanted" or otherwise sought to marry Helen.

13. One of Beam's more inflammatory statements reads, "Apparently no one had prepared her [Helen Mar Kimball] for what Joseph would do to her when they were alone" (93). This insinuation of sinister and/or sexual behavior is pure fiction because there is no evidence Joseph and Helen were *ever* alone

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37   Mary Ann West, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), pages 521–22, questions 679, 687.

38   See Brian C. Hales, "The Joseph Smith–Sylvia Sessions Plural Sealings: Polyandry or Polygyny," *Mormon Historical Studies* 9/1 (Spring 2008): 19–28.

and available documents strongly suggest that the marriage was never consummated.[39] These facts and perspective have been well-known for decades, and a responsible historian — or reporter — has a duty to let his audience know it.[40]

14. Beam quotes Helen Kimball using a secondary source:

> "I would never have been sealed to Joseph, had I known it was anything more than a ceremony," Helen later told her mother. "I was young and they deceived me, by saying the salvation of our whole family depended on it." (93)

Here Beam inaccurately reports that the conversation occurred between Helen and her mother Vilate Kimball. However, the actual source is Catherine Lewis, an anti-Mormon writer who was the first woman to describe the Nauvoo Temple ceremony in an 1848 exposé.[41] The quotation is questionable on several levels. For example, it is implausible that Helen would ever have used accusatory language against her parents or Joseph Smith at that or any other time of her life.

15. Beam's treatment of Joseph's interactions with Sarah Pratt is remarkably one-sided (94). There is strong evidence that Sarah was sexually involved with John C. Bennett[42] and that Joseph tried to intervene in order to help her and her

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39   Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:286–98.

40   In 1981, Stanley Kimball described the relationship as "unconsummated." Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 9; see also Stanley B. Kimball, "Heber C. Kimball and Family, the Nauvoo Years," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15/4 (Summer 1975): 466.

41   Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of their Iniquities* (Lynn, Mass: by the author, 1848), 19.

42   See J. B. Backenstos, "Affidavit of J. B. Backenstos," *Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters*, Nauvoo, Illinois, Aug. 31, 1842; Bachenstos, *Affidavits and Certificates*, letter from Letter of Stephen H. Goddard to Orson Pratt, July 23, 1842.

husband Orson Pratt, an apostle who was serving a mission in England.[43] Beam ignores these details, and as a consequence, he fails to adequately portray the entirety of events. Instead, he opts to discuss a very narrow selection of available evidence in order to portray Joseph as immoral.

16. Beam's discussion of Joseph and the Laws, William and Jane, is even more precarious than that of Sarah Pratt. As Hales has exhaustively documented in *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology*, five different scenarios regarding their interactions can be supported, depending upon the evidence an author choses to cite. In that publication, Hales warns future writers like Beam: "Authors who choose to report on the relationship between the Prophet and the Laws are wise to not selectively quote any one set of historical data to the exclusion of the contradictory documents."[44] Obviously Beam was unaware of this warning, but it was issued precisely to authors like him who choose to selectively cite the historical record in order to concoct a story to their liking that is at best incomplete and at worst deceptive.

Beam begins his discussion of the Laws stating plainly: "Joseph tried to seduce the wife of his second counselor, William Law" (94). Is there evidence to support this? Yes, an entry in Law's journal: "He [Joseph] has lately endeavored to seduce my wife and has found her a virtuous woman."[45] Beam quotes this line, but in an unfortunate lapse of journalistic ethics and historical practice, he fails to inform his audience that the line is crossed out. What is the significance of the strikeout? We don't know, but good scholarship requires that he divulge this detail. Is there evidence to contradict the accusation? Yes,

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43   See the statement of Mary Ettie V. Coray Smith in Nelson Winch Green, *Fifteen Years Among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith* (New York: D.W. Evans, 1860), 31.

44   Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:221; see also 221–31.

45   Lyndon W. Cook, *William Law* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Co., 1994), 53. In the typescript, the entry is crossed out but apparently clearly legible.

a contemporaneous journal entry from Alexander Neibaur records that Jane approached Joseph.[46] In addition, Law's son said that if Joseph had tried to seduce Jane, his father would "have shot his head off. No man can be more delicate and conscientious about the relations of husband and wife and more apt to be terrible in such a case, than my father."[47]

17. Beam alleges that by May of 1843: "Polygamy was rapidly becoming the worst-kept secret in Nauvoo" (98). To support his view, he quotes non-member Charlotte Haven who learned that George J. Adams had married a plural wife in England. She wrote, "I cannot believe Joseph will ever sanction such a doctrine." In fact, Adams was not a polygamy insider and his behavior had nothing to do with authorized polygamy secretly being practiced in Nauvoo at the time. While authors may choose to ignore the difference between authorized plural marriage and other unauthorized relationships, Joseph Smith taught unauthorized unions were not valid and were considered adulterous (see D&C 132:7, 18). Adams was promptly brought before the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve on May 27, 1843. There he apparently confessed the sin of adultery and was forgiven. Minutes from the meeting record Joseph Smith as saying, "Brother Adams … has started anew, and let all present hold their tongues and only say that Elder Adams has started anew."[48] Importantly, Associate Church President Hyrum Smith did not learn about the principle of plural marriage until the day prior to George J. Adam's trial.[49] Similarly, Second Counselor William Law did not learn of it until the middle of 1843.[50] In other words, Beam alleges that "polygamy was rapidly

46   Alexander Neibaur, diary, May 24, 1844, CHL.

47   "The Law Interview," *The Daily Tribune*, Salt Lake City, July 31, 1887.

48   "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," New Mormon Studies.

49   George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 106.

50   See William Law, affidavit dated July 17, 1885. Quoted in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: The Standard

becoming the worst-kept secret" in Nauvoo in May of 1843, yet Hyrum Smith and William Law were either unaware or had just barely learned of it. In light of their lofty Church callings and their closeness to the Prophet, one wonders how far the alleged rumors had actually spread. Nevertheless, a case of adultery that began in England is valueless as evidence for the spread of knowledge regarding Nauvoo polygamy. It is obvious from Beam's own quote from Charlotte Haven that she was unaware in May of 1843 of the "worst-kept secret in Nauvoo," because she then did not believe that Joseph Smith would "ever sanction such a doctrine" of polygamy.

18. Beam also includes an even more dubious claim regarding Joseph Smith and Robert D. Foster's wife (100). He repeats a late anti-Mormon accusation but fails to reference all pertinent documents, including affidavits signed by Foster's wife insisting that Joseph was not guilty of the charges or anything akin to them.[51]

Scholars (and members who believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet) would have desired a higher standard of writing and historical analysis for Chapter 5 — one that portrayed the historical record more accurately. Indeed, the prejudices and weaknesses manifested by Beam, particularly in the second half of the chapter, are so egregious that it is unlikely that even the most militant of anti-Mormon writers would be able to make any suggestions to strengthen the antagonistic message found within those pages. They will likely appreciate and perhaps even applaud the fact that Beam doesn't seem to know the territory at all.

Joseph Smith

These are not the only problems with Alex Beam's interpretation of Joseph Smith. A telling potential problem with Beam's book

Publishing Co., 1914), 126.

51   Reproduced in *History of the Church*, 6:271.

is that he seems to be almost proud that he is not up to date with his sources, displaying an embarrassing lack of understanding of both the sources and the importance of historical research. For example, he states that "Smith had between thirty-three and forty-eight wives, depending on who was counting."[52] Incredibly, Beam actually included Fawn Brodie's 42-year-old claims as legitimate, source-backed estimates. In fact, the most recent source cited by Beam is George D. Smith's *Nauvoo Polygamy: "… but we called it celestial marriage,"* which was published six years ago, but he ignores Bringhurst and Foster's *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* and, even more bizarrely, he leaves unmentioned Brian Hales's three-volume, extensively-researched *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, which gives the most up-to-date and documented count of 35 plural wives.[53]

It isn't surprising that Beam would focus on Brodie, Compton, and Smith because, as he stated in a podcast interview, he had gone first to Fawn M. Brodie's *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* to try to understand Joseph

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52   Alex Beam, *American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 5, 91. On page 91, Beam states, "Scholars disagree on the number of wives Joseph had. Todd Compton estimates thirty-three; George D. Smith says thirty-eight; Fawn Brodie lists forty-eight; D. Michael Quinn counts forty-six." Beam later explained, "I have a joko-serious footnote that scholars disagree about the number … that's straight comedy when you have Fawn Brodie saying that Joseph has thirty-seven wives and Mike Quinn saying that Joseph has fifty-one wives." Russell Stevenson, "Podcast #10: An Interview with Alex Beam, Author of *American Crucifixion*," Mormon History Guy: Mormon History for the Masses, accessed June 30, 2014, http://mormonhistoryguy.com/2014/06/13/podcast-10-interview-alex-beam-author-american-crucifixion/.

53   Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer Books, 2010); Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:263–315; and Hales, "Biographies of Joseph's Wives," Joseph Smith's Polygamy (website), accessed June 30, 2014, http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/history-2/plural-wives-overview/.

Smith, reading her book twice.[54] He explained, "I wonder if any non-Mormon comes to Joseph Smith other than through Fawn Brodie's biography." He continued on, perhaps a little naively, "Brodie is the nightmare from which Mormonism is trying to awake." Beam later explained about his portrayal of Mormon polygamy, "I'm definitely leaning on George Smith's work and Todd Compton's work."[55]

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54   Stevenson, "Podcast #10." See also Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945). Virtually no claim of Brodie's has gone uncontested, and to rely on her uncritically can only be called historical malpractice. For a sample of the nightmare from which those who wish to rely on Brodie must wake, see Hugh Nibley, *No Ma'am, That's Not History: A Brief Review of Mrs. Brodie's Reluctant Vindication of a Prophet She Seeks to Expose* (1946, reissued 1959); reprinted in Hugh Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young*, ed. David J. Whittaker (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 3–45, esp. 33–35. Louis Midgley has written extensively on Brodie. See his "The Brodie Connection: Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20/1 (Fall 1979): 59–70; "F. M. Brodie 'The Fasting Hermit and Very Saint of Ignorance': A Biographer and Her Legend, review of *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, by Fawn McKay Brodie," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 147–230; Louis Midgley, "The Legend and Legacy of Fawn Brodie," review of *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life* by Newell G. Bringhurst, *FARMS Review of Books* 13/1 (2001): 21–72; see also Glen J. Hettinger, "Comments on Critical Exchanges," review of "A Hard Day for Professor Midgley: An Essay for Fawn McKay Brodie," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/1 (2001), 91–126. Additional useful material is also available in Gary F. Novak, review of "Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History" by John Phillip Walker, *FARMS Review of Books* 8/1 (1996): 122–67. See also a much more informed, non-LDS historian's take on Brodie in Charles L. Cohen, "No Man Knows My Psychology: Fawn Brodie, Joseph Smith, and Psychoanalysis," *BYU Studies* 44/1 (2005): 55–78. A valuable volume on both the strengths and weaknesses of Brodie's work is Newell G. Bringhurst, ed., *Reconsidering 'No Man Knows My History': Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996).

55   Stevenson, "Podcast #10." See Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1997) and Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*. To read about the serious flaws and problems of Smith's *Nauvoo Polygamy*, see Craig L. Foster, "*Nauvoo Polygamy*: "… *but we called it celestial marriage*," A Review," *Mormon Historical Studies* 11/1 (Spring 2010): 155–59 and Gregory L. Smith, "George D. Smith's *Nauvoo Polygamy*," *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 37–123.

Plural marriage, particularly during the Nauvoo period, is a complex issue with many twists and turns. Even those who have studied the subject for years sometimes have difficulty navigating the difficulties of this subject. Therefore, it is not surprising that Alex Beam, either unaware of or unconcerned by the complexities and sometimes contradicting evidences, makes mistakes and demonstrates an open and unrepentant, unapologetic bias about the subject.

In an interview, Beam repeatedly complimented himself by proudly stating he "really tried to find a middle road," and even though people had asked him why he just didn't come right out and call Joseph Smith a sexual predator, he wanted to leave it to others to make up those kinds of names for Smith. He made sure to let the listeners know that he "stopped well short of using the term lecherous conduct" about Smith's marriages and that he "stopped well short of calling Joseph Smith a dirty old man … or whatever."[56]

Unfortunately, in spite of his declarations that he took the middle of the road and didn't write his book in a voice that was derisive of Joseph Smith,[57] there were too many examples of the opposite. Perhaps one of the most inane statements in Beam's book involved Joseph Smith and Jane Law: "Most likely he lusted after the beautiful Jane Law, and intended to exercise his *droit du seigneur*."[58]

This statement is irresponsible on several levels. Firstly, even suggesting that Joseph Smith wanted to exercise his *droit du seigneur* on Jane Law is, to say the least, ludicrous. The phrase "droit du seigneur," also known as *prima nocta*, was a putative legal right allowing the lord of a medieval estate to

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56 Stevenson, "Podcast #10."

57 Stevenson, "Podcast #10."

58 Beam, *American Crucifixion*, 97.

take the virginity of his serfs' maiden daughters."[59] The idea of
Joseph Smith deflowering Jane Law, by then mother of between
four and six children, before her wedding night is absurd and
indicates either complete ignorance or simple intent to privilege
a memorable phrase over historical or journalistic accuracy.
Secondly, Beam's historical naïveté is highlighted by the fact
that knowledgeable historians have long discounted the silly
myth of a lord being able to deflower all of the virgins within
his demesne before their wedding night.[60] Thirdly, Joseph
Smith was not a medieval lord, and the Latter-day Saints were
not his vassals. He could not, even if he desired, have exercised
such a demand. Finally, there is no evidence that Joseph saw
plural relationships in the kind of salacious light that Beam
seems to favor.

But the sexual innuendo doesn't stop with the above
instance. As an example of how fair he had been, Beam stated
that he had used the word "priapic" only once.[61] This purported
example of authorial restraint is found in Chapter 13 where he
writes, "At the same time, it was whispered that Rigdon wanted
to put 1,000 miles between his attractive twenty-one-year-old
daughter Nancy and the priapic Nauvoo polygamists."[62] The

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59   *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Droit du seigneur," accessed June 30, 2014, http://
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droit_du_seigneur.

60   See Alain Boureau, *The Lord's First Night: The Myth of the Droit de
Cuissage*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998); H.
L. B., "VARIÉTÉS: Le droit du seigneur," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de
France*, 2 Série, T. 1 (Jan. 1857–Dec. 1858): 117-27; and P. K., "The Jus Primæ
Noctis," *Folklore* 9/4 (Dec., 1898): 366–68. Even Vern L. Bulough in "Jus primæ
noctis or droit du seigneur," *The Journal of Sex Research* 28/1 (February 1991):
163–66, who argues that there were probably some cases of rape acknowledges
but other researchers have found no evidences of laws allowing for such behavior.
In fact, "the most exhaustive survey was made by Karl Schmidt (1881) who held
that the whole idea was only a learned superstition" (p. 163). For more in-depth
discussion of Karl Schmidt's analysis, see Karl J. Schmidt, *Jus Primae Noctis:
Eine Geschlichtliche Untersuchung* (Freiburg: Harden, 1881).

61   Stevenson, "Podcast #10."

62   Beam, *American Crucifixion*, 237.

word priapic means "of or relating to male sexuality and sexual activity" and to "(of a male) have a persistently erect penis."[63] Such a statement is not only offensive for its suggestiveness but is also overly sensationalistic given there were only 29 men and 50 women involved in polygamous unions out of a population estimated to be around 10,000 at the time of Joseph's murder.[64]

Continuing with the sexual innuendo, Beam claims of the young women who worked in the Mansion House that Joseph Smith "ended up marrying them all, and the opera bouffe opening and closing of doors bedroom doors tormented his long-suffering wife Emma."[65]

Furthermore, while Beam mentions that the minimum age of consent for females in Illinois was 10 years old, but 14 in Nauvoo, he still seems fixated on the ages of the young women. Beam uses such terms and phrases as "teenager Martha Brotherton;" "mansion girls;" "teenage women;" "Richards married two teenage girls;" "[Smith] urged Richards to marry two teenage girls;" and "[Smith] did want to marry the Kimball's fourteen-year-old daughter."[66] But even these leading phrases are outnumbered by at least 10 uses of "seduce," "seduction," or potential or actual plural marriages described in terms of sexual advance or innuendo.[67]

Thus in spite of Beam offering information about the legal age of marriage and consent, he still lets his 21st century sensibilities color his analysis and portrayal of Joseph Smith's and others' marriages. This is not surprising given that he has no historical training and no apparent understanding of how social and marital customs have changed by time and place. His superficial command of the facts was apparent in an

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63   *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. "Priapic,", accessed July 1, 2014, http://www. oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/priapic.

64   Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:3 and 2:165.

65   Beam, *American Crucifixion*, 49.

66   Beam, *American Crucifixion* 48, 49, 90, 91, and 92.

67   Beam, *American Crucifixion*, 48, 93, 94, 97, 100, 101, 104, and 117.

interview in which he commented, "When Joseph is coming on to the Partridge sisters or the Lawrence sisters who are fifteen or sixteen — at the very least I try to put that into historical context." Admittedly, this comment is from an interview and the actual ages of the wives may have slipped his mind. Or, perhaps given his narrow view of Joseph Smith's wives, he has lumped the majority of them into a "young teenager" category. He did not get the ages of either set of sisters correct. Emily Dow Partridge was 19 and Maria Eliza Partridge was 22; Sarah Lawrence was 17, and Maria Lawrence was 19. Thus both sets of sisters were beyond what would have been considered young for marriage in 1840s Illinois.[68] Like the salesman in *The Music Man*, he doesn't know the territory, so he leads his audience astray.

Problems with Historical Sources and Method

Many of Beam's mistakes are silly missteps that are not serious in themselves but reflect this lack of understanding "the territory." For example, while discussing how Mormons viewed the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, he quotes from an article in the *Lamoni Chronicle* without noting (or perhaps even knowing) that the *Lamoni Chronicle* was from a town founded by and used as the headquarters of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It did not, therefore, reflect the views of the Utah-based Church.

Some mistakes are more serious, such as repeating without question the accusation that Willard Richards ordered Hosea Stout to murder Samuel H. Smith in order to keep him from being a threat to the leadership of Brigham Young and the

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68   Remembering the Wives of Joseph Smith (website), accessed July 2, 2014, http://www.wivesofjosephsmith.org/ and Craig L. Foster, David Keller, and Gregory L. Smith, "The Age of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives in Social and Demographic Context," in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy*, eds. Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., (Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 152–83.

Twelve Apostles. Beam states that Smith's death "has gone down in Mormon history as an ambiguous event or an unsolved crime."[69] D. Michael Quinn discusses Samuel Smith's supposed murder in *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*. While Quinn certainly did his best to make Samuel Smith's death a fascinating "whodunit" with plot, counterplot, and skullduggery galore, ultimately, even Quinn admitted, "This troubling allegation should not be ignored but cannot be verified."[70]

This is an understatement. Not only was there no contemporary evidence or primary documentation to hint at foul play but also the initial accusations from William Smith (brother of Samuel) and Mary B. Smith Norman (daughter of Samuel) were made over 50 years after the events of 1844. Even Quinn recognized how weak his theory was, repeating "evidence does not exist to prove" that Samuel Smith was murdered. Beam, however, portrays this dubious accusation as reality, perhaps because juicy speculation is more exciting than a complex reality.[71]

Conclusion

While his book has many other problems, it suffices to say that Alex Beam's *American Crucifixion* is a disappointment. His attempt to study and understand the martyrdom of Joseph Smith falls short on grounds of accuracy, balance, and

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69   Beam, *American Crucifixion*, 235.

70   D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 152–54, 383–85.

71   Ironically, while Beam accepts the supposed murder of Samuel Smith without any apparent questions or research of his own, he rejects the stories of the transfiguration of Brigham Young to look and sound like Joseph Smith, in part because, according to him, the manifestation "appeared in no contemporary accounts of Brigham's talk." Beam, *American Crucifixion*, 241. This would seem to represent an ideological bias rather than a consistent approach to historical evidence.

completeness. It fails as serious scholarship and is merely a popularized repetition of inadequate work that has gone before. *The Music Man* concludes happily with Professor Harold Hill being saved by an inexperienced but dedicated musical band of little boys playing their hearts out to the joy of proud River City townsfolk. Alex Beam's creation, however, leaves readers with an inadequate and biased examination of Joseph Smith and Mormon history. Not only did Beam not know the territory, but he also chose not to learn it. We are left with little but what his pre-conceived biases expected the terrain to look like. We suspect that any editor faced with a reporter who told a story involving living people with Beam's lack of due diligence would urge — or order — their underling to find a new beat. Mormon history is not Beam's beat; he doesn't know the territory.

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A Look at Some "Nonstandard" Book of Mormon Grammar

Stanford Carmack

Abstract: *Much of the earliest Book of Mormon language which has been regarded as nonstandard through the years is not. Furthermore, when 150 years' worth of emendations are stripped away,[1] the grammar presents extensive evidence of its Early Modern English character, independent in many cases from the King James Bible. This paper argues that this character stems from its divine translation.*

Preliminary remarks

This article provides additional solid evidence in favor of Skousen's TIGHT CONTROL view of Book of Mormon translation and that the words of the text were revealed to Joseph Smith from the Lord (see 2 Nephi 27:11, 19–24). Skousen came to this view after scrutinizing the manuscripts, the printed editions, and internal and external textual evidence over many years (see, for example, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript"[2] and *Analysis of Textual Variants*[3]). His approach is abundantly supported by many cases of obsolete Early Modern English and even some non-English, Hebrew-like constructions that

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1 Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009).

2 Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7.1 (1998): 24ff.

3 Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 Parts, (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2004–09). These will be referenced within the text by part and page, for example ATV 6: 3589–90.

exist in the earliest English text of the Book of Mormon and whose syntax would have been unknown to Joseph Smith and his scribes.

> [Skousen's Earliest Text of the Book of Mormon[4] — the "Yale edition" — is used throughout this study. For date ranges of Early Modern English, some scholars use 1470 to 1670, others 1500 to 1700, and there are other opinions as well. As for **late** Middle English, it began during the early 1300s and ended sometime in the late 1400s. **Boldface** will often be used in this article for emphasis since so many word forms are *italicized*. And Small caps is often used to indicate pregnant meaning or to highlight various word forms in examples. The following abbreviations are used throughout much of this article: Book of Mormon (BofM), King James Version of the Bible (KJV), *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED),[5] *Analysis of Textual Variants* (ATV), Modern English (ModE), Early Modern English (EModE), Middle English (ME).]

Introduction

Early assessments of the quality of the English language of the Book of Mormon were largely dismissive. Many criticisms were merely unsubstantiated, derisive comments lacking in analysis, sometimes made for comic effect, while others were more substantive but still without an awareness of older English beyond that found in the King James Bible.[6] A close syntactic

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4   Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text.*

5   *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., on CD-ROM, v.4 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

6   See, e.g., E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 23–24; Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, CT: American, 1872), 127–28, 135; and Bernard DeVoto, "The Centennial of Mormonism." *The American*

examination of the language of the BofM, however, reveals that the quality of English in the book is excellent and even sophisticated. But because in many cases it is English that we don't use today, it seems to the casual observer to be deficient in many ways. The English certainly is very frequently different from and foreign to current modes of expression. But it turns out to be nonstandard only sporadically. When we consider more advanced syntax, such as the nominative absolute construction (discussed later in this article), nested structures (3 Nephi 5:14;[7] Jacob 1:10–11 [see below]; 3 Nephi 7:12), and command syntax or causative constructions (hundreds of these in the text, with usage strikingly different from that of the KJV), we find the BofM to be quite elaborate in its patterns of use.

Beyond fairly routine, shallow, derogatory statements about BofM language, we note that B. H. Roberts, who was largely (and admirably) self-educated, showed concern for "errors in grammar and diction" apparent in the text.[8] He viewed imputing "such errors to God [as] unthinkable, not to say blasphemous."[9] Yet Roberts — with good motives but no expertise in Early Modern English — fell prey, as many of us do, to the allure of grammatical prescriptivism. And by asserting what he did, he put constraints on the Lord, imposing specific choices. We hardly need to remind ourselves that God has supreme intelligence and that we are limited by human understanding. With that in mind, it is right to be expansive in

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Mercury 19.73 (1930: 5); and compare E. B. T. Spencer "Note on the Book of Mormon." The Methodist Review. Ed. William V. Kelley. Vol. 87 — 5th series, Vol. 21. New York: Eaton & Mains, (1905: 33–38), who made many specific criticisms that clearly reveal, however, a lack of knowledge of Early Modern English.

7   See Royal Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" Journal of Book Mormon Studies 3.1 (1994): 33.

8   B. H. Roberts, "Translation of the Book of Mormon." Improvement Era 9.6 (1906), 428–29.

9   See also Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," 28.

our acceptance of grammatical possibilities within the book and grant that the Lord could have intentionally made a translation using forms that are nonstandard in Modern English; and he also could have allowed dialectal forms to enter the first written text. Indeed, he has permitted many incorrect and unnecessary emendations (largely inconsequential) to become part of the fabric of the book's text through the years.[10] Because of the frequency and number of subsequent substantive edits through the decades, we conclude that Moroni did not instruct Joseph Smith against making such changes to the text. So the Lord knew it would happen through the years, and though aware of the loss of meaning that some of the faulty emendations entailed, he has waited patiently for them to be corrected, in all likelihood because they have not been doctrinally significant.[11]

God chose the language variety that was delivered to Joseph Smith, despite its archaic and obsolete character, consistent with his divine purposes. But still, many of us, like B. H. Roberts, have tended to doubt the quality of the textual language through the centuries because some of the older forms in the book look wrong or sound bad to us, even from the perspective of the KJV. A portion of that doubt stems from the fact that we don't have a linguist's knowledge of KJV language, but more of it derives from the fact that we aren't

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10   For example, *striped* changed to *stripped* (Alma 11:2) in 1840 — see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 3* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2007), 1802–04.

11   See Royal Skousen, "The Original Text of the Book of Mormon and its Publication by Yale University Press," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 81. Yet when considered together, the hundreds of faulty emendations do add up to something. So it behooves us, going forward, to use throughout the Church a version of the BofM that is closer to the one God initially provided for us. I advocate using Skousen's 2009 Yale edition as a base text for such an endeavor. With the textual analysis capabilities of our present era, we can now make consistent substantive edits and in a limited way standardize the Earliest Text, noting such changes. In addition, valuable notes and glosses could be provided in order to point out to readers EModE meanings and syntax as well as conjectural emendations.

experts in EModE (both comprehensible positions). As a result, we've missed some arcane linguistic correspondences between the KJV and the BofM, but what is more important, we haven't realized that many ostensibly defective forms reflect usage from earlier stages of the English language. Most of these are clearly attested in the textual record of EModE and even late ME — some frequently, some rarely.[12]

It's important and helpful to bear in mind that the original BofM language is, generally speaking, only nonstandard from our standpoint, centuries after the Elizabethan era, which appears to be the epicenter of the book's syntax. To be clear, I still allow for a small portion of the language of the BofM to be the result of human error, on the part of Smith and scribe, what Skousen calls DIALECTAL OVERLAY. But many words and phrases initially found in the text, which we have thought to be American dialectal idiosyncrasies, are not. Many of the nonstandard ModE word forms and phrases emended through the years are simply examples of typical EModE. (Please note that I do not call these examples cases of **standard** EModE, since it's doubtful that there was a standard at that stage of the English language — see below.)

The impetus for most of the edits that the BofM has suffered through the decades has been to "clean up" the language and make it more closely conform to a ModE standard. It's perhaps ironic that through the years emendations have removed language that clearly points to the objective impossibility of Joseph Smith being able to either compose the book or put it into his own language. It has obscured our ability to see that it is, in large part, an EModE text.

While ascribing some "nonstandard" language to deity is against Roberts's view of over a century ago, this reality is not

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12   Skousen has pointed this out (see, Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" 29–30 [with some KJV examples]; 2009: xxxvii–xxxix; 2013: 90–93).

problematic to faithful views of the text's provenance. By virtue of his supremely intelligent nature, the Lord must be viewed as having native-speaker competence in all language varieties and being fully capable of putting together the English text of the BofM with its normal if extensive linguistic variation. Skousen has asserted "that since God is not … a respecter of tongues, he is perfectly willing to speak to his 'servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding' " (quoting D&C 1:24).[13] In other words, the Lord doesn't discriminate against linguistic variation or the intrinsic worth of different languages and dialects (when not used in an evil way, for evil purposes). Therefore, had another time and place been right for the publication of the BofM, or another style of language, then another language (variety) could have been chosen.

The notion of nonstandard in relation to Early Modern English

With those introductory remarks, we now review some recent statements about the idea of NONSTANDARD as it relates to earlier stages of English. Hickey notes that the "modern notion of standard English is an eighteenth-century development which builds on formal usage prior to that. The prescriptivism which arose at this time led to the social marginalisation of dialects and their literature."[14] Claridge and Kytö observe that the "concept of 'non-standard' remains somewhat fuzzy during the Early Modern English period. Language change and especially ongoing standardization can make it difficult

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13   Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" 31–32. See also Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon," 31.

14   Raymond Hickey, "Linguistic evaluation of earlier texts," *Varieties of English in Writing*, Raymond Hickey, ed. (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2010), 1.

to pin down an individual feature at any given time as clearly non-standard."[15]

The goal of standardization has always been to achieve maximal functional capacity with minimal variation in form. In other words, a lexical or syntactic STANDARD is one that can be used in a maximum number of contexts with variation kept to a minimum — variation in vocabulary, spelling, grammar.[16] Prescriptivists want to eliminate variation, but that is never possible in spoken language or in extended written texts, nor is it desirable. The BofM exhibits plenty of variation, and that is the result of its being a natural language translation. God conveyed the important eternal truths and doctrines found in the text after the manner of an earlier stage of English — a human language full of both free variation and principled variation. And of course we must conclude that he chose not to reduce or eliminate the variation.

The KJV seemingly has less variation, but that is due in part to the KJV translation committees consciously working to reduce it, and also the result of standardization over time since its initial publication in 1611. Take, for example, *thou saidest/saidst*. There is one of each in the (Earliest Text of the) BofM: Alma 11:25 and Helaman 11:14. In contrast, there are 21 instances of *saidst* in the KJV Old Testament, but no variant forms. So is the KJV a purer, better text than the BofM? Is the BofM faulty or defective in this regard? We can answer this question with a decisive no.

We currently read a cleaned-up, **standardized** version of the KJV (and the BofM as well [the current, partially regularized

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15   Claudia Claridge and Merja Kytö, "Non-standard language and earlier English," *Varieties of English in Writing*, Raymond Hickey, ed., (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2010), 15.

16   Skousen has standardized the spelling as if Smith had had one scribe throughout the translation who consistently had first-rate spelling knowledge and ability. Thus he controlled what are called the **accidentals**, but not the **substantives**.

text of the BofM has two instances of only *saidst*]). The **1611** Old Testament had 13 instances of *saidst* (the "standard" form), 4 of *saidest*, 3 of *saydst*, and 1 of *saydest* (Job 35:2). That verb form has been completely standardized in the biblical text, in both spelling and phonology. An example of incomplete standardization is *riches*. In Jeremiah 48:36 we now read "because the **riches** that he hath gotten **are** perished." But in the 1611 original this reads "**is** perished", since *riches* coming out of the ME period was singular, being derived from Old French *richesse* (singular) = 'wealth'. Indeed, Revelation 18:17 still shows the singular usage (with archaic auxiliary selection): "For in one hour so great **riches is** come to nought."[17] And so we have incomplete syntactic standardization still to be found in the venerable KJV.

With that in mind we now consider some forms found in the BofM which are generally accepted to be nonstandard. Skousen mentions three in one of his earlier articles on BofM usage:[18]

in *them* days [Helaman 13:37] (*in them days* 2×:
Helaman 7:8)

I had *smote* [1 Nephi 4:19] (*had smote* 3×: Alma 20:30;
Ether 15:31)

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17   Here are some EModE examples from the OED showing *riches* clearly used in the singular:

1535 Stewart *Cron. Scot.* I. 449 Ʒour **riches** thus **is** waistit and euill waird. **1590** Lodge *Euphues Gold. Leg.* B 4 b, **Riches** (Saladyne) **is** a great royalty, & there is no sweeter phisick than store. **1604** Shakes. *Oth.* III. iii. 173 But **Riches** finelesse **is** as poore as Winter, To him that euer feares he shall be poore. **1606** B. Barnes *Offices* I. 2 **It** [*sc.* **riches**] **is** the bone of that strong arme, by which the kingdome is in time of peace strengthened against all hostile attempts. **1607** J. Carpenter Spir. Plough 209 All that copie or **riches**..**is** nought else but extreame povertie. **1667** Waterhouse *Fire London* 30 **This riches**..was as well devoured by the Suburbian thieves.

18   Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" 30.

> they *was* yet wroth [1 Nephi 4:4] (*they was* 5×:
> Mosiah 18:17; 29:36; Alma 9:31; 9:32)

These deserve a second look. Are these nonstandard forms? From a ModE perspective, they certainly are. Are they clearly attested in EModE? Yes. Must they necessarily be regarded as the intrusion of upstate New York dialect in the translation process?[19] No, they don't have to be at all.

Demonstrative *them*

First we consider *in them days*. The use of demonstrative *them* has been an American nonstandard dialect form for some time, but it actually arose at least in the 16th century in England and was part of **formal** usage in that time period. It simply wasn't "adopted into the codified standard of British English which emerged during the eighteenth century and which was shaped by the strictures of normative grammars which were published at that time."[20] In the OED we see these three early "nonstandard" examples of the demonstrative used after a preposition and with a following noun:[21]

> **1596** H. Clapham *Bible Hist.* 92 To Samaria and **them partes**. **1598** Barret *Theor. Warres* i. i. 4 The warres and weapons are now altered from **them dayes**. **1621** Ainsworth *Annot. Pentat. Gen.* xviii. 6 Foure of **them Logs** make a Kab.

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19   The possible intrusion of dialectal forms is an example of what Skousen's TIGHT CONTROL view of BofM translation might have allowed: as Joseph Smith dictated the text to his scribe, with a resulting human error in seeing, reading, hearing, or writing (see Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon," 24).

20   Hickey, "Linguistic evaluation of earlier texts," 5.

21   The relevant dictionary entry is [**them**, *pers. pron.* 5]. The OED provides two early nominative uses as well (such uses are absent in the BofM):

> **1607** Topsell *Four-f. Beasts* (1658) 126 **Them** few [**dogs**] which be kept must be tyed up in the day time. **1610** Healey *Vives' Comment St. Aug. Citie of God* xii. xvi, Augustine… saith that **them times** were called eternall.

The 1598 quotation shows the use of *them dayes*, just as we see twice in the BofM.

"Apart from the fact that there was no unambiguous standard at that time, one can only say that [these quotations] are from contexts which make a careful and formal use of language very likely."[22] So while it isn't accurate to call *them days* **standard** EModE usage (because of the absence of a standard), we can properly view it as formal EModE usage. It thus fits well in the BofM text. So it is reasonable to surmise that *them days* was indeed transmitted to Joseph Smith twice; there was probably no inadvertent conversion of *those days* by Smith or scribe into dialectal *them days* in the scribal transmission process. While its use may grate on our prescriptivist nerves, *them days* can reasonably be viewed as an intentional part of the translation.

By way of a brief aside, this article singles out for discussion examples that appear to be ungrammatical or nonstandard. Much of the time, however, the superficial grammar of the Earliest Text actually seems **standard** from a ModE perspective. A case in point is the phrase type we've just been discussing: *in them* + plural noun phrase. The BofM has **more** examples of the ModE standard: *in **those** cities / traditions / signs / lands / circumstances*. And *those* was also used in this way in the KJV and more generally in EModE.[23]

Levelled past-participial verb forms

Next we consider *I had smote*. To many of us, *smote* seems to be a past-tense verb form **defectively** used in a pluperfect construction. The KJV doesn't use *smote* in this way. From

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22   Claridge and Kytö, "Non-standard language and earlier English," 30.

23   Here are two examples of *in those days* taken from the OED:

     1571 Golding *Calvin on Ps.* xlix. 5 It was a customable matter **in those dayes** to sing Psalmes to the harp. **1611** Bible *2 Kings* x. 32 **In those dayes** the Lord began to cut Israel short [*margin*, Hebr. to cut off the ends].

the perspective of that important biblical text, past-participial *smote* is a grammatical error; it seems like *smitten* should have been used in 1 Nephi 4:19 (and in Alma 17:39; 20:30; 26:29; 51:20; Ether 15:31). Indeed, in the latest LDS edition there is only standardized *smitten* in these contexts, a clear reflection of that view. But *smote* is specifically noted in the OED as functioning as a **past participle** for centuries in English, beginning in the 16th century. The OED contains about 10 examples of this usage. Here are two representative quotations from that dictionary, one with *smote* used in the passive voice,[24] one with *smote* used in the active voice:

> **1597** Beard *Theatre God's Judgm.* (1612) 309 He caused..the Citie of the Priests to **be smote** with the edge of the sword. **1658** Manton *Exp. Jude* verse 3. Wks. 1871 V. 98 The goose-quill **hath smote** antichrist under the fifth rib.[25]

As a result, we are justified in thinking that *smote* is the correctly translated word.

Again, this paper focuses on exceptional word forms, and this is the case here as well. Past-participial *smitten* is used 42 times in the BofM; only 6 times is the levelled form *smote* used

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24   Spencer, "Notes on the Book of Mormon," 35, pointed out this usage as an error of the BofM (Alma 51:20). He was thus unknowingly criticizing the writing of an English clergyman and theologian who wrote around the same time that the KJV was written.

25   There are at least six other OED quotations with *smote* used as a verbal past participle, from the 16th c. to the 19th c., plus one early one with *smot*:

    1590 Spenser *F.Q.* iii. ii. 46 Till thou in open field adowne be **smot**. **1624** Quarles *Job Militant* iii. 43 Which [wind] with a full-mouth Blast Hath **smote** the House. *a***1716** South *serm.* (1744) X. 192 Being **smote** upon the face, they expostulated the injury of the blow. **1768–74** Tucker *Lt. Nat.* (1834) II. 523 Turning the right cheek to him that has **smote** the left. **1777** Warton *Poems* 76 But since, *gay-thron'd in fiery chariot sheen, Summer has **smote** each daisy-dappled dale. **1813** T. Busby *Lucretius* II. vi. 676 Eruptive winds, what cities have they **smote**! **1818** Byron *Mazeppa* xviii, Once so near me he alit, I could have **smote**.

(12.5%). Still, Shakespeare goes along with the exceptional BofM usage; there is no occurrence of *smitten* in his large body of work. There is one case of *have smote*, another of *have smit*, but **no** cases of HAVE/BE+*smitten* (SMALL CAPS is often used here and elsewhere in order to indicate any relevant form of a verb).

Shakespeare's *smit* is a **clipped** past-participial form akin to *hid up*, which is found 10 times in the BofM, including twice in the title page. Here is an interesting 17th-c. usage found in the OED:

> *a*1652 J. SMITH *Sel. Disc.* vi. 200 That so his sublime and recondite doctrine might be the better **hid up** therein.

The OED declares *therein* to be a word used formally in EModE, and the Latinate adjective *recondite* fits in such a context, supporting the assertion that *hid up* could appear in formal language. So *hid up,* which Twain poked fun at back in 1872,[26] is not just a 19th-c. American colloquialism, but a **formal** usage from the EModE period.

It is noteworthy that *had smote* occurs three times in the BofM, never **had smitten*. This is a good example of a pattern widely seen in the text: past-tense verb forms used as past participles are especially favored in the BofM with the past-tense auxiliary *had*. Some notable ones are *had spake*, *had came*, and *had began*. *Had spoke* is a usage directly analogous to *had smote*, and it is found at least eight times in the OED

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26 **1872** 'MARK TWAIN' *Roughing It* xvi. 128 "Hid up" is good. And so is "wherefore" — though why "wherefore"? Any other word would have answered as well — though in truth it would not have sounded so Scriptural. **1884** 'MARK TWAIN' *Huck. Finn* xxiv. 241 It's reckoned he left three or four thousand in cash **hid up** som'ers.

(*had spake* once), beginning in the late ME period.[27] And *had spoke* also occurs six times in the Shakespeare *œuvre*; there is no case of **had spoken*. As a result, HAVE/BE+*smote* and HAVE/BE+*spake* (13×) should **not** be considered nonstandard dialectal forms in the BofM; they have deep English roots. (The same can be said for many other analogous forms in the BofM — for example, *had came* [also 13×].[28])

Past-tense number agreement levelling

Next we consider *they was yet wroth. They was* is uncommon in the book (and in the EModE record): it occurs five times in the BofM while *they were* occurs 628 times (0.8% *they was*). Nevalainen notes that plural **pronouns** — *we, ye/you, they* — were used with singular *was* in EModE written correspondence

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27   Here are a few OED quotations showing *had spoke / had spake*:
    *c*1400 *Three Kings Cologne* (1886) 56 Whan þey **had spoke** togedir and euerych of hem had tolde his purpos and þe cause of his weye. *c*1500 *Three Kings' Sons* 61 That he **had spake** to hym. **1602** SHAKES. *Ham.* III. ii. 4, I had as liue the Town-Cryer **had spoke** my Lines. **1612** DRAYTON *Poly-olb.* xvi. 311 To much beloued Lee, this scarcely Sturt **had spoke**. **1699** GARTH *Dispens.* i. 11 More **had He spoke** but sudden Vapours rise, And with their silken Cords tye down his Eyes. *a*1716 SOUTH *Serm.* VIII. vii. (R.), Just as if Cicero **had spoke** commendatories of Anthony. **1725** tr. *Dupin's Eccl. Hist. 17th C.* v. I. 184 He begs Aleander to send him the figur'd Inscription of the Sicles, of which he **had spoke** to him. *a*1774 GOLDSM. tr. *Scarron's Com. Romance* (1775) I. 63 When she **had spoke** these last words. **1814** SCOTT *Ld. of Isles* III. ii, When that grey Monk His prophet-speech **had spoke**.

28   We note further that Henry Fielding used *had spoke* five times in the 18th c., Sir Walter Scott used it four times in the early 19th c., but the early 19th-c. **American** author J. Fenimore Cooper never did in his extensive writings (4.5m words). This also points to *had spake* and *had smote* as not deriving from an American source.
    The OED contains this 17th-c. quotation:
    1694 ECHARD *Plautus* 53 If I had got Pacolet's Horse, I cou'dn't **ha' came** sooner.
    This is an example of a phenomenon that persists to this day: modal perfect use increases the likelihood that a levelled past-participial verb form will be used. For many English speakers *he must have fell* sounds acceptable, while *he has fell* does not.

about 5% of the time (from 1440 to 1639).[29] Of these, *they was* is the least frequent. This overall rate of use is slightly higher than what is noted in the BofM, the kind of difference that might be expected in comparisons of written correspondence with a formal religious text. The variation from the EModE period is thus properly reflected in the text. So we conclude that the rare instances of *they was* found in the text were likely intended and not caused by dialectal overlay; each of them could've come from the divine translation.

The usage rate of *we was* and *ye was* is higher in the BofM, but the counts are much lower. *We was* occurs once (1 Nephi 17:6), *we were* 35 times (2.8%). *Ye was* occurs once (Alma 7:18), *ye were* 20 times (4.8%). Northern British writers demonstrate singular past-tense usage with *ye/you* as far back as the 15th and the 16th centuries.[30] Nevalainen has found that in EModE written correspondence "*we* turns out to be the only plural pronoun to occur with any frequency with *was*."[31] The observed relative frequency is, in descending order: *we was,* then *ye/you was,* then *they was.* There isn't much relevant data in the BofM text, but *they was* does show the lowest rate of use of the three plural pronouns, as was the case in EModE.

Also consistent with EModE behavior is the observed fact that plural-to-singular levelling occurs only in the marked past

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29   Terttu Nevalainen, "Vernacular universals? The case of plural *was* in Early Modern English," *Types of Variation: Diachronic, dialectal and typological interfaces.* Terttu Nevalainen et al., ed. (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2006), 362–63. The OED has only two 17th-c. examples of *they was* out of about 1,500 examples of *they were* (0.13% nonstandard):

   1675–7 G. Fox Jrnl. (1911) I. 267 About this time [sc. 1656] I was moved to sett uppe ye mens Quarterly meetinges throughout ye nation though in ye north **they was** setled before. **1694** T. Houghton *Royal Instit.* Ded. A 3 Which Veyns and Mines, if **they was**..Set to Work, by any that understands them, would..prove as Rich.

30   *c*1450 Henryson *Mor. Fab.* 19 **You was** our drowrie and our dayes darling. *a*1529 Skelton *Poems agst. Garnesche* 46 In dud frese **ye was** schryned With better frese lynyd.

31   Nevalainen, "Vernacular universals?" 360.

tense in the BofM — that is, there isn't any occurrence of *they is* in the book (or *we is*, *ye is*). Nevalainen has found EModE language that exemplifies this directly:[32]

> **Some of our chief commanders**, as Col. Sands and Duglas, **was** wounded, and **are** since both dead (1642) | That in the evening from a steeple wch hath advantage for itt, **was** [discerned] **300 vessels. They are** merchantmen in generall (1652)

The 1642 excerpt strikingly and effectively illustrates the use of the past tense in the singular and the present tense in the plural. The subject is the same for both verbs.[33] The BofM in effect shows the same usage pattern:

> For as I said unto you from the beginning, that I had much desire that **ye was** not in the state of dilemma like your brethren, even so I have found that my desires have been gratified. For I perceive that **ye are** in the paths of righteousness.
>
> *Alma 7:18–19*

The correspondence between EModE *some was/are* and BofM *ye was/are* is clear.

Existential verb use in the past tense

Nevalainen also indicates that the existential past-tense *there was* was frequently used with plural noun phrase subjects in EModE written correspondence (29% of the time).[34] That

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32   Nevalainen, "Vernacular universals?" 358.

33   The second example is not as strong since the subject comes after the past-tense verb and there may be a positional effect; also, there isn't ellipsis, as there is in the first excerpt. Still, we note the contrastive use of singular past-tense *was* and plural present-tense *are* with the same referent.

34   See also Jerry Morgan, "Some Problems of Agreement in English and Albanian." *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Berkely Linguistics Society* (Berkely: Berkely Linguistics Society, 1984), 235. Shakespeare has: There

should not surprise speakers of present-day English; the same tendency is noted today with both *there's* and *there was*. A check of *there was* followed by plural noun phrase subjects in the BofM yields 30 counts. Here are four plain examples:

> [1 Nephi 18:25] there was beasts in the forests of every kind [Alma 4:9] there was envyings and strifes
> [Mormon 9:19] if there was miracles wrought
> [Ether 13:26] there was robbers

On the other hand, there are about 120 instances of *there were* + plural noun phrase subjects in the book. This yields a 20% usage rate for plural subjects with (past-tense) singular verbs.[35] Thus the BofM rate of *there was* usage with plural noun phrase subjects is lower than, but fairly close to, the observed EModE written correspondence rate. Again, this is the kind of difference we expect when we compare the BofM with the less formal corpus used by Nevalainen in her study.

Worth mentioning here are the three places in the BofM where instead of *there was* + PLURAL NOUN we surprisingly find the reverse situation — that is, *there **were*** + SINGULAR NOUN. These are all of the form *there **were** **no*** followed by a singular noun:

> … and they were in one body. Therefore **there were no** *chance* for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food save it were to come up in open battle against the Nephites.
>
> *3 Nephi 4:4*

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was three fools fell out about an howlet (*Two Noble Kinsmen* III. v. 67); There **is** reasons and causes for it (Merry Wives of Windsor III i. 48), etc.

35   Some of the counts are difficult; I am not making an effort to be exact here, only close.

> Nevertheless … it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that **there were no** *part* of their frame that it did not cause to quake *3 Nephi 11:3*

> peace did remain for the space of about four years, that **there were no** *bloodshed*
>
> *Mormon 1:12*

Is this bad BofM grammar? The KJV doesn't have any cases of this curious syntax, and these readings have all been changed subsequently to *there **was** no*. ATV 6: 3589–90 discusses these examples, noting that *there was no* is used in the text in this context at least 36 times. And *there was no* was also commonly used in the 16th century. Yet a search for the plural construction in EModE does turn up a number of examples:

> **1523** Cromwell in Merriman *Life & Lett.* (1902) I. 30 Whereoff **there were no** dowte but that ryght haboundant stremys shuld from his most liberall magnyfysence be dereued… **1548** Hall *Chron., Edw. V* 9 Put the case that we neither loued her nor her kynne, yet **there were no** cause why [etc.]. **1594** Blundevil *Exerc.* v. (1636) 592 **There were no** way.. to be compared vnto it, neither for the truenesse, easinesse, nor readinesse of working thereby. **1681** Otway *Soldier's Fort.* v. (1687) 61 … I and my Watch going my morning Rounds, and finding your door open, made bold to enter to see **there were no** danger.

In short, these OED quotations have: *there were no doubt/ cause/way/danger*. This subjunctive construction was therefore optionally available for use in the EModE period to express the unreality of the situation described (an old example of what is commonly termed the IRREALIS mood). Consequently, not only do we find that this particular BofM syntax — *there were no chance/part/bloodshed* — is not bad grammar, but from an

examination of the syntactic structure in EModE we obtain additional confirmation that the BofM is a well-formed EModE text.

Notional concord and the principle of proximity

How about syntax such as [*the* **arms** *of mercy*]ᵢ **was**ᵢ *extended towards them* (Mosiah 16:12)? It appears twice in this verse and once with present-tense *is* in Alma 5:33. Singular *was* is used about one-third of the time in the book in these contexts.[36] Nowadays we tend to focus on grammatical concord with the **head** of the noun phrase (the noun phrase is in brackets

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36   Others include: [1 Nephi 18:15] the **judgments** of God **was** upon them; [Mosiah 27:8] the **sons** of Mosiah **was** numbered among the unbelievers; [Alma 25:9] the **words** of Abinadi **was** brought to pass; [Ether 12:1] the **days** of Ether **was** in the days of Coriantumr; [3 Nephi 7:6] the **regulations** of the government **was** destroyed.

These contrast with: [Jarom 1:5] the laws of the land **were** exceeding strict; [Mosiah 18:34] Alma and the people of the Lord **were** apprised of the coming of the king's army; [Mosiah 19:2] the forces of the king **were** small; [**Alma 14:27**] the walls of the prison were rent in twain; [Alma 17:2] these sons of Mosiah **were** with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; [Alma 17:15] the promises of the Lord **were** extended unto them on the conditions of repentance; [Alma 17:27] as Ammon and the servants of the king **were** driving forth their flocks to this place of water; [Alma 46:29] the people of Moroni **were** more numerous than the Amalickiahites; [Alma 48:25] the promises of the Lord **were** if they should keep his commandments, they should prosper in the land; [Alma 50:22] those who were faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord **were** delivered at all times; [Alma 52:28] the men of Lehi **were** fresh; [Alma 52:39] their weapons of war **were** taken from them; [Alma 62:24] the armies of Moroni **were** within the walls; [Helaman 5:27] they that were in the prison **were** Lamanites and Nephites which were dissenters; [Helaman 8:21] the sons of Zedekiah **were** not slain; [3 Nephi 26:17] as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus **were** filled with the Holy Ghost; [3 Nephi 26:21] they which were baptized in the name of Jesus **were** called the church of Christ; [3 Nephi 27:1] as the disciples of Jesus **were** journeying and were preaching; [Ether 13:31] the people upon all the face of the land **were** a shedding blood; [Ether 15:6] the people of Coriantumr **were** stirred up to anger; [Ether 15:6] the people of Shiz **were** stirred up to anger; [Ether 15:13] the people which were for Coriantumr **were** gathered together to the army of Coriantumr; [Ether 15:13] the people which were for Shiz **were** gathered together to the army of Shiz.

— its head is *arms*). So from that point of view this is defective agreement. But in this particular case there may be **notional** concord — that is, [*mercy*]$_{sg}$ *was* $_{sg}$ — or even "agreement of a verb with a closely preceding noun phrase in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase that functions as subject."[37]

In the case of *the arms of mercy was*, proximity agreement is probably reinforced by notional concord. Quirk et al. also provide the following example (and four others are included below theirs).[38] These sentences demonstrate the prevalence of the phenomenon in present-day English:

> No ONE except his own *supporters* **agree** with him.
> More than *one* **was** there. Less than *two* **were** there.
> NONE of these *examples* **were** very clear.
> I asked her two specific THINGS *which* I didn't think
> **was** in her article.[39]

Some verses showing proximity agreement or notional concord can of course also simply be cases of EModE plural–singular agreement variation. That is because singular *was* was used with plural noun phrase subjects 20% of the time at the beginning of the EModE era.[40] That rate diminished over time. Sixteenth-century examples of this kind of agreement (and of proximity agreement) from the OED include the following:

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37   Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London: Longman, 1985), 757 (§10.35). Quirk et al. also call this phenomenon "attraction" in their descriptive, comprehensive treatise on English grammar.

38   Quirk et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, 757.

39   Compare 1 Nephi 2:5; 5:11; 15:3; etc. See Terttu Nevalainen, "Vernacular universals? The case of plural was in Early Modrn English." *Types of Variation: Diachronic, dialectal, and typological interfaces.* Ed. Terttu Nevalainen et al (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2006), 364.

40   Nevalainen, "Vernacular universals?" 362.

> **1508** Fisher *Wks.* (1876) 279 The **assautes** of *deth*
> **was** fyers and sharpe. **1593** *Rites & Mon. Church of*
> *Durham* (Surtees) 79 All the **pippes** of *it* **was** of Sylver
> to be sleaven on a long speare staffe.

Past-tense second-person singular inflection

One of the signal achievements of Skousen's Earliest Text is
the uncovering of EModE usage through unflinching editorial
rigor despite apparent ungrammaticality. Take, for example,
thou received as found in the following passage:[41]

> **thou** *hast* great cause to rejoice … **thou** *hast* been
> faithful in keeping the commandments of God from
> the time which **thou** *received* thy first message from
> him
>
> *Alma 8:15*

The second-person singular (2sg) past-tense verb form in this
verse initially carried no -*st* inflection, even though Luke 16:25
has *thou…receivedst.* This, then, makes it seem like the BofM
is faulty when compared to the KJV.[42] So isn't *thou received*
just the result of dictation/scribal error, a mispronouncing
or mishearing of a rare verb form with a difficult consonant
cluster? Almost certainly not. First, the pronunciation is very
different — two syllables versus three, very different ending
sounds: [rəˈsivd] versus [rəˈsi.vətst]. Second, the textual record
of EModE shows that 2sg inflection was often **not** used with
(regular) past-tense verb stems. This absence of marking is
present from at least the ME period. There are many examples

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41   Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 3*,
1740–41, notes that the change to *receivèdst* came in 1920.

42   There are two instances of 2sg *hast* immediately preceding *thou received*.
It seems that their use in that passage could have analogically led to the use of -*st*
in *received*, but it did not.

of *thou* used with bare past-tense stems in the OED. Here is one very similar to *thou received*:

> **1526** *Pilgr. Perf.* (W. de W. 1531) 182 **Thou..conceyued** thy chylde without corrupcyon or violacyon of thy virginite.[43]

This indicates that *thou received* could well be a case of EModE syntax, not a failed attempt at archaic usage or an inadvertent human error.

Similar to this is *thou had*, used as a full verb in this choppy verse:[44]

> Behold, these six onties — which are of great worth — I will give unto thee — when **thou had** it in thy heart to retain them from me.

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43   Here are some further examples from the OED: **1402** in *Pol. Poems* (Rolls) II. 45 A! for-writhen serpent, thi wyles ben aspied, with a thousand wrynkels **thou vexed** many soules. **1430–40** Lydg. *Bochas* viii. i. (1558) 3 b, **Thou died** in preson at mischefe like a wretch. **1507** *Communyc.* (W. de W.) A iij, **Thou purposed** the daye by daye To set my people in synnynge. *c***1510** Barclay *Mirr. Gd. Manners* (1570) D iij, Reputing in his thought By suche maner giftes thee greatly to content, Because **thou resembled** as poore and indigent. **1526** *Pilgr. Perf.* (W. de W. 1531) 262 All the compassyons & mercyes that **thou shewed** to the people. ~ 262 b, That vnspekable mercy that **thou shewed** in theyr vocacyon or callynge. ~ 20 b, I am the soule of hym that **thou watched** the last nyght. **1562** Foxe *A. & M.* I. 456/2 For so **thou behited** us sometime. **1577–87** Holinshed *Scot. Chron.* (1805) II. 51 Though **thou seemed** as enemie..ʒit we found mair humanities and plaisures than damage by thy cumming. *c***1600** Shakes. *Sonn.* i, But **thou contracted** to thine owne bright eyes. *a***1625** A. Garden *Theat. Scot. Kings* (Abbotsf. Club.) 14 **Thou forced** for to fald Such as deboir'd from thy Obedience darre. **1638** *Diary of Ld. Warriston* (S.H.S.) 295 **Thou prayed** earnestly for the Lords direction..about..the hol busines to be trusted to the staits~men. *a***1656** *Sir Cawline* xxi. in Child *Ballads* II. 59/1 For because **thou minged** not Christ before, The lesse me dreadeth thee. **1720** Welton *Suffer. Son of God* I. viii. 202 **Thou Deigned** to Come down..to dwell with Me in this Exile-World.

44   See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 3*, 1821–22, for a discussion, noting that the change to *hadst* came in 1911. *Thou hadst* occurs once in an Isaiah passage as an auxiliary, never as a full verb as *had* is in Alma 11:25.

Alma 11:25

The OED has eight examples of uninflected *thou had* from the 15th to the 17th centuries, and Alma 11:25 fits right in with these quotations. Here's one EModE example:

> **1526** Skelton *Magnyf.* 1148 Fol. In faythe I wolde **thou had** a marmosete.[45]

One other past-tense, 2sg verb form without inflection is relevant to this discussion. However, unlike the previous two, *thou beheld* (1 Nephi 14:23) has never been changed by a BofM editor to *beheldest*. This is a rare verb form in the textual record, but we see the same usage in a late ME quotation:

> **c1400** *Rom. Rose* 2505 …Where **thou biheld** hir fleshly face.[46]

In addition, present-tense **auxiliaries** with *thou* are very similar to past-tense 2sg full-verb forms. There are dozens of examples of 2sg *shall/will/may* **without** *-(s)t* inflection in the OED; that indicates it was a prevalent usage in EModE.[47] Consequently,

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45   Here are several more examples from the OED:
c1420 Sir Amadas (Weber) 746 Yette was Y ten so glad When that thou gaffe all that **thou had**. *a1425* tr. *Arderne's Treat. Fistula*, etc. 6 Ȝif **þou had** bene stille **thou had** bene holden a philosophre. *c1460 Towneley Myst.* 190 (Mätzn.) As good that **thou had** Halden stille thy clater. **1513** Douglas *Æneis* xi. Prol. 162 Haill thy meryt **thou had** tofor thi fall, That is to say, thy warkis meritable, Restorit ar agane. **1578** *Ps.* li. in *Scot. Poems 16th C.* (1801) II. 119 Gif **thou had** pleased sacrifice I suld have offered thee. *c1650 Merlin* 2094 in Furniv. *Percy Folio* I. **487**, & **thou had** comen eare, indeed, thou might haue found him in that stead. **1684** *Yorksh. Dial.* **481** (E.D.S. No. **76**) Thou Glincks and glimes seay, I'd misken'd thy Face, If **thou had** wont at onny other place.

        Some of the above quotations have *thou had* used under a hypothetical condition. Yet there are 12 instances of *if thou* **hadst** in the OED showing that past-tense 2sg inflection was used after the hypothetical.

46   Milton's *Paradise Lost* (xi: 697) contains a conscious, metrical instance with an otherwise unattested complex consonant cluster [ltst]: thou *beheldst*.

47   In the OED, *thou* with *shall(e)* (25×), with *will(e)* (15×), and with *may* (32×). These are the exceptions, in both the BofM and the OED. Present-tense

thou shall (2 Nephi 29:6; Mosiah 12:11; Alma 10:7), *thou will* (Alma 8:20), and *thou may* (Mosiah 26:11) are not cases of bad grammar but typical forms that were used widely in EModE.

The effect of word order on subject–verb agreement

Remember thou (1 Nephi 14:8)[48] and *did thou* (Ether 12:31)[49] are examples of the effect that word order may have in potential agreement contexts. The first one is the only time a present-tense full verb lacks 2sg inflection in the Earliest Text:

> *Remember thou* the covenants of the Father unto the
> house of Israel?　　*1 Nephi 14:8*

Again, this example is the outlier. There are 26 cases of present-tense yes-no question syntax in the BofM with 2sg verb forms, and **all** of them, with the exception of 1 Nephi 14:8, adopt marked forms with 2sg inflection: *believest* (17), *knowest* (6), *seest* (1), *deniest* (1). So the tendency to use 2sg inflection is very strong, but the rare variation here can still be explained by the positional effect. As is commonly seen in many languages (including English during its various stages of historical development), lack of verb agreement with postverbal subjects is more frequent than it is when the word order is canonical (see, for example, England 1976: 816–18, discussing some Old Spanish examples). Here are two examples of nonagreement, one from the Old English period, and another from the EModE period:

2sg agreement runs at 99% in the BofM.

48　　Changed in 1849 to *Rememberest thou* — see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 1* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2005), 304–05.

49　　Changed in 1879 to *didst thou* — see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 6* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2009), 3834, and Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 2* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2005), 794.

On þæm selfan hrægle **wæs** eac awriten þa **naman**
ðara twelf heahfædra

'On that same garment **was** also written the **names** of
the twelve patriarchs'

[Ælfred, C.P. 6,15][50]

1549 *Chron. Grey Friars* (Camden) 65 That nyght
was the **comyneres** of London … dyscharged of ther
waching at alle the gattes of London in harnes…

These examples are reminiscent of *was discerned 300 vessels*,
given above.[51] Though *remember thou* is slightly different since
it involves person marking, it is nevertheless another instance
of the same general phenomenon.

To be clear, what is being put forward here for consideration
is not that Old English directly influenced the BofM text.
Rather, I am trying to show that the tendency towards this kind
of nonagreement was present in English at an early stage of the
language. And that tendency — found in many languages over
time — carried through to EModE, which **is** the language of
the text.

Next we take a brief look at *did thou* in the following
passage:

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50   See Lukas Pietsch, "'Some do and some doesn't'":Verbal concord
variation in the north of the British Isles." *A comparative grammar of English
dialects: Agreement, gender, reative clause.* Ed. Bernd Kartmann et al. (Berlin:
Mouton de Gruyter, 2005), 129; quoting Frederic T. Visser, *An historical syntax
of the English language.* Vol. 1. (Leiden: E. J. Brill. 1963).

51   A modern-day example might be: A rooster *and* a turkey **were** in the
corral, and so **was** a duck *and* a goose.

This example, however, isn't directly on point, since there is a complex
postverbal subject. Thus it's a case of nonagreement in part because of a lack
of plural number resolution; still, there is certainly a positional effect. (In this
article I do not address directly such resolution issues in the BofM exemplified
by the following construction: [the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla]$_i$
was$_i$ nearly surrounded by water.)

> For thus *did thou* manifest thyself unto thy disciples;
> for after that they had faith and did speak in thy
> name, *thou didst* shew thyself unto them in great
> power
>
> <div align="right">*Ether 12:31*</div>

EModE past-tense levelling of 2sg inflection is possible in Ether 12:31 (OED *thou did* = 8×). But it is less likely because of no instances of **thou did* in the text and the use of *thou didst* later in the verse. The positional effect is a more likely explanation — that is, because the verb *did* preceded its (overt 2sg) subject, the analogical force pushing the use of *did* — a very high frequency, unmarked verb form — trumped the force of subject–verb agreement.

Another similar example is the following:

> so great *was*_i [the *blessings* of the Lord]_i upon us
>
> <div align="right">*1 Nephi 17:2*</div>

Roughly 20% of the time there is no plural agreement in the BofM when the agreement controller **follows** the past-tense verb BE. That agreement rate is very similar to the rate calculated for *there was* with plural noun phrase subjects, as noted above, and the syntax is effectively like it. In both these cases there may also be an effect from the formally singular element — *there* or *great* — which precedes the verb, but we don't need to stretch that far in order to explain the variation; the positional effect is sufficient to explain it. Again, more typical syntax in the BofM is the following:

> great *were*_j [the *groanings* of the people]_j because of the darkness
>
> <div align="right">*3 Nephi 8:23*</div>

**Third-person plural subjects used with
archaic third-person singular inflection**

Another curiosity of the BofM in the domain of subject–verb agreement is that third-person plural subjects are often found with archaic third-person **singular** inflection: *Nephi's brethren rebell**eth**, they dieth/yieldeth/sleepeth, flames ascendeth, hearts delighteth, Gentiles knoweth, men/many hath*, etc. This syntax is not found in the KJV, as noted in ATV 1: 48. So is this usage ungrammatical? No, it's characteristic of EModE. The OED has about 60 examples of *they* (and *thei*) followed directly by verbs ending in *-eth*:

> **1526** *Pilgr. Perf.* (W. de W. 1531) 174 b, **They consumeth** superfluously & **spendeth** in waste, in one daye, the goodes that wolde suffyse & serve for theyr necessite many dayes.

And there are clear quotations, such as the following ones with noun phrase subjects, that are part of the EModE textual record:

> **1541** R. Copland, *Guydon's Quest. Cyrurg.*, The **vaynes bereth** the nourysshyng blode…

> **1590** R. Payne, *Descr. Irel.* (1841) 5 The **seas fretteth** away the Ice and Snowe.[52]

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52   Here are a few more OED quotations containing third-person plural NP subjects associated with verbs carrying third-person singular inflection:
        1477 Norton *Ord. Alch.* (in Ashmole 1652) v. 76 **Liquors conveieth** all Aliment and Food To every part of Mans Body. **1526** *Pilgr. Perf.* (W. de W. 1531) 274 b, The **hopes kepeth** fast the bordes of the vessell..& holdeth in ye endes that they start not. **1534** Ld. Berners *Gold. Bk. M. Aurel.* (1546) B iij, For certaine al the **fruites cometh** not togither. **1534** Whitinton *Tullyes Offices* iii. (1540) 142 The **lawes taketh** away craftyng one way, and phylosophers another way. **1578** Lyte *Dodoens* i. xl. 58 ..Amongst the leaues **groweth** fayre azured or blew **floures**..

Consequently, such syntax constitutes one more piece of evidence that BofM language is not a derivative of KJV language, either poor or otherwise. *Hearts delighteth* and *flames ascendeth* are not grammatical flaws (or even syntactic calques of a base Hebrew text), but EModE syntax.[53]

Has/hath variation

One of the inconsistent modernizations the book has undergone, after a score of global edits, has been the increase of the appearance of *has* at the expense of *hath* (currently 36% *has*). Excluding biblical passages (and the witness statements), *hath* occurs 724 times in the Yale edition, but *has* only 76 times (9.5% *has*).[54] The highest rate of use of *has* is in Mosiah and Alma, the lowest rate is in the SMALL PLATES. The KJV doesn't use *has* (not even the original 1611 text). So is the presence of *has* in the BofM an instance of bad grammar? No; on the contrary, *it is directly in line with pre-Shakespearean EModE usage.* The OED points toward the following *has* usage rates during the EModE period (some sampling bias is undoubtedly present in these figures): 15th c. = 32%; 16th c. = **7.5%**; 17th c. = 25%. The nadir of *has* use was squarely in the middle of that period. The BofM is right at home with 16th-c. *hath/has* usage rates.[55]

Faith on the Lord and *if it so be*

The BofM uniquely and consistently uses the phrase *faith **on** the Lord (Jesus Christ)*, not found in the KJV. The biblical text

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53   That being the case, researchers need to be cautious and resist the temptation to analyze BofM syntax as non-English Hebrew-like language or instances of nonstandard use before analyzing past English usage.

54   The following phrases are (nearly) exclusive: *the Lord hath*, *hath commanded / spoken / given / made*. These are relatively favored: *has been*, *has not*, and *he hath*.

55   Shakespeare's rate of use of *has* (16.5%) reflects the trend and transition to 17th-c. usage.

only uses *faith **in***. The BofM also uses *faith on* the **name** of the Lord several times. Skousen has found these relevant 17th-c. examples in *Early English Books Online*:[56]

> by **faith on his name** wee may haue life
>> Johann Gerhard, *The conquest of temptations* (1614)

> and when all faile, renew thy **faith on his Name**
>> Thomas Godwin, *A child of light walking in darknessse* (1636)

> They are altogether sufficient for that, inasmuch as **Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and obedience to his Commandments …
>> *The Racovian Catechism* (1652)

> he makes them to see their sins, and bewail them, and raise them by renewing and strengthening **faith on the Lord Jesus Christ**
>> Obadiah Sedgwich, *The bowels of tender mercy sealed in the everlasting covenant* (1661)

The emphatic hypothetical *if it so be (that)* is used 41 times in the BofM (almost always with *that*); it isn't found in the KJV. In the biblical text *if so be* is used almost 20 times (half the time with *that*), and the verbal phrase *if it be so/if it were so* (which is more like ModE syntax) is found three times, never with *that*. In view of this, is *if it so be* an error on the part of the BofM? No, on the contrary, the hypothetical phrase *if it so be (that)* is well-attested in the OED (8×), the last time in 1534. Quotations include two by these famous authors:

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56   Personal communication, May 2014.

> *c*1386 Chaucer *2nd Nun's T.* 258 **If it so be** thou wolt
> with-outen slouthe Bileue aright. **1534** More *Comf.*
> *agst. Trib.* ii. Wks. 1200/2 **If it so be** [that] a man..
> perceiueth that in welth & authoritie he doth his own
> soule harme…

The structure found in the BofM constitutes evidence of the independence of the book's language vis-à-vis the KJV and testifies to the historical depth of its syntax.

Dative impersonal constructions

Dative impersonal constructions like *it supposeth me*, *it sorroweth me*, and *it whispereth me* are also not found in the KJV, though they appear in the BofM (some analogous syntax **is** found in the KJV[57]). The first phrase — used four times in the text — is classified as rare in the OED; that dictionary provides a single late ME example from a poet who was a contemporary of Chaucer:

> **1390** Gower *Conf.* II. 128 Bot al to lytel **him**
> **supposeth**, Thogh he mihte al the world pourchace.

There is also this example taken from *Early English Books Online* (EEBO):

> **1482** Caxton *polychronicon* **me supposeth** that they
> toke that vyce of kynge Hardekunt

The next impersonal construction *it sorroweth me* is also attested in the EModE record (see, for example, the EEBO and OED quotations below), and *it whispereth me* is exemplified

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57 Spencer, "Notes on the Book of Mormon," 36, criticized the use of *it supposeth/sorroweth me*. He wrongly believed that Joseph Smith manufactured these phrases on the analogy of *it sufficeth us* (John 14:8), etc. By extension, other similar criticisms levelled at the book through the years, and even to this day, are likewise devoid of merit. The rare neologisms that **are** found in the book are both well-motivated and well-formed from the point of view of EModE.

with many similar quotations from EModE and ModE (see, for example, the OED quotes below):

> **It sorroweth me** to thinke of the Ministers of England
> Adam Hill, *The crie of England* (1595)

> 1574 Hellowes Gueuara's Fam. Ep. (1577) 189 The ague that held you, **sorroweth me**. 1637 Heywood Royall King ii. iv, **It sorrows** me that you misprize my love.

> **1605** Shakes. *Macb.* iv. iii. 210 Giue sorrow words; the griefe that do's not speake, **Whispers the o're-fraught heart**, and bids it breake. **1640** S. Harding *Sicily & Naples* iii. i. 33 This day (**There's something whispers to me**) will prove fatall. **1713** Addison *Cato* ii. i, **Something whispers me** All is not right.

The presence of these impersonal verb phrases in the BofM is an indication of the historical range of the book's language.

The analogical past participle *arriven* and auxiliary selection

Another item which indicates that range is the past participle *arriven* 'arrived', with analogical, strong inflection, used (at least) five times in the BofM (see ATV 1: 356 for a discussion).[58] The verb *arrive* is not used in the KJV. The analogy with the three-form verb *drive* is apparent: drive ~ drove ~ driven :: arrive ~ arrove ~ arriven. There are two relevant late ME entries in the OED with *aryven*:

> *c***1435** *Torr. Portugal* Fragm. 1 In a forest she *is* **aryven**. *c***1450** Lovelich *Grail* xliv. 113 To morwen schole ȝe hem alle se To londe **aryven**… [Tomorrow

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58   Part of the etymological entry for *arrive* in the OED reads as follows: "inflected after strong vbs., with pa. tense *arove* (*rove, arofe*), pa. pple. ***ariven*** (*aryven*)." Spencer, "Notes on the Book of Mormon," 35, was unaware of this, asserting that there was "no such word in the language as 'arriven.' "

shall ye them all see to land **arriven**] 'Tomorrow you
will see them all **arrived** to land'.

The first quotation — 'she has arrived in a forest' — shows the use of *is* with the past participle *aryven* — akin to *he is risen* (ModE 'he **has** risen'). In the Earliest Text *arriven* is used only with HAVE: *had* (3×), *have*, and *has* (plus *having arrived*).[59] So this parallels the infrequent use of BE in the book with other similar verbs (of motion and change-of-state) like *come* and *become* — for example, *they **were** nearly all become wicked* (3 Nephi 7:7).[60] This usage is the exception in the BofM,[61] and the overall usage pattern in the BofM in relation to auxiliary selection with these verbs is completely different from what we see in the KJV; that text prefers the use of *were come*, etc. So had the biblical text used *arriven*, it would likely have used *was arriven*, *am arriven*, etc.[62]

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59   This standard past-participial form might have been *arriven* in the original MS, but we have no way of knowing for sure.

60   Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 4* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2007), 3296, notes that this was changed to *had* by Joseph Smith in 1837.

61   In fact *they were…become* is also exceptional in its class because it's the only time the past tense is used with BE and this class of past participles in the BofM. The text has a simple, reduced system in this regard; it uses the present tense 9 out of 10 times with BE and this class of past participles — e.g., *when I **am** again ascended* (3 Nephi 11:21).

62   This sentence in the body of the article has examples of the counterfactual pluperfect and the modal perfect with the past participle *used*. Other examples of these are *if I had come* and *they would have become*. These verbal structures arose in English during the late ME period. When they were first used, the modal perfect was always used with the auxiliary HAVE (with past participles like *come* and *arriven*), never with BE, and the counterfactual was used only 2% of the time with BE and this class of past participles. These were the initial drivers of the change to the present-day English system, which uses HAVE with these past participles exclusively (see Thomas McFadden and Artemis Alexiadou, "Counterfactuals and BE in the History of English." *Proceedings of the 24th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics. Ed. John Alderete et al (Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project,* 2005), 273–74.

At the time the KJV was being written, the usage rate in EModE of ʜᴀᴠᴇ with this class of past participles was below 20%. This rate would jump during the late 1600s to 30% or more. This estimate of the 1611 rate is backed up by data from the OED, Shakespeare, and a recent linguistic study.[63] The KJV, with 15 cases of ʜᴀᴠᴇ+*come*, but 494 instances of ʙᴇ+*come*, has only a 3% rate of usage with ʜᴀᴠᴇ. Thus it is archaic for its time in terms of auxiliary selection. On the other hand, the BofM is the complete opposite in usage (91 of 95 ʜᴀᴠᴇ+*come*/ *came* = 96% ʜᴀᴠᴇ). It functions like an early 19th-c. text in this regard.[64] This is one of the areas where the BofM is a ModE text. And the use of *arriven* with ʜᴀᴠᴇ in the MSs is an example of a curious mixture of modern verbal syntax (ʜᴀᴠᴇ) with older morphology (*arriven*).[65]

The more part of the people

The obsolete though transparent phrase *the more part of* occurs 24 times in the BofM but is not found in that exact form in the KJV. It is, however, used twice without *of* (Acts 19:32; 27:12).[66] The BofM is always explicit in its use, perhaps for plainness — for example, *the more part of **the people*** — while the KJV only uses the bare phrase *the more part. More* as used in this phrase carries a sense of 'greater in number', which became obsolete in

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63   I performed nonexhaustive counts for Shakespeare of 28 ʜᴀᴠᴇ+*come* and 115 ʙᴇ+*come* = 19.6%. OED counts for the 16th c. are 10 *had come* and 48 *was/were come* = 17%. McFadden and Alexiadou (2005: 273) calculated 15% usage.

64   By way of comparison with contemporaneous authors, we note that Walter Scott used ʜᴀᴠᴇ+*come* about 70% of the time, J. Fenimore Cooper about 95% of the time. The latter then is a close match with BofM usage in this regard. Henry Fielding, writing around 1750, used ʜᴀᴠᴇ+*come* only one-third of the time. His usage was slightly archaic for its time.

65   Skousen has found an EModE example with ʙᴇ from 1658, the shape perhaps influenced by rhyme: "Until I safely **am arriven** At the desired Haven, Heaven".

66   Spencer, "Notes on the Book of Mormon," 37, criticized its frequent use in the BofM, unaware of EModE usage.

the 17th century.[67] The OED provides several examples with *the more part of* from the late ME period and the EModE period (from 1380 to 1610). Here are two quotations from the 16th century:

> **1546** Bale *Eng. Votaries* Pref. A iij, **The more part of** their temptynge spretes they haue made she deuyls. **1585** T. Washington tr. *Nicholay's Voy.* i. xviii. 21 Palm trees: of the fruit of which trees, **the more part of** the inhabitants..are nourished.[68]

The phrase fell out of use at the beginning of the ModE period.

Nominative absolute syntax

The BofM uses the nominative absolute construction frequently, clearly, and differently from the KJV (two notable examples are found in the first verse of 1st Nephi — cf. the 2nd amendment of the U.S. Constitution[69]). Here is one showing nested syntax. Note the repeat of *the people* after *wherefore*:

> *The people* **having** loved *Nephi* exceedingly — *he* **having** been a great protector for them, **having**

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67   That relevant OED definition reads as follows: **more**, *a*. †A1b = Greater in number, quantity, or amount. **1529** Rastell *Pastyme, Hist. Brit.* (1811) 125 The Danis, with a **more** strenght, enteryd the west part of this land. *a*1648 Ld. Herbert *Hen. VIII* (1683) 298 The **more** Party of the Sutors of this Your Realm.

68   Here are some more examples from the OED:

*c*1380 Wyclif *Wks.* (1830) 369 Siþ þai han now þe **more part of** þe temporal lordeschips, and wiþ þat þe spiritualtees and þe greete mouable tresouris of þe rewme. **1535** Coverdale *Acts* xxvii. 12 The **more parte off** them toke councell to departe thence. [Also **1611**.] **1610** *Acta Capit. Christ Church*, Canterbury 17 July (MS.), To ymbarn in the Barnes..all or **the more part of** the tythe corne.

There is one outlier among these, an 1871 quotation from the historian Edward Freeman, who wrote with an intentionally archaistic style:

1871 Freeman *Norm. Conq.* (1876) IV. xviii. 117 **The more part of** them perished by falling over the rocks.

69   A well regulated Militia *being* necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.

wielded the sword of Laban in their defence, and
having labored in all his days for their welfare —
Wherefore *the people* were desirous to retain in
remembrance his name

Jacob 1:10–11

The clarity of the syntax is heightened in the BofM because
almost always (1) an overt **subject** precedes the PRESENT
PARTICIPLE (**I Nephi** HAVING *been born*, **the people** HAVING *loved
Nephi*), (2) a logical, adverbial connector (*therefore/wherefore*) is
used between the clauses, and (3) even if the subject of the main
clause is the same as the one in the nominative absolute clause,
it is repeated following the logical connector (THEREFORE **I**
was taught, WHEREFORE **the people** *were desirous*). The book's
nominative absolute syntax is distinctive, emphatic, and more
closely aligned to what is found in EModE and the early ModE
period than the KJV's usage; and it is notably plainer in use.
Here is a biblical example taken from the OED, also showing
the way the BofM might have expressed it:

> **1611** BIBLE *John* iv. 6 Now Iacobs Well was there.
> Iesus **therefore** [TINDALE then], **being** wearied with
> his iourney, sate thus on the Well.
> BofM *style*: **Jesus being** wearied with his journey,
> **therefore he** sat thus on the well.

Here are two more examples from the KJV which demonstrate
the relative clarity of BofM nominative absolute style because
of the overt initial subject and the use of *therefore* at the clausal
junction:

> **Therefore being** by the right hand of God exalted,
> and **having** received of the Father the promise of the
> Holy Ghost, **he** hath shed forth this, which ye now see
> and hear.

Acts 2:33

BofM *style*: **He being** … exalted, and **having** received … the promise of the Holy Ghost, **therefore he** hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Therefore being justified by faith, **we** have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Romans 5:1

BofM *style*: **We being** justified by faith, **therefore we** have peace .…

The verb *beseech* used with the personal preposition *of*

The KJV and the BofM differ in the following way in their use of the archaic verb *beseech*:

KJV: I beseech you/thee… (46×)
BofM: I beseech **of** you / **of** thee… (4×)[70]

Is this use of *beseech* defective syntax on the part of the BofM, a bad imitation of the KJV? No. The use of the personal preposition is old syntax found in both the late ME period and EModE (see OED [**beseech**, *v.* †2c]; the entry also indicates several variant dialectal forms, as are seen in the quotations below):

*a*1400 *Morte Arth.* 305 [**He**] **of hyme besekys** To ansuere þe alyenes wyth austerene wordes. **1563** *Mirr. Mag.* Induct. xliv. 7 And to be yong againe **of Joue [he would] beseke**.

This use of *of* before the person who is BESOUGHT may seem like a minor, inconsequential difference, yet the OED clearly distinguishes between these constructions — see [**beseech**,

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70   The four instances of *I beseech **of** you* / ***of** thee* are found at Jacob 6:5; Alma 34:33; 36:3; Moroni 7:19.

v. †2c & 3c] — and declares the one used in the BofM to be obsolete. Furthermore, the usage in the texts is distinct and consistent. The most rigorous statistical test for this pattern of usage gives the odds that this difference in the texts occurred by chance at five in one million (Fisher's exact test).

Auxiliary usage following *beseech*

What about the use of *should* in the clause that follows *besought* in the following BofM passage (also see Moroni 7:19)? This specific usage is absent in the KJV:

> Now when [Korihor] had said this, he **besought** THAT Alma *should* pray unto God that the curse *might* be taken from him.
>
> <div align="right">*Alma 30:54*</div>

In the KJV only *would* (cf. Alma 15:5) or *might* is used after *besought* (15× in the New Testament). And when present-tense *beseech* is used, then only *will* and *may* are used, never *shall*. This KJV auxiliary usage is consonant with the semantics of the verb: 'supplicate, beg earnestly'. The auxiliary *will/would* in particular, with its notion of voluntary action, is a good semantic fit for the clause following and syntactically linked to *beseech* because the meaning of the full verb directly implies that notion. On the other hand, when the auxiliary *should* is used with *beseech*, the use is somewhat anomalous since there is a combination of some degree of compulsion or command (see OED [**will**, *v.*[1] 46]) and supplication (from *beseech*).

Nevertheless, usage of *should* following *beseech* **is** found in 14th- and 15th-c. quotations in the OED and also in a 16th-c. example from EEBO. The important thing to notice in these quotations is the co-occurrence of BESOUGHT and SHOULD, in boldface (a rough translation for the first two excerpts is given below):

1390 Gower *Conf.* I. 10 Unto the god ferst thei **besoughten** As to the substaunce of her Scole, That thei ne **scholden** noght befole Her wit upon none erthly werkes, Which were ayein thestat of clerkes, And that thei **myhten** fle the vice Which Simon **hath** in his office.

*a***1450** *Knt. de la Tour* 87 Thanne the quene after kneled tofore her lorde, and **besought** hym that men **shulde** do semble iustice to Amon the seneschall.

1587 *A notable historie containing foure voyages …* which aboue all thinges **besought** vs that none of our men **should** come neere their lodgings nor their Gardens.[71]

The 1390 poetic passage appears to say that the clergy besought God so they wouldn't foolishly squander (*scholden noght befole*) their intellect on earthly matters, and so they'd be able to avoid (*myhten fle*) the corruption of Simon Magus (Acts 8:18–24). (Interestingly, both *should* and *might* are used in the same syntactic sequence after *besought*; both these auxiliaries are also used immediately after *besought* in Alma 30:54 — one in the same way [*should*], the other in a related purposive clause [*might*].) In the 1390 quotation the clergy themselves wanted God to **compel** them to engage in worthy study (*should*), and also evinced a desire to have the **ability** to avoid corruption (*might*). In the 1450 excerpt a queen knelt before her lord and besought him to **compel** others to similarly show deference to a steward.

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71 This book is a translation into English from the French original. The passage is quoted from Richard Hakluyt (1599) *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation*, from *Early English Books Online*.

As a result of these findings, we learn that the use of *should* with *beseech* in the BofM reflects a well-formed early structure found in both late ME and in EModE. And we also learn that Korihor made a forceful plea to Alma (even perhaps one of a commanding nature); otherwise the auxiliary *would* would have been used (as used in Alma 15:5 with Zeezrom). The use of *should* with *besought*, like the use of *beseech **of***, reveals the depth of BofM language.

Grammatical mood after the hypothetical *if*

The BofM exhibits plenty of variation in its use of grammatical mood: subjunctive as opposed to indicative — for example, present-day English *if I **were*** versus *if I **was***. One word that optionally controls the subjunctive mood in the book is the hypothetical *if*.[72] In other words, after the hypothetical we find that the verb is sometimes in the subjunctive, and other times in the indicative, with no discernible difference in meaning of *if*:

> **if** he HAVE _{subj.} more abundantly, he should impart
> more abundantly
>
> <div align="right">*Mosiah 18:27*</div>

> But **if** he REPENTETH _{indic.} not, he shall not be numbered
> among my people, that he may not destroy my people.
>
> <div align="right">*3 Nephi 18:31*</div>

The following example indicates compactly free variation in grammatical mood in two verses, one chapter apart (the source language derives from the Old Testament):

> as a young lion among the flocks of sheep who, **if** he
> GOETH/GO through, both treadeth down and teareth

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72   At times the use of a verb in the indicative mood after *if* points to an atypical meaning for *if*; other times *if* carries its standard meaning after an indicative form.

in pieces, and none can deliver.

> *3 Nephi 20:16* = **goeth**; *3 Nephi 21:12* = **Go**
>
> [cf. *Micah 5:8*]

In a few places in the BofM there is more than one verb after *if*, and in three of these passages there is variation in MOOD: Mosiah 26:29; Helaman 13:26; 3 Nephi 27:11. These interesting cases can tell us about deeper linguistic behavior. Still, some find this variation to be unsatisfactory usage. But the same pattern of use is also found in at least one Shakespearean example. And the original 1611 KJV has a similar example as well.[73] This testifies to its well-formed nature in relation to EModE, telling us at the same time that it is not substandard usage in the BofM.

But this kind of variation is not found in the current state of the KJV; because of the aforementioned emendation there is now no mixture of use. As a result, when conjoined verb phrases follow *if*, the KJV uniformly uses the subjunctive **or** the indicative. Consistent patterns of use are also found in Shakespeare and the BofM:

Consistent subjunctive use

For what is a man advantaged, **if** he GAIN the whole world, and LOSE himself, or BE cast away?

> *Luke 9:25*

yea, **if** thou REPENT of all thy sins and WILL bow down before God

> *Alma 22:16*

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73   The OED provides the following quotation of Genesis 4:7, indicating that later in the 17th century "if thou do" was changed to "if thou doest", and that Coverdale had "if thou do" for the second instance, something the KJV never had: **1611** BIBLE *Gen.* iv. 7 If thou **doe** [16.. **doest**] well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou **doest** [COVERD. **do**] not well, sinne lieth at the doore.

The hypothetical *if* seems to have the same meaning in both instances because the phrases closely match each other. Cf. Alma 22:16 and the discussion below.

If he BE credulous, and TRUST my tale, I'll make him glad to seem Vincentio

> *Taming of the Shrew* IV. ii. 67–68

Consistent indicative use
Yea, **if** thou CRIEST after knowledge, and LIFTEST up thy voice for understanding

> *Proverbs 2:3*

for **if** he LISTETH to obey him and REMAINETH and DIETH in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul

> *Mosiah 2:33*

If thou but THINK'ST him wrong'd, and MAK'ST his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

> *Othello, the Moor of Venice* III. iii. 143

Variation in grammatical mood and conjunct effects

When there is **variable** MOOD after *if* in the BofM, the pattern of use is always the following: [subjunctive & indicative], never *[indicative & subjunctive]. Here are the three verses that show this pattern and one from Shakespeare (bracketed [ø ø] as used below indicates ellipted "if he/it"):

> And **if** he CONFESS his sins before thee and me *and* [ø ø] REPENTETH in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive; and I will forgive him also.
>
> > *Mosiah 26:29*

> For as the Lord liveth, **if** a prophet COME among you *and* [øø] DECLARETH unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are

angry with him and cast him out and seek all manner
of ways to destroy him.

Helaman 13:26

But **if** it BE not built upon my gospel *and* [ø ø] IS built
upon the works of men or upon the works of the devil,
verily I say unto you: They have joy in their works for
a season; and by and by the end cometh, and they are
hewn down and cast into the fire from whence there is
no return.

3 Nephi 27:11

He must before the deputy, sir, he has given him
warning. The deputy cannot abide a whoremaster. **If**
he BE a whoremonger, *and* [ø ø] COME**s** before him, he
were as good go a mile on his errand.

Measure for Measure III. ii. 35–37

In short, these are the verb forms showing variation in
grammatical mood after *if* found in the BofM, Shakespeare,
and the KJV:

1829 Book of Mormon: *if* confess & repenteth |
if come & declareth | *if* be & is
1603 Shakespeare: *if* be & comes
1611 King James Bible: *if* do & *if* doest

The ellipsis of *if* (and the subject) in these BofM verses tells us
two things. First, it indicates that these verb phrases are closely
linked syntactically and therefore that both are under the same
hypothetical condition. And we know that the hypothetical
condition in these verses is sufficient to control subjunctive
marking in the first verb. Yet there was also analogical force
in the language to use **indicative** forms for these verbs since
indicative forms are used in the majority of contexts. This

analogical force is weaker than the hypothetical force for the first verbal conjuncts.[74] Second, ellipted *if* also makes it more likely that the indicative will be used in the second verb, the distant conjunct, since *if* is not overtly used and that is the element that overcomes analogy (which drives the use of the indicative) and controls the use of the subjunctive for the close conjuncts in these passages.

In summary, *if* calls for the subjunctive, analogy calls for the indicative. In the first verb, closely following the hypothetical, *if* overcomes analogy and controls the shape of the verb. In the second verb, far from the overt hypothetical, analogy outweighs *if* (in ellipsis) and controls the shape of the verb. That being the case, while it isn't surprising for both conjuncts to show only subjunctive marking or to show only indicative use (as we've seen above), it would be anomalous if the following were found in the text:

* *if* + INDICATIVE & *ellipsis* + SUBJUNCTIVE

This of course doesn't occur in the text and the unreality of that fact is indicated in the following expressions by an asterisk:

> * **if** he CONFESSETH <indic.> his sins … *and* [øø]
> REPENT <subj.> in the sincerity of his heart
> * **if** [he] COMETH <indic.> among you *and* [øø] DECLARE
> <subj.> unto you the word of the Lord

The complex syntax of conjuncts in the BofM exhibits native-speaker sensitivity to EModE and typical cross-linguistic behavior.[75]

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74   And this indicative analogical force persists to this day; that's why there's levelling of *if I were* to *if I was* in ModE, and levelling elsewhere in the BofM.

75   Did Joseph Smith and his scribes have EModE linguistic competence — i.e., native-speaker intuition? No, certainly not. But while it's a stretch, they could have been sensitive to this from a ModE analog. For example, we could

Another example with variable marking

These verses are similar to Alma 39:3, which also has subject ellipsis and variable marking, in this case on the past-tense auxiliary *did* (see the discussion in ATV 4: 2388–89):

> for **thou** DID**ST** forsake the ministry *and* [ø] DID go
> over into the land of Siron

In this verse the distant conjunct *did* is unmarked for person even though the (understood) subject is *thou*. This is another example of the tendency of distant conjuncts under ellipsis to level to less marked shapes.[76] Again, we would be surprised if the text had the following:

> *for **thou** DID forsake the ministry *and* [ø] DID**ST** go
> over into the land of Siron

None of these examples have been changed through the years, precisely because they represent — at a subconscious level — acceptable syntax.[77] Yet because this syntax is absent in the KJV and since it involves the (non)use of archaic verb inflection and variable marking which was outside the scope of Smith and associates' daily usage patterns, these examples constitute

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think up a realistic phrase in present-day English that is similar to what is found in these verses:

> **If** I WERE <subj> to go to the store today in order to buy that, and [ø ø] WAS <indic.> really hungry, then I might buy something that I shouldn't.

Using subjunctive, then indicative under ellipsis, would be an acceptable, even typical way to say something like this in present-day English, and perhaps it was for Joseph Smith as well.

76   Other similar present-tense examples are found in Helaman 10:4 and Ether 3:3 — "thou hast . . . and hast . . . but hath" and "thou hast . . . and hath" (see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 5* [Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2008], 3047).

77   Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part 4*, 2389, notes that "there has been no tendency to emend *and did* in Alma 39:3 to *and didst*."

Note the proximity agreement at the start of this sentence (in the body of the article): *examples have.*

some evidence for (divine) EModE authorship, just as the use of words with non-KJV EModE meaning does. In addition, an author consciously attempting to sound "scriptural" or express things using biblical language would likely have been mechanical in usage with unfamiliar forms and probably would have followed the consistent 1769 KJV.

A counterexample to levelled forms under ellipsis?

Here is a verse that appears at first glance to qualify as a counterexample to the foregoing since an indicative verb form is followed by a subjunctive one (see ATV 3: 2044–46; the discussion here has a limited, different approach):

> But Aaron saith unto him: **If** *thou* DESIREST this thing, **if** *thou* WILL bow down before God — yea, **if** *thou* REPENT of all thy sins and [ø ø] WILL <u>bow</u> down before God and <u>call</u> on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive — then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.
>
> *Alma 22:16*

In this verse, fine points of grammar can aid our understanding of the intended import.[78]

To begin with, this isn't a counterexample to Mosiah 26:29 and Helaman 13:26 since there's no ellipsis of *if thou* before the first occurrence of *will bow down*. So the two uses of *if* can convey different hypothetical force. In this doctrinally powerful

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78   I take every instance of indicative and subjunctive to be intentional, especially since *shalt thou* with 2sg marking is used towards the end of the verse even though the inverted word order doesn't favor it and three verb forms lacking 2sg inflection have just been used. Of course it is possible that *thou will* is a levelled form (as in Alma 8:20), but the odds of that with respect to this verb are low (less than 5%), and they are even lower in the case of the full verb *repent* (about 1%). The second use of *will* (with ellipsis) is almost certainly subjunctive because it's the second verbal conjunct after *if*. As we've seen in the three BofM verses just discussed, in this linguistic context *will* could have understandably adopted an indicative shape *wilt*.

verse there is one instance of the indicative after *if* at the outset, and then three cases of the subjunctive — *will*, *repent*, *will*. And there is only ellipsis of *if thou* — indicated by [ø ø] — with the final subjunctive use of *will* (like Skousen, I take underlined *bow* and *call* to be parallel <u>infinitives</u>).

Lamoni's father has just indicated his desire to Aaron, and so *desirest*, in the indicative, conveys that Aaron entertains no adverse opinion as to the truth of the statement. The hypothetical *if* therefore conveys a notion akin to 'given or granted that; supposing that'.[79] After that, however, the subjunctive is used three times, conveying the notion that Aaron is faced with a normal lack of certainty surrounding the realization of his statements. This is therefore a good example of the Earliest Text elucidating meaning, while well-intentioned (conjectural) emendations have obscured it. It also tells us that at a deep level the BofM is an intelligently crafted, sophisticated text.

Much horses or many horses?

How about the strange use of the adjective *much* found in the Yale edition with plural nouns (taken collectively)?[80]

> **much** afflictions / fruits / threatenings / horses / contentions / provisions

Is this a reflection of nonstandard U.S. dialectal use? No, usage in the 16th and 17th centuries definitively says otherwise.

Half of the above phrases have been emended through the years, with the noun usually suffering the change and thereby affecting nuance (see ATV 2: 1092–93). Perhaps the motivation

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79   See OED [**if**, *conj. (n.)* I & 1]. The dictionary indicates, and this study verifies, that in Genesis 4:7 the original 1611 KJV had *if thou doe* (subjunctive). According to the OED (see [**if**, *conj. (n.)* A1a(α)]), this was changed at some point in the 1600s to *if thou doest* (indicative), reflecting a sense similar to what is found in Alma 22:16 with *if thou desirest*.

80   See OED [**much**, *a.*, quasi-*n.*, and *adv.* 2d]. This entry points out that vestiges of this use remain in the phrase *much thanks*.

for emendation was because the KJV clearly shows this use only once (*much goods* in Luke 12:19),[81] or perhaps because it's nonstandard ModE. Yet the 16th-c. textual record has many examples of this use; these two are reminiscent of BofM syntax (cf. Mosiah 27:9; 4 Nephi 1:16):

> 1565 STAPLETON tr. *Bede's Hist. Ch. Eng.* Ded., The same Emperour after **much disputations** and conferences had with the Arrians,..commaunded [etc.].
>
> 1586 J. HOOKER *Ireland* Ep. Ded. in Holinshed *Chron.*, You..haue through so **much enuiengs**.. perseuered in your attempts.[82]

Helaman 3:3 nicely illustrates free variation in use (taken to be an intended part of the divine translation):

> there were **much** contention**s** and **many** dissension**s**

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81   As we've seen near the beginning of this article, *riches* in EModE was not clearly plural (*much riches*: Joshua 22:8; 2 Chronicles 32:27; Daniel 11:13; Alma 10:4). And *alms* could also be construed as singular. And in the phrase *much people* — an obsolete use found in both texts — *much* conveyed the notion of 'a great number of' [OED **much**, *a.* †2b].

82   Here are some more OED examples of *much* with plural nouns taken collectively:

      1546 J. HEYWOOD *Prov.* I. xi. (1867) 32 We maie doo much ill, er we doo **much wars**. *c*1550 H. LLOYD *Treas. Health* viii. C viii, Agaynst to **much watchynges**… The Sygnes. That he can not slepe after his accustomyd fashyon. **1555** W. WATREMAN *Fardle Facions* G viij, The Arabiens named Nomades occupie **much Chamelles**, bothe in warre, and burden. **1558** T. PHAER *Æneid* VI. R iv, **Much things** congendrid long [L. *multa diu concreta*]. **1564** *Brief. Exam.* **iij b, There are **much paynes** bestowed of these discoursours. **1591** SPARRY tr. *Cattan's Geomancie* 165 This figure..sheweth that the seruantes of the saide Lords shall get **much friends**. **1569** *Depos. John Hawkins* in Arb. *Garner* V. 231 The said Sir William Garrard and Company, did also then provide, prepare, and lade in those ships **much wares**. **1596** SHAKES. *Merch. V.* I. iii. 123 You cald me dog: and for these curtesies Ile lend you thus **much moneyes**. **1597** SHAKES. *2 Hen. IV*, II. iv. 29 I' faith, you have drunk too **much canaries**.

In EModE, although *much* could be used and was used before a variety of plural nouns, *many* was used more frequently, perhaps as much as 85% of the time in the 16th century.[83]

The periphrastic past and an obsolete use of the relative adjective *which*

Next we consider this late 16th-c. quotation taken from the OED:

> **1588** Parke tr. *Mendoza's Hist. China* 190 Many of the Gentlemen of the cittie **did go** vnto the Spaniards to visite them..*in the which visitation* they spent all the whole day.

Remarkably, there are three things in this excerpt that are found in the BofM but not in the KJV. First, **did go**. This particular wording is a grammatical structure that is familiar to any serious reader of the BofM and is currently used in ModE for emphasis and contrast. Back in the 1500s and early 1600s *did go* could be used without indicating any emphasis at all. When it was used in that way, it simply conveyed the same meaning as *went*. The periphrasis did+*infinitive* appears more than 1,000 times in the BofM! And it is used 54 times with the infinitive *go*, either as *did go* or *didst go*. On the other hand, the KJV uses *went* or *wentest* more than 1,400 times, but **never** *did(st)…go* in affirmative declarative syntax. The EModE usage of expressing the affirmative declarative simple past with did+*infinitive* peaked in the latter half of the 16th c. (probably in the 1560s — see Barber 1997: 195).[84] The BofM is full of this periphrastic syntax, using it more than 20% of the time, while the KJV uses

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83   This estimate is subject to sampling bias from OED quotation selection and overlap in query retrieval counts.

84   Charles Laurence Barber, *Early Modern English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997), references a study and chart from p. 162 of Alvar Ellegård's *The Auxiliary Do: The Establishment and Regulation of its Use in English* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1953).

it sparingly, less than 2% of the time, and mainly with *did eat*.[85] This is additional evidence that the BofM's syntactic center of gravity is this time period.

Second, although *in the which* is found in the KJV, it is not used with a syntactically linked noun as it is with *visitation* in the 1588 quotation above.[86] This occurs a handful of times in the BofM: *in the which things/rebellion/strength/alliance/time*. More than a dozen examples of this prepositional phrase with the relative adjective *which* are to be found in the OED. The earliest ones noted in that dictionary come from the late ME period, the majority from the 16th c., and the latest one isolated thus far is from the year 1617.[87] The BofM has both *in the which*

85 The KJV's low usage rate of this periphrasis reflects syntactic practice of the year 1530, after Tyndale.

86 The relevant OED entry is: [**which**, *a.* and *pron.* 13a]. The OED has quotations from the 1300s to 1607, plus two consciously archaic ones from the 19th century. Here is one from Tyndale whose language carried through to the KJV in this case:

    1526 Tindale *Heb.* x. 10 **By the which will** we are sanctified.

87 The OED and other sources may show later usage. Here are some OED quotations:

    *c*1374 Chaucer *Boeth.* iv. pr. vi. 109 (Camb. MS.) **In the which thing** I trowe þat god dispensith. *c*1450 *Godstow Reg.* 352 **In the which**..**mese**..the Chapelayn..shold haue a dwellyng to serue by the tymys succedyng. **1495** *Act 11 Hen. VII*, c. 63 *Preamble*, **In the which Acte**..the seid Francis Lovell was ignorauntly lefte oute and omitted. **1597** A. M. tr. *Guillemeau's Fr. Chirurg.* 26/3 **In the which wound**, we must impose a silvern or goulden pipe. **1617** Abp. Abbot *Descr. World, Peru* V iv, Which bedds are deuised of Cotten wooll, and hung vp betweene two trees..**in the which flagging downe** in the middle, men and their wiues and their children doe lie together.

    Here are two EModE examples taken from EEBO:

    1568 "…and he was a louer of his neighbor, as thou doest well know, **in the which things** consisteth all christian religion" English translation: *The fearfull fansies of the Florentine couper* (original Italian: Giovanni Battista Gelli).

    1615 "**in the which things** Israel ought to be commended" H. S., *A diuine dictionarie.*

things (like Chaucer) and *for the which things*, similar to a 1568 quotation.[88]

Third, the emphatic, pleonastic phraseology ALL…WHOLE occurs here and once in the BofM in Mosiah 2:21 — *all your whole soul.*

To be plain, some analogous forms are found in the KJV; it has similar relative-adjective prepositional phrases: *by the which will* (Hebrews 10:10), and *for the which cause* (2 Timothy 1:12). And as has been mentioned, it also has *didst eat* (Ezekiel 16:13; Acts 11:3), etc. But the KJV didn't use these analogous forms frequently (the relative adjective after a preposition) or anywhere near as often as the BofM (the periphrastic past), and it didn't ever use *in the which* with a noun, or *did(st) go*, when it had ample opportunity to do so. And so the BofM exhibits significant usage of 16th-c. forms like these which are well-attested in that time period but barely present in the KJV. As a result, the syntax of the BofM is appropriately and even sophisticatedly creative beyond what is readily apparent in the biblical text.

By the way of Gentile

Finally, one item in the TITLE PAGE is worth mentioning here. The phrase *by the way of Gentile* is an obsolete use of both *way* and *Gentile*. The use of *way* in this phrase is noted in the OED but only one 16th-c. example is provided:

> **way**, *n*. †32h = Through the medium of (a person). *Obs.*
> **1560** SIR N. THROGMORTON in Wright *Q. Eliz.* (1838) I. 49 The 29th of October last, I wrote to you from Paris **by the waye of** Monsieur de Chantonet.

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88   **1568** GRAFTON *Chron*. II. 47 The Bishops and Priestes..were contented yet to ayde him with money. **For the which thing**, he being desyrous to gratefie them againe, caused it to be ordeyned and enacted [that].

The BofM also has *for the which holiness* (Alma 31:17).

By the way of is frequent in the KJV but it is used exclusively in locative expressions and is not used with persons. (What seems like a use with a person in Numbers 21:1 is actually a covert locative use.) So *by the way of* used with a person with the meaning of 'through the medium of ' is non-KJV EModE, and perhaps rare, if the scarcity of examples in the OED is any indication. Also, singular-in-form *Gentile* is an adjective used absolutely as a collective noun; the OED demonstrates the obsolete use with one late ME quotation:

> *c*1400 *Apol. Loll.* 6 Constreyning þe **gentil** to be com Jewes in obseruaunce.

Summary

This article has reviewed many forms and much syntax that are not found in the KJV but which are found in the broader EModE textual record. Because what we know to be standard EModE (for a religious book in particular) largely comes from our acquaintance with KJV language, readily identifiable discrepancies on the part of the BofM from KJV modes of expression have been viewed as nonstandard, even ungrammatical. And from the perspective of ModE the Earliest Text of the BofM certainly often reads that way. But because much of its language is independent of the KJV, even reaching back in time to the transition period from late ME into EModE, it needs to be compared broadly to those earlier stages of English. And we have seen in this paper that the BofM has many syntactic structures that are typical and well-formed when compared to those of earlier periods of English. The correspondences are plentiful and plain.

Therefore, in view of the totality of the evidence adduced here, I would assert that it is no longer possible to argue that the Earliest Text of the BofM is defective and substandard in its grammar. And that follows in large part because we would

then have to call EModE defective and substandard, since so much of what we see in the book is like that stage of the English language. And it was a human language like any other, fraught with variation and exhibiting diverse forms of expression. My hope is that this article has managed to disabuse us of the idea that the BofM is full of "errors of grammar and diction" and appreciate the text for what it is: a richly embroidered linguistic work that demonstrates natural language variation appropriately and whose forms and patterns of use are strikingly like those found in the EModE period. There is now clear and convincing evidence that the BofM is, in large part, an independent, structurally sound EModE text.

The bulk of the foregoing textual usage was beyond the reach of Joseph Smith (and also his scribes, who put the BofM text in writing). Because of the way language use works, even written texts naturally resist conscious manipulation. That is because we express conscious thought by a largely subconscious act of drawing on an internal grammar built up over time by experience, analogy, and inference. Yet in the case of the BofM, even if the composition of the book had been consciously manipulated by Smith and his associates in order to create a structurally and lexically plausible work of scripture based on the Bible they knew, the evidence is abundantly clear that the language is broader in scope and in many cases deeper in time than what might possibly have been derived from the KJV. Its grammar shows that it is markedly different in a number of ways. So the text itself presents solid evidence of its non-KJV origins since it clearly draws on a wide array of other language forms and syntax from the EModE period, some of them obscure and inaccessible to virtually everyone 200 years ago. Only now are we beginning to appreciate the book's surprising linguistic depth and breadth.

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