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Cloud Illusions and the Perfect Day

Daniel C. Peterson

I’ve looked at clouds from both sides now,
from up and down, and still somehow
it’s cloud illusions I recall.¹

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more
and more unto the perfect day.²

The Sun makes life possible on Earth. It’s the source of virtually all of
the energy that we use or need. No wonder many ancient civilizations
worshipped it as a god. During the daytime, it’s the principal reason that
we can see anything. Indeed, it’s so bright in itself that we find it difficult,
if not impossible, to look directly at it.

It’s also unimaginably vast. Its diameter, for instance, is approximately
864,938 miles (1.392 million kilometers). By contrast, Earth’s diameter
is only 7,917.5 miles (12,742 kilometers), which means that 109 Earths
could be comfortably placed side by side across the Sun’s disk. And the
Sun’s circumference is about 2,713,406 miles (4,366,813 km). Again,
that’s approximately 109 times the circumference of Earth.

The Sun’s mass is 1.989 x 10³⁰ kilograms, or roughly 333,000 times
that of Earth, and its total volume is 1.4 x 10²⁷ cubic meters. Thus, about
1.3 million Earths could fit within it. In fact, the Sun contains 99.8 percent
of the mass of the entire solar system, which is why Imke de Pater and
Jack J. Lissauer, in their textbook Fundamental Planetary Sciences, quip
that our solar system is essentially “the sun plus some debris.”³

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¹ Partial lyrics from Joni Mitchell’s “Both Sides Now.”
² Proverbs 4:18.
Even so, half of the Earth is turned away from it at any given time, rendering the Sun invisible and leaving roughly half of Earth’s population in the darkness.

A surface fog can hide it, and a small cloud can obscure it.

Consider this fact: An ordinary puffy cumulus cloud (significantly known as *cumulus mediocris*), for instance, typically floats at about 2500 feet (1/2 mile) over flat land and is about as thick as it is wide — a few thousand feet at most. Still, it can completely obscure the Sun, which is many millions of times larger.

Indeed, a mere hand over an eye or over the lens of a telescope can obscure it, leaving the viewer in complete darkness.

And yet, the Sun is still there. Our ability or inability to see it changes nothing about its existence or even its real appearance.

Unfortunately, we humans cannot accurately move or see in the absence of light. Lehi had this plainly illustrated for him in his vision of the Tree of Life:

And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.

And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.4

“God is light,” John writes in his first epistle, “and in him is no darkness at all.”5 “God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth,” agrees the Qur’an.6 “In the beginning was the Word,” opens the gospel of John, referring to Jesus Christ:

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him;

---

4 1 Nephi 8:23–24.
5 1 John 1:5.
6 Qur’an 24:35. Reflecting upon this verse, the great philosophical theologian al-Ghazali (d. AD 1111) argued that the term *light* isn’t applied to God only metaphorically but that, on the contrary, it is God who is truly light. The term is applied metaphorically to the physical “light” that we know on earth. See *The Niche of Lights = Mishkāt Al-Anwār*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 13–15.
and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.\(^7\)

Indeed, it’s not even apparent that we humans can rely upon our thinking in the absence of divine light. C. S. Lewis makes this point memorably in his essay, “Is Theology Poetry?”

I was taught at school, when I had done a sum, to “prove my answer.” The proof or verification of my Christian answer to the cosmic sum is this. When I accept Theology I may find difficulties, at this point or that, in harmonising it with some particular truths which are imbedded in the mythical cosmology derived from science. But I can get in, or allow for, science as a whole. Granted that Reason is prior to matter and that the light of the primal Reason illuminates finite minds, I can understand how men should come, by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in. If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science. If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees. And this is to me the final test. This is how I distinguish dreaming and waking. When I am awake I can, in some degree, account for and study my dream. The dragon that pursued me last night can be fitted into my waking world. I know that there are such things as dreams; I know that I had eaten an indigestible dinner; I know that a man of my reading might be expected to dream of dragons. But while in the nightmare, I could not have fitted in my waking experience. The waking world is judged more real because it can thus contain the dreaming world; the dreaming world is judged less real because it cannot contain the waking one. For the same reason, I am certain that in passing from the scientific points of view to the theological, I have passed from dream to waking. Christian theology can fit in science, art, morality, and the sub-Christian religions. The scientific point of view cannot fit in any of these things, not even science itself.

\(^7\) John 1:1–5.
I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.8

The repeatedly demonstrated human tendency to miss divine illumination, however, is the reason the scriptures are so replete with admonitions to seek after and then to share the light of the Gospel, the light of Christ. “I am come a light into the world,” he taught, “that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”9

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.10

“Be thou an example of the believers,” wrote the apostle Paul to his young protégé Timothy, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”11 “Ye are the light of the world,” Jesus taught his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount:

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.12

Anybody who has flown in airplanes often has surely had the experience of arriving at an airport on a dismal, gloomy day, sitting out on the runway in a drizzle, and then, only a few minutes into a flight, bursting through the clouds into a glorious, brilliantly sunlit world that had been there all the time, although unseen and forgotten.

During my mission in Switzerland, it was possible to go for days and even, it seemed, for weeks without seeing the Sun. It’s the price you pay for living in so green and beautiful a land; if you want sunshine all the time, you need a desert. (I’m sure that there’s a sacrament meeting speech in that, somewhere.) However, I served for seven months in the Bernese Oberland region, where I quickly learned that, if you could just get above what the Swiss called the Nebelmeer, or “fog sea,” things were often very different. Above the fog, the sun was shining. Soaring above

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9 John 12:46.
10 Doctrine and Covenants 88:67.
11 1 Timothy 4:12.
12 Matthew 5:14–16.
the fog, on such days, were the Alps, islands rising above an ocean of cloud in seemingly endless, spectacular rows of stunning beauty.13

It’s the duty of those who have received the light to try to pass it on. It’s not merely our duty to God but our duty to our brothers and sisters. Sending his apostles out to “the lost sheep of Israel,” Jesus asked them to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received,” he said, “freely give.”14

The Interpreter Foundation exists in order to share the light — insofar as we are able to do so — in order to remove those obscuring clouds, to lift people up to a place where they can see the marvelous vistas that are so often hidden in an often dark and dreary world. Here, on this Earth with its clouds and its cycles of day and night, “we know in part … for now we see through a glass, darkly.” But someday, “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Then we shall see “face to face: now [we] know in part; but then shall [we] know even as also [we are] known.”15 “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”16

John the Revelator, in his vision of the New Jerusalem, came to understand this when he saw that city, which (like the ancient Holy of Holies of the Temple) had the dimensions of a perfect cube:

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; … And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. … And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the

13  My companions and I soon sought out tracting areas where we could go on such days. It was fun to show up at district meetings with suntans, with lines where our sunglasses had been.
14  Matthew 10:8.
15  1 Corinthians 13:9–12.
16  2 Peter 1:19.
sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.  

Mere scholarship cannot build that city. It cannot bring people to it nor inscribe their names in the Lamb’s book. But it can sometimes provide a small glimmer of the pending reality that John saw, and it can help to sustain the hope for it. The Interpreter Foundation was established to contribute to that purpose. We’re grateful to all of those writers, editors, administrators, technical experts, donors, and readers who have contributed to the cause. Much has already been accomplished. We’re determined, though, to do even better in the future.

Daniel C. Peterson (PhD, University of California at Los Angeles) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University’s Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur’an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled Muhammad: Prophet of God (Eerdmans, 2007).
Viewing the Temple Through Wilford Woodruff’s Eyes

Laura Harris Hales


In Wilford Woodruff’s Witness, Jennifer Ann Mackley takes what could easily be a dry topic and turns it into a fascinating study not only of the unfolding of Latter-day Saint temple doctrine but also of early Mormonism. Primarily using Woodruff’s own words taken from his journals and published discourses, the narrative follows the line-upon-line revelation of doctrine pertaining to the purpose and ordinances of the temple and the quest for sacred space to conduct these rites.

With over three hundred illustrations, the book visually reinforces the concepts presented in the text and reminds readers that they are in a world far removed from the present. Doctrines we now take for granted were slowly being revealed, and leaders grappled with foreign concepts as they simultaneously rejoiced in promised blessings. Along the journey, readers are taught valuable principles applicable to understanding the nature of current prophetic revelation within the Latter-day Saint community, as they view the imperfect nature of the temple doctrine reception and implementation in the early Church.

When presenting Woodruff’s growing understanding of the work for the dead, Mackley presents only enough biographical information to provide context and refrains from overabundant commentary or analysis, instead deferring to primary sources when possible to tell the story. This approach allows the author to accomplish at least three things in the book. First, readers are given glimpses into the unique experience of living in Nauvoo and being taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. In a letter to Wilford, his wife Phoebe described the announcement of baptisms for the dead at an October 1840 conference as “‘strong Meat;’ one of the ‘strange doctrines’ Joseph had brought forth that season …
but] he made it very plain and consistent with the gospel” (p. 48). Second, readers are introduced to unusual temple practices no longer utilized, such as baptisms for healing. Mackley introduces these rites, safely guiding members along an unknown path by explaining contemporary thinking behind their initiation and practice. Third, it allows for the interweaving of explanations of complex doctrine by presenting them through Woodruff’s eyes as he feels more and more compelled to delve into temple practices that leave him unsettled. In one case he vigorously embraces the practice of non-relative adoptions but in 1894 realizes its inappropriateness in light of the words of Malachi. Abandoning them as resolutely as he once sought them, he establishes the precursor to the Family History Library, allowing members to more easily identify their ancestors.

Mackley lays out an engaging, clear, and complete timeline for the development of temple doctrine within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but the glimpses into early Church history are the hidden jewels of this volume. As readers learn about the gradual unfolding of the form, function, and meaning of temple ordinances, they are also given tastes of the sometimes messy practice of polygyny, the preaching of misunderstood doctrine, the details of the sewing of the first temple clothes and garments, the gentle and patient manner in which President Woodruff taught the Saints the necessity of forsaking former practices, and the countless hours he dedicated to the work of salvation of both the living and the dead.

This book was written for mainstream Mormons, but scholars will not be disappointed. It is obvious that Mackley has carefully researched the topic because of her meticulous notations, many expanding on concepts from the cited text. In appealing to both audiences, the author elected to use endnotes rather than footnotes. This will frustrate some, but the continuous numbering makes finding endnotes a more manageable prospect, and the information makes the inconvenience well worth the additional effort. While the text mentions Woodruff’s zeal for temple work and initial fervor for the ordinance of adoption, one would need to look in the endnote section to learn that his enthusiasm also extended to proxy marriage sealings, as he had 267 women sealed to him (note 734).

The appendix contains five charts, with four pertaining to Woodruff’s life and only one pertaining to the development of temple doctrine. This seems an interesting shift, as Mackley foregoes discussion of Woodruff’s personal life in lieu of his ecclesiastical affairs within the body of the text. Much of what is contained in these four charts seems like material
for another book, eliciting more questions than answers in opposition to her excellent narrative. Context for some of the material is located in the endnotes, but tying the two together would be a laborious process.

Readers may fear that because the book was self-published, it is of lesser quality than one published by a college press or mainstream LDS publisher. While the cover art and binding are only of moderate quality, the text itself has been well-edited and the chronicle accomplishes the rare feat of turning a historical timeline into a fascinating read. One of the reasons Mackley may have self-published is that there wasn’t a suitable mainstream publisher for this book. Though the topic is presented in a faith-promoting manner, it is also a comprehensive treatment that mentions by name all of the Latter-day Saint temple rites. While the author is careful to not reveal that which is sacred, she does nevertheless mention rites that Latter-day Saints have been asked not to discuss. For this reason, the niche publishers for this topic may have shied away from accepting the manuscript.

*Wilford Woodruff’s Witness* is an important addition to the scholarship of temple rites in the LDS Church. It strips away the cloak of uncomfortableness about the changing nature and understanding of temple ceremonies by clearly acknowledging them and postulating that evolution of any complex doctrine is to be expected, especially those that are new and complex such as that introduced by Joseph Smith to the early Saints.

**Laura Harris Hales** is the co-author of Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding (*Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015*). She is also the copy editor of *Mormon Historical Studies*. 
THE “FIERY DARTS OF THE ADVERSARY” IN 1 NEPHI 15:24

Stephen O. Smoot

AFTER receiving a revelation (1 Nephi 11–14) that clarified the meaning of his father Lehi’s dream (1 Nephi 8), Nephi explained to his rebellious brothers the significance of the various symbols of that dream. Concerning the “rod of iron,” which led to the tree of life, Nephi recorded,

And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction. (1 Nephi 15:24)

The inclusion of the phrase “the fiery darts of the adversary” calls to mind Paul’s description of the various parts of the spiritual “armour of God” that disciples of Jesus are exhorted to put on in their spiritual warfare against evil (Ephesians 6:11–17). “Above all,” Paul recommends as part of this defensive ensemble, take “the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16). It is tempting to see 1 Nephi 15:24 as simply echoing the language of the King James rendition of Ephesians 6:16. After all, the phrase “fiery darts” appears nowhere else in the kjv. This may lead some to wonder about the connection between this New Testament phrase and Nephi’s words. Did Joseph Smith imitate (or, as critics would suggest, plagiarize) either consciously or unconsciously the language of the King James Version in this Book of Mormon passage, or is more going on here?

There may indeed be something more going on here — and something that works in favor of the Book of Mormon’s historicity. Although not appearing in the kjv, the phrase “fiery darts” or “fiery arrows” appears in the Hebrew of Psalm 7. This psalm depicts Yahweh as both a “refuge … from all of [David’s] enemies” (v. 1) and a divine warrior who executes judgment against David’s foes. It includes a cry unto the Lord to “rise up … in [his] anger” (v. 6) and overthrow the wicked in righteous judgment (vv. 7–9). The psalm contains striking martial imagery of God as a
“shield” (v. 10), armed and ready for combat. The psalmist exclaims, “If one does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his bow; he has prepared his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts” (vv. 12–13 nosv, emphasis added). On the other hand, the kjv’s rendering of the same verse reads, “He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors” (emphasis added). But as will be seen below, the kjv’s rendering of this verse is undoubtedly in error, for the underlying Hebrew of Psalm 7:13 contains the word for “fiery shafts” or “fiery darts” as is also found in the English translation of Ephesians 6:16.

The Hebrew underlying the nosv’s “making his arrows fiery shafts” (v. 13 in English and v. 14 in Hebrew) is אַשָּׂאָב לְדוֹלֶ֥קֶים יִפְעָל. The King James Bible translators misunderstood dālaq (“to burn,” “to inflame”) as meaning in this case “to pursue,” and thus rendered dōlēqiym as “persecutors” (v. 13 kjv). While it is true that dālaq can mean (in a metaphorical sense) “hotly to pursue,” its primary definition is “to set on fire,” and this is certainly the meaning intended in this passage.1 Thus, while the nosv has produced an acceptable translation of v. 13, a more literal reading of the text would be, “he makes his arrows to [be] fiery.” Or, simply put another way, “he makes his fiery arrows.” This is clear when one consults both the Septuagint and the Vulgate translations of Psalm 7:13. In these two ancient translations of the Hebrew, dōlēqiym is rendered with καίω (“to burn,” “to kindle”)2 and comburō (“to burn up”),3 respectively, thus erasing any doubt as to the kjv’s misreading of the Hebrew.

More significantly, the ancient Greek version renders hisāyw (“his arrows”) as τα βελή αυτου. This is important to note, as the Greek word in Ephesians 6:16 for “darts” in “fiery darts” is the same noun—belē (belos). Rather than the short darts one might encounter in an English pub, belos (and its Hebrew equivalent ḥēṣ) means “missile” or “arrow.” Furthermore,

1 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 1:223; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 196. With an understanding that the English word “persecutor” comes ultimately from the Latin persecūtor (to prosecute, pursue after), the translators of the kjv were (in this instance erroneously) following the idiomatic definition of dālaq with their choice of “persecutor” or someone who pursues or follows.


although it uses a different verb than kaiō, the phrase in Ephesians 6:16 is qualified by pyroō, the common Greek verb for “to burn.” Thus, there can be little question that the original Hebrew underlying Psalm 7:13 is a functional equivalent to the Greek that underlies Ephesians 6:16. Both passages speak of, basically, “set-on-fire missiles.”

Historically, the use of fiery arrows or missiles is known in ancient Near Eastern warfare perhaps as early as the Neo-Assyrian period in the eighth century BC. Robert G. Grant reports that the Assyrian siege engines used during Sennacherib’s attack on Lachish in 701 BC were evidently “covered with dampened leather hides to protect [them] from flaming arrows — an incendiary weapon apparently used by both sides.” In the Persian and classical Greek periods, Herodotus (Histories 8.52) and Thucydides (History 2.75) mention the use of fiery missiles, both likewise in the context of siege warfare. Interestingly, Bernardino de Sahagún recorded at the time of the European conquest of the New World the ancient Aztec use of fiery arrows in Mesoamerican warfare in his General History of the Things of New Spain (the celebrated “Florentine Codex”).

Incendiary arrows were also evidently used in dispelling infantry ranks. “With their shields on fire,” Williams explains, “soldiers were tempted to throw them down, thus making themselves more vulnerable to the enemy.” If that weren’t enough, “heavier loads of burning material were [also] launched by catapults, against which a shield was of little protection.” Such is recorded by the anonymous native author of the so-called Anónimo Mexicano (“a twelve-chapter document concerning

4 Liddell and Scott, Liddell and Scott’s Greek–English Lexicon, 619–620.
5 David J. Williams, Paul’s Metaphors: Their Context and Character (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 240.
6 R. G. Grant, Battle: A Visual Journey through 5,000 Years of Combat (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2009), 17. See also the discussion provided by Steve A. Wiggins, Weathering the Psalms: A Meteortheological Survey (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 36–37. David Ussishkin suggests that the Assyrian reliefs depicting the siege of Lachish show “the defenders standing on the wall … throwing flaming torches on the siege-machine” as opposed to firing incendiary arrows, but in any case incendiary projectiles (arrows or otherwise) were used. See David Ussishkin, “Excavations and Restoration work at Tel Lachish,” online at <http://archaeology.tau.ac.il/?page_id=2045> (accessed October 2, 2015).
8 Williams, Paul’s Metaphors, 240.
the history of the Nahuatl Tlaxcalteca”)\(^9\) who mentioned the use of “some sort of smoking arrows” in Aztec infantry combat.\(^10\)

Thus, the phrase “fiery darts” (or more properly “fiery arrows” or “incendiary missiles”)\(^11\) undoubtedly found currency in the world of the ancient Near East, including Israel, and is therefore not alien to the world of Nephi. Although one might still argue that the Book of Mormon’s English rendering of “fiery darts of the adversary” is an imitation of kjv Ephesians 6:16, there’s no controversy in proposing that the phrase would have been accessible to Nephi, who could have used a similar phrase on the plates that Joseph Smith could eventually have rendered into the equivalent kjv idiom of his day (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:24).\(^12\)

Granted, the metaphor in 1 Nephi 15:24 is not likely to have been drawn directly from Psalm 7, as Nephi’s metaphor portrays the fiery darts as something evil or otherwise negative, whereas in Psalm 7 the fiery arrows are instruments of God’s justice against David’s enemies and therefore something positive. It is always possible, I suppose, that Nephi deliberately reversed the imagery of God’s avenging fiery arrows in Psalm 7 into something negative (Satan’s fiery arrows of temptation), but I personally find this unlikely, given Nephi’s piety. Rather, I am suggesting that the metaphor and language in 1 Nephi 15:24 fits comfortably in an ancient Near Eastern setting. Psalm 7 and the evidence of fiery arrows used in ancient Near Eastern warfare examined above indicates that Nephi’s metaphor need not be strictly seen as coming from Ephesians, but rather could easily have been available to the prophet in his ancient Israelite cultural setting.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that it would have been practically impossible for Joseph Smith to have stumbled upon any of this, as first, the kjv, the only biblical translation feasibly accessible to the Prophet,\(^13\) mistranslated Psalm 7:13, and second, Joseph began his study of Hebrew

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\(^10\) Crapo and Glass-Coffin, Anónimo Mexicano, 40.

\(^11\) Williams, Paul’s Metaphors, 222.

\(^12\) As a bonus, the Book of Mormon’s singular “the adversary” comes closer to the Greek underlying Ephesians 6:16, which reads οὐ τον πονερόν or “the evil one” (cf. the nRSV), as opposed to the kjv’s ambiguous “wicked,” which in English could be construed as either a collective singular or a plural. If one is going to suggest that Joseph Smith was simplistically cribbing from the kjv, one must account for the change in 1 Nephi 15:24 that brings the text closer to the underlying Greek than what is rendered by the kjv.

\(^13\) The Coverdale (1535), Matthew (1537), Great (1539), Geneva (1560), and Bishops’ (1568) Bible translations mishandled the Hebrew in the same manner as the
and Greek some five years after the translation of the Book of Mormon. While I wouldn’t at all call it “proof” of the Book of Mormon’s antiquity, the evidence examined above leads me to conclude that 1 Nephi 15:24 need not be seen as a sloppy plagiarism of Ephesians 6:16. Rather, I am convinced that even if the Prophet Joseph Smith imitated the language of the KJV in his English translation of the plates, Nephi’s metaphor of “the fiery darts of the adversary” in 1 Nephi 15:24 can ultimately be traced to the world of ancient Israel.

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A number of years ago, my home teacher, John Wright, stopped by to see me, unannounced. As we talked, he said, “I’ve been thinking a lot about what it was like when we were in that meeting in heaven where God said that he would choose the Savior.”

We talked a little bit about that, and then John left.

A few weeks later, I had a wonderful dream about that question. Sometimes my brain just has a dream that could never be realized, but this particular dream was a purposeful dream that really changed my life. Of course, I could never say what I saw in my dream is what this meeting in heaven was. But it truly has helped me think about my relationship with my Savior in a deeper way.

I was at the meeting when God announced his plan, and then Satan announced an alternative plan. And God said that he would implement his plan. I remember we felt a real worry in all our minds because the question was, “That’s a great idea to send us to Earth, to experience the options of choosing right and wrong.” Our concern was, “What will happen if we don’t choose the right?” Then in my dream I saw one man amongst us — Jesus Christ — who stood up and said, “Send me!” He explained that, if we sin, it will be okay because, he said, “I will go, and I will live the perfect life, and, at the end of my life, I will take upon myself the suffering that all your sins might have created.”

I saw my friends and family were relieved the Savior would do that for us. But then in a similar way, I began to feel apprehension. “This is a great deal for us, but what’s going to happen if the Savior comes down to Earth, and he doesn’t live a perfect life? And what would happen if, when he comes to the end of his life, he decides not to go through with it and decides not to take our suffering upon himself, onto his shoulders. What’s going to happen to us then?”

Then I saw in my dream the Savior standing up again, and with the kindest, gentlest voice I can imagine, he said to us, “It’s okay. I will do what I have promised I would do. And if you’ll only accept me, I will do
what I planned to do right now. I will do what I said I would do. And your responsibility will be to accept me.”

I remember the feeling in my heart, in this dream, at that time, that what he asked me to do was to have faith in him that he would do what he promised to do.

Then in my dream I saw that the meeting finished, and everybody went to do whatever was on his or her agenda. I looked, and there was the Savior standing alone. I realized that he was the only man who stood and offered himself to be the sacrifice for the rest of us, and he was standing there alone. I thought to myself, “What can I do to thank him? Should I go shake his hand and say, ‘Thanks?'” I realized that the way I can say thanks to the man whose sacrifice would give me eternal life would be if I can stand next to him and commit that I will do everything I can to help God’s plan work, and he can trust me, that I will do what I have committed to do. And then my dream ended.

It has changed my life because it has helped me to frame the commitment I have to the Savior that I will do everything I can to bring souls unto him.

I think of this dream over and over again, every time Christmas happens. I’m grateful that everybody I meet actually accepted Christ once when we were at that meeting in heaven. We all accepted Jesus, and we expressed our faith in him that he would do what he promised he would do. Now we’re on this Earth, and he did what he said he would do. All we have to do is to have faith that he did it. At Christmas time, I wish to tell everybody that I know that he did it and that we have accepted him. Now all we have to do is have the faith that he did it. I give you my testimony that he did, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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service in the Boy Scouts of America for 25 years as a scoutmaster, cubmaster, den leader, and troop and pack committee chairman. He and his wife Christine live in Belmont, Massachusetts. They are the parents of five children and grandparents to five grandchildren.
Abstract: In this paper, Christ’s ministry is characterized by his relationship with the females found in the four gospels. The drastic differences between the ways Jesus and society treated women are emphasized. The culture into which Christ was born had degraded women for generations. Under Christ’s leadership first-century priesthood brethren were shown how to treat women. However, after Christ’s ascension Hellenistic philosophy pervaded the Christian Church’s thinking and accelerated an apostate perception of women. This study explores Jesus’s actions and teachings which restored women’s true identity. In short, this paper focuses on the reverence, respect, and loving kindnesses that Christ showed women. By studying Jesus’s example we are taught that women are an integral part of divine creation having individual worth.

Jesus Christ’s interactions with women during His mortal ministry have been the subject of many articles and books, both scholarly and popular. Writers generally agree that Jesus treated people, including women, as individuals with respect and honor. In particular, Jesus often reached out to those often excluded or marginalized in society. Christ seems to have behaved in ways not generally demonstrated by many of His contemporaries, especially in His interaction with women. In this, He provided a model for His disciples to follow. It was a model of perfect equality in God’s eyes — not the world’s standard of equality but God’s standard. Likewise, the women of the New Testament also give their modern counterparts a worthy pattern of how true [female] disciples of Christ are to act.

Contemporary Cultural
Identifying first-century attitudes about women is fraught with challenges. We know a lot more about elite women living in the cities than we know about ordinary women who lived in rural hamlets and villages in the eastern part of the Roman Empire where Jesus walked
and taught. Numerous waves of changes swept the religious, social, and political landscape of Palestine in the centuries preceding the birth of Jesus Christ. Additionally, Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties had changed the physical landscape with building projects small and great, providing a Greco-Roman veneer to the several urban centers in Palestine and material culture — buildings, artifacts, etc. — shaping beliefs and perceptions.

Although there were exceptions, the dominant society often valued men much more than women. Elite women, like the wives of Pilate or Herod Antipas, enjoyed privileges unknown to most other women living in Palestine during the first century. Greek philosophy was hostile to women. Greco-Roman legal and religious culture, which favored men, and the Jewish subculture, which reflected a male-oriented society, were changing by the time Jesus began His ministry. Nevertheless, women were often voiceless, invisible, and undervalued.

Some general attitudes about women in the first century include:

- A woman came of age at about twelve years.\(^1\)
- The practice of exposing newborn children, especially daughters, was not unknown in the first century.\(^2\)
- Men often exercised the power of life and death over their children and wives.\(^3\)
- Some believed that “all women because of their lack of judgment should [then] be under the power of guardians.”\(^4\)
- A man could, in some situations, divorce his wife “for reasons ranging from unchastity, to burning a meal.”\(^5\)
- A wife rarely could divorce her husband.\(^6\)

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• Many women had no real legal, civil, or financial voice.7
• Women may have been required to cover their heads, faces, or both in the presence of men.8

By the time rabbis appeared as a distinct group in the second century, some of them saw the woman’s role as God’s punishment for Eve’s transgression. Because Eve’s disobedience caused not only her own death but also the demise of every other mortal (Ben Sira 25.24), she became the “fundamental character and identity of all women … through Eve’s words and actions, the true nature of women was revealed.” Most thought her nature was passed down to every daughter and included being “disobedient, guileless, weak-willed, prone to temptation and evil, disloyal, untrustworthy, deceitful, seductive, and motivated in their thoughts and behavior purely by self-interest.” As scholar Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe informs, both then and now, “no matter what women might achieve in the world … Whoever she might be and whatever her accomplishments, no woman can escape being identified with Eve, or being identified as her.” Eve’s transgression was the principle story used by the rabbis to identify the status of all women, and because of that status, women were not allowed to seek direct access to a rabbi.10 In fact, a rabbi could not speak even in public with a woman who was not his wife or daughter. Apparently, rabbis were forbidden to enter a woman’s house to teach.11 Although Jews revered Old Testament matriarchs, some Jewish men repeated daily in prayer, “Praised be God that He has not created me a woman.”12

Women’s economic lives often depended on their fathers before they married and subsequently on their husbands. A husband, with few exceptions, had complete control over his wife’s person and property. In summary, New Testament scholar Ben Witherington suggests that a

8 Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 17.
10 Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 389.
“low view of women was common, perhaps predominant before, during, and after Jesus’s era.”

Mary the Mother of Jesus

Elder James E. Talmage suggests that Christ in His ministry “recompensed women in rich measure for the injustice they endured” in the culture that surrounded Him. The Lord often displayed this recompense in the quality of His relationships with the women found in the Gospels, and his mortal “sisters” responded in kind. His treatment exalted the self-image of those women with whom He came in contact. In short, He treated women with respect, regardless of their station. Studying how Christ and the women of the New Testament interact can help everyone understand how He views and treats all women and how his true followers respond.

One of the most important relationships the Savior had with a woman in the first century was with His mother. Mary was one of her son’s most committed disciples. An interesting interaction between Jesus and Mary took place at the wedding in Cana, as outlined in John’s Gospel. Mary may have had some social responsibility at the wedding feast, and as a result, when the supply of wine had diminished, she approached Jesus. Christ responded, “Woman, what wilt thou have me to do for thee?” (JS\T John 2:4). Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed, “Christ’s answer to Mary was respectful and discreet. He agreed to do what she requested even though the hour for the heralding abroad of His miraculous powers was yet future.” In modern vernacular, it is as if Jesus were saying, “Mother, I can see you’re frustrated. What can I do to make things right?” Mary, still reluctant to give her son instruction, accepted His offering and the way He might do it and instructed the servants, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

The Master of the Vineyard then turned water into wine — better wine than any previously served. His action filled six water pots, which is over 100 gallons. No wonder Mary was concerned, as “this wedding

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celebration was one of no small size.”

Interestingly, Christ’s first recorded miracle was not a matter of life or death, sickness or health, or evil or righteousness; rather, it was to provide wine at a social gathering as a favor to His mother who may have had some responsibilities. Christ chose the one who had given Him life to be the first mortal to receive a miracle at His hands by meeting her concerns as a hostess. And perhaps He also indicates His love and respect for his mother and his willingness, as appropriate, to defer to a parent as required in the Commandments.

The Gospels do not give us much more about Jesus’s interaction with His mother. However, they do show Mary standing before the cross at the end of His life. Former General Relief Society President Elaine L. Jack describes her thoughts about this last interaction between Christ and his mother,

I can hear Mary comforting the baby Jesus with soothing words that come so naturally to us: “I’m right here.” And then at this most dramatic moment of all time, there was the mother, Mary. She couldn’t soothe his pain this time, but she could stand by his side. Jesus, in tribute, offered those grand words, “Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!” (John 19:26–27.)

Even in agony Jesus was concerned with the well-being of His mother and ensured that she was taken care of temporally by asking John the Beloved to take her home (see John 19:27). In these scenes Jesus the Christ can be viewed as the epitome of a noble son. He was noble because he was obedient to the Law and the Prophets.

Martha and Mary

Mary and Martha are well known in the Gospels, especially in John. Christ had come to the two sisters’ home in Bethany accompanied by many visitors. Having to fix a meal for the guests in her home, Martha was frustrated and complained to the Savior that her sister Mary, instead of helping her prepare food, was sitting at His feet being taught (Luke 10:40). In many accounts, Martha is sometimes portrayed as being more concerned with trivial matters than with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Before responding too harshly to Martha’s reaction, readers must look at what she was doing as her sister sat at the feet of Christ. Martha was serving the Lord.

Luke says, “Martha was cumbered about much serving” (Luke 10:41). Martha was filling the needs of others and doing service herself out of love for Jesus.\(^{19}\) How could the Savior be critical of such service? BYU Professor of Ancient Scripture Camille Fronk Olsen informs, “Luke never intended a conclusion that Martha’s service was unacceptable. Similarly, Jesus did not consider educating women as time wasted. He viewed women as intellectually and spiritually capable of studying and understanding God’s word.”\(^{20}\)

As Martha was bothered that her sister was untroubled with the many details of the day, she requested Jesus’s help. In response, disciples of today should envision the tone of the Redeemer’s voice to be entreatying, not accusatory. As He twice repeated her name, Martha felt a softening of her stress. In a loving, tender tone, He acknowledged her many callings and duties: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things” (Luke 10:41). When the Savior used the word “careful,” He could have been suggesting that Martha was concerned with others’ needs — that she was cautious and considerate of others’ feelings. The important word in the next passage is the word “needful.”\(^{21}\) “But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part” (Luke 10:42). When the Redeemer used the word needful, was He perhaps showing a concern for Martha’s personal needs? Could the Savior have been suggesting that sisters who so often put others’ needs before their own deserve to fill their own “well” once in a while? Was Christ perhaps suggesting that women have to take a spiritual break, listen to the gospel, and fill themselves with the “good part” before going out again and sharing with others?\(^{22}\) As Former General Relief Society Bonnie Parkin explains, “The Savior’s response strikingly clarified what mattered most. On that evening in Martha’s home, the good part was not in the kitchen; it was at the Lord’s feet. Dinner could wait.”\(^{23}\) Though the Lord’s motives cannot truly be known, Christ most likely wanted Martha to keep a balance between serving a meal and gaining spiritual refreshment; and He was willing to facilitate that balance. Former General Relief Society President

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22 Wilcox, *Daughters of God*, 189.
Julie B. Beck views the Savior’s “gentle comment … as an invitation to participate in the Lord’s Ministry.”

In this particular story, Mary’s actions are different than her sister’s. She was daring since we have no examples from Palestine of a male teacher instructing women. In this account, Mary acts like a male disciple, sitting at Jesus’s feet to be taught. As Bonnie D. Parkin informs the relationship between Jesus and Mary “breached convention, for at that time women were not usually able to discuss the gospel with men.” This story can be viewed as the basis of the “changed status of women thanks to Jesus and his teachings,” showing that women could be independent disciples who were fully accepted by Christ “without male intermediaries such as fathers, brothers or husbands.”

Though the above-related passage is an oft-repeated scriptural account, this incident does not relate Martha’s finest hour. Her behavior as a disciple of Christ can be observed when she loses her brother Lazarus, in death. As Lazarus takes ill, his sisters know that Jesus is in Perea and send for Him. It would have taken one day for the messenger to travel to Perea. When the message finds Jesus, His reply is that Lazarus’s “sickness is not unto death” (John 11: 4). The Lord then stayed two more days teaching and ministering without any seeming regard for Lazarus, and then took another day to reach Bethany. Martha’s mindset was that she knew the omniscient Christ had full knowledge of her brother’s condition and had done nothing to prevent his death. As soon as she hears that Christ is approaching their home, Martha runs to him (John 11: 20). She then acknowledges that what she has experienced has been difficult. She does not negate the impact of the sorrow she has felt and her first words to Jesus are “If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (vs. 21). The characteristic Martha displays as her beloved

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brother lies in a tomb is that she keeps her testimony intact, despite trying circumstances. Martha’s testimony includes knowing that her brother would be resurrected. Though her faith had been tested to the utmost she still testifies:

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. … I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this? (John 11:22-26)

Though her brother’s death had gone against her prayers, her testimony remained valiant. “She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly” (John 11:27-28). Commenting on these verses Elder Bruce R. McConkie declares: “Women as well as men have testimonies, receive revelation from the Spirit, and know of themselves of the Lord’s divinity. Martha’s testimony of Christ’s divine Sonship is as plain, as positive, and sure as was the same testimony born by Peter.” Martha accepted the will of the Lord. Her testimony of the Resurrection was strong enough to secure her through the ordeal of her brother’s death, and her faith was soon rewarded with Lazarus’s restoration to life.

In another account found in the Gospel of John, Mary’s response to Lazarus’s death is unlike her sister’s. Although Martha seemed to keep her emotions in control as Christ came, Mary sobbed. Christ then exhibited remarkable sympathy. “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping … he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. Jesus wept” (John 11:33-35). How different Jesus was than another first-century man who wrote of his wife: “Well aware of [her] own guilt, she invents complaints. … She has tears by the gallon all ready to flow wherever and whenever she pleases.” In juxtaposition, Christ justified Mary’s tears by displaying the epitome of empathy. Truly, empathy is at the heart of Christ’s behavior. The scriptural account does not say Christ suggested to Mary that He would make everything right again or “fix it.” At this point, He did not try

28 Philip F. Esler, and Ronald Piper, Lazarus, Mary and Martha (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 124.
30 Michael Massey, Society in Imperial Rome (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 73.
to rectify the situation. He simply showed empathy and was there for Mary physically and emotionally. This was also a transgression of gender boundaries — then and now — of a man crying. Yet Christ’s perfect example is for men to feel, express, and show empathy giving us another critical dimension of how one behaves toward women, and others.

In another passage from scripture, we find an interesting interaction between Mary and the Savior, again indicating to followers the proper attitude disciples of Christ display toward women. It would appear that Mary wanted to do something for the Savior in honor of His burial. Her conclusion was to sit at the feet of the Savior, take a pound of spikenard, uncover her hair, and wipe the Lord’s dusty feet with the ointment. In her society, Mary’s actions were inappropriate. For a woman to uncover her hair in the presence of men unrelated to her was scandalous and offensive.31 Biblical scholar Raymond Brown points out that in Jesus’s day it was the head of the living and the feet of corpses that were anointed.32 The amount of ointment she used was the equivalent of an entire year’s wages (see Mark 14:5).33 She used so much spikenard that the entire house was filled with the fragrance. Elder McConkie suggests that “Mary at least foreknew and realized what her beloved Lord would soon face. … [And she must have wondered] what act of love, of devotion, of adoration, of worship, could a mere mortal perform for him who is eternal?”34 The act she chose to perform of dusting the feet with hair was a task performed only by the lowliest of slaves. Her choice of this act of service clearly shows that Mary knew Jesus was to die and live again.

Christ could have responded in a critical manner. He could have chided her, “Mary, I am not dead yet.” From His gentle response, He obviously understood her motivation. Judas ungraciously responded to Mary’s actions and mentioned that she was incurring a ridiculous expense (see John 12: 3-5). Christ’s reply denounced Judas’s brutish conduct, “Let her alone: For she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial” (JST John 12:7). As Olson concludes, “Impervious to Judas’s complaints, Jesus refused to rebuke Mary and instead defended her, received her act of discipleship,

31 Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 113.
33 Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 136.
and extolled her actions as prophetic.” Christ allowed Himself to be the recipient of Mary’s affection, graciously accepting her offering. He let this sister serve Him in the way she knew how, even when others were critical of an action that could be seen as inappropriate. Yet it was something that was entirely appropriate in the Savior’s eyes.

The Woman with an Issue of Blood

Another biblical woman whom others criticized is identified only by her illness. Mark writes of an unnamed woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. Luke the Beloved Physician (Colossians 4:14) simply says that this woman had spent all her living on physicians. Mark is a bit harsher toward first-century doctors, declaring the woman had suffered many things at the hands of many physicians (Mark 5:26).

This woman’s concerns may have been more attached to the societal impact of her illness than to her physical limitations. In Jewish subculture, and in the larger dominant culture, illness was often associated with wrongdoing. Added to his underlying view of sickness, Mosaic law declared the woman perpetually unclean because she was constantly bleeding (Leviticus 15: 25-30). Anything or anyone she had physical contact with would also become ritually unclean. Given social and religious realities in first century Judaism, it would not be surprising to discover that she was marginalized in her village. The text suggests the woman had exhausted all possible hope until she found Jesus. Christ’s response to this woman “with an issue of blood,” is far different than the societal norm. Her continual vaginal bleeding made her, in the eyes of the faith, perenially ritually unclean. Even today, orthodox Jewish women must ritually clean themselves after menses. This was man’s law, not God’s law, and Christ here is attempting to show what his true standard is. This specific societal misperception was countered by Christ. To Jesus, this women’s health concern was inconsequential as far as her worthiness or her value in God’s eyes.

This woman may not have felt she could ask the Savior to bless her through touching her or anointing her because that would make Him ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:19). Instead, she chose to exercise her faith as she pressed against the Savior in a crowded narrow street in Capernaum where she might go unnoticed. She may have said to herself

35 Olson, Women of the New Testament, 163.
36 Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 426.
38 Holzapfel and Holzapfel, Sisters at the Well, 101.
in a statement laden with faith, “If I can touch His garment, I will be made whole.” The Savior was probably wearing a square upper garment mantle with corners and fringe which represented priesthood power. As the woman made her way through the crowd trying to be inconspicuous, she finally dared to reach for one of those tassels. Amidst the throng, Jesus felt her faith and asked, “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:44). The disciples were surprised as everyone was pressing against Him. In this instance a key gospel principle is demonstrated — the necessity of faith for any and all disciples of Christ. Former Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency Anne C. Pingree notes that in like manner current disciples of Christ “must [also] demonstrate that faith in the Lord has penetrated our hearts deeply enough to move us to action.”

Jesus’s response to this woman’s faith is interesting. He declared, “I perceive that virtue is gone out of me” (Luke 8:46). In the English translation, this may seem to be an odd statement. Modern usage of the word *virtue* often connotes chastity. However, virtue is a more inclusive term that implies goodness, loveliness, refinement, and being of good report (thirteenth Article of Faith). President James E. Faust of the First Presidency adds to the definition moral excellence, right action and thinking, or goodness of character.

Fearing and trembling, with the knowledge that what she had done was revealed, she fell down before Jesus and told Him “all the truth” (Mark 5:33). Culturally, this interchange alarmed those witnessing this healing as the woman was unclean. Jesus responded to the woman, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” Mark reports the conclusion to the story: “And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague” (see Mark 5:29–34). By publicly speaking with this woman and even calling her by the intimate term of “Daughter,” Christ’s shows his sensitivity to women’s feelings, emotions, and even health concerns.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

Another woman experienced Christ’s sensitivity when a group of men brought her to the temple mount at daybreak, charging her with adultery. Choosing to publicly challenge the Savior, their choice of location for this confrontation reveals a lot about this woman’s accusers: “And the scribes and Pharisees brought [her to Christ]; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?” (John 8:3–5).

Their question is ridiculous because the power of the Jewish courts to impose the death penalty ceased around the year 30 BCE. They were tempting Him, hoping they would be able to accuse Him wrongly. These men used the woman to make a point. The interview was in no sense a request for guidance, nor were her accusers asking for a decision. They were not worried about this woman or the Law of Moses; instead, they were using her as an object in their plot to trap the Savior. It is an understatement to say they were the antithesis of respectful.

Christ, the transcendent respecter of women, would not let this woman be used in this way. His reaction to this query was to stoop down and start writing on the ground. When they continued to tempt Him, Christ lifted Himself up and prodded, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground” (John 8:7–8). Convicted in their own conscience, they went out one by one beginning at the eldest even unto the last, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. When He saw none but the woman left, he asked, “Woman where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” The woman responded, “No man, Lord.” Jesus then said, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:10–11).

Anyone who suggests that the words of the Savior here are negating this woman’s need for repentance are limiting his teachings and lessening the real price of discipleship. The jst adds that “the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name” (jst John 8:11). This experience can be seen as one of the most seminal events in the history of women, from Christ’s day into our day. Here, Christ demonstrates what is expected of men with regards to women and also introduces key doctrines of His teaching. Historically, there has often been a sexual double standard. Women were, and are, held to a higher standard of sexual morality than men. Christ consistently decried this sexual double standard, even though under the law men were treated differently than women when they committed adultery. One can clearly see this in the
fact that the woman’s accusers did not bring the man involved in the adultery before Christ to be condemned — just the woman. Christ very succinctly teaches the necessity of adhering to His standard of chastity; but, He also teaches the reality of repentance and complete forgiveness if any individual — man or woman — transgresses His law. Christ’s interaction here indicates that the standard before us today should be both men and women alike in need of repentance when they sin.

A Gentile Woman

Another outcast of society whom the Lord treated with respect was a Gentile woman. Some may accuse the Lord of being less than kind with this Gentile. However, a careful examination of the passage shows clearly that His graceful end justified His means. A certain woman’s young daughter had an unclean spirit. Whether possessed by an evil spirit or bound by a mental or emotional illness, she was afflicted. Her mother had heard of Christ and somehow located Him. Seeking solitude, Jesus had escaped the crowds, and she interrupted His few minutes of rest. She was probably a rather intuitive person to even be able to find Him. Then, inappropriately, she showed up at mealtime. The woman was a citizen of a Gentile nation, a Syrophoenician by birth and a Canaanite by religion. In short, she was the wrong sex, the wrong citizenship, the wrong ethnic background, and the wrong religion to make such a request. Yet, she accepted Jesus as her promised Messiah.42 She was a “persona non grata” in Jewish law and worthy only of contempt at best. In His own way, the Lord responded to her needs.

Matthew says that she was crying unto Him: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word” (Matthew 15:22–23). Thus, He did not say anything; ignoring her request. However, she was not offended by His silence; or if she was, she apparently simply chose not to take offense.43

Chagrined at her impulsiveness, the disciples suggested that Jesus send her away. Instead, Jesus responded to her persistence, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). In other words, “she was not fit for the feast prepared for the lost sheep of Israel.” Christ was saying, “My mission is to the Jews not the Gentiles,” and she was not fit to receive the blessings prepared for the House of Israel. However, she still continued to importune and worship, “showing greater respect than most of the Jews.” She begged, “Lord help me.” He

43 Wilcox, Daughters of God, 212.
answered, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs (Matthew 15:26).”

Jesus’s response might cause some to accuse the Lord of being unkind; however, “Jews were prone to label non-Jews as Greeks, pagans, sinners and even dogs because they were seen as not yet matured, prepared, and worthy to receive God’s word.” He was merely trying to help her understand her position of being outside the covenant. What was her reaction? She took whatever the Lord gave her and acknowledged that she was not of the covenant people, so she was not asking to take away their blessings. Rather, she was merely asking for a small scrap, a small blessing, for herself. A great deal of “thy will, not mine” can be seen in her response: “Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table (Matthew 15:27).”

The Lord gave a test of faith and patience to this mother, a test she passed with flying colors. Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Matthew 15:24–28). Because she was content to accept the Lord’s will, He eventually gave her the desires of her heart, even though she was not entitled at that time as a nonmember of the house of Israel. His blessings came to this woman “just when the highest good for the petitioner” was accomplished. Jesus taught his followers the correct view in regards to women’s equality. His words indicate that women are equal in God’s eyes if they have faith in his divinity. His teachings show that it is not all cultural mores and man-made Jewish laws that turn women into second class citizens. Rather, when Christ qualified women, He looked at their hearts and their faithfulness. Thus, women were equal before God because of their faith.

A Widow’s Mite

On another occasion, Jesus was sitting against the treasury of the temple watching people give alms for the poor. His attention was focused on a vulnerable, husbandless woman. Just as the feminization of poverty is real today, it was also profound when Jesus lived on the earth. It is “no wonder with his perfect regard for women [that] he is so insistent about

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46 James E. Faust states: “It is unfortunate that it is taking so long to bring full economic justice to women. The feminization of poverty is real and tragic.” See
our obligations to widows." In Jewish Palestine, a widow often found herself at the mercy of her sons. In fact, widows were often legally and financially defenseless in ancient society. With that backdrop, the account depicts a woman identified by scripture only as a widow who was donating two mites to the temple treasury. A lepton, or mite, was a tiny Jewish bronze coin worth anywhere from a fraction of a penny to fifty cents.

Yet her donation and witness show forth great power because as a widow she most likely was poor. Irony shows its face here. Should not those at the temple be taking care of the widow and not vice versa? As the Lord observed her, He called His disciples over and said to them, “Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” (Mark 12:43–44) The Savior’s acknowledgement of the widow’s sacrifice shows that motive is more important to Him than the size of a gift. Here the Lord taught a visible lesson that “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Mary Magdalene

As with the unnamed widow, no matter the circumstances of a woman’s life, Jesus Christ was always gracious and kind. These attributes can especially be seen in His interactions with Mary from Magdala. All the Gospel authors mention Mary Magdalene as the first woman among the women following Jesus Christ. As her example shows, women were not only included in Jesus’s teachings but also were incorporated into His group of disciples. This indicates their intrinsic worth and value — their equal standing before God. Tradition holds that Mary Magdalene was a woman of considerable substance. Even for a wealthy Jewish woman, to follow a teacher “through cities and villages” was not acceptable behavior


prior to Christ’s ministry (see Luke 13:22). She and other women were physically and emotionally supportive of Jesus during His ministry and even at His death, when they saw to His burial. Readers of the account should try to imagine what Mary felt when she found the stone rolled away and Christ’s body gone. She was distraught. She wanted to find Jesus’s body herself (John 20:16–18). She stood outside the sepulchre weeping, stooped down, and looked into the tomb again:

And seeth two angels in white sitting the one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman why weepest thou? She saith unto them because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. (John 20:12–14)

Mary’s reaction to this angelic revelation is incredible. She must have been in shock, as so many are when a loved one dies. She saw angels and still did not understand what had occurred. She was still asking the same questions even after the heavenly messengers had answered her queries. Then, “Jesus saith unto her, Woman why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away” (John 20:15). She did not know Him until He spoke her name. The Savior choosing Mary to be the first witness of his resurrection is not coincidental or insignificant. This occurrence tells us that women are not substandard disciples in the Kingdom of God but that they will also receive great blessings along with their male counterparts.

The Lord knows each of His spiritually begotten daughters and sons by their given names. Mary Magdalene recognized his voice: “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master” (John 20:16). As they embraced, the Savior did not say “Touch me not!” as recorded in the King James Version. Those words seem cold compared to the correct Joseph Smith translation in which Christ says, “Hold me not.” There is a big difference between someone saying to a woman “Don’t you touch me” and asking something like “Don’t hold me back.” Here the Savior may have been asking Mary not to hold him back from ascending to his Father. She may have thought that He would return to his life as she had known him before. But now he was different, resurrected, and could not be hindered from what he needed to do as the Resurrected Christ. This first appearance to a woman was typical of His approach to females during His lifetime. In
that respect, “Jesus not only raised the status of women but put them on equal spiritual footing with men.”

Many other examples of this approach are found in the four Gospels. He chose females as the subject of many of His parables, including The Leaven (Matthew 13:33), The Fig Tree (Matthew 24:42), The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1), The Silver Piece (Luke 15:8), and The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:3) demonstrating that women’s concerns were as valid as men’s activities. He spoke of patching worn-out clothes, grinding wheat, making bread, and cleaning homes, concerning Himself with the goings-on in the daily lives of first-century females, and He brought the good news in terms with which they could identify. Using examples of women to portray gospel principles and practices, He taught that daughters of God are an integral part of divine creation and eternal progression as He showed great reverence and respect for them.

Conclusion

Jesus’s teachings relating to women and their roles in their original setting were “sometimes radical, sometimes reformational, and usually controversial.” Where “Bleeding Pharisees” would strike their heads on posts as they walked around with their eyes shut to avoid even seeing a woman, how controversial it must have been for Christ to seek women to teach and then to show them His loving kindnesses. By studying Jesus’s example, His disciples today are taught that women are an integral part of divine creation and have individual worth. “He never by word or deed, lent encouragement to the disparagement of women.” The way that Christ consistently demonstrated treatment of women throughout his life is one of the things that made him such a radical. Such treatment was a far cry from Jesus’s contemporaries and his interactions with women indicate their intrinsic value in his eyes and their equality before God. With each incident described above there are specific cultural practices that are condemned and new patterns of belief and behavior that are to be engaged in by disciples in regards to women and by women. Every act of Christ was intended for a purpose. His acts towards women, because of the conditions of his day and thereafter — are intended to liberate women from false and more often than not, inappropriate and harmful treatment that diminished women. His behavior towards women

53 Starr, The Bible Status of Woman, 165 and 175.
indicated their equality before God and with faithfulness and devotion their ability, alongside men, to inherit Eternal Life.

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The More Part of the Book of Mormon Is Early Modern English

Stanford Carmack

Royal Skousen has done an excellent job of summarizing the use of the construction “the more part of + NOUN PHRASE” (and close variants) in the Book of Mormon at Helaman 6:21 in his Analysis of Textual Variants. In this phrase, the adjective more conveys an obsolete meaning of ‘greater’. My concern here is to compare Book of Mormon usage to that of the King James Bible and the textual record and to place it in its proper time.

The Oxford English Dictionary has about 12 instances of the phrase (and several more with the less-common variant party, not found in the Book of Mormon). From that source we find that John Trevisa, William Caxton, and Robert Fabyan used it before the 16th century:

1398 OED TREISA Bartholomew’s De Proprietatibus Rerum vi. xiv

Lawe woll that the eldest sone haue the more parte of therytage.

c1477 OED CAXTON Jason 35

The more parte of men haue no verite ne loyaulte as to the regard of loue.

1494 OED FABYAN vii. 664

He rode about the more parte of the lande,

1. See Royal Skousen, Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, 6 parts (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2004–2009), 2976–79 (Helaman 6:21). In this study I exclude the phrase “for the more part”, akin to modern “for the most part”.

2. See the Oxford English Dictionary entry for more, a. (n.) and (adv.), definition †1c.

In addition, Geoffrey Chaucer used “the more part”, “the more party of”, and “the more part . . . of” at least once each in his writings. So we learn that the usage arose no later than the late Middle English period and that it continued into the Early Modern era. Even though most OED quotations occur before the 17th century, the last-dated example in the dictionary is surprisingly late — 1871. This was a conscious, scholarly use by an Oxford historian, Edward Freeman, apparently well-versed in old historical writings such as Holinshed’s Chronicles — heavily used by Shakespeare — which employed many instances of “the more part (of)”.5

It is noteworthy that although the phraseology and the sense of more in “the more part (of)” are obsolete, the meaning is nevertheless transparent. Thus Freeman knew that his readership would have no trouble understanding what he meant by “the more part of them perished by falling over the rocks”. That is one way we encounter obsolete meaning in the Book of Mormon. Another is that various words persist with modern meanings and the obsolete senses are close and may not be clearly perceived. As a result, we often don’t consciously notice that we are reading obsolete language. For example, such is the case with the verb scatter, as used in the title page, or with detect at Helaman 9:17.

Besides the above 1871 outlier, the last quotation in the OED containing “the more part of” is dated 1610.6 This suggests that the phrase (and its congener) was characteristic of preceding centuries. Yet this phrase-type occurs 26 times in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon, a book dictated and scribed in the late 1820s in rural America.

The 1611 Bible only employs a truncated form of the phrase — without of. It does so twice, and both instances are found in the book of Acts:

Acts 19:32

and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

4. Here I exclude “for the more part” (three times; see note 1).

5. Davies’ Corpus of Historical American English shows the use of the phrase “the more part of” only four times, in a single 1882 book, Hopes and Fears for Art, by an English author who was educated in the classics at Oxford and a devotee of medieval subjects and Chaucer. William Morris, similar to Freeman, would have learned the phraseology by studying earlier writings, and consciously employed it in his book. Mark Davies, The Corpus of Historical American English: 400 million words, 1810–2009 (2010–) [http://corpus.byu.edu/coha].

6. There is also an example with “the more party of”, dated 1648.
Acts 27:12
And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also,

Here is how the Coverdale Bible expressed the language of Acts 27:12, seventy-six years earlier:

1535 EEBO A10349 Miles Coverdale, tr. [1488–1568] Biblia the Byble, that is, the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully translated in to Englyshe

for somoch as the haven was not comodious to wynter in, the more parte off them toke councell to departe thence,

The principal data source used in this study is Early English Books Online (EEBO) [Chadwyck-Healey ‹http:/ / eebo.chadwyck.com›]. Many of these texts can be freely accessed by using the provided EEBO number and entering it after ‹http:/ / name.umdl.umich.edu/ ›. The publicly searchable portion of EEBO–TCP (Text Creation Partnership) is ‹http:/ / quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/ ›. Mark Davies provided a very useful corpus and interface: Early English Books Online, 400 million words, 1470s–1690s (2013–). I have also derived some of the examples from a 500-million-word corpus of my own elaboration, made from several thousand publicly available EEBO–TCP texts.

We see that Miles Coverdale chose to convey the notion in this verse with the longer, explicit phrase. (Coverdale has the short form in the other verse.) Tyndale had used many here:


And because the haven was nott commodius to wynter in / many toke counsell to departe thence /

The Book of Mormon always matches Coverdale’s syntax in this case, employing the longer wording seven times:

Alma 14:2
the more part of them were desirous that they might destroy Alma and Amulek,


Alma 47:2
or the more part of them would not

Helaman 6:1
the Lamanites had become the more part of them a righteous people,

Helaman 6:31
the more part of them had turned out of the way of righteousness
Helaman 15:5
I would that ye should behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty,

Helaman 15:6
I say unto you that the more part of them are doing this.

Helaman 16:6
the more part of them did not believe in the words of Samuel.

The construction caught the eye of Edward Spencer in 1905, who thought that it was used too frequently. He concluded that Joseph Smith was more concerned with style than substance — while acknowledging similar biblical usage in Acts.7

One can reasonably argue that the King James Bible did not serve as a model for this Book of Mormon language, despite strong evidence that the phraseology was obsolete long before the 1820s. The textual record seems to indicate that Joseph Smith could have known of the old usage only from reading it in two New Testament verses. But it is unlikely that he could have derived Book of Mormon usage from these two verses for at least two reasons. First, had he learned it there, he probably would have used the short, biblical phrase “the more part” in some or all of the above passages. Indeed, in volume 4 of the History of the Norman Conquest of England (1871), Freeman employed the obsolete phrase a total of five times, twice using the short form, “the more part”, and twice using the long form, “the more part of them”. So Freeman, who almost certainly had encountered both types, split usage. On the other hand, Smith, who could have read or heard only the short form, consistently dictated the long form. Second, there are phrasal variants in the Book of Mormon that were rare/uncommon during the Early Modern period. We now turn to that evidence.

Significantly, there is one instance of “a more part of” in the earliest text:

Helaman 6:32
insomuch that a more part of it had come unto them in the sixty and seventh year

The phraseology with the indefinite article is scarcely found in the print record of English:  

**1494** EEBO A00525 Robert Fabyan [d.1513] Chronicle (1533)

In revengement wherof, Cadwaladyr of new destroyed a more parte of the sayde provynce.

**c 1530** EEBO A06462 Thomas Lupset [1495?–1530] A compendious and a very fruteful treatyse, teachyne the waye of dyenge well

For trees and herbes haue a parte of life, and a more parte of life is in muskylles, oysters, and wormes:

So it was rare in both the textual record and the Book of Mormon. This effectively anchors this grammatical construction to the 16th century, since we don’t find the phrase with the indefinite article in later centuries. There are also two instances of plural “the more parts of” in the earliest text:

Helaman 6:21

Satan did stir up the hearts of the more parts of the Nephites,

4 Nephi 1:27

and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel,

Here are three examples of this wording from the textual record:

**1553** EEBO A19723 John Brende, tr. | Quintus Curtius Rufus The history of . . . the greate Alexander

They buylded Cyties and put in them inhabiters through out the more partes of the worlde,

**1583** EEBO A12533 Sir Thomas Smith [1513–1577] The maner of gouernement or policie of the realme of England

The more parts of them that be present onely maketh the consent or dissent.

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8. Beyond these two 16th-century examples, Google books currently gives four false positives from the pre-1830 modern era (14 October 2015): “a more airy part of”, “till a part of”, “a more extraordinary part of”, “and a Close, part of which is”.

9. Here I have excluded one false positive from the 16th century found in EEBO (a transcription error from Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1587).
The narrow or slender cavity of the Gutts, wanting deep profundity, applies itself to the more parts of the Chyle contain'd in it at once:

This was also uncommon Early Modern English usage, and a modern English example has not yet been found. So again, what was uncommon in the textual record, is uncommon in the Book of Mormon. The alignment is solid: the dominant form in earlier English is the dominant form in the Book of Mormon; the least common forms in earlier English are the least common forms in the Book of Mormon.

The following chart shows that the phrase-type “the more part (of)” flourished in the 16th century. The chart represents more than 800 instances of the phrase, with and without of. It clearly indicates that by the time the King James Bible was first published, the usage of the phrase had dropped off dramatically. This fact explains the near absence of “the more part” from the biblical text. It had waned by that time; the phrase “(the) most of” had taken over. By the end of the 17th century “the more part (of)” was nearly extinct.

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10. Two apparent instances from Google books (accessed 20 June 2015) are semantically and syntactically distinct: “the more . . . the more” (1741) and “the more [ parts of air ] there are . . . the greater the . . . ” (1742).

11. The phrase “(the) most of” dominated and grew during the Early Modern period, and the phrase “the majority of” emerged in the 17th century.
Google books yielded approximately 80 hits of “the more part of” in the modern period, but many were duplicates, and the rest were almost all reprints of legal language from the Early Modern era (primarily the 16th century). Here are some of the more important/interesting examples found:

1569 Google Richard Grafton Grafton’s Chronicle, v.2 (1809) [4 instances]
   or the more part of hys disloyall people,

1585 Google Raphael Holinshed The Scottish Chronicle (1805) [9 instances]
   Their whole number was esteemed to be about 2000:
   but the more part of them were commons and countriemen.

1621 Google Virginia. William Waller Hening The Statutes at Large (1823)
   [5 instances]
   in such order . . . as the councel of that collony, or the more part of
   them, shall sett downe and direct;
   Virginia Colony legal language.

1631 Google Edward Wedlake Brayley, John Britton The Beauties of England
   and Wales, p.156 (1810)
   whereof the more part of the strangers were prisoners.

1716 Google William Jackson An Account of the Many and Great Loans,
   p.53 (1802)
   The choice . . . to be made by his cousins . . . or the more part of
   them
   British legal language from a will.

1782 Google Thomas Caldecott Reports of Cases (1786)
   or in default thereof by the church-wardens and petty constables of
   the same parish, or the more part of them;

1823 Google Great Britain. Court of King’s Bench Reports of Cases
   and also to abide such order as the justices of the peace there
   assembled, or the more part of them,
   A paraphrase of late 16th-century legal language: 18 Eliz.

The latest examples were close paraphrases (or quotations) of Elizabethan legal language. There was also an instance from the early days of the Virginia Colony. The 1716 example was the last independent instance

12. The search was limited to the years 1700 to 1830 and performed on 18 June 2015.
encountered. Every example was British in origin. Google books thus verifies the obsolescence of the construction; a modern American attestation is lacking at this time. The phrase “the more part of” appears to have been virtually extinct by the year 1700, barely surviving as legal boilerplate in the British realm.

Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577), with roughly two million words, has at least 86 instances of “the more part of”, as well as 16 of the truncated form. Of these 86 phrases, 17 are of the form “the more part of them”. Book of Mormon language is much closer to that of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* in this regard, and unlike King James English. The best fit between this Book of Mormon language and past syntax is the middle of the 16th century.

To sum up, had Joseph Smith come up with the language of the Book of Mormon himself, out of his own language, it is possible but unlikely that he would have used “the more part” in the dictation. Also, had he followed rare biblical usage (comprising less than 0.001% of the words), then he likely would have used the short biblical phrase several times, instead of “the more part of them” every time. Finally, if we suppose that Smith was the translator (in the usual sense of the term), then it is highly unlikely that the Book of Mormon would have “a more part of” and “the more parts of” (three times total).

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13. See note 5.
Joseph Smith Read the Words

Stanford Carmack

2 Nephi 27:20, 22, 24

wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.

... Wherefore when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee

... the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him:

This study examines the assertions of two investigators who have discussed the nature of the translation of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s role in it: Brant Gardner and Orson Scott Card. Their writings on the subject have declared that Smith’s own language frequently made its way into the wording of the Book of Mormon. However, a comparison of the earliest text with the textual record tells us that this is an incorrect view of the translation. The linguistic fingerprint of the Book of Mormon, in hundreds of different ways, is Early Modern English. Smith himself — out of a presumed idiosyncratic, quasi-biblical style — would not have translated and could not have translated the text into the form of the earliest text. Had his own language often found its way into the wording of the earliest text, its form would be very different from what we encounter. It is still appropriate to call Joseph Smith the translator of the Book of Mormon, but he wasn’t a translator in the usual sense of the term. He was a translator in the sense of being the human involved in transferring or re-transmitting a concrete form of expression.

1. There is no ellipsis of a verb phrase after “commanded thee”. This is biblical usage conveying the important notion that Christ was to cause words to come to Joseph Smith. See the Oxford English Dictionary, definition 6b of command, v. I used the 2nd edition on CD-ROM, version 4 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).
(mostly English words) received from the Lord. The above language of 2 Nephi 27 indicates such a state of affairs as well. And so I have undertaken to critique some of the observations that have been made with respect to Book of Mormon translation, and to lay out an entirely different view of the text, which has been argued for by Royal Skousen for quite a while now.

Card and Gardner represent the latest iteration of a line of proponents of the theory that Smith himself, from his own language, was responsible for much of the wording of the text. They are in good company. Former advocates of this view include B. H. Roberts, John A. Widtsoe, Sidney B. Sperry, Daniel H. Ludlow, and Robert L. Millett.

A general problem with this approach has been that it restricts a divine translation to what the analyst has deemed to be probable, having decided that divine action would not have proceeded in certain ways. A driver of this has been the perceived ungrammatical nature of the dictation, the earliest text. For the first time, however, we can carefully compare it with earlier English, and we now find that the matching is extensive and surprisingly solid. As a result of this newly available evidence, in the future critics would do well to forbear giving grammatical opinions till they have examined the Early Modern English textual record.

Many researchers, including Brant Gardner, have gone beyond the grammatical and considered other, related features of the text, arguing that they point to Smith acting as an English-language translator. Gardner writes, “We see a clear dependence on Joseph’s language culture when idiomatic expressions occur that emphasize cultural content from Joseph Smith’s time rather than that of the ancient text.” In other words, Gardner (2011) asserts that various textual features found in the Book of Mormon necessarily point to Joseph’s own linguistic knowledge directly influencing word selection. There are problems with this

2. See OED translate, v. definition 1a, which includes a sense of ‘transfer’; definition 5 has the sense of ‘re-transmit’, as is implicit in the term “translation station”.


view. To begin with, it must be admitted that a divine faculty could be responsible for such items since we cannot reasonably limit the reach and ability of such an undertaking. A divine translation could have carried out a functional/conceptual translation\(^5\) of some of the plate script into English (as opposed to a literal translation). Therefore, evidence of functional/conceptual equivalence in the translation is not a conclusive argument in favor of Smith being the English-language translator. A divine translation is possible with the same textual evidence that Gardner presents, which he thinks indicates that Smith acted as a translator (in the usual sense of the term).

Part of the problem is that misinformation about Book of Mormon language has accumulated for decades, continuing to this day. Not only has the grammar been declared to be faulty, but often language has been taken to be of more recent origin than it actually may be. In particular, phrases like “mighty change” and “song of redeeming love” arose at least in the Early Modern period. Consequently, we cannot say with certainty that these came from burnt-over-district revival language of the early 19th century, when and where correspondence has been noted.\(^6\) Hence, there is not necessarily dependence on Smith’s language culture in these cases, nor with many other similar phrases that have been investigated, such as “infinite atonement”:

*Alma 34:12*

> Therefore there can be nothing which is short of an **infinite atonement** which will suffice for the sins of the world.

\(^{1654}\) GOOG Anthony Burgess (or Burges) *The True Doctrine of Justification Asserted & Vindicated*, p.432

> So that the two opinions about active and passive obedience differ not in this, Whether the Law be perfectly satisfied, and an **infinite atonement** made, but only Whether the passive doth solely concurre, or active and passive both.

From the above Google books excerpt we plainly see that “infinite atonement” was used as early as the middle of the 17th century (by a nonconformist English clergyman who died in 1664).

Here is an example of the phrase “mighty change” from the early part of the same century, paired with a Book of Mormon passage containing the same accompanying verb:

5. See, for example, Gardner, *The Gift and Power*, 144, 150, 156.

And how doth God worke this mighty change in men?

And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart.

In addition, a Puritan divine, no later than the year 1680, used the striking phrase “sing the song of redeeming love”, which is also found in the Book of Mormon:

and see the saints there, in their white robes, with their harps in their hands, and hear them sing the song of redeeming love;

and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love,

We see that it continued into the early 18th century:

It is true the Saints do sing this Song of Redeeming Love in a measure now;

This next excerpt from the late 18th century indicates that the usage stems from Revelation 5:9 and 14:3:

the same song of which mention is made, chapters v. 9. and xiv. 3. the song of redeeming love,

One can find quite a few examples in the early 19th century, so that we have a textually verified chain of use from the 17th century on.

Gardner also asserts that imagery such as the following, which involves a hanging sword, means that Smith was translating from ideas into his own words:

except ye do bestir yourselves in the defense of your country and your little ones, the sword of justice doth hang over you; yea, and it shall fall upon you

As noted, functional/conceptual equivalence is also possible in a divine translation, so the presence of this imagery in the text does not
convincingly argue for Smith being a translator (in the usual sense of the word). This language is also found in an earlier time:

1587 EEBO A12622 Robert Southwell [1561?–1595] An epistle of comfort to the reverend priestes

The sword of god's justice hangeth over our soules, ready for our sins to divyde

Gardner has chosen to believe that every instance of apparently obsolete lexis found in the earliest text was current in Smith’s dialect. It is important to note that there are more than 30 instances of apparently obsolete, nonbiblical vocabulary found in the earliest text, so it is highly likely, in the absence of comprehensive, specific evidence to the contrary, that at least one of them was not part of his dialect. Here I provide a quick list of possibles, many of them mentioned before by Royal Skousen (Oxford English Dictionary definition numbers provided):

become = ‘begin to act’ (come, v. 63m; be, v. 23c) (3 Nephi 1:29)
break = ‘stop’ (†27) (Ether 6:10)
but if = ‘unless’ (†C10b) (Mosiah 3:19)
by the cause of = ‘on account of, by reason of’ (†6a) (Alma 7:5; 15:3)
captivate = ‘subjugate’ (†2) (2 Nephi 2:29)
choice = ‘judgment’ (†6) = ‘sound judgment, discernment’
(1 Nephi 7:15)
commend = ‘recommend (to do a thing)’ (†2d) (Ether 12:41)
counsel = ‘ask counsel of, consult’ (†4) (Alma 37:37; 39:10)
curious = ‘ingenious’ (†4) (Alma 63:5)
depart = ‘divide’ (intr.) (†1b) (Helaman 8:11)
desire = ‘require’ (†3) (1 Nephi 6:3)
desirous = ‘desirable’ (†5) (1 Nephi 8:12)
detect = ‘expose’ (†2a) (Helaman 9:17)
do away = ‘dismiss, reject’ (†44a) (Moroni 10:26)
extinct = ‘dead (individual)’ (†3) (Alma 44:7)
for this cause that = ‘in order that’ (†4, †6a)
(eg 1 Nephi 4:17; 2 Nephi 10:15; Alma 9:25)
give = ‘describe’ (25, rare) (Alma 46:17)
go by = ‘pass without noticing’ (†57a) (2 Nephi 3:20)
hurl = ‘drag’ (†6) (Helaman 7:16)
manifest = ‘expound’ (†2) = ‘declare’ (2 Nephi 1:26)
mar = ‘hinder’ (†1) (Ether 6:10)
obtain = ‘reach (a place)’ (5b, Obs. or arch.) (1 Nephi 8:21; Alma 14:27)
pitch (battle) = ‘set in array’ (†11) (Helaman 1:15)

rebellion = ‘opposition, variance’ (†2c) (Mosiah 10:6)
retain = ‘hold back, check, stop; prevent, hinder’ (†1a)
(Alma 11:25; 24:13; 59:10; 3 Nephi 3:10; Moroni 7:8)
scatter = ‘separate (from the main body)’ (†2d) (TITLE PAGE)
scorch = ‘burn, consume’ (†2) (Mosiah 17:13,14)
stripe = ‘whip, beat’ (†2) (Alma 11:2)
suppose = ‘expect’ (†4) (Words of Mormon 1:2; Moroni 1:1)
suppose = ‘suspect’ (†3a) (Alma 54:11)
to that = ‘until’ (†C1b) (1 Nephi 18:9)
turn upon = ‘fall upon’ (32, rare or Obs.) (1 Nephi 22:13)
withstand = ‘oppose, deny, contradict’ (†1b) (Alma 1:9; 5:53; 8:13)

Biblical
again = ‘back’ ([†]1) (eg 1 Nephi 22:12 & 1 Chronicles 21:12)
cast = ‘shoot (arrows)’ (†2) (Alma 49:4,19 & Proverbs 26:18)
errand = ‘message (for a third party)’ (†1a) (Jacob 1:17 & 2 Kings 9:5)
establish = ‘confirm’ (†1b) (1 Nephi 13:40 & Numbers 30:13)
for = ‘because of, on account of’ (21a & 23c)
(eg 3 Nephi 17:10 & Mark 2:4)
frankly = ‘freely’ (†1) (1 Nephi 7:21 & Luke 7:42)
require = ‘request’ (5, †of one) (Enos 1:18 & Ezra 8:22)
suffer = ‘endure, consent’ (intr.) (†15b) (Alma 48:24 & Mark 10:4)
turn again = ‘return’ (†66b) (Alma 8:25 & Ruth 1:11)
wrap together = ‘roll up’ (9) (3 Nephi 26:3 & 2 Kings 2:8)

This is powerful evidence since semantic shifts in sense are unpredictable and not recoverable for later speakers when prior usage has become obsolete. Just one truly obsolete instance forces Smith to be a reader of that lexical item of English. Furthermore, one instance means that it is reasonable to think that others were obsolete as well, and that they were given to Joseph Smith. And of course some nearly obsolete words would have been rare in his time and unlikely to have entered his mind as well. It is therefore probable that such words would have been read.

Textual evidence suggests that some senses were dead before American colonization. Consider, for instance, depart = ‘divide’ (intransitive):

Helaman 8:11
Moses [smote] upon the waters of the Red Sea
and they departed hither and thither,
‘and the waters divided to the left and right’
The last-dated example in the OED is 1577, and the latest one that I have found in a 500-million-word corpus is the following:

1615 EEBO A19628 Helkiah Crooke [1576–1635] *Mikrokosmographia a description of the body of man*

but the Axillary veine **departeth** into two branches,

Obsolescence before American colonization also appears to be the case with *counsel* = ‘ask counsel of, consult’ (last-dated OED example is 1547) and *but if* = ‘unless’ (the last-dated OED example is from Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, a 1596 poem that is full of language that was archaic by its year of publication). There are other possibilities beyond these three examples.

In addition, even under the unlikely scenario that every apparently obsolete lexical instance was part of Smith’s dialect, the view of Smith *qua* translator almost certainly fails because of abundant and pervasive syntactic evidence that demands a non-dialectal, Early Modern English view (a small subset of this evidence is mentioned immediately below). This in turn supports the (probably) obsolete lexical evidence. It is apparent that Gardner continues to ignore this substantial syntactic evidence which argues directly against Smith being a translator.8

Yes, there is plenty of language in the earliest text that had been used for centuries and which continued into Smith’s time. However, because there is a considerable amount of language that we find exclusively in the Early Modern era, either Smith had read widely in older literature — some of it virtually inaccessible to him — and had mastered its syntax, or he must have read words off the instrument in those instances. Different types of systematic usage — for example, 16th-century past-tense syntax with *did*; heavy *that*-complementation with verbs like *command*, *cause*, *suffer*, and *desire*; the completely consistent use of the short adverbial form *exceeding* with adjectives; and morphosyntactic patterns and variation involving the {-th} plural9 (and even the {-s} plural) — only match the systematic usage of the Early Modern period and are found throughout the text. As a result, the approach of Gardner (2011) and others ends up being one in which Smith continually switched during the dictation — thousands of times — between reading and translating. The

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view that Smith consistently read a concrete form of expression and did not translate (in the usual sense of the word) is an accurate, consistent, comprehensive view that is asserted by the scripture itself.

Gardner discusses biblical use, implicating Joseph Smith in the process of altering Isaiah passages and employing New Testament phrasing in Old Testament passages. He writes, “It is easy to see how Joseph could be so heavily influenced by the KJV New Testament; it is harder to explain why a divine interpreter would be.” That is a speculative statement to which one might reasonably respond, Why couldn’t a divine interpreter choose to mix Old Testament and New Testament language? To my mind, a divine translation could quite understandably mix biblical language in conveying important truths. What agency could more properly and judiciously do so than a divine one? Biblical quoting, in all its variety, was possible as part of a divine translation, and more likely than Joseph Smith doing it. Otherwise we must imagine that he had a truly masterful command of biblical language in 1829, and the ability to incorporate it extensively during a short dictation period.

The switch in this Isaiah passage is interesting:

2 Nephi 8:16
And I have put my words in thy mouth
and hath covered thee in the shadow of mine hand,

Isaiah 51:16
And I have put my words in thy mouth,
and (I) have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand,

The distinctive morphosyntactic form of the Book of Mormon passage — “I have + \(\text{PAST PARTICIPLE}\) . . . and hath + \(\text{PAST PARTICIPLE}\)” — is just like these two examples from the 1660s:

1662 EEBO A53060 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle [1624–1674] Playes
I think I have made myself a scorn,
and hath indangered my reputation.

1666 EEBO A47379 Sir William Killigrew [1606–1695] Fovr new playes
I have chid him for his lewd life,
and hath with-drawn my self from his ill company

The close inflectional contrast — driven by syntactic context — and the matching Book of Mormon usage are noteworthy. There are other examples to be found in the earliest text like this one. But 2 Nephi 8:16 is interesting for another reason. The 1611 King James Bible has “and
have covered” while the 1769 Blayney update inserted the pronoun I; the Book of Mormon has the 1611 wording in part, with a nonbiblical Early Modern English tweak, hath. Earlier Bibles do not use the verb cover here. So the Book of Mormon follows the lexical usage of the King James Bible, employing, however, an inflectional option of the Early Modern era that is not clearly found in King James English.

Also, Smith seems to have been given the Septuagint/Coverdale language “upon all the ships of the sea” found in 2 Nephi 12:16 but missing in the King James Bible.11 He certainly didn’t refer to that version of the Bible in that instance. By continuing to maintain the strained view that Smith consulted a Bible during the translation, which there has never been any eyewitness testimony of, Gardner (2011:257) has unfortunately cemented prior damage done to our understanding of the book’s translation.

Smith was also likely to be a reader in the following passage, which is substantially different from the corresponding Isaiah language:12

2 Nephi 7:2
I make the rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink
because the waters are dried up and they dieth because of thirst.

Isaiah 50:2
I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh,
because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

Nowhere does the King James Bible use they with the {-th} plural. Smith would not have known that it was occasional Early Modern English usage:

1565 EEBO A07396 Thomas Stapleton, tr. [1535–1598] | Venerable Bede [673–735] The history of the Church of Englande
the ship drawing nere unto the land, as sone as they ar towched wyth
the smell of the ayer, THEY dieth owt of hand.

Lest the reader think that this was merely a case of Smith overdoing the biblical, I would point out that the {-th} plural isn’t used stupidly in the Book of Mormon: it isn’t overused or underused, and the earliest text manifests inflectional variation and differential usage rates typical

12. See also Sperry, Answers to Questions, 94–96.
of Early Modern English. The match is solid. More examples of this are provided below.

The arguments found at Gardner (2011:184) about tense usage with respect to 1 Nephi 15:13 and 1 Nephi 19:13 are without merit. They do not hold up to scrutiny because these are prophetic contexts where earlier future events are referred to as if they have already occurred, and later future events are referred to as yet to occur. Abinadi implemented this approach, stating it explicitly here:

**Mosiah 16:6**

> And now if Christ had not come into the world
> — speaking of things to come as though they had already come —
> there could have been no redemption.

Emphasis added.

In addition, Gardner misses Skousen’s treatment of this issue in his *Analysis of Textual Variants*. There Skousen has argued that the tenses employed are appropriate in their contexts. Even if we skew the matter in favor of Gardner’s view, it can only be inconclusive.

Moreover, discussions about textual anachronisms are meaningless from the perspective of a divine translation that was able to include English-language cultural terms that had been in use for centuries, and often all the way up to the year 1829. Finally, Gardner wrote the following: “The problem of positing Joseph Smith as a reader is that it tells us next to nothing about the translation itself.” I don’t think that viewing Smith as a reader creates a problem (see the 2 Nephi 27 language set forth at the beginning of this article), but since an examination of Early Modern English syntax tells us that the earliest text is similar to it in form in hundreds of instances, then it is accurate to state that it appears that Smith read revealed words to his scribes. And that is simply because it is highly likely that a significant amount of Early Modern English lexis and syntax found in the text was unknown to him. And in the near future we will learn a great deal about the English-language translation by studying the earliest text in relation to the textual record of earlier English.

13. See Lass, “Phonology and Morphology”, 165–66, for background. These observations stem from research that I have carried out (article forthcoming) using two large corpora of Early Modern English: one of 400 million words (Mark Davies, *Early English Books Online: 400 million words, 1470s–1690s, 2013–*), and one of my own elaboration with 500 million words.


In summary, Gardner’s position must be abandoned in light of substantial textual evidence which makes it untenable; Skousen’s tight control position is the correct one. Not only does Gardner (2011:192) generally mislead us by a blanket assertion that the Book of Mormon was formed in imitation of King James language and style (when hundreds of pieces of lexical and syntactic evidence clearly say otherwise), but the book is also ultimately wrong about Smith being the English-language translator of the plate script. The data that follow give further evidence of this position.

In this section I address and elucidate various arguments made by Orson Scott Card more than 15 years ago in favor of Joseph Smith being the English-language translator.16 Gardner (2011:184n2) mentions Card’s analysis and agrees with his assessment that there are (many) grammatical errors in the translation. While there are grammatical errors in the earliest text, there are not many of them from the perspective of Early Modern English. That is its language, but its true character has been obscured over the ensuing decades by thousands of edits.

Card asserts that the be usage in the following passage is a case of “double use of future subjunctive on both sides of the logical assertion”:

2 Nephi 2:13

And if there be no righteousness, there be no happiness.

The second use of be may be viewed as an extension of the present-tense subjunctive from “if there be”, or as a case of indicative be — either way we view it, it is attested usage of the Early Modern period:

1591 EEBO A05025 Henry Barrow [1550?–1593] A brief discoverie of the false church

and so deferr and put off their comming out, either until the winter of Gods wrathful judgmentes circumvent and inclose them, or the saboth of his final indignation fal and rest upon them, and then there be no space granted them to flie, or grace to be preserued.

The philosophicall touchstone

Fifthly, if there be no accidents in the soule, then there be no habits, nor actions, nor intelligible species in her;

The following biblical passage might employ the phrase “he be” due to closely preceding usage:

Numbers 5:30
Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the Lord,

Sixteen verses earlier there are two instances of “and he be jealous” after a hypothetical. In the above verse, however, be is clearly paired with indicative cometh.

Discussing Early Modern English, Barber wrote, “In the present plural, we often find indicative are and subjunctive be, but some writers use be for both, especially early in the period. Indicative be is also common in the construction ‘There be.’”17 This observation further explains “there be no happiness” seen in 2 Nephi 2:13. It also explains why the plural is the typical biblical use of what Barber calls indicative be. (The usage carried over from earlier English into modern dialects and colloquial speech.) In the following excerpts, be takes the place of indicative are, as is explicitly shown in the first and last examples:

Isaiah 2:6
because THEY be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines,

Matthew 7:13
and many THERE be which go in thereat:

Acts 19:26
this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that THEY be no gods, which are made with hands:

Next Card points out a passage that appears to be “ungrammatically (not just stylistically) redundant”:

Alma 9:16
For there are many PROMISES which is extended to the Lamanites, for it is because of the traditions of their fathers that causeth them to remain in their state of ignorance.

17. Barber, Early Modern English, 172.
Before the apparent redundancy, which involves because and causeth, we see the {-s} plural of Early Modern English — “promises which is” — as in the following examples:

1652  EEOB A49252  Christopher Love [1618–1651]  The naturall mans case stated
he that is without the Lord Jesus Christ the foundation of hope, and without the promises which is the pillar of hope, must needs be without all true hopes of heaven.

but the Saints baptism we own, and the believers, and the promises which is to the seed, thou hast cleared thy self from,

We also see the {-th} plural of Early Modern English used right after the relative pronoun that, as in the following examples:

1479  EEOB A19333  Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, tr. [1442?–1483] | Jean Miélot, tr. [d.1455] | Gerard van Vlierderhoven [14th cent.]  Cordyale, or Four last things
which answerd that of al thinges that causeth moost payne to a dampned sowle was losse of tyme,

1634  EEOB A68954  Robert Bolton [1572–1631]  A three-fold treatise containing the saints sure and perpetuall guide
it is mens corruption, and prophane hearts, that causeth all the stirre.

Both the {-th} plural and the {-s} plural were more often found after relative pronouns in earlier English, and so it is in the Book of Mormon.

Interestingly, it is reasonable to interpret the relative pronoun that in Alma 9:16 as non-restrictive. We expect the relative pronoun which in such a reading, since in modern English non-restrictive that is rarely seen. But in Early Modern English it was more common. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, by the modern period it was confined to poetic and rhetorical use (see OED that, rel. pron., definition 2). Barber (1997:209–10) discusses this syntax, giving a Shakespearean example of non-restrictive (or continuative) that: “My foolish Riuall that her Father likes,” (Two Gentleman). Recast for clarity, the relevant part of this Book of Mormon verse could read as follows:

18.  This reads caused in the current LDS text. See Skousen, Analysis of Textual Variants, 1760–63 (Alma 9:16), for a thorough discussion.
19.  See the discussion in Lass, “Phonology and Morphology”, 165–66; and in Barber, Early Modern English, 169–70.
20.  Ibid.
Alma 9:16

_Their current condition_ is because of the traditions of their fathers, _which traditions_ cause them to remain in their state of ignorance.

I have replaced the pronoun _it_ with the first italicized phrase, placing a comma before the relative _which_. As is made explicit above, their forefathers’ traditions caused them to remain in their state of ignorance. Here are similar examples with _that_ and _which_:

1593 EEBO A14178 John Udall [1560?–1592] _A commentarie vpon the Lamentations of Jeremy_

_The use is, to teach us, that whenvsoever the Lord dealeth so with us, it is because of the hardnes of our harts that otherwise wil not be thorowly softned;_


_It was because of the plague that tormented them much:_

1627 EEBO A11649 Henry Ainsworth [1571–1622?] _Annotations upon the five bookes of Moses, the booke of the Psalmes, and the Song of Songs_

_for the Church did it not because of their teaching which caused them to erre:_

As Skousen points out,21 we find this same construction elsewhere in the earliest text:

Mosiah 7:20

_And behold, it is because of our iniquities and abominations, that has brought us into bondage._

_I have added a comma after abominations to indicate a non-restrictive reading._

In other words, their iniquities and abominations brought them into slavery. The current LDS text has it wrong here:

Mosiah 7:20

_That *he* has brought us into bondage._

Skousen writes:

_For the third printing of the 1905 LDS Chicago edition (in 1907), the pronoun _he_ was added to the last clause of this passage. All subsequent LDS editions, from 1911 on, have followed this reading with the _he_. The selection of _he_ is consistent with the verb form _has_, which is found in all the (extant) textual sources. The editing here suggests the possibility that _he_ might have been accidentally lost during the early transmission of the text._

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The verb form *has*, however, is a likely instance of the Early Modern English {-s} plural after non-restrictive *that*. Recast we have:

Mosiah 7:20

*Our current condition* is because of our iniquities and abominations,

*which have* brought us into bondage.

For those who doubt that *has* might have been used by the literate with plural antecedents in Early Modern English, I provide the following examples, along with an exact Book of Mormon variational match:

**1653** EEBO A70988  F.G., tr. | Madeleine de Scudéry [1607–1701]  *Artamenes*

it must be an entire heart, and none of *those that has* been pierced with a thousand Arrows;

**1658** EEBO A40227  George Fox [1624–1691]  *The papists strength, principles, and doctrines*

and strike down all *those that has* got the words but not the power,

**1681** EEBO A47819  Sir Roger L’Estrange [1616–1704]  *The character of a papist in masquerade*

the whole strain of *them that has* been taken off by the hand of Justice, . . . *have* so behaved themselves at the last cast,

**1696** EEBO A34770  tr. | Gatien Courtiz de Sandras [1644–1712]  *The memoirs of the Count de Rochefort*

’twas not that I was really present there, or that I am troubled with that itch of scribbling, to write of those *things which has* already employ’d the Pens of so many worthy men

**Mosiah 8:17**

But a seer can know of *things which has* passed,

and also of *things which is* to come;

**1681** EEBO A47819  Sir Roger L’Estrange [1616–1704]  *The character of a papist in masquerade*

the whole strain of *them that has* been taken off by the hand of Justice, . . . *have* so behaved themselves at the last cast,

**Alma 57:36**

and I trust that the souls of *them which has* been slain

*have* entered into the rest of their God.

The last pair of examples provide strong, striking evidence of correspondence because we see the same principled variation: the normal singular verb form is used after the relative pronoun, and the
normal plural verb form is used after the complex subject. The reason for the variation is that there was a greater tendency in Early Modern English to use the {-s} plural after relative pronouns than after noun phrases. Occasionally the difference ended up being expressed overtly in a compact, contrastive passage. And that is what we see in Alma 57:36 — the intriguing variation of the Early Modern era. We find it also with hath ~ have, was ~ were (Mosiah 24:15), and is ~ are. Here are two examples of the latter, along with a related pair:

1588 EEBO A01864 R. Parke, tr. | Juan Gonzáles de Mendoza [1545–1618] The historie of the great and mightie kingdome of China

that [ the most part of these rivers ], those which do distil and run from the mountaines which is towards the west, are very rich of gold,

1607 EEBO A13820 Edward Topsell [1572–1625?] The historie of foure-footed beasts

for [ the lips of the wounds which is made by contusion ], are cut off, and burned.

1615 EEBO A23464 Edward Grimeston, tr. | Pierre d’ Avity, sieur de Montmartin [1573–1635] The estates, empires, & principallities of the world

It is true in my opinion, that they[r] distrust of all things which is stil recommended unto them (by reason of the infinit number of cheaters which are seen in Paris) is the greatest pollicie they have.

Alma 32:21

ye hope for things which is not seen, which are true.

Next Card mentions that the Book of Mormon contains some ungrammatical gerundive constructions, a structure that lacks the preposition of before the object, as in the following example:

2 Nephi 3:24

and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel and unto the seed of thy brethren.

Card thought that the above phrasing should have been “the bringing to pass of much restoration”. Yet this is not ungrammatical but Early Modern English usage found in Shakespeare and elsewhere:

1601 Shakes. All’s Well That Ends Well iv. iii. 4–5

for on the reading it he chang’d almost into another man.
The supper of our Lord set forth according to the truth of the Gospel and Catholike faith
because as the truth of the body was to be eaten, so the maner of the eating it, was determined.

The construction actually carried into the modern period.

The co-referential use of *you* right before *thou* is also fairly typical Early Modern English:

2 Nephi 2:1

And now Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my first born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness.

1496 EEBO A19336 Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, tr. [1442?–1483] | Jean Mielot, tr. [d. 1455] | Gerard van Vlierderhoven [14th cent.] Cordyale, or Four last things

all that is comyn unto them may happen unto you. Thou arte but a man

1668 EEBO A30582 Jeremiah Burroughs [1599–1646] Gospel remission, or, A treatise shewing that true blessedness consists in pardon of sin

Now know and consider this day, what from God shall be said unto you, thou much dishonourest the pardoning grace of God.

1668 EEBO A74977 Richard Alleine [1611–1681] The world conquered, or a believers victory over the world

when will it say unto you, thou hast served me long enough; thou hast serv’d thy pleasures, and thy estate,

It is even found in the King James Bible:

Ezekiel 36:13

Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations;

Second-person pronoun usage in the Book of Mormon shows extensive variation. Virtually everything in this domain that has been objected to (by many critics) can be found in either the Bible or the textual record: *thou*, etc. used with plural referents (e.g. Isaiah 65:11, 15), *you* used as a subject (e.g. the 1611 KJB), *ye* used for singular (e.g. Shakespeare), *ye* used as an object (e.g. Shakespeare), co-referential *ye ~ thou* (e.g. Tyndale), *ye ~ you* alternation (e.g. Shakespeare), co-referential *you ~ thou* (e.g. Ezekiel 36:13), close objective and subjective *ye* and *you* usage (e.g. Marlowe), as well as no {-st} inflection in the past tense. As one example, the following passage exhibits multiple switching between *thou* and *you*:
Here again thou lettest drop [and you wrest the Scriptures to your own Destruction] (as the Unlearned and Unstable do; and is not this Dangerous in them?) Then thou bringest in this, And to you it is Dangerous to read or speak of them;

Next up for criticism is the use of the {-th} plural in the text, as in this example:22

Mosiah 12:20

What meaneth the words which are written
and which have been taught by our fathers,

As mentioned, Lass discussed this Early Modern English phenomenon around the same time that Card wrote his article (other linguists such as Barber had discussed it previously):

1585 EEBO A09063 Robert Parsons [1546–1610] A Christian directorie guiding men to their saluation

what meaneth the words, Grace and Mercie brought with him?

1530 EEBO A13203 William Tyndale, tr. [d.1536] [The Pentateuch]

What meaneth the witnesses, ordinaunces and lawes which the Lorde oure God hath commaundede you?

1580 EEBO A19272 Thomas Cooper [1517?–1594] Certaine sermons wherin is contained the defense of the gospell nowe preached against such cauils and false accusations

What meaneth the terrible threatnings, against wicked and vitious livers?

The earliest text is full of Early Modern English — that is why the {-th} plural is found throughout it.

Next Card confronted the use of what as a simple relative:

2 Nephi 32:3

the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

22. The particular verse that Card referred to — 1 Nephi 22:1 — has an error made by the 1830 typesetter that has persisted into the 1981 edition (he changed “what mean these things” to “what meaneth these things”). See Skousen, Analysis of Textual Variants, 3657 (Mormon 8:14), for some discussion.
Although it isn’t biblical, we do find this in the textual record of earlier English (as well as in later dialectal and colloquial speech): 23

1496 EEBO A08937 Henry Parker [d.1470] _Diuus [et] pauper_
Is the people bounde to obeye to the pope / to theyr bysshop /
to theyr curate in al thynges _what_ they wyll byd them do

1643 EEBO A46823 Arthur Jackson [1593–1666] _A help for the understanding of the Holy Scripture_

the Levites, whom God hath set over you to teach you in ALL THINGS
_what_ ye should do, lest otherwise ye provoke God to punish you,

The matching between the last example and 2 Nephi 32:3 is excellent — “all things what ye should do”.

Card mentions the following as failing to employ the subjunctive:

Mosiah 4:16

    and ye will not suffer _that_ the beggar _putteth_ up his petition to you
    in vain and turn him out to perish.

The subjunctive was usually observed in this type of context in Early Modern English:

1551 EEBO A08444 Lady Anne Cooke Bacon, tr. [1528?–1610] | Bernardino Ochino [1487–1564] _Certayne sermons_

    God wil not suffer _that_ they be tempted above their power,

1550 EEBO A13758 Thomas Nicolls, tr. | Thucydides _The hystory . . . of the warre, whiche was betwene the Peloponesians and the Athenyans_

    But if he suffred _that_ the one of the parties _were_ destroyed,

And we even find it in the Book of Mormon with bare verbs:

Mosiah 11:24

    Yea, and I will suffer them _that_ they _be_ smitten by their enemies.

23. See OED _what_, pron., a.!, adv., conj., int. (n.), definition C7:

1557 OED _North Gueuara’s Diall Pr._ 244
    They do al thinges _what_ they lyst, and nothing _what_ they ought.

1645 OED _Fuller Good Th. in Bad T._ (1841) 36
    For matter of language there is nothing _what_ grace doth do, but wit can act.

1657 OED _S. Titus Killing no Murder_ 9
    They . . . thought it not adultery _what_ was committed with her.

1740 OED _Richardson Pamela_ xxiii. I. 57
    Do you think that so dutiful a Son as our Neighbour . . . does not pride himself,
    for all _what_ he said at Table, in such a pretty Maiden?
Alma 39:11
Suffer not that the devil lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots.

But the subjunctive was not always used in this context:

1517 EEBO A13670  William Atkinson, tr. [d.1509] | Giovanni Gersen [14th cent.] A full deuoute and gostely treatysse of the imytacyon and folowyng the blessed lyfe of our moste mercyfull Sauyour cryste

Howe may this be that man by pacience suffereth and desireth that nature fleethe

Moreover, in the past tense the verb suffer did not always trigger subjunctive were, or an auxiliary functioning as a subjunctive marker, such as should or might:

1550 EEBO A13758  Thomas Nicolls, tr. | Thucydides The hystory . . . of the warre, whiche was betwene the Peloponesians and the Athenyans
he suffred that the paymente of the souldyars was delayed by the sayd Tyssaphernes.

1607 EEBO A11931  Edward Grimeston, tr. | Jean de Serres [1540?–1598] A general inventorie of the history of France
And seeing that God had suffred that the bond of their coniunction was dissolved,

In addition, the use of the syntax “would not suffer” with finite complementation and the auxiliary should is fairly common in the Book of Mormon (8 times) and not hard to find in Early Modern English, but found only once in the King James Bible:

Mark 11:16
And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

2 Nephi 30:1
for I Nephi would not suffer that ye should suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be.

Thenne the lord sende worde to peter that he wold not suffre / that they SHOLDE entre in to the toun

1541 EEBO A21318  Sir Thomas Elyot, tr. [1490?–1546] The image of governance compiled of the actes and sentences notable, of the moste noble Emperour Alexander Seuerus
he wolde not suffer that any of them shulde be apprehended or punished:
The harmony of the divine attributes in the contrivance and accomplishment of man's redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ

Therefore the Eternal Law that annexes Immortality to Innocence, would not suffer that He should remain in the state of Death.

Also, there is rare layered syntax (involving doubled pronominals) with should found in the Book of Mormon:

Alma 56:8
   But I would not suffer them that they should break this covenant which they had made,

Recuyell of the historyes of Troye
   but Jupiter wold not suffre [T]hem that they shold helpe hym in ony maner

All this is more evidence that the Book of Mormon is a well-formed Early Modern English text that would have been difficult to derive from the Bible by a non-expert.

Next up for consideration is the resumptive that in this passage:

Mosiah 8:4
   And it came to pass that after he had done all this that king Limhi dismissed the multitude

Resumptive that continues to this day, but the following excerpts match the usage well, with a repetition of that along with “it came to pass” and a time conjunction:

The displaying of supposed witchcraft
   And it came to pass, that when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp,

The new help to discourse or, Wit, mirth, and jollity
   Now it came to pass that when the Executioner had smitten off Saint Denis his head, that he caught it up, between his Arms,

Finally, Card discusses has/hath variation in the Book of Mormon. He understandably didn’t know it, but the earliest text employs has slightly less than 10% of the time (the current LDS text is roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ has, $\frac{2}{3}$ hath). Similarly, Shakespeare employed has a little more than 15% of the time. Also, in EEBO we find that the decade of the 1660s matches the has usage rate found in the earliest text. Card mentions closely occurring has/hath variation in Mosiah 4:8–9 as a slip-up of Smith’s,
but it was not present in the printer’s manuscript or in the 1830 first
dition. Still, the following example (and there are others) exhibits the
close variation that he was trying to point out:

Alma 29:10

then do I remember what the Lord has done for me,
yea, even that he hath heard my prayer.

Here are some 17th-century examples of this variation:

1637  Eebo  A07832  Thomas Morton [1564–1659]  New English Canaan, or
New Canaan containing an abstract of New England

on a sodane a thunder clap hath bin heard that has amazed the
natives, in an instant hee hath shewed a firme peece of Ice to flote

1651  Eebo  A43998  Thomas Hobbes [1588–1679]  Leviathan, or, The matter,
forme, and power of a common wealth, ecclesiasticall and civil

and memory to retain, digest and apply what he hath heard. The
difference and division of the Lawes, has been made in divers
manners,

1652  Eebo  A47682  Person of quality, tr. | Gaultier de Coste, seigneur de La
Calprenède [d.1663]  Cassandra the fam’ d romance

by those injuries he hath done thee, he has violated all manner of
rights,

1653  Eebo  A67462  Izaak Walton [1593–1683]  The compleat angler or, The
contemplative man’s recreation

as I know an ingenuous Gentleman in Leicester-shire has done; who
hath not only made her tame, but to catch fish,

And so we see that the blunders which Card thought that Smith had
made as a translator are actually instances of Early Modern English. In
some cases Smith would not have been familiar with the language. It is
possible to present and discuss scores of questionable bits of grammar
found in the earliest text; in virtually every instance we find them in the
textual record of Early Modern English:

“Here is” with plural noun phrases

Mosiah 18:8

Behold, here is the waters of Mormon, for thus were they called.

Alma 11:22

Behold, here is six onties of silver; and all these will I give unto thee
But here is the heights of their folly and errour,

observe here is the words of the Prophet Jeremiah fulfilled

And here is the LIMITS and BOUNDS of that comfort the Spirit is sent to bring.

Singular and plural riches

Helaman 13:31
the time cometh that he curseth your RICHES, that it becometh slippery, that ye cannot hold them;

Consider that where much RICHES is, there are many that eate and devoure them, many that covet them, and many that lye in waite to steale them.

Switching from that-complementation to an infinitive

And knowing it to be the last struggle of my people and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer that the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites

which was alsoe an occasione of his resanation, because he suffered, that the tronchone of the Launce, which sticked clean through his heade, to be with force, and violence drawne therout.

And anone the kynge commaunded that none of them upon payne of dethe to myssaye them ne do them ony harme

[ mis-say = 'speak evil against, revile' ]

Plural “have + past participle,” followed by the {-th} plural in a conjoined predicate

for the LAMANITES have awoke and doth pursue thee.
1673  EEBO A26892  Richard Baxter [1615–1691]  *A Christian directory*
when the CHURCHES have felt such dreadful concussions, and bleedeth to this day, by so horrid divisions,

1535  EEBO A07430  William Marshall, tr. [fl.1535] | Marsilius of Padua [d.1342?]  *The defence of peace*
And afterwardis it is to be shewed how they have used hetherto, and doth use, and hereafter wyll use these powres,

. . .
THey have hetherto disceyved, and doth newe dysceyve and gothe aboute more and more to begyle and dysceyve,

1697  EEBO A58807  John Scott [1639–1695]  *Practical discourses upon several subjects*
and afterwards when having awoke his Disciples, he returned to his Prayer again,

This passage has the same past participial leveling seen in Mosiah 24:23.

A large amount of textual evidence — and the foregoing discussion contains only a sliver of it — tells us that Joseph Smith did receive and read a revealed Early Modern English text. Understandably, he may not have been fully aware of it.

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Abstract: Terryl Givens’ masterful work *Wrestling the Angel* takes on the daunting task of examining the history of Christian belief while also examining the worldly philosophies which shaped its scriptural interpretation. As in the biblical story of Jacob’s struggle with the angel, we all must forge our own testimonies while confronting a secular world including godless philosophies. Sometimes testimony wins, and tragically sometimes the world wins and a testimony is lost. In dealing with this intellectual “matter unorganized,” interpretation of the secular philosophy becomes the key. With the right interpretation, philosophies deemed “secular” or “godless” can be seen as helpful and even providentially provided by the Lord to help provide a philosophical grounding for a testimony instead of destroying it. Aspects of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant can be seen as laying a groundwork for much of contemporary American philosophy, Continental philosophy, and a possible basis for interpretations of these philosophies, which help rather than hinder the spread of the gospel. Kant’s concept of the synthetic a priori, for example, can help us understand how humans organize our individual ideas about reality from “matter unorganized,” perhaps in a way similar to how our “human” God organizes our world. Kant’s philosophy had vast influences, arguably resulting in a new way to see the relationship between God and mankind, which is compatible with the gospel. Finally I examine Givens’ view of humanism and how it can be interpreted as helpful rather than hindering the gospel.

*Wrestling the Angel* by Terryl Givens is a work of great importance describing a comprehensive view of the development of Mormon theology. Volume one in a planned two-volume series, it is extensively researched, detailed, and referenced so even in cases where some ideas are mentioned only in passing, Givens provides references to facilitate...
further study. A planned second volume will follow the same encyclopedic approach to Mormon practices and will include an exhaustive index to both volumes.

This must-have book for anyone with an interest in the development of Mormon thought is designed to be read both as a topical reference, one section at a time or as a cover-to-cover overview of how social and cultural forces affected the development of Christian (not just Mormon) theology, culminating in those forces in the nineteenth century which influenced Joseph Smith in the Restoration of the gospel.

A fascinating though unstated implication of Given’s position is that twists and turns within the history of philosophy itself appear to have provided early Mormonism a proper historical and philosophical setting for the Restoration, a thesis I later examine in more detail.

Givens’s topical arrangement of the volume has both strengths and weaknesses. On one hand, it allows encyclopedic study of a history of a topic or doctrine from the beginning of Christianity through the nineteenth century, but doing so at times makes it difficult to see how each topic relates to the others in a historical milieu. Had the book been arranged chronologically, it would have lost its strength topically. For example, if a reader wants to review Origen’s views on several topics — since the book sees him as a watershed thinker — it can be done, but with some difficulty, by flipping through the various topics. But decisions must be made, and clearly the author’s decision was to present the material topically, and indeed, that is the best way to use this volume. The objective of the book is not to provide comprehensive summaries of a given thinker’s views but rather summaries of the history of a given Christian doctrine or belief. The companion volume, an exhaustive index yet to be published, should make this first volume and its companion perhaps the greatest tools for general research of Mormon theory and practice ever published. But until that time, volume one is most likely best used as a doctrinal study encyclopedia, and to my knowledge, it is the best of this sort of volume available to date.

Defining Mormon theology is no small feat, since many Mormons insist that Mormon theology does not exist. Such a view is remarkable for those not acquainted with the this book’s thesis, though that view has quite a long and well-argued history as a defensible position.

The very premise behind the need for a restoration is that revelation is not complete and that continuing revelation is an ongoing part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For that reason, Mormons believe the Bible,
though scripture, to be incomplete and doctrinally insufficient. Givens states:

The Bible, in other words, was depicted as neither complete nor accurate. Nor was it sufficient. As Parley Pratt would later develop the concept with vibrant but controversial imagery, Mormon thought demoted scripture to the status of stream rather than fountain. Pratt conceded that “the scriptures are ... useful in their place.” But, “they are not the fountain of knowledge, nor do they contain all knowledge.” Their greater value lies in the way “they point to the fountain, and are every way calculated to encourage man to come to the fountain and seek to obtain the knowledge and gifts of God.” God’s utterance preceded, and superseded, its incarnation as holy writ, tainted as it was by the flawed conduits of human understanding and fractured language. Even believing himself to be the Lord’s oracle, Smith would simultaneously deliver revelations in the voice of God and lament, “Oh Lord God, deliver us from this prison, ... of a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language.” And he would spend his entire life revising and recasting the words he gave his people as scripture, struggling to claw his way through irredeemably fallen human language to its perfect divine source. (30)

As Blake Ostler and others have argued, Mormons do not believe in “orthodoxy” but “orthopraxis,” placing the practical day-to-day concerns of living a spiritual life above the need for a comprehensive, systematic theology. Indeed this is the case: One can be a fully active Mormon who is seen as thoroughly devout, “true believing Mormon” by truthfully passing a “temple recommend interview” in which one must affirm that one is living the commandments and hold some basic Christian beliefs in the salvific sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the prophethood of Joseph Smith as the “restorer” of Christianity. Crucially, in that same interview one affirms that one has a “testimony” of these beliefs. In effect, this is an affirmation that one has had a spiritual witness or experience which one interprets as a direct personal revelation from God confirming these beliefs.

As in no other Christian church, Mormons are defined by their personal “testimonies,” which place at the core of personal belief a personal revelation from God that “the Church is true.” Mormons are repeatedly admonished that a member may begin on “borrowed light,” but everyone must eventually gain his or her own spiritual witness, or
spiritual experience, confirming that the orthopraxis — the lifestyle chosen — is indeed God’s will for the person. The personal spiritual witness obtained by reading the scriptures, pondering, and praying is what confirms in the heart of each Mormon individual that the path chosen is the one God has shown to be “true”; it is the basis for the declaration that “the Church is true.”

Through this process, each individual is to become a “convert” to the Church, regardless of whether one was born into it or has become a true convert after being a believer in another religious discipline. It is no wonder that Mormons are suspicious of systematic theology, when Joseph Smith himself built this attitude into the Church. Givens goes on to state:

In the first generation of the Mormon Church, the picture is especially complicated, for several reasons. First is because Smith hated dogma and tests of orthodoxy. A revelation declared him “a seer, translator, and prophet,” but his calling as a prophet was some years morphing into the virtual office of Prophet. (The first was a function of his revelatory experience; the second was an institutionally defined position in an ecclesiastical hierarchy.) Joseph Smith was as likely to promote openness as to exert his authority. He severely rebuked his own brother Hyrum for performing unauthorized rituals. But in another case, he “did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine” when a council met to discipline Pelatiah Brown for speculating on the meaning of portions of the book of Revelation. “It looks too much like methodism and not like Latter day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be kicked out of their church. I want the liberty of believing as I please, it feels so good not to be tramelled.” … A popular joke has more than a hint of truth to it that Catholics espouse papal infallibility, but no Catholic believes in it. Joseph Smith espoused prophetic fallibility, but no Mormon believes in it. (18–19)

The very assertion that one must confirm every principle by testimony and personal revelation is antithetical to the idea of prophetic infallibility, yet we are to discipline ourselves in following the prophet, personally confirming his counsel. Furthermore, there may develop a tension between this simple spiritual witness that confirms the truth of Mormonism and the complexity of ideas and philosophies with which all contemporary human beings are bombarded — religious and atheistic, scientific and moral, faith-based and rational. The task for
every thinking Mormon is to sort all this out, to construct a consistent worldview that accounts for all these apparently diverging philosophies, and to reconcile it with his or her simple spiritual experience and the scriptures.

Complicating the issue, Mormons are admonished to avoid “the philosophies of men, mingled with scripture”¹ and to keep their beliefs scripturally based, avoiding “the mysteries” that do not “apply to their salvation.”

Thus conflict is inevitable. We all live in a word saturated with irreligious patterns of thought. Ultimately, even scripture comes to us written by a human hand within a cultural context with all the influences of that culture embedded in the prophet’s choice of words and vocabularies. One cannot fully understand the Old Testament, for example, without understanding much about the culture and language in which it was written. Separating the “philosophies of men” from scripture completely is probably an impossible task, yet certainly with the proper attitude and a sense of discernment, one can extract the universal spiritual lessons to be found in at least some of the cultural context. Still, since revelation is not complete, where does philosophy end and scriptural interpretation begin? The answer for any thinking Mormon is not an easy one to always discern.

Indeed this is the task Givens takes on, and his approach may make some Mormons uncomfortable because indeed, in discussing the historical development of Mormon thought, he takes on precisely the task of analyzing the sources for those ideas, scriptural or otherwise. Such an approach is unavoidable in tackling the complex task he has set up for himself and which he has accomplished admirably.

This confrontation between the subjective personal spiritual witness of experiencing God and the ensuing objective act of verbalizing that “God is real” or “the Church is true” — and what all that could possibly mean — is the central confrontation of Wrestling the Angel and is indeed the question every theist must be able to answer at least for him or herself.

Tension between the rational and revelatory, faith and reason, the sophic and the mantic runs throughout book, symbolized by the concept of “wrestling an angel.”²

² This is a reference to the account of Jacob, the son of Isaac, wrestling the angel, found in Genesis 32.
Without directly articulating the problem in these terms, these are the tensions Givens faces: between the historical and the spiritual, between scripture and its philosophical interpretation, and between unchanging truth and the evolution of theology. He handles these tensions masterfully.

Givens cites figuratively the task of Jacob in the Old Testament, who wrestles with the balance between the philosophies of men and revealed scripture.

The account of this struggle is one of the most cryptic chapters in all scripture, in which Jacob receives his new name from God, “Israel,” or “he who prevails,” after wrestling all night long with the angel, interpreted to be the Lord himself.

Scripture tells us that in this struggle, Jacob “prevailed.” But how can man prevail against God?

The only way is through consistent, diligent, humble obedience, which shows worthiness. Ultimately, this is the way Israel “prevailed” against the angel — by persisting in seeking a blessing despite being completely humbled.

The story tells us that Jacob held fast to the angel and would not allow him to escape, leaving the angel no alternative but to dislocate Jacob’s hip. Jacob/Israel had lost the fight, yet Jacob still would not release the angel, insisting that the Lord give him a blessing. The angel ultimately agreed and gave him his blessing. So in the long run, Israel “prevailed” through surrender to God and an unwavering commitment to do what was necessary to receive God’s blessings. By any objective measure, he limped away from the battle a defeated man, yet God pronounced that Jacob, now “Israel,” had prevailed by his persistence and ultimate surrender to God’s will. By struggling well to do what God ultimately desired of him, Jacob was blessed and became favored of God. The endowment of blessings resulted in God’s changing Jacob’s name to “Israel,” “He who prevails with God.”

For Mormons, as “children of Israel” we may apply this story to our own personal struggles in weighing the philosophies of men against scripture. Though we have no systematic theology, each of us has to become his or her own systematic theologian in our own wrestlings with the angel, our own struggle to answer these questions to our own satisfaction. Literal interpretations appeal to some, and some literalists include positivism in their mental repertoire. To others, historical evidence is essential. To others the philosophy must gel perfectly with a scriptural interpretation. Still others see scripture as largely symbolic,
figurative, and perhaps interpretable in terms of Jungian archetypes or Freudian projections. To faithful Latter-day Saints, all paradigms are possible as long as their lives are lived in orthopraxis under the principles of obedience and sacrifice and the keeping of sacred covenants. In short, each of us needs to take “matter unorganized” and organize it into a rational world that makes sense to each of us according to our personal needs.

And that is precisely what this wonderful volume helps us do — with benefit of the history of the ways others have organized their rational worlds and made sense of the questions that arise when wrestling an angel and the interpretations they have found for scripture. Thus we can learn from others’ dead ends and false starts and also their triumphs in discovering the answers that have endured in the eternal battle of ideas — then using those tools to organize our own answers. Ultimately, like Israel, we will go through our faith-struggle with God, receive His blessing of a testimony, and limp away from the struggle triumphant in being blessed by the grace of His personal revelation.

Givens presents in each section of his book the theological development of Joseph Smith’s thought, while sometimes seeming to ignore Joseph’s prophetic call in favor of a more scholarly tone. Yet I find the overall purpose of the volume itself very faith affirming. By presenting Mormon thought in its cultural setting, Givens helps us to see the hand of God in turning the minds of his children to the thoughts of their fathers in setting up the conditions necessary for the restoration of the gospel.

This is where Givens’s topical approach shines: he traces the development of major Church tenets one by one through their history, beginning early in primitive Christianity. His approach brings a remarkable clarity to the idea that what we think of as “Mormon” ideas are clearly expressed in early Christianity, thus giving greater credence to the notion that indeed Mormonism is a restoration of primitive Christianity.

Givens repeatedly expresses and gives evidence for the idea that until around the time of Origen, ideas we now think of as “Mormon” were clearly present in early Christianity. Origen seems to become a watershed figure for Givens, since Origen is seen as one of the last believers in the ideas of primitive Christianity as founded by the apostles.

Givens shows that St. Justin, Tertullian, Origen, and Clement affirmed that angels had bodies of “subtle material,” a doctrine that can be identified with Joseph’s notion of “spirit matter” as material, yet
“more refined” than the coarser material that makes up the world as we know it. (58)

Givens notes that Irenaeus clearly articulated different roles for the Godhead, meaning that members of the Godhead operated independently yet found no need for a description of ontological unity (70), a belief paralleled in Mormonism which denies the Trinity of three persons united by one “substance,” as defined by the Nicene Creed. Mormonism denies that the three persons of the Godhead have ontological unity as well; they are simply unified in purpose and love, much as a family should be unified.

Givens quotes Origen’s understanding of a God who is capable of emotions, as human beings are, specifically in suffering (85). The implications of this position are vast: God becomes an immanent being capable of interacting with his children, as opposed to the Neoplatonic God of Aquinas, who is transcendent and unchangeable, beyond emotion, and yet paradoxically able to hear and answer the prayers of his children, which implies compassion for their changing circumstances. Givens joins his voice with Paulsen, Webb, and Tertullian himself in saying that the predominant understanding of God was as an embodied being, a doctrine that changed around the time of Origen (91).

Givens spends a great deal of time discussing the doctrine of a premortal existence, tracing it from its biblical origins through philosophical history, its loss in the middle ages, and its return in the Romanic poets in the nineteenth century. He illustrates its New Testament origins in the story of Jesus questioned by his disciples about a man born blind. They asked whether the man or his parents had sinned in a premortal state, that he should be born blind. Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). In other words, the man was foreordained to remain faithful despite his affliction, specifically to be healed by the Lord so that the works of God might be “manifest.” Givens also shows that Origen believed that the spirits in the nation of Israel were pre-existent (166), that fleshly bodies were not inherently degraded, as the Greeks believed (200). Givens goes on to note that Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria affirmed that for man to have joy, the body must be united with the soul (202), all doctrines that parallel Latter-day beliefs. Furthermore, Givens tells us that Origen also believed that hell was temporary; eventually virtually everyone would be “saved,” parallel Mormon beliefs (240).
In my opinion, the most important belief that Givens explores in detail is the idea of “theosis,” which means exaltation, or what Mormons sometimes call “eternal progression.”

In the vast panorama of Mormon thought, it is the destiny of mankind to progress from the state of premortal spirit to a “second estate,” where we have the opportunity to become incarnate so we may “fill the measure of our creation,” that is, to find our fullest potential as human beings. But this quest for continued human development and progress does not stop there; it continues into the afterlife, where the belief is that after eons of attempting to perfect oneself, one can begin to actually become like God himself. A large portion of the book is devoted to tracing the development of this belief and its roots; I will not attempt a summary here. Suffice it to say that Givens makes a convincing case that the early Church fathers were believers in theosis. He even quotes the somewhat controversial Platonic Dialogue Theaetetus, in which Plato uncharacteristically says that the greatest human goal should be “becoming as like God as possible” (257). This is one of Plato’s most troubling dialogues, however, and should not be taken as representative of Plato’s earlier and better known work. Givens also notes that Origen clearly believed in both a pre-existence and theosis (262).

The Eastern Orthodox believers also have had an affirmed version of theosis from early times and find sharing in the Divine Nature one of the greatest human goals to be achieved.

The idea that humans could become godlike became anathematized in the Middle Ages in the West along with the rise of the notion of man’s fallen nature and the degradation of all things physical, including the human body. Fallen man could not hope to approach the magnificence of a transcendent God. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, these were the times characterized by the phrase “the apostasy,” a time of lost light.

But in the eighteenth century, a new philosophy appeared, which helped set up conditions for a philosophical climate that would prove a receptive home for the revelations of Joseph Smith. Immanuel Kant was born in 1724, just 99 years before Joseph experienced his First Vision. Kant died one year before Joseph’s birth. Givens mentions Kant, but I think he misses Kant’s central importance to the restoration.

To call Kant “influential” would be a vast understatement. He became one of the most important of all philosophers and actually revolutionized philosophy. His influence in philosophy is comparable to the Copernican revolution, changing forever the way we see the world, especially if one includes all those he has influenced. Arguably, Kant
laid the foundation for much of philosophy as we know it today, both in the United States and on the European continent. My purpose here is not to describe in detail his philosophy, only its ultimate importance to Mormonism.

One of Kant’s central insights involves a faculty of the mind he called the *synthetic a priori*. Before Kant, virtually all philosophers saw truths like those of mathematics as logically necessary eternal truths that could not possibly be dependent on humans for their structure. Kant revolutionized that idea by essentially holding that such truths, instead of existing independently of the human mind, were actually in a sense “created” by the human mind and were the rules by which humans perceive the world. The world as we know it is essentially “organized” by the human mind. Perception does not “correspond” to the world outside but is framed completely by rules beyond which humans cannot know anything. Everything we know is essentially ordered and organized, that is, “synthesized” by human consciousness.

Robert Solomon, a noted Kant scholar, puts it this way:

To perceive an object is not merely to have an experience or a set of experiences: to perceive an object, there must be a combination of different experiences into an “objective” unity. To use one of Kant’s examples, my perception of a house from various perspectives could not be considered a perception of a *house* (or of any *object*) if the several experiences constituting this perception were not unified or synthesized as various experiences … (of the house), but my synthesizing these experiences as experiences of a house. Because experiences alone can never give us objects, there can be no perception of objects unless there is a synthesis of the manifold of experience. Moreover, because we never perceive simply, or experience simply, but always perceive or experience *something* and because perceiving or experiencing something depends on synthesis, there can be no unsynthesized experiences. (We shall see this same major thesis become the central principle of Edmond Husserl’s *Phenomenology*, the philosophy which will give a major impetus to the methodological innovations of the twentieth century existentialists.)

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To me, this principle is the essence of the Mormon view that God does not “create” matter ex nihilo but indeed “organizes” from matter unorganized. Essentially the Mormon exalted human God is doing what each human him or herself does through human perception — organizing the chaos of streaming photons and vibrations in the air into a gloriously harmonious experience of a symphony orchestra.

Kant’s central idea that logical form can exist only within rational human activity influenced all the German philosophers who came after him, Phenomenology and Existentialism from Hegel to philosophers of language, and even Frege, Wittgenstein, William James, Kuhn, and much of Twentieth Century philosophy on both sides of the Atlantic — including Pragmatism. All these take as their central thesis the view, in one form or another, that reality as we know and speak about it is a product of the organizing abilities of the human mind, and there is nothing we can speak about or know outside what we are capable of organizing as humans. So it can be said that much of contemporary philosophy provides a background support for the notion that a human God, if such an entity could exist (and of course we know He does), would organize reality through the powers of his consciousness much as humans do every day of their lives.

I am further convinced that God allowed these philosophies to emerge at this time and place to provide fertile intellectual soil to allow thinking Mormons to see the Restoration in this light. Unfortunately, much of Mormon thought to date is still imbued with a sectarian perspective. In my view, there is much to overcome.

Givens is fully aware of the importance of this spirit of humanism for the Restoration and mentions it several times. Here are two especially relevant quotes:

Setting the fall of man into an even larger context, as we saw, was Smith’s doctrine of pre-mortal existence, in which those born into mortality successfully “kept” their “first estate.” These re-invented master narratives that span both dispensational and cosmic history convey a framework utterly incompatible with Calvinist readings of human origins or human depravity. At the same time, Mormon conceptions of a human nature unencumbered by original sin or inherited depravity comport perfectly with the nineteenth-century zenith of liberal humanism, with its celebration of human potential, sense of boundlessness, and Romantic optimism. But for Smith, those conceptions become grounded in a totally reconfigured human
anthropology. As a consequence, he sees God’s plan— from the beginning— as being about human elevation rather than remedy, advancement rather than repair. In all this, Smith returns his version of Christian thought to a pre-Augustinian state, starkly different from most of the theology of his day. The early Christian rejection of Origen’s doctrines of premortality and apokatastasis (restoration to one’s primordial position), writes one religious historian, ensured the supremacy “of a Christian theology whose central concerns were human sinfulness, not human potentiality; divine determination, not human freedom and responsibility.” (191)

This early twentieth-century reorientation from the communal to the individual, and from other-worldly bonds to this-worldly character formation, was further enhanced by important developments in the social context of the era. The key influence in this regard was the mania for progressivism that swept the period — a philosophy that emphasized the amelioration of social conditions and the blossoming of human potential through the improvement of technology, government, and education. Progress became the mantra across the social and cultural spectrum. As a prominent voice of the movement declared, “democracy must stand or fall on a platform of human perfectibility.” “Human nature” itself, he argued, was improvable “by institutions.” The convergence of such optimism about human potential with Mormon theologies of eternal progress was fortuitous, coming as it did on the heels of polygamy’s abandonment. As Matthew Bowman has argued, “the early twentieth century was a time of rehabilitation for Mormons, when they worked to reinvent a religion shorn of polygamy and forced into American ways of being, and progressivism gave them the concepts, language, and tools to preserve their distinctiveness within adaptation.” The practical consequence of these developments, in and outside the church, was a new emphasis on individual perfectibility. In Smith’s thought, humankind’s role in the process of sanctification centers on his submission to divine law. It is this submission, Smith declared, that makes Christ’s freely offered sacrifice personally efficacious, allowing individuals to become “perfected and sanctified.” For
this reason, Mormons hold, “obedience is the first law of heaven” (307–308).4

So again we return to the beginning.

Just as Jacob in his wrestle with his angel was persistent in his struggle to receive a blessing and though injured in the process, still “prevailed” through submission to divine law, so too must we struggle in the organization of our world from matter unorganized and seek the Lord’s blessing on our adventure.

And how are we to handle the use of scripture to tangle with the philosophies of men? Givens gives us a perfect example in this wonderful book.

We must place first the filter of what we know from the spirit on our discernment, and then see the philosophy for what it is — as faith promoting or not — and act accordingly. Too often we reverse the process, throw away the spirit, and proceed without guidance. For those unacquainted with philosophy, that can be a recipe for disaster.

Humanism can be seen as a godless interpretation of the world or, as Givens here demonstrates, as not only compatible with but part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the extent it is interpreted in the light of human progression and affirmation of the basic goodness of mankind. The question, as always, becomes one of choices we make in the way we decide to view the world.

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THE CASE OF THE {-th} PLURAL IN THE EARLIEST TEXT

Stanford Carmack

Abstract: The earliest text of the Book of Mormon employs the {-th} plural — for example, “Nephi’s brethren rebelleth” — in a way that is substantially similar to what is found in many writings of the Early Modern period. The earliest text neither underuses nor overuses the construction, and it manifests inflectional variation and differential usage rates typical of Early Modern English. The totality of the evidence tells us that the Book of Mormon is most reasonably classified as a 16th- or 17th-century text, not as a 19th-century text full of biblical hypercorrections.

Careful readers of the Yale edition of the Book of Mormon notice the following language:

1 Nephi [heading]

Nephi’s brethren rebelleth against him. He confoundeth them and buildeth a ship.

2 Nephi [heading]

Nephi’s brethren rebelleth against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness etc.


Indeed, we can find more than 100 instances of the type “Nephi’s brethren rebelleth” in the earliest text. In the Book of Mormon and in Early Modern English, this particular syntax usually involves a grammatical subject that is third-person plural and a verb that carries archaic third-person singular inflection (ending in {-th}). After Lass (1999), I refer to

1. Phonetically speaking, this inflection is a voiceless interdental non-sibilant fricative — IPA symbol /θ/.
such morphosyntax as the {-th} plural. This usage has been recognized and discussed by historical linguists like Lass for some time. Barber (1997:169) wrote, “The old southern {-eth} plural appears sporadically throughout the sixteenth century, possibly encouraged by the analogy of the third-person singular.” Of course when we read the standard LDS text we miss most of these since they have been changed by subsequent editors, and more often than not by Joseph Smith himself in 1837.

Here are a number of quotes exhibiting lexical and morphological correspondence between the above Book of Mormon language and the textual record:

1523 EEBO A71318 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?] Chronicles

as for the comon people that rebelleth about London

This example is ambiguous since people can be construed as either singular or plural.

1548 EEBO A04807 William Kethe [d.1608?] A ballet declaringe the fal of the whore of babylone

Let they that rebelleth beware

The principal data source used in this study is Early English Books Online (EEBO) [Chadwyck-Healey ‹http://eebo.chadwyck.com›]. Many of these texts can be freely accessed by using the provided EEBO number and entering it after ‹http://name.umdl.umich.edu/›. The publicly searchable portion of EEBO–TCP (Text Creation Partnership) is ‹http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/›. Mark Davies provided a very useful corpus and interface: Early English Books Online, 400 million words, 1470s–1690s (2013--). I have also derived some of the examples from a 500-million-word corpus of my own elaboration, made from several thousand publicly available EEBO–TCP texts.


3. See also, for example, Henry C. Wyld, A History of Modern Colloquial English (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1936), as well as the Lass citation in the previous footnote.


5. Nevertheless, six or seven instances of the {-th} plural remain in the current LDS text. Besides “mine eyes hath beheld” (2 Nephi 25:5), the few that have escaped emendation involve relative pronouns and subject–verb inversion: “for I will contend with them that contendeth with thee” (2 Nephi 6:17; cf. 1 Nephi 21:25), “the judgments of God which hath come to pass” (2 Nephi 25:6); “the prophecies . . . which leadeth” (Helaman 15:7); “what meaneth the things” (1 Nephi 15:21); “what meaneth the words” (Mosiah 12:20); “these . . . works . . . of which hath been spoken” (Helaman 16:16). This last example could also be considered to be an adjunct construction where the subject slot of the clause is occupied by the prepositional phrase, which is construed as singular by default.
2 Nephi 2:10
   And because of the intercession for all, all men **cometh** unto God.

1537 EEBO A02303 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Antonio de Guevara [d.1545?] *The golden boke of Marcus Aurelius Emperour and eloquent oratour*
   Many tymes of wyse yonge men **cometh** olde FOLES,
   And of yonge fooles customably **cometh** wise olde MEN:

Mosiah 3:18
   but men **drinketh** damnation to their own souls

1542 EEBO A18528 William Thynne, ed. [d.1546] | Geoffrey Chaucer [d.1400] *Works*
   To say this worde, and fouler is the dede whan men so **drinketh** of the whyte & rede

1675 EEBO A37049 James Durham [1622–1658] *A practical exposition of the X. Commandements*
   and so one man, or several men, **drinketh** by the measure, will, and appetite of another;
   Besides the possibility of proximity agreement, this could be "one man . . . drinketh".

Helaman 5:12
   a foundation whereon if men **buildeth** they cannot fall.

1484 EEBO A07095 William Caxton, tr. [ca.1422–1491] | Aesop *The subtyl historyes and fables of Esope*
   And that of me men . . . **byldeth** fayre edefyces

1525 EEBO A71319 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?] *Chronicles*
   But the Frensshe men **knoweth** all our secretes and counsayles

When it comes to Book of Mormon language, the tendency has been (and is) to suspect that virtually every identifiable instance of variation is bad grammar, such as the use of modern *warns* after obsolete *rebelleth*, in the heading of 2 Nephi. Yet here are clear examples from the 1670s of this same close inflectional variation:
but withal, he saith, honour that which is most excellent in the world, **that which disposeth and Governs** all:

being born, it **nouriseth and sustains** us, and at last **takes** us into her entrails as in our Couch, and **keepeth** us until our God shall call us to appear before his Tribunal:

This goodness he **desipeth, and maintains** in himself the hardness of an impenitent heart, a heart that will not relent.

That being so, an apparent failing of the earliest text points us to Early Modern English. Indeed, in my examination of the text, I have found that in almost every instance of suspect grammar, both the curious and the critical have pointed out archaic or obsolete usage. This next passage not only has **rebelleth/warns** variation, but also mixed use of the {-th} plural and the {-th} singular (the same as “brethren rebelleth” and “he counfoundeth” in the heading of 1 Nephi):

for they **that hath** the Commandments, and **keepeth** them, **dwelleth** in Christ, and Christ in them: ... for **he that manifests** his faith by being obedient, he shall live for ever: for the **Kingdome of God consistseth** not in words, but in life and power, which is righteousness; and **that procureth** true peace, such peace as men and Devils can never take from you:

Joseph Smith is known to have used the following grammar book in Kirtland in 1835, as part of his study in the School of the Prophets: Samuel Kirkham, *English Grammar, in Familiar Lectures* (New York: Robert B. Collins, 1829). Kirkham’s grammar clearly states that {-th} inflection was only to be used with third-person singular (3sg) subjects, and that {-st} inflection was only to be used with second-person singular (2sg) subjects. So Smith could have learned from that resource precisely what biblical style was. In 1829, however, it is highly likely that he knew biblical style only implicitly. Therefore, one possible view of Joseph’s heavy 1837 editing is that in 1829 he willingly dictated without question

6. This is mentioned in *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, Vol. 15 (Liverpool: Samuel W. Richards, 1853), 230.
the words revealed to him. A better educated man might have imposed his own will on the revealed text. Of course in 1837, with increased education and awareness, Smith consciously edited for biblical style. As a result, while he may have placated grammarians and his own emergent views on proper scriptural style, an important, tell-tale component of the text was lost. What has remained of the {-th} plural in the current LDS text could be called a vestigial use characteristic of the first half of the 18th century. Which being the case, this study points out a vital accomplishment of the critical text project.

The extensive presence of the {-th} plural in the Book of Mormon is one more piece of evidence in support of the position that its extrabiblical language is Early Modern English. A seemingly viable view is that {-th} plural inflection in the Book of Mormon results from a hypercorrection on the part of its presumed author/translator. One could always attempt to argue in this case that Joseph Smith was overdoing the biblical, the notion being that he was trying too hard to be scriptural. But did Smith overuse {-th} inflection in the wrong places because of biblical influence and in order to make the text sound scriptural? Hypercorrection is a valid linguistic explanation that holds in many instances. But the approach fails in the case of the Book of Mormon, since {-th} plural syntax in particular, and the entire book in general — given the extensive, principled, nonbiblical Early Modern English usage in many contexts — would have to be viewed as a sophisticated hypercorrection, which is an oxymoron.

There are a few arguments to be made against viewing the {-th} plural in the Book of Mormon as an error of Joseph Smith’s. Three of these are general in nature and four are specific. The general arguments have to do with the lexis, the syntax, and the syntactic systems found in the Book of Mormon. Skousen has written about various instances of lexical usage that are old and extrabiblical (or barely found in the King James Bible). These are not amusing or trivial pieces of evidence, but

7. This has been mentioned before, but in less detail, and without reference to what precisely searchable databases can tell us — see Stanford Carmack, “A Look at Some ‘Nonstandard’ Book of Mormon Grammar”, Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture 11 (2014): 234–35.

8. A hypercorrection is a linguistic construction “falsely modelled on an apparently analogous prestigeful form” (definition taken from the Oxford English Dictionary).

powerful and significant. Semantic shifts in sense are unpredictable and not recoverable for later speakers when prior usage has become obsolete.

Examples of nonbiblical syntax include, but are by no means limited to, “it supposeth me that”, “a more part of it”, “nor no manner of”, “with our/your/their mights”, “of which hath been spoken”, and barely biblical syntax such as “it sufficeth me”. Syntactic systems include did usage (nearly 2,000 instances) and command, cause, and suffer complementation syntax (nearly 500 of these in the text, patterning very differently from what is found in the King James Bible, but reflecting well-formed older usage), as well as exceeding with adjectives. There are others. That is only a glimpse of the extensive textual evidence found in the Book of Mormon which, taken together, indicates that the book is not a faux Early Modern English text. It is not a book that is full of hypercorrections. The abundant linguistic evidence (from English) cannot be reasonably dismissed as mere artifacts of apologetic investigation. And how are all of them to be accounted for naturalistically? By numerous plagiarisms of largely inaccessible texts? By scores of analogical bull’s-eyes? By ad hoc stipulation that all these forms were part of Smith’s dialect, without any evidentiary support for the view?

Before presenting specific arguments, I provide additional examples of unexpected {-th} inflection and we look at possible cases of the {-th} plural in the King James Bible. It is little known and discussed, but we can find all persons with {-th} inflection in Early Modern English, even 1sg I and 2sg thou:

1 Nephi 22:2

And I Nephi saith unto them:

1639 EEBO A09971 John Preston [1587–1628] Grace to the humble: As preparations to receive the Sacrament

Thus Paul argues this, I saith that every one of you saith, I am Paul, I am Apollo, I am Cephas, & I am Christ:

Mosiah 26:23

For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world, for it is I that hath created them. And it is I that granteth unto him that believeth

Ether 4:19

And behold, it is I that hath spoken it.

1583 EEBO A67926 John Foxe [1516–1587] Actes and monuments of matters most speciell and memorabel, happeneyng in the Church

O Israel, it is I, it is I, which forgeeveth thee thy sinnes.
It is I that doth profit thereby.

It is I (saith the Lord) that doth sanctifie you: It is I that doth act every Grace; it is I that do put your hearts into a good frame:

it is I, that worketh in thee both to will, and to do, of my good pleasure:

A discussion of 1sg and 2sg {-th} is left for another time.

Lass (1999:166) mentions that there was approximately 20% usage of the {-th} plural in a corpus of early 16th-century eastern correspondence (letters). He also states that in the 16th century “the southern {-th} plural is always a minority form, though it persists (if decreasingly) in the standard well into the seventeenth century”. Here are three instructive examples, two taken from the Book of Mormon, and one from EEBO:

2 Nephi 7:2

I make the rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink
because the waters are dried up and they dieth because of thirst.\(^{10}\)

Moroni 7:17

for he persuadeth no man to do good — no, not one —
neither doth his angels,

Examples of inverted {-th} plural syntax with doth are provided below.

10. Here is the corresponding Isaiah passage:

Isaiah 50:2

I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh,
because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

The noun fish is treated as singular throughout the King James Bible (see below).
EEBO A06932  Thomas Becon [1512–1567]  A new postil conteinyng most godly and learned sermons vpon all the Sunday Gospelles

[ And the angels giveth him such honor, as Christ giveth to us all. ]

And the Angels gueueth hym suche honour, as Christ gueueth to vs al.

The King James Bible does not have the {-th} plural with the pronoun they as used in 2 Nephi 7:2, a passage that is a substantial and interesting alteration of biblical language. Indeed, there is no {-th} inflection directly associated with they in that biblical text. Likewise, there is no {-th} certainly associated with plural noun phrases in the biblical text, even in inverted constructions, as seen in Moroni 7:17 (compare “which things the angels desire to look into” [1 Peter 1:7]).

In the above 16th-century excerpt, the Protestant reformer Thomas Becon (or Becon) used giveth in both instances, whether the subject was plural angels or singular Christ. This example is thus analogous to “brethren rebelleth” ~ “he confoundeth”, as shown at the outset of this study.

Interestingly, the {-th} plural is a minority usage both in Early Modern English and in the Book of Mormon. Still, Lass notes that the {-th} plural was standard use into the 17th century. As a result, in this domain (and in many others) the earliest text of the Book of Mormon offers us a wider glimpse of Early Modern English than the King James Bible does.

In that influential scriptural text, {-th} was consistently singular. Nearly dispositive of this issue is the fact that verbs whose explicit subject is they never take {-th} inflection in the biblical text:

Psalms 41:8

An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him:

EEBO A20987  Scipion Dupleix [1569–1661]  The resoluer; or Curiosities of nature

A[nswer]. The cause is (saith they) that the Fever proceeding f[r]om a sweete Phlegme in those which have great drouth or thirst,

The string “saith they” (and spelling variants) appears to be rare in the print record.

The {-th} plural is not even found in the King James Bible when they, them, or those precedes a relative pronoun, syntax that seems to have favored the use in the Early Modern period:

Psalms 50:5

Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
Revelation 2:9
I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews,

The following verse may contain the most likely case of the {-th} plural:

John 7:49
But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

Yet even here we cannot be sure that the language doesn’t switch from singular to plural construal, since it reads “this people”, not “these people” (cf. Deuteronomy 20:16), and people is used with was elsewhere:

Isaiah 23:13
this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness:

Mark 11:18
for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

Again, this next one could well be a case of singular construal followed immediately by resumptive plural reference:

Jeremiah 5:23
But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

The following biblical examples are also ambiguous on their face as to whether they involve the {-th} plural. An ordinary reading doesn’t tell us, one way or the other, what the real syntax is:

Antecedent ambiguity

Numbers 21:15
And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.

Other English translations indicate that KJB stream is the antecedent of goeth and lieth.

Micah 5:7
as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

Either dew or showers can be viewed as the subject on an ordinary reading; the underlying Hebrew verb forms are singular.
Conjoined abstract nouns used with 3sg {-th}

1 Kings 10:7
thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.\textsuperscript{11}

Matthew 6:19
Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt,\textsuperscript{12}

1 Corinthians 13:13
And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.\textsuperscript{13}

Fish was consistently construed as singular

Exodus 7:18
And the fish that is in the river shall die,

Exodus 7:21
And the fish that was in the river died;

\textsuperscript{11} Lack of number resolution with abstract nouns is still the case in modern English. See Lass (1999:166), where lack of number resolution is mentioned and exemplified in the context of animate nouns. The underlying Hebrew verb forms support this view.

\textsuperscript{12} In Matthew 6:19, two singular nouns convey roughly the same meaning with a figurative sense. A singular verb here is unsurprising, following the underlying Greek, as is also seen in the following verse with “neither moth nor rust”. Again, an ordinary reading of the King James Bible here does not tell the non-specialist that there was such a thing as the {-th} plural.

\textsuperscript{13} The syntax of 1 Corinthians 13:13 is quite different from “Nephi’s brethren rebelleth”. The complex subject — “faith hope charity” — is postverbal and consists of three singular, abstract nouns. Both things work together to prevent the resolution of this complex subject as plural. The use of {-th} in 1 Corinthians 13:13 may reflect the Greek, which reads in the singular, menei (in Kurt Aland’s critical text). The Latin Vulgate (also the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft’s version) has singular manet as well, but a footnote for the plural variant manent is to be found in the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate of 1592, 1593, and 1598. Therefore, we see that the singular form of the verb was preferred in Greek and Latin, and thus Tyndale 1534 and the 1611 KJB understandably have abideth.

This study is primarily concerned with simple, plural preverbal grammatical subjects, as in “mine eyes hath beheld great things” (2 Nephi 4:25; emended to have) and “mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews” (2 Nephi 25:5; never emended). (Cf. 2 Nephi 16:5 [a biblical Isaiah passage] “For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts”; the King James Bible has three instances of only “mine eyes have.”) Following Lass (1999), abstract number resolution is not assumed in this discussion.
Deuteronomy 4:18

the likeness of any fish that **is** in the waters beneath the earth:

Isaiah 50:2

their fish **stinketh**, because there is no water, **and dieth** for thirst.

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The King James Bible may lack the {-th} plural in part because the majority of the decrease in use occurred before the year 1600. Barber (1997:169) wrote that “[i]n the later sixteenth century, plural {-eth} is very rare.” Lass observed that the {-th} plural decreased during the Early Modern period, but doesn’t give many details. Corpora made from EEBO texts tell us that much of the decrease took place during the second half of the 16th century. (Textual data from the beginning of the era is intermittent.) The peak period of syntax like “**angels hath** ministered unto him” (1 Nephi 16:38) appears to have been during the first half of the 16th century. It was certainly employed at a much higher rate in the year 1500 than it was 200 years later.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{14}\) The chart was derived from a 500-million-word corpus and from contexts with nouns ending in {-es} as well as **people, men, things,** and **words** followed by a relative pronoun and **hath, doth,** and words of at least six letters ending in {-eth} (to limit the number of false positives). The following smoothing was applied to
In relation to this discussion, the relative rates are important in the chart, not the absolute numbers. From this data set we learn that the {-th} plural — which was verb inflection from the Middle English period — was relatively frequent in the first half of the Early Modern period, especially during the early 1500s. But it was never the dominant form, and neither is it in the Book of Mormon. By the year 1600 a large drop-off in usage had occurred, partially elucidating its absence in the King James Bible. By the 1690s the syntax was rare, and still in a downward trend. By the 1800s it is virtually nonexistent (3sg {-th} inflection having all but dropped out of the language, with formulaic and religious use remaining).\footnote{See Lass (1999:162–63); at pages 164–65 he mentions that hath and doth, from about the 1650s, probably did not reflect pronunciation.}

Now we consider specific arguments against taking the {-th} plural in the Book of Mormon to be 19th-century usage. They are that the earliest text:

- does not underuse the {-th} plural
- does not overuse the {-th} plural
- exhibits variation typical of the Early Modern period
- employs the {-th} plural at a significantly higher rate after relative pronouns than it does after pronouns

The Book of Mormon does not underuse the {-th} plural. The text has more than 100 instances of the morphosyntax. The usage is neither biblical nor like the early 19th century. It occurs with many more verbs besides high-frequency auxiliary verbs, and in many more contexts besides conjoined singular, abstract noun phrases. If the usage were similar to biblical usage, then it might be claimed reasonably that it was done in imitation of it. But the earliest text contains {-th} plural syntax that goes well beyond the following examples, in which {-th} could be singular:

Mosiah 8:12

Or perhaps they will give us a knowledge of this very people which hath been destroyed.

the chart: the decade itself was weighted 70%, and the two nearest decades were weighted 15% each; end decades were deleted (data is intermittent in the early years of the period). The search gives a reasonable approximation; it is difficult with current database coding and search limitations to achieve a good approximation of this syntax with a global search. Related searches that I have performed corroborate this chart as generally accurate.
Helaman 15:7
which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them

Ether 12:28
And I will shew unto them
that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me,

As mentioned, the King James Bible has no examples of they with {-th} inflection. The Book of Mormon has four of these, one inverted (here I exclude five instances of historical-present “they saith”, which is semantically equivalent to ‘they said’):

2 Nephi 7:2
and they dieth because of thirst.

2 Nephi 26:10
for because they yieldeth unto the devil
and choose works of darkness rather than light,

The inflectional variation — yieldeth ~ choose — is addressed below.

Alma 55:8
Behold, we have escaped from the Nephites and they sleepeth.

Moroni 7:17
neither doth they which subject themselves unto him

Here are some relevant examples from the print record of English:

1557 EEBO A21119 Roger Edgeworth [d.1560] Sermons very fruitfull, godly, and learned
yet they sprinkleth, boileth and welleth up.

1565 EEBO A07396 Thomas Stapleton, tr. [1535–1598] | Venerable Bede [673–735] The history of the Church of Englande
the ship drawing nere unto the land, as sone as they ar towched wyth the smell of the ayer, they dieth owt of hand.

and their possessions they kepeth for them,

1583 EEBO A67922 John Foxe [1516–1587] Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorabl, happenynge in the Church
Other mens fields they repeth,

1664 EEBO A28337 Stephen Blake The compleat gardeners practice
There be double and single flowered ones, and both of them yeeldeth seed;
there doth they in likewise displease the contrary party,

All these but for a time doth serve,
Soone come, soone gone, so doth they fare:

So they used with {-th} inflection is another instance — that we may add to many others — of the Book of Mormon containing extrabiblical Early Modern English.

“They sayeth/saith”, which occurs five times in the Book of Mormon as a verb in the historical present (Mosiah 12:18; Alma 9:4, 6; Alma 18:9; 3 Nephi 27:3), is hard to find in the textual record. I found one late Middle English example in Google books (accidentals regularized):

Also they sayeth that in Fithekfield are contained 165 acres of land and every acre is worth three shillings.

Lass (1999:166) notes that the auxiliaries doth and hath were more robust in maintaining {-th} plural syntax after the 17th century. Frequency would have played a role in this retention. Consequently, if the earliest text primarily contained plural doth and hath, then it could be classified as an 18th- or 19th-century text in this regard.

When we examine the modern English textual record leading up to 1829, we find occasional examples of they (and those) used with high-frequency doth and hath.16 Wading through many OCR errors, I found the following 1705 phrase written by a Quaker from Warwick, England: “he or they that doth his Will shall enter into his Kingdom”. This can be legitimately interpreted as agreement with either he or they. In addition, I encountered a mid–16th-century quote with the string “they that hath” from the author Andrew Boorde, whose writings have plenty of varying inflectional usage:

16. Unfortunately, when using Google books one must examine each search hit because 18th-century searches yield many false positives, as well as reprints of older language (and duplicates). I performed searches in early May 2015, limiting them to the period 1700 to 1830. I looked for “they/those {relative pronoun} doth/hath”, as well as instances of “they doth/hath”, and inverted “doth/hath they”.
Andrew Boorde  Introduction of Knowledge  EETS Extra Series No. X (1870) 178, 185

When they do heare masse, & se[e] the sacrament,  
y they do inclyne, & doth clap theyr hand on theyr mouth  
. . .  
y they doth begyn and do reken  
. . .  

the Venyscions hath great prouision of warre,  
for they hauue ever in a redyness tymber.

Searches for “they which doth/hath” and “they who doth/hath” resulted in false positives, but I did find the following quote that seems to be taken from a much earlier translation of a work by Louis Ellies Du Pin (d.1719):

1784 GOOG Owen & Johnston  A new and general biographical dictionary, p.153

Theodoret is one of those who hath succeeded the best in every kind.

There are also early 18th-century instances (often with later date-stamps) of “those that doth/hath”.

Picking through many false positives and duplicates, I found eight actual examples of “they hath” and “hath they” — only two were on point:17

1811 GOOG T. B. Hughes  A report of the case of the King against Bebb and others, p.9 (London)

or at any time since, nor had or hath they, or either of them, or any person

1828 GOOG The Collateral Bible  (Philadelphia)  [cf. John 15:24]

but now hath they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

Therefore, we do find modern instances of inverted “hath they” (but none in the earliest text), consonant with what Lass (1999:166) asserts: “plural is, hath, doth are commoner than inflected plurals of other verbs, and persist longer” (emphasis added).

I encountered four legitimate instances of “doth they”, one modern (Scottish):

1707 GOOG Walter Steuart  Pardovan, p.52 (Edinburgh: 1770)

How doth they observe the Lord’s day?

17. Five search hits were reprints of 16th- and 17th-century language, and one was a typo from a 1746 King James Bible printed in Leipzig: “and they gave them wives which they hath saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead” (Judges 21:14); other editions have “they had” in this verse.
This syntax is found once in the Book of Mormon (at Moroni 7:17 — see above).

As for “they doth”, there were four legitimate hits, three from modern English (two American):

1735 GOOG William Mitchel The Tinklarian Doctor’s Fifteenth Epistle, p.8
   THEY doth not so commonly curse and swear,

1813 GOOG Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, p.307
   Resolved, That this HOUSE doth recede from their disagreement to the amendment insisted upon by the Senate, and that THEY doth agree to the residue of the report

   When they are burned by physicians THEY doth assume another kind of shape.

The second example illustrates how the formulaic bled into a rare use of “they doth”. House reports from this era commonly had “this House doth . . . and doth . . . and doth”. The last example is American-published, no author given. There is no example of “they doth” in the Book of Mormon.

Finally, searches for some high-frequency main verbs with they yielded old language except for one interesting case discussed in the next section. In particular, I found 14th-century instances of “they taketh” and “they sayeth” (the latter shown above). These searches also verify what Lass (1999:166) asserts (see above quote). As a result, we must conclude that by the year 1830, the {-th} plural was rare, in both American and British English, and confined to use with doth and hath.

In summary, we have seen that the {-th} plural, as contained in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon, is neither biblical (covert singular use) nor 19th-century in character (confined to rare use with high-frequency auxiliary verbs). So by using syntax of the type “Nephi’s brethren rebelleth” somewhat frequently throughout the dictation, Smith went against both his own American English and biblical language.

The Book of Mormon does not overuse the {-th} plural. An overuse of this construction might have been an order of magnitude higher in rate of use. I found an example of such overuse from the 1820s, quite by

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18. The book was first published anonymously in England in the late 1600s. This is the only edition of this oft-printed book that I have seen with this syntax. Other editions have “they assume” or “they do assume” here.
accident. Searching for “they maketh” in Google books, I encountered one from the late 14th-century poem *Piers Plowman*, another from Trevisa’s version of Higden’s *Polychronicon* (1387), and a third from 1823. The last one naturally caught my eye.

The early 19th-century instance turned out to be from a play written by the Jewish-American dramatist Samuel B. H. Judah (b. 1799): *A Tale of Lexington: a National Comedy, founded on the opening of the Revolution. In three Acts.* (New York, 1823). A London review of this play included a curious exchange between two characters, exhibiting a remarkable amount of “quaker-dialogue and burlesque of scripture phraseology”. In the space of about 350 words, Grimalkiah manages to say “men returneth”, “they maketh”, “men prevaleth”, “we crieth”, “we sacrificeth”, “we putteth”, “they layeth”, “legs and spirit rumbleth”, “bowels yearneth”, “limbs quaketh”. Modern instances include “we wax/lament/melt”. In addition, he utters nonbiblical *smited*, “exceedingly wroth” (biblical would have been “exceeding wroth”), as well as the odd query “sayeth it that Sampson moaneth?” (odd because we’re not sure what it refers to). In the whole of the Book of Mormon — about 270,000 words — there is one instance of the {-th} plural with *we*:

*Helaman 13:34*

Behold, we *layeth* a tool here and on the morrow it is gone.

This is attested usage from the past:

1540 EEBO A10769 Lancelot Ridley [d. 1576] *A commentary in Englyshe vpon Saymcte Paules Epystle to the Ephesyans*

> We *thynketh* the Apostle dothe speake
> these wordes to stoppe the vngodly mouthes

1574 EEBO A69056 Arthur Golding, tr. [1536–1606] | Jean Calvin [1509–1564] *Sermons . . . vpon the booke of lob*

> when wee *suffereth* vs not to bee deafe too his doctrine,
> but *giueth* it enterance into vs

In addition, we have seen that there are only four examples of *they* + {-th} in the earliest text (excluding the aforementioned “they saith”). That is a far cry from Grimalkiah’s rate: two instances in 350 words. His overall rate of use of the {-th} plural is greater than 70%. The Book of Mormon’s {-th} plural rate appears to be less than 10%. Thus one can reasonably argue that the {-th} plural of the earliest text is not a case of consciously overusing the construction.

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There are four cases of “ye hath/doth” in the Book of Mormon (but no examples of the {-th} plural with ye and a main verb). Because some may think that this is a misuse of language, we consider it briefly here. Three cases of ye + {-th} actually involve singular ye:

Alma 41:9

do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine which ye hath hitherto risked to commit sin.

Alma 41:15

For that which ye doth send out shall return unto you again and be restored.

Alma 61:9

And now in your epistle ye hath censured me, but it mattereth not.

Here is an example of singular ye + {-th}:

1507 EEBO A03936 Walter Hilton [d.1396] Scala perfectionis

If thou loue moche god ye lyketh for to thynke vpon hym moche / & yf thou loue lytyl / thenne lytyl thou thynkest vpon hym

So we see singular ye + {-th} in both the Book of Mormon and earlier English (and we see close thou ~ ye switching in the 1507 example, as we see in various places in the Book of Mormon as well).

Both Alma 41:9 and the next example have “ye hath hitherto”:

Mosiah 2:31

I would that ye should do as ye hath hitherto done; as ye have kept my commandments, and also the commandments of my father,

Mosiah 2:31 is an instance of plural ye, and therefore the {-th} plural. The following passages exemplify and elucidate the Book of Mormon usage:

1681 EEBO A38821 Edmund Everard The great pressures and grievances of the Protestants in France and their apology to the late ordinances made against them

Hitherto the Clergy have done nothing else but contradict the Edicts,

1680 EEBO A97353 Richard Baxter [1615–1691] The nonconformists plea for peace

The worst Magistrates almost were like to use the sword more harmlesly, than the Secular Clergy hath hitherto done, through most of all the Christian world.

The first example shows that clergy can be construed as plural; the second example contains the morphosyntax of Mosiah 2:31.
Here are three examples of plural ye + {-th} from three different centuries:

1485 EEOB A23591 Saint Albans chronicle
sires ye hereth all what he has said

as if he had said, although ye eateth:

1655 EEOB A90622 John Pain A discovery of the priests
the anointing which ye hath received of him abideth in you

The last example has “ye hath + ‹past participle›”, as in various Book of Mormon passages.

The Book of Mormon exhibits variation in this domain that is typical of the Early Modern period. We have seen that {-th}/{-s} variation after a singular subject is attested 17th-century language:

The above is a syntacto-lexical match. When we read the earliest text, we are reading Early Modern English:
This order of inflectional variation was apparently favored by the translator Edward Grimeston in 1607.

The Book of Mormon also has passages that have verbs carrying {-th} plural inflection followed by bare verb stems, under ellipsis. Here are two with that pattern:

2 Nephi 26:10

for because they **yieldeth** unto the devil
**and choose** works of darkness rather than light,

Helaman 7:23

save it be unto **those who repenteth** of their sins
**and hearken** unto my words.

The next three examples exhibit the same syntax:

1565  EEBO A07396  Thomas Stapleton, tr. [1535–1598] | Venerable Bede [673–735] | The history of the Church of Engelande

**they maketh** them bowers about their churches,
**and feasting** together after a good religious sorte, **kill** their oxen

1646  EEBO A92138  Samuel Rutherford [1600?–1661] | The divine right of church-government and excommunication

for we dispute only of **those who acknowledgeth** their sins,
**and promise** amendment.

1648  EEBO A85404  John Goodwin [1594?–1665] | Neophytopresbyteros, or, The yongling elder, or, novice-presbyter

he, and many more, speake highly of the Scriptures,
not because **they loveth** Truth, or the minde of God, and of Christ, contained in the Scriptures,
**or care** much for the propagation or knowledge of these in the world,

We also see inflectional variation in the other order, from unmarked to marked:
Mosiah 3:18
except they humble themselves and become as little children
and believeth that salvation . . .

and glad when they have the masterie, and so feeleth and knoweth
theyr enemies in battaile,

But we also often see consistent inflection in the textual record:

1557 EEBO A21119 Roger Edgeworth [d.1560] | Sermons very fruitfull, godly, and learned
for they spotteth and defouleth them selues by ebrietie and surfets,

These next three passages contain examples of repeated {-th} plural inflection:20

Mosiah 8:21
Yea, they are as a wild flock
which fleeth from the shepherd and scattereth,
and are driven and are devoured by the beasts of the forest.

Mosiah 15:14
these are they which hath published peace, that hath brought good
tidings of good, that hath published salvation, that saith unto Zion:

Helaman 8:19
ever since the days of Abraham
there hath been many PROPHETS that hath testified these things

Here are three 16th-century excerpts that are the same, from a syntacto-lexical standpoint, as Helaman 8:19:

1509 EEBO A16638 Sebastian Brant [1458–1521] | The shyppe of fooles
there hathe ben but FEWE that hathe edefyed grete places and houses

20. The following are probably not examples of consistent {-th} plural usage, since the antecedents of the relative pronoun which are probably the closest nouns, which are singular:

1 Nephi 12:17
And the mists of darkness are the TEMPTATIONS of the DEVIL, which blindeth
the eyes and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men and leadeth them
away into broad roads

Alma 34:15
this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the BOWELS of MERCY,
which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto men that they may
have faith unto repentance. And thus MERCY can satisfy the demands of justice.
1545 EEBO A02886  John Bale [1495–1563]  *A mysterye of inyquyte*  
*There hath* bene Popes which *hath* bene poyseners

1583 EEBO A67926  John Foxe [1516–1587]  *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church*  
*there hath* bene MANY, that *hath* sclaundered you, and the Gospell of our Saviour Christe.

So the syntax of Helaman 8:19 was not Smith overdoing the biblical. Instead, it was Early Modern English usage not to be found in the King James Bible.

Here are some further examples of close variation:

2 Nephi 6:17

I will contend with them *that contendeth* with thee. And I will feed them *that oppress* thee with their own flesh.

1534 EEBO A00387  William Marshall, tr. | Desiderius Erasmus [d.1536]  *A playne and godly exposytion or declaratio[n] of the co[m]mune crede*  
And the name of thefte / whiche in Latyne is called furtum / is a generall worde unto them / *that stealeth* out of the commune treasurehouse / which are called peculatores / and unto them *that committe* sacrilege / by takyng away halowed or holy thynges

1626 EEBO A11058  Alexander Ross [1591–1654]  *An exposition on the fourteene first chapters of Genesis, by way of question and answere*  
Fourthly, hee will blesse them *that blesseth* him, and curse them *that curse* him;

Mosiah 15:11

all *those who hath* hearkened unto their words and believed that the Lord would redeem his people *and have* looked forward to that day

1548 EEBO A16036  Nicholas Udall, tr. [1505–1556] | Desiderius Erasmus [d.1536]  *The first tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Newe Testamente*  
Therfore equitie would, and no lesse becummeth our bounteousnesse, that *those whiche hath* forsaken the worlde to come to us, *and have* commit and credite themselfes wholly to us,

Moroni 7:28

and he claimeth all *those that hath* faith in him. And *they that have* faith in him will cleave unto every good thing.
This is a present remedy in burning Agues, and to those that hath a hot Liver, or heart, and it helpeth also those that have any roughness in the wind pipe or throat.

2 Nephi 26:10
And they sell themselves for naught, for for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yieldeth unto the devil...

And brookes, although neither man nor beast drinke of them, yet never the lesse they kepe their course and floweth.

while they be full, yet they desire, Therefore they desireth to see,

All of the above language clearly varies between the {-th} plural and the unmarked state.

The following late 15th-century example shows three different inflectional possibilities after they, as discussed by Lass (1999:165):


THEY woneth in celles and lyven under a pryour . . .
but THEY take leude men . . .

Barber (1997:169) wrote that “in [Middle English], broadly speaking, {-es} was Northern, {-en} Midland, and {-eth} Southern. There was an alternative Midland plural form in which the final /-n/ had been lost, and from this descends the normal plural of Modern English.” The above examples provide evidence that Early Modern English was full of inflectional variation, which we also see in the Book of Mormon (except for the old {-en} Midland plural).

Here are examples where the subject is ye (and they) and the {-th} plural only occurs under ellipsis (in the conjoined predicate):
Helaman 13:21

Ye have set your hearts upon them
and hath not hearkened unto
the words of him who gave them unto you.

1660 EEBO A50450 Sir George Mackenzie [1636–1691] Aretina

Ye have disarmed my tongue of complement,
and hath turned the edge of my own weapon against me


They haue found a treasure,
and hath felt the sweetnes of this Manna


They have come sick and weakly, and have gone away so,
and hath found your promises and assurances of no effect at all.

1660 EEBO A44802 Francis Howgill [1618–1669] One of the Antichrists voluptiers defeated and the true light vindicated

They have ordained one another, and hath set up a trade of preaching,
and . . . hath fill'd the world with darknesse

These examples may be evidence of an Early Modern English tendency to employ hath more readily in conjoined predicates or less readily after pronouns.

In the next group of examples we see hath after noun-phrase subjects, but not after closely preceding they:

Mosiah 8:11

And again, they have brought swords;
the hilts thereof hath perished

1623 EEBO A01554 Thomas Gataker [1574–1654] Two sermons tending to direction for Christian cariage, both in afflictions incumbent, and in judgements imminent

especially when they have been of long continuance,
and much pains hath beene taken for the recovery of it againe.

1651 EEBO A30575 Jeremiah Burroughs [1599–1646] An exposition . . . of the prophesy of Hosea

that they have prevail'd over their consciences,
that their consciences hath given them leave to do such a thing;

There seems to have been a tendency in Early Modern English to employ the {-th} plural more readily after noun-phrase subjects than after they. Further study is required.
In summary, we have encountered ample evidence that various kinds of inflectional variation found in the Book of Mormon are, syntactically speaking, examples of attested/acceptable Early Modern English usage. The overall matching is solid, suggesting implicit knowledge of particular syntactic tendencies of earlier English. What on its face seems to be questionable grammar, actually turns out to be attested variation patterns.

The Book of Mormon employs the {-th} plural at a significantly higher rate after relative pronouns than after pronouns. To facilitate and properly constrain this study, I narrowed the range of inquiry to third-person plural (3pl) pronominals: they, them, those. I found that the earliest text prefers the use of the {-th} plural in relative clauses, whose antecedents are 3pl pronominals, to the use in simple predicates after they (p ≅ 0.001). This same syntactic preference is noticeable in the Early Modern period. For convenience, I refer to these two types of {-th} plural syntax here as relative {-th} and predicate {-th}. (Again, the {-th} plural is the clear minority usage in all texts.)

In present-tense contexts (in the Book of Mormon), excluding language using a form of the verb be, there are about half as many relative-clause contexts as simple (non-conjoined) predicate contexts. Nevertheless, there are more cases of relative {-th} even though there are fewer potential constructions. All told, I counted 11 instances of relative {-th} with 3pl pronominals in the earliest text:

21. There is also one interesting case of “them which has”, treated later in this section.

2 Nephi 6:17
I will contend with them that contendeth with thee.

2 Nephi 9:26
upon all those who hath not the law given to them,

Mosiah 15:11
all those who hath hearkened unto their words

Mosiah 15:14
these are they which hath published peace,

Alma 32:16
blessed are they who humbleth themselves without being compelled to be humble.
Alma 60:1

all those *who hath* been chosen by this people to govern and manage the affairs of this war.

Alma 60:27

even until those *who hath* desires to usurp power and authority shall become extinct.

Helaman 7:23

save it be unto those *who repenteth* of their sins

Helaman 13:19

And cursed be they *who hideth* not up their treasures unto me,

3 Nephi 9:14

And blessed are they *which cometh* unto me.

Moroni 7:28

and he claimeth all those *that hath* faith in him.

I have estimated that relative {-th} with 3pl pronominals occurs about 8.5% of the time in the earliest text. In contrast, predicate {-th} with *they* occurs less than 1.5% of the time in the earliest text. I haven’t estimated these two rates for the Early Modern period, but I have verified the existence of the same differential with 3pl pronominals. It is also a statistically significant difference. Evidence from a 500-million-word corpus suggests that in Early Modern English, the relative {-th} with 3pl pronominals was used at a little more than four times the rate of the predicate {-th} with *they*. In the Book of Mormon, it is used at a little more than five times the rate. As a result of this inquiry, we find that the arcane differential usage rate tendencies of Early Modern English with 3pl pronominals and the {-th} plural are found in the Book of Mormon.

This is akin to the Early Modern English tendency to favor the use of *was* after plural relative pronouns over the use of *was* after plural noun-phrase subjects, a tendency that is also found in the earliest text (exemplified at the end of this section). Both of these basically involve singular ~ plural morphological variation. Generally speaking, verb forms that are singular in shape were used at a higher rate after plural relative pronouns than in predicates with plural noun-phrase subjects. Occasionally overt expression (close variation) exhibiting this underlying tendency is found.

22. As discussed earlier, there are three non-inverted instances — “they dieth/yieldeth/sleepeth”. If we include inverted “doth they”, then the rate is between 1.5% and 2% and $p ≅ 0.003$ (here I exclude historical-present “they saith”, whose use is formulaic and whose tense is covert).
Lass (1999:165–66) discusses the {-s} plural (in addition to the {-th} plural), noting that this “(Northern) East Midlands” usage is “common throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a minority alternant of zero, and persists sporadically into the eighteenth century.” Analogous to plural *hath*, plural *has* would have persisted longer than plural {-s} with lower frequency verbs. (Lass mentions only *is* and {-th} forms in this regard: *hath, doth.*) Plural *has* is what we see in the following passage:

Alma 57:36

and I trust that the souls of them which *has* been slain
*have* entered into the rest of their God.

Reading this can be a bit of a shock, but the *has ~ have* alternation is attested in Early Modern English. First, here are six examples of the relative {-s} plural with *has* from the latter half of the 17th century:

1653 EEBO A70988 F.G., tr. | Madeleine de Scudery [1607–1701] *Artamenes*
   it must be an entire heart, and none of those *that has* been pierced with a thousand Arrows;

1658 EEBO A40227 George Fox [1624–1691] *The papists strength, principles, and doctrines*
   and strike down all *those that has* got the words but not the power, and reach to the life and immortality
   
   ... are not they *them that has* set up all these outward things,

1659 EEBO A85769 William Guild [1586–1657] *The throne of David, or, An exposition of the second of Samuell*
   and leave the persons for their faults to God, and *them who has* power to punish them.

1668 EEBO A47152 George Keith [1639?–1716] *Immediate revelation*
   And now a few words by way of tender advice, to *those who has* been long seeking a pure Church, not a mined confused Rabble of godless Atheists,

1678 EEBO A30130 John Bunyan [1628–1688] *Come & welcome to Jesus Christ*
   That the Father giveth no such gift to *them that has* sinned this sin;
   *Is evident,*

Second, here is the same, close variation pattern — *has* is used after the relative pronoun, and *have* is used in the predicate after the complex subject:
EEBO A47819  Sir Roger L’Estrange [1616–1704]  *The character of a papist in masquerade*

the whole strain of *them that has* been taken off by the hand of Justice, . . . *have* so behaved themselves at the last cast, as if the whole Schism were upon a vie who should damn bravest.

The matching between the syntax of this passage and that of Alma 57:36 is essentially identical: “[ them <RELATIVE> has . . . ] *have* . . .”

This pattern is similar to the following:

Mosiah 24:15

the *burdens which was* laid upon Alma and his brethren *were* made light;

The tense and verbs are different, but the singular ~ plural morphological pattern is the same and both passages involve high-frequency verbs. This was an arcane tendency of the Early Modern era:

EEBO A19179  Antony Colynet  *The true history of the ciuill warres of France*

the raging *follies which was* committed at T[ou]louse *were* incredible to report,

This next one is notable as well because the syntactic pattern also matches Alma 57:36 — only the verb morphology is different:

EEBO A40227  George Fox [1624–1691]  *The papists strength, principles, and doctrines*

which the . . . *KINGS . . . which hath* been converted *have* drunk of

I see the blindness, and the ignorance, and the rottenness, and the foundation of the Roman Church to be but rubbish, and sandy, for it stands upon inventions, mens traditions, and devised fables, and lying stories, and is not founded upon the Rock of ages, and stands in the *waters, which are* moveable and unstable upon which the whore sits, *which has* made all Nations drunk, which the great *KINGS thou speaks of, which hath* been converted, *have* drunk of,

This example has other interesting variation: “waters which are . . . [waters] which has”. As highlighted, we see here “which hath . . . have”; the Book of Mormon at Alma 57:36 has “which has . . . have”. Both of these are thus instances of the {-th}/{-s} plural of the verb *have* followed by the typical plural (base) verb form *have*. The close singular-to-plural switch mediated by the syntactic context is analogous to “which was . . . were”, shown above.²³

²³. Moroni 7:28 (“those that hath . . . they that have”) has the same order of variation as the above examples, but no change in syntactic context. The next example has the same order of variation as well, but the syntax involves a conjoined predicate:
Conclusion

Plural {-th} syntax in the earliest text is very different from rare 19th-century auxiliary usage and from King James style (with occasional singular {-th} usage that looks to be plural). The systematic use of the {-th} plural in the Book of Mormon falls in the “Goldilocks” zone — it is neither overblown nor underdone. Interestingly, {-th} plural usage in the earliest text is similar to 16th- and 17th-century syntactic patterns, in a number of ways. We have seen that inflectional variation and differential usage rates in the earliest text are a strong match with little-known patterns attested in Early Modern English. In view of the textual evidence, it is reasonable not to attribute Joseph Smith’s dictation of the {-th} plural — as in “whose flames ascendeth up” (2 Nephi 9:16; Mosiah 2:38; Alma 12:17) — to a presumed idiosyncratic, quasi-biblical style:

and the smoke of their tormentes, ascendeth up for ever and ever.
Showing the redundant use of up with ascend in the Early Modern era.

1591 EEBO A01504 William Garrard [d.1587] | The arte of warre
in the night the fires and flames signifieth the campe to be there
Showing the {-th} plural with flames as subject in the Early Modern era.

1597 EEBO A06400 Peter Lowe [ca.1550–ca.1612] | The whole course of chirurgerie
by the euill vapors which ascend, and corrodeth the gummes,
Showing the verb ascend carrying {-th} plural inflection in the Early Modern era.

1635 EEBO A09500 David Person | Varieties: or, A surveigh of rare and excellent matters necessary and delectable for all sorts of persons
The fourth kind of vapors which ascend, are cold and moyst,
Showing “vapors which” used with the base form of verb.

Mosiah 15:11
those who hath . . . and [who] have
I say unto you that all those who hath hearkened unto their words and believed that the Lord would redeem his people and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins
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Abstract: Because it is primarily an Early Modern English text (in terms of its English language), the earliest text of the Book of Mormon understandably employs plural was — for example, “the words which was delivered” (Alma 5:11). It does so in a way that is substantially similar to what is found in many writings of the Early Modern period — that is, it manifests the syntactic usage, variation, and differential rates typical of that era.

This study looks at a subset of the questionable grammar of the Book of Mormon. It focuses on the use of was in contexts where standard modern English requires the verb form were. This has been called plural was by linguists, as a convenient way to refer to the not-infrequent use of was with plural subjects that has been present in the language since Middle English and possibly earlier. Of course we miss these readings in the current LDS text; we must turn to the following edition to see them today: Royal Skousen, ed., The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009). Indeed, we could not learn about these matters without such a critical text.

Because of the resources that have become available recently, it is a new day in the study of the English-language text of the Book of Mormon. Most of the examples presented here — from both the Book of Mormon and the Early Modern English textual record — will be new to virtually everyone; they should be eye-opening. Here I unapologetically focus on the form of expression, not the content; cases of exceptional usage, not the majority usage. Still, some excerpts provide us with a glimpse of interesting content.

Interestingly, syntactic variation in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon at times matches what may be found in the textual record of earlier English. This suggests that implicit knowledge of Early Modern English and its tendencies was part of the translation of the Book of Mormon. When we consider the array of diverse matching, at times obscure, an Early Modern English view is compelling. That is the approach adopted here. Let us now consider why that is the correct approach.

Abstracting away from Hebrew-like expressions and non-English words found in the earliest text, we may reasonably assert, based on evidence, that there are four sources for the English of the Book of Mormon:

1. King James English
2. Standard modern English
3. Modern American dialect
4. Nonbiblical Early Modern English

Numbers 1 and 2 are uncontroversially accepted by everyone, number 3 has been largely accepted and assumed from the beginning, but many reject the possibility of number 4, often resorting to protesting that because it is not readily apparent why nonbiblical Early Modern English would have been used, it cannot be so. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence for that position. Indeed, pertinent lexical, morphological, and syntactic evidence has been provided for some time by Skousen (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2004–2009 [Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon], 2005, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015), and more recently also by Carmack (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016b). Volume 3 of the Book of Mormon critical text project contains a large amount of evidence as well. Those who choose to reject the existence of nonbiblical Early Modern English in the earliest text must ignore or dismiss hundreds of pieces of evidence that are mutually supportive.

As for number 3, it turns out that provincialisms such as *drownded, massacred*, and *had ought to* are found in earlier English as well (these three examples are taken from Grant Hardy’s introduction to Skousen’s *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, page xx). Here is evidence in support of that assertion:

1656 EEBO A62145  Sir William Sanderson [1586?–1676]  *A compleat history of the lives and reigns of, Mary Queen of Scotland, and of her son and successor, James the Sixth*

And finding that he was thus betrayed, ran into the sea and *drownded* himself.
Surely when you are sober you will consider, and when you are come to your selves you will be ashamed, and will not open any more your malice and wrath which hath drowned your honesty and civility;

The principal data source used in this study is Early English Books Online (EEBO) [Chadwyck-Healey: ‹http://eebo.chadwyck.com›]. Many of these texts can be freely accessed by using the provided EEBO number and entering it after http:/ / name.umdl.umich.edu/. The publicly searchable portion of EEBO–TCP (Text Creation Partnership) is ‹http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup›. Mark Davies provided a very useful corpus and interface: Early English Books Online, 400 million words, 1470s–1690s (2013–). I have also derived some of the examples from a 500-million-word corpus of my own elaboration, made from several thousand publicly available EEBO–TCP texts.

how doth he deliver his Children when we see them taken away by death, and oftimes are massacred?

some he surprized by treachery, the rest he massacred in one night at a revelling;

and yf it be not so / than tell thou me, In what thynge he meaned, that every soule shulde be subiecte to the powers, etc. For yf euery soule hadde oughte to haue done, because hee had giuen his word, that he would not stoppe their passage.

The same can be said of attackt, bellowses, fraid, grievous, kinsfolks, tremendous, etc., as well as various phrasal items. All these are cases of the earliest text employing Early Modern English that persisted in dialectal use. Interestingly, this is therefore language that Smith could have been quite familiar with when he saw and read words during the dictation. And it also provides evidence against a common misconception that dialect forms are recent inventions (corruptions of the language) when they are often (less-common) historical forms that
were marginalized. In view of the evidence, we may rewrite the above list as follows:

1. Early Modern English found in the King James Bible
2. Early Modern English that persisted in standard modern English
3. Early Modern English that persisted in modern dialects
4. Nonbiblical Early Modern English that underwent obsolescence

In addition to this, there is a very small amount of 18th-century language (vocabulary and perhaps syntax) in the earliest text, as well as dialectal overlay from dictation and scribal errors (the latter often hard to pin down definitively).

To sum up, the position that the text is not Smith’s language (mainly Early Modern English) is comprehensive and fully explanatory. On the other hand, the position that the text is Smith’s language (quasi-biblical, standard English, and American dialect) is inadequate, failing to explain much textual usage (all of number 4). For the above reasons I adopt the Early Modern English view, as set forth above.

**The {-s} plural of Early Modern English**

The data presented here are related to what Charles Barber and Roger Lass have called the {-es} or {-s} plural of earlier English (they refer to the present-tense only). Lass (1999:166) mentions that this particular morphosyntactic phenomenon was a minority alternant, “persist[ing] sporadically into the eighteenth century”. Barber (1997:169) wrote that in Middle English

the use of {-es} as a plural inflection is found in Scots, in Northern England, and in part of the North-East Midlands. Its occasional use in the standard southern language may be due to the influence of these northern forms. Alternatively, it may be due to the analogy of the third-person singular {-es} inflection. This is suggested by the fact that plural {-es} is seldom found in the early sixteenth century, and is commonest around 1600, when {-es} had displaced {-eth} as the singular ending.

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Lass (1999:166) takes *is* to be an “[-s] form”, noting heavy plural *is* usage in one late 15th- and early 16th-century northern dialect (the Yorkshire *Plumpton Correspondence* [letters]).

Ten years ago, in an article on plural *was* in Early Modern English, Nevalainen wrote that

> the use of *was* with plural subjects was a northern English dialect feature in the 15th and 16th centuries, but it was by no means restricted to the north. In the course of the 17th century the pattern levelled dialectally, and declined, but continued to be used as a minority variant **even by the literate social ranks throughout the country**.³ (emphasis added)

So plural *was* was a widespread literate usage. And although plural *is* usage may have reinforced plural *was* usage, there appears to have been a greater tendency in earlier English to use *was* with plural pronouns than *is*.

Here is a passage with close variation exemplifying that tendency (more examples could be given), along with a Book of Mormon match:⁴

**1664** EEBO A57970 Samuel Rutherford [1600?–1661] *Joshua redivivus*

> the Lord saw ye *was* able by his grace to bear the loss of husband and childe, and that ye *are* that weak and tender

**Alma 7:18–19**

> 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

For many of the Book of Mormon examples discussed here, we can profitably consult Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 parts (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2004–2009).

**Adam and Eve**

The following passage has frequently received notice as an example of Joseph Smith failing in an attempt to imitate older language:

1 Nephi 5:11

> and also of **Adam and Eve**, which *was* our first parents

The change from “which was” to “who were” was made for the 1837 edition, marked in the printer’s manuscript by Joseph Smith.


⁴ See also the examples at Nevalainen, “Vernacular universals?”, 358; one of these is provided at Carmack (2014:223).
We can find this phrase criticized in various places today on the internet. In view of that, this is an important one to address at the outset. The relative pronoun here is non-restrictive, providing information that isn’t critical to the understanding of the main clause. It is employed with human antecedents, which makes it biblical in nature. The following old syntax, partly nonbiblical, is a close match:

1566 EEBO A06932 Thomas Becon [1512–1567] A new postil conteinyng most godly and learned sermons vpon all the Sunday Gospelles

not after the maner of ADAM and EVE, which was made of the grounde

The author was Thomas Becon (or Beccon), a British Protestant reformer. I have not found this language outside of the Early Modern period. So it turns out that in this case Smith actually succeeded admirably in matching older syntax.5

The plagiarism argument made against the Book of Mormon is a charge frequently leveled against the text when convenient. In this case, the match is obscure, so a plagiarism charge is inconvenient (hardly any one would believe it), and the argument is not made. That is the case in the majority of instances.

Because of the 1566 example, it is reasonable to view 1 Nephi 5:11 as an instance of Early Modern English, similar to what Thomas Becon wrote 450 years ago. Which being the case, this piece of syntax, pointed out quite often as a glaring blunder — a howler — in fact qualifies as additional evidence of its 16th-century character. That is how it is with the earliest text. When we read language that seems odd or suspect, it almost invariably points us to Early Modern English usage.

Plural “which was” followed by “were”

The following passage has interesting agreement variation:

Mosiah 24:15

[ the burdens which was laid upon Alma and his brethren ]

were made light;

The change from was to were was made for the 1837 edition, marked in the printer’s manuscript by Joseph Smith; see Skousen, Analysis of Textual Variants, 2564 (Alma 46:33).

5. During the 16th century, the relative pronoun which was used quite often (non-restrictively) to refer to people, and “plural noun phrase which was” was relatively common. In the 17th century, the non-restrictive use of which with personal antecedents continued, although it diminished over time, eventually remaining as a vestigial use, as in “Our Father, which art in heaven”.

Singular *was* is used after a relative pronoun whose antecedent is plural (*burdens*); plural *were* is used after a complex subject (in brackets) whose head is plural (also *burdens*). So *burdens* acts as both an antecedent and a head, grammatically speaking.

Large corpora tell us that in earlier English *was* was employed at a relatively higher rate after the relative pronoun *which*, with a plural antecedent, than it was after plural noun phrases. Occasionally that manifested itself overtly, with close variation, as in Mosiah 24:15. Of course, the relative pronoun *which* is invariant in form — and so it doesn’t indicate by its shape whether the antecedent is plural or singular. Whether this contributed to a higher degree of plural *was* usage at that time is not our concern here. We simply note that it is not hard to find Early Modern English examples of “which *was*” preceded by plural noun phrases. Here are three examples:

1605  EEBO A69226  John Dove [1560/61–1618]  *A confutation of atheisme*  
neither how Moses his rodde devoured the SERPENTS *which was* made by the sorcerers of Aegipt,

1655  EEBO A52713  James Naylor [1617?–1660]  *The royall law and covenant of God*  
and the Apostles which writ the EPISTLES *which was* to be read among the Saints,

in such manner as he challenged  
all the PRAISES *which was* given unto him,

The usage seen directly above — “which plural *was*” — though not uncommon, was not the dominant syntax of the period, becoming less common with the passage of time. Here is a Book of Mormon excerpt that is similar to these Early Modern English examples:

Alma 9  [heading]  
The words of Alma and also the words of Amulek *which was*  
declared unto the people which was in the land of Ammonihah.

This has received direct criticism, but it is simply an instance of Early Modern English plural *was*. Here we see a syntacto-lexical match — “words/accusations . . . which was declared”:

he made **ACCUSATIONS** to be exhibited against BRVTVS and CASSIVS, and the rest of the conspirators, **which was** declared against them all:

In this next example “which was” is both preceded and followed by plural nouns:

Mosiah 25:11

> when they thought upon the LAMANITES, **which was** their BRETHREN, of their sinful and polluted state,

The following may be an example of this syntax:

1650  EEBO A40026  George Foster  *The pouring fourth of the seventh and last viall upon all flesh and fleshlines*  

> where formerly I did make out my glory and my name to your FATHERS of old, **which was** the PEOPLE whom I did chuse out of all nations;

More to the point, these next examples match the variation seen in Mosiah 24:15:

1550  EEBO A13758  Thomas Nicolls, tr. | Thucydides  *The hystory . . . of the warre, whiche was betwene the Peloponesians and the Athenyans*  

> But pryncipally the BRASIDES, **whyche was** adioygninge unto them, **were** of that intelligence and confederacy, and had bene always ennemys of the Athenyans:

1591  EEBO A19179  Antony Colynet  *The true history of the ciuill warres of France*  

> the raging follies **which was** committed at Tholouse **were** incredible to report, except his owne disciples had written them in his legend.

Examples like these, along with many other verified variational matches, indicate that Early Modern English competence was part of the translation. Syntactically, these expressions are extremely close:

\[
\text{[ } \langle \text{PLURAL NOUN PHRASE}\rangle \text{ } \langle \text{which was} \rangle \langle \text{PARTICIPLE} \rangle \text{ } \langle \text{PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE}\rangle \text{ ]}_{\text{subject}} \langle \text{were} \rangle \ldots
\]

Here are two more clear examples that demonstrate the same syntactic matching:

1560  EEBO A04920  John Knox [1505–1572]  *An answer to a great nomber of blasphemous cauillations written by an Anabaptist*  

> That place of Paule proveth not that all the ISRAELITES, **which was** called from Egypt, **were** within gods holie election to lief everlasting in Christ Jesus.
he praised God for that the controversies which was amongst them, were not upon any fundamental Article.

This is reprinted older language, possibly from the 1630s.

This next example is also similar to the above, but the syntax is more complicated because squadron is formally singular and because of the prepositional phrase with a plural noun (in braces):

Despite outward appearances, the verb agreement, in both cases, probably derives from the head noun squadron. It is of course semantically plural, and it is probably grammatically plural as well. While “which was kept” doesn’t tell us this, “were generally commanded” suggests it, and unsurprisingly we find that squadron could be construed as plural during this time (as in certain varieties of present-day English):

This next example involves two conjoined nouns that overtly resolve to plural only in the larger agreement phrase:

Plural number resolution is likely in the first instance as well, although it isn’t visible there (“which was professed”). These last two examples from 1663 and 1695 illustrate the complexity of language, and make understandable the emergence and persistence of variation.7

7. The following syntax is perhaps distinguishable because the antecedent of which is army, and that noun was usually grammatically singular in the latter half of the 18th century:

The prodigious army, of a million of Ethiopians, which was overthrown by Asa, were not all descendants of Chus,
In summary, the agreement pattern found in Mosiah 24:15 involves close variation that is an excellent match with no fewer than six examples of earlier usage. In that verse we see the tendencies of the past, with overt plural expression occurring only after the noun-phrase subject, not after the relative pronoun.

“Were” followed by conjoined “and was”

Next we take a look at the agreement variation found in this passage:

Mosiah 7:7

and they were surrounded by the king’s guard

and was taken and was bound and was committed to prison.

This is straightforward syntax, if unexpected and objectionable to the modern eye and ear. Normal “they were” is followed by three instances of elliptical syntax with conjoined was, even though the ellipted subject is clearly they. I have found three Early Modern English examples with the same syntactic pattern — that is, with were used right after the pronoun, and was used in conjoined predicates:

1581 EEBO A06863 John Merbecke [ca.1510–ca.1585] A booke . . . to those that desire the true vnderstanding & meaning of holy Scripture

Confirmation was that Ceremonie, which the Apostles did use, when they laide their handes upon those which received the holy Ghost after they were baptised of them, and was likewise ordeigned by the auncient Fathers.


so we were put in prison again, and some hours after we were called forth again, and was had before the Governour John Indicot,

1659 EEBO A44796 Francis Howgill [1618–1669] The invisible things of God brought to light by the revelation of the eternal spirit

inwardly they were ravened from the spirit, and was gone from it into the earth, into the world, and served not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies,

Three different writers, from two different centuries, employed the same syntax found in Mosiah 7:7. In every case the syntax is passive in parallel: “they were <past participle>” followed by “and was <past

If army is grammatically singular here, then were may agree with the following noun phrase, headed by descendants, or “a million of Ethiopians” may be the understood subject of were. Alternatively, semantically plural army may be construed as grammatically plural throughout, with overt expression only in the larger phrase, as in Early Modern English.
participle”. The textual match is excellent because of the same pattern of variation, even though we don’t like the sound of the language today.

“Every soul which was ... were”

Next we consider the following variable agreement pattern:

Alma 14:28

and every soul which was within the walls thereof,

save it were Alma and Amulek, were slain;

In order to accurately analyze the language of this passage, it is helpful to note that “every <singular noun>” could be treated as either singular or plural during the Early Modern period. I have placed three examples of “every one was” (standard in modern English) in a note, providing here two examples of “every one were”:

1597 EEBO A22560 William Burton, tr. [1575–1645] | Achilles Tatius The most delectable and pleasaunt history of Clitiphon and Leucippe

one of the passengers ... got holde of the rope, and almost brought the boat to the ship side, and every one were made ready,

1616 EEBO A08882 Anthony Munday, tr. [1553–1633] | Palmerin of England and Florian de Desart his brother

insomuch as every one thought his labour well imployed to do him service, and every one were desirous to question with him,

Notice how in the 1616 example the first instance of “every one” appears to be singular because of the following pronoun his, but then it is construed as plural in the second instance. The takeaway from this? At this point in time the language was quite fluid and unpredictable in this regard.

8. Examples of “every one was”:

1599 EEBO A04845 John King [1559?–1621] Lectures vpon Ionas deliuered at Yorke because the portions of the Levites and singers had not beene given to them, and everie one was fled to his lande,

1602 EEBO A04680 Tho. Lodge, tr. [1558?–1625] | Flavius Josephus Works For all the porches were double, and everie one was supported by pillars,

1629 EEBO A11516 Nathanael Brent, tr. [1573?–1652] | Paolo Sarpi [1552–1623] The historie of the Councel of Trent For the Bores in Germany rebelled against the Princes, and Magistrates, and every one was busied with the warre of the Anabaptists.
As we might expect, there are more examples of “every one which was” than there are of its plural counterpart, nevertheless, here are two 16th-century examples of “every one which/that were”:

1579 EEBO A07026 George Gylpen, tr. [1514?–1602] | Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde [1538–1598]  The bee hive of the Romishe Church  
he . . . coniured everie one which were there present, that THEY shoulde beware from doing those,

1583 EEBO A13091 Phillip Stubbes  The second part of the anatomie of abuses  
to gather the benevolencies, and contributions of everie one that were disposed to give,  
This could be an example of indefinite, subjunctive were, rather than indicative were; in the subjunctive case the verb would convey a sense of ‘might be’.

Here is syntax that is the close to that of Alma 14:28, with variation in verb morphology:

1615 EEBO A23464 Edward Grimeston, tr. | Pierre d’Avity, sieur de Montmartin [1573–1635]  The estates, empires, & principallities of the world  
They carried a hundred mils [i.e. mills] in carts,  
[ every one of which ] was turned with a horse,  
and were brought to grind their corne;  
The subject is “every one of which”, the relative pronoun referring to mills; the verb phrases (truncated) are “was turned” and “were brought”. Even though which is not the grammatical subject of was, its immediacy may have influenced the choice of the singular by analogy with plural “which was” — syntax that wasn’t uncommon at the time. The alternative interpretation is that there is close variation in number construal, as we have seen above with “every one thought his labour” followed closely by

9. The first example of “every one which was” shows consistent use of was:

1604 EEBO A16795 George Abbot [1562–1633]  The reasons which Doctour Hill hath brought, for the vpholding of papistry  
and for that every one which was against them was ever accounted and reputed for an Heretike.

1654 EEBO A33335 Samuel Clarke [1599–1682]  The marrow of ecclesiastical history  
But Regius did so clearly and fully open the genuine sense of them, that every one which was not wilfully blinde might easily discern the truth:

1675 EEBO A43515 John Hacket [1592–1670]  A century of sermons upon several remarkable subjects  
every soul which was a thirst drank.

1675 EEBO A45465 Henry Hammond [1605–1660]  Sermons  
That every soul which was to spring from these loins, had been without those transcendent mercies.
“every one were desirous”. The same can be said of the Book of Mormon passage under consideration:

Alma 14:28
and [every soul which was within the walls thereof], save it were Alma and Amulek, were slain;

“Every soul” is the head of the complex subject (in brackets) whose predicate is “were slain”; “every soul” is also the antecedent of which. It is impossible to know whether “every soul” is construed consistently as plural, or variably. Under the former view, the intervening relative pronoun which led to the use of singular was, while the head of the subject phrase, construed as plural, led to were.

**Absence of plural number resolution**

The conjunction save usually triggers the subjunctive in the text, as it does in Alma 14:28 (covertly). Otherwise, we would expect was in this clause, without resolution of the postverbal conjuncts Alma and Amulek, akin to what is possible in modern English and the following Book of Mormon examples:

Modern English
The pig was in the corral, and so was [the horse and the donkey].

Mosiah 24:16
And . . . so great was [their faith and their patience]

3 Nephi 6:6
And now it was Gidgiddoni and the judge Lachoneus and those which had been appointed leaders

This is a reasonable position to take because there is lack of resolution in the text even with preverbal conjuncts, as in this obvious example:

Alma 22:32
the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water

The closest example of this syntax that I have seen is the following, taken from Tyndale’s translation of the Pentateuch (cf. Numbers 32:1):

1530 EEBO A13203 William Tyndale, tr. [d.1536] [The Pentateuch]
when they sawe the londe of Jaeser and the londe of Gilead that it was an apte place for catell

So for Tyndale, “the land of X and the land of Y” didn’t automatically resolve to plural, and neither does it in the Book of Mormon. Here are
two more examples showing a lack of number resolution with singular conjuncts:10

1607 EEBO A13820 Edward Topsell [1572–1625?]  *The historie of foure-footed beastes*

The fat of Wolues and the marrow of Swyne *is* good to anoint bleare-eyes withall

1608 EEBO A02239 Edward Grimeston, tr. | Jean François Le Petit [1546–ca.1615]  *A generall historie of the Netherlands*

The Towne of Romerswaell, the castell of Lodycke and the Scluse of Creeke *was* all carried away.

10. Here are further examples of no plural resolution with singular conjuncts:

1550 EEBO A15297 John Purvey [1353?–1428?]  *The true copye of a prolog wrytten about two C. yeres paste by Iohn Wycklife*  
for which the puple of Israell and the puple of Juda *was* thus punishid and conquerid of heathen men

1572 EEBO A17219 John Coxe, tr. | Heinrich Bullinger [1504–1575]  *Questions of religion cast abroad in Helvetia by the aduersaries of the same*  
For the woordre of God and the institution of Christ *was* sufficient for them.

1587 EEBO A68202 Raphael Holinshed [d.1580?] | John Hooker [ca.1527–1601]  *The first and second volumes of Chronicles*  
For the serpent of division, and the fier of malice, *was* entered into the citie, manie being inuenomed with the one, but more scaulded with the other.

1593 EEBO A15431 Andrew Willet [1562–1621]  *Tetrastylon papisticum, that is, The foure principal pillers of papistrie*  
That the baptisme of John, and the baptisme of Christ, *was* one and the same in substance, and of the same efficacie and force, we prove it thus:

1602 EEBO A06131 Lodowick Lloyd [fl.1573–1610]  *A briefe conference of diuers lawes diuided into certaine regiments*  
could not stand before the arke, where the presence of God, and the figure of Christ *was*.

1602 EEBO A06143 Lodowick Lloyd [fl.1573–1610]  *The stratagemes of Jerusalem*  
So the kingdom of Judah and the house of David *was* likewise taken by Nabuchodonozar in the eleventhe yeare of Zedechiah, the last king of Judah.

1602 EEBO A19602 Simon Patrick, tr. [d.1613] | Jean de Hainault [d.1572]  *The estate of the Church with the discourse of times, from the apostles vntill this present*  
The fall of Tyles, and the cry of persons, *was* horrible and fearefull.

1603 EEBO A04911 Richard Knolles [1550?–1610]  *The generall historie of the Turkes*  
hee determined to returne againe into Thracia, because the raine of Autumnne, and the cold of Winter *was* now come in.

1607 EEBO A12475 Henry Ainsworth [1571–1622?]  *The communion of saintcs*  
the reward of humility and the fear of God, *is* riches and glory and Life.
“That were” followed by “was”

Next we see a different kind of syntax, where the larger agreement employs plural *was*, while the internal agreement is recognizably plural:

Helaman 1:7

\[ \text{[ Paanchi and that part of the people} \]
\[ \text{that were desirous that he should be their governor }] \]
\[ \text{was exceeding wroth} \]

Here is a close syntactic match with this curious language:

1588 EEBO A01864 R. Parke, tr. | Juan Gonzáles de Mendoza [1545–1618]  
*The historie of the great and mightie kingdome of China*

which was the occasion that

\[ \text{[ the citie and all those that were in it],} \]
\[ \text{was not destroyed and slayne:} \]

Because the second part of the complex subject shows plural agreement, we naturally expect plural agreement with the full subject phrase. The foregoing examples suggest that the prominent head of the complex subject governs the larger, singular agreement. Yet it may be the case that the translator simply opted for plural *was* as a contrast with closely occurring *were*, as seems to be the case in the following example:

1580 EEBO A07911 Anthony Munday [1553–1633]  
*Zelauto. The fountaine of fame*

\[ \text{[ the LADYES and all that were present],} \]
\[ \text{was stroken into a great maze, some for joy clapped theyr handes,} \]
\[ \text{and some on the other side began to weepe:} \]

This next excerpt is like the 1588 example except that it has an additional noun phrase:

1606 EEBO A22474 William Attersoll [d. 1640]  
*The badges of Christianity. Or, A treatise of the sacraments fully declared out of the word of God*

\[ \text{so [ the field and } \text{the cave that was therin }} \]
\[ \text{withal [ the trees and appurtenances that were therin ]}, \]
\[ \text{was made sure to him for a possession.} \]

11. The following is a normal case of *was*, since singular abstract nouns often do not resolve as plural, cross-linguistically:

1608 EEBO A02239 Edward Grimeston, tr. | Jean François Le Petit [1546–ca.1615]  
*A generall historie of the Netherlands*

\[ \text{[ the keeping and possession of } \text{the goods that were in them }] \]
\[ \text{was delivered into the hands of them that tooke them.} \]
The objectionable use of “they was”

Let us consider the five instances of “they was” found in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon. Most readers find this language completely unacceptable. Indeed, had Edward Spencer noticed these in 1905, it is likely he would have added it to his list of shocking grammar.12 Here they are:

1 Nephi 4:4

Now when I had spoken these words, THEY was yet wroth and did still continue to murmur.

Mosiah 18:17

And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God, THEY was added to his church.

Mosiah 29:36

telling them that these things ought not to be, that THEY was expressly repugnant to the commandments of God.

Alma 9:31–32

when I Alma had spoken these words, behold, the PEOPLE were wroth with me because I said unto them that THEY was a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people. And also because I said unto them that THEY were a lost and a fallen people, THEY was angry with me and sought to lay their hands upon me,

In the last example we notice close variation, in the following order: “people were”, “they was”, “they were”, “they was”. Here is an example of close variation of “they was” and “they were”, in both cases referring to plural arms:

1659 EEBO A40651 Thomas Fuller [1608–1661] The appeal of iniured innocence

The Arms of the Knights of Ely, might on a threefold title have escaped the Animadvertor’s censure: First, THEY was never before printed. Secondly, the Wall whereon THEY were depicted, is now demolished.

Here is another example, without variation, but where “they was fitted” clearly references plural ships.

In Early Modern English, “they was” was a minor variant of heavily dominant “they were”, with low but varying rates of use depending on the dialect and other factors. The usage rate in the Book of Mormon is also low, less than 1%.

Mosiah 18:17, shown above, has “whosoever was baptized . . . they was . . .”, which is an interesting complication. “Whosoever was” is singular on its face, but in Early Modern English it could be referenced immediately afterwards by plural pronouns. There are, of course, examples where following, referential pronouns are singular, but more interesting are examples containing they and its congener:

In the 1625 example singular Bishop is immediately followed by plural they. Also, the 1671 example goes from singular to plural to

13. Examples of “whosoever was” with following singular pronouns:

1631 EEBO A01974 William Gouge [1578–1653] Gods three arrowes plague, famine, sword
And whosoever was yet strong of body and well liking, him they presently killed;

1668 EEBO A34964 R.F. | Serenus Cressy [1605–1674] The church-history of Brittany from the beginning of Christianity to the Norman conquest
that whosoever was seen to have it in his hands, they foolishly shew’d the same respect and veneration to him,

Whosoever was strong of Body, and in good liking they killed; upon presumption that he had some secret stores, . . .
singular. These passages suggest that the third-person plural pronouns act as indefinite singular pronouns. Wherefore it is possible that Mosiah 18:17 contains an instance of indefinite singular they:

And it came to pass that whosoever, was baptized by the power and authority of God, they singular was added to his church.

If that is the sense, then was might signal that fact. In any event, it’s an intriguing possibility.

Here are more examples of Early Modern English “they was” with close variation:

14. More examples of “whosoever was” followed by plural pronouns:

If this order had not bene in our predecessors, Pithagoras, Socrates, Plato, and whosoever was renowned in Greece for the glorie of wisdome: they had never bene eternished for wise men,

1583 EEBO A67926 John Foxe [1516–1587] Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenynge in the Church
Thou false heretike hast taught plainly against the vowes of Monkes, Friers, Nunnes, and Priests, saying: that whosoever was bounde to such like vowes, they vowed themselues to the estate of damnation:

1676 EEBO A61366 Aylett Sannes [1636?–1679?] Britannia antiqua illustrata, or, The antiquities of ancient Britain derived from the Phœnicians
Now the Mysteries of these Rites were accounted so Sacred and Powerful, that whosoever was initiated in them, immediately received, as they thought, some extraordinary gifts of Holiness, . . . .

15. See the Oxford English Dictionary entry for they, pers. pron., definition B2, discussing pronominal use with singular nouns made universal, with quotations from 1526.

16. Here are examples of the syntax without close variation:

1525 EEBO A03315 Hieronymus Brunschwig [ca.1450–ca.1512] The noble experyence of the vertuous handy warke of surgeri
And than he wolde put in agayn the guttys / and they was so sore swollen that they cowde nat be handelyd

1658 EEBO A40227 George Fox [1624–1691] The papists strength, principles, and doctrines
when they was speaking of justifying by faith without the works of the Law,

1659 EEBO A52921 Humphrey Norton [fl.1655–1659] et al. New-England’s ensigne and the first relation we had was concerning him, and how they was laboring to save his life;

The judgement did not come upon Corah because they was Lay-persons,

1665 EEBO A35520 Thomas Curwen et al. An answer to John Wiggans book and though the Disciples were led into all truth by the Spirit, by which they was to preach the Gospel to all Nations,
The above excerpts contain close instances of were, clearly demonstrating that such variation was permissible. Again, this is like Alma 9:31–32, shown above, which has “they was/were/was”. In the 1523 example, was conveys a fairly typical biblical meaning of ‘became’, just as in the last instance of the Alma 9:31–32 passage.

This next example is interesting because there is no expected number resolution:

Nevertheless, Early Modern English usually employed were after this compound subject. This leads us to another example of suspect Book of Mormon grammar.

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**1523** EEBO A71318 John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?] Chronicles

So they was a great hoost whan bothe hoostes were assembled togyder.

**1653** EEBO A70988 F.G., tr. | Madeleine de Scudéry [1607–1701] Artamenes

The reason why we were more civilized then they was, because we were not very far from the Euxime Sea,

**1671** EEBO A42277 tr. | Count Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato [1606–1678] The history of the managements of Cardinal Julio Mazarine

[the Ships] entred into the River, not knowing they was departed, and were so far engaged amongst the French Ships before they were aware,

**1679** EEBO A30211 John Bunyan [1628–1688] A treatise of the fear of God

by which they were brought into a bondage fear; yea they was to remember this especially.

and there he did affirm in his preaching to the People, that both he and they was without the Life of both the Law and the Gospel.

Nevertheless, Early Modern English usually employed were after this compound subject. This leads us to another example of suspect Book of Mormon grammar.
Both X and Y was

In the earliest text, there is one striking instance of this syntax — conjoined nouns preceded by the conjunctive adverb *both* — without plural number resolution:

Mosiah 18:14

*both Alma and Helam* was buried in the water

I have located quite a few instances of this pattern in Early Modern English. With non-abstract nouns, resolution became *de rigueur* during the modern period. Besides the 1691 example, there is this pronominal one as well:


In the end, I expressly demanded his Opinion, as that, whereto *both he, and I* was enjoyned

In the previous two examples, and in most that I have found of this type, a past participle is used (almost) immediately after *was*. Here is a sampling of the syntax:17

17. The following examples might be typical instances of no plural resolution with singular abstract nouns:

1583 EEBO A67926 John Foxe [1516–1587] *Actes and monuments of matters most speccall and memorabel, happenyng in the Church*

after dinner, **butler and smith** were brought to the starre chamber before the privie Counsayle, where *both sedition and heresie* was objected against them

1572 EEBO A14710 John Bridges, tr. [d.1618] | Rudolf Gwalther [1519–1586] *Homelyes or sermons vppon the Actes of the Apostles*

this was an evident and infallible argument, that *both sinne and death* was vanquished

1602 EEBO A04680 Tho. Lodge, tr. [1558?–1625] | Flavius Josephus *Works*

but *both the hope of Caesar and the forwardnes of Aristobulus* was overthrown through enuie

1644 EEBO A57969 Samuel Rutherford [1600?–1661] *A peaceable plea for the government of the Church of Scotland*

*both question and cause* was determined by the Synodical-Church

1689 EEBO A59082 Nathaniel Bacon [1593–1660] *An historical and political discourse of the laws & government of England*

*Both Right and Possession* was now become theirs

1696 EEBO A46926 Richard Johnson [1573–1659?] *The famous history of the seven champions of Christendom*

So *both time and place* was appointed, which was the next morning following, by the King’s Commandment,
Carmack, The Case of Plural Was • 129

1560 EEBO A09567 John Daus, tr. | Johannes Sleidanus [1506–1556] Sleidanes Commentaries

at certen howres both dynner and supper was serued

1600 EEBO A06128 Philemon Holland, tr. | Livy The Romane historie

So both citie and camp pe was spoiled and sacked

1650 EEBO A40681 Thomas Fuller [1608–1661] A Pisgah-sight of Palestine and the confines thereof

and soon after both Temple and City was destroyed, by Vespasian and Titus his son, seventy two years after our Saviours birth

1659 EEBO A26947 Richard Baxter [1615–1691] A key for Catholicks, to open the jugling of the Jesuits

there was no monsters of filthiness, or sink, or plague of uncleanness, with which both people and priest was not defiled

1660 EEBO A50450 Sir George Mackenzie [1636–1691] Aretina

where by both Army and navie was maintained

1668 EEBO A53044 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle [1624?–1674] The description of a new world, called the blazing-world

when she saw that both church and state was now in a well-ordered and setled condition

Singular syntax with the conjunctive adverb both and abstract conjuncts persisted more robustly. The same syntax, with animate or concrete conjuncts (as in Mosiah 18:14), was largely confined to the Early Modern period.

As X and Y was V-ing

The earliest text has no plural number resolution after the subordinating time conjunction as, at least this one time:

Alma 20:8

as Ammon and Lamoni was a journeying thither

The following example is different, since it has conjoined plural noun phrases:

18. The other two items in Alma 20:8 are biblical: the directional adverb thither and the action preposition a, meaning 'engaged in' (see OED a, prep.1 definition 13; cf. “as he was yet a coming” [Luke 9:42]). We also see “a journeying” in the following example:

1661 EEBO A42833 Joseph Glanvill [1636–1680] The vanity of dogmatizing

wherein other spirits are continually a journeying.
Helaman 5:2

For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people

Here are late 17th-century examples with plural was:

1669 EEBO A66812 Thomas Bayly [d.1657?] Witty apophthegms
not long time had passed before it happened, that as himself and train was riding through the streets to see how well this order was put in execution

1676 EEBO A53472 Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery [1621–1679] Parthenissa, that most fam’d romance
I met the generous Falintus at his Landing, as Ventidius and I was diverting our selves upon a pleasant Strand, not far from his Palace

1682 EEBO A30018 Richard Brathwaite, tr. [1588?–1673] | Heinrich Bünting [1545–1606] The travels of the holy patriarchs, prophets, judges, kings, our Saviour Christ and his apostles
as Peter and John was going into the Temple by this Gate, they healed a man that had been born lame from his Mothers Womb, Acts. 3.

1686 EEBO A56820 John Pearson [1613–1686] Antichristian treachery discovered
as he and I was speaking together concerning the payment of Tythes

In the publicly available subset of Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO–TCP ‹http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/›) there are examples of this syntax dated 1718 (“as my Wife and I was sitting together”) and 1756 (“as if Heaven and Earth was coming together”). So the usage continued into the modern period, dropping off in use in standard modern English.

King and people

Here is another case of unexpected singular was:

Mosiah 21:33

[ KING Limhi and many of his people ] was desirous to be baptized

The more common alternative in the textual record is were:

the king and his people were converted and Christened.
Nowadays we expect *were* after a combination of *king* and *people*; we expect plural number resolution. But we don’t always see that in the Early Modern era:\(^\text{19}\)

**1581** EEBO A06481  Thomas Lupton  *A persuasion from papistrie wrytten chiefly to the obstinate, determined, and dysobedient English papists*

yet KING Aram and *his people* *was* not blessed of God,  
nor yet *wer* the *people* of God,

**1583** EEBO A20370  Thomas Deloney, tr. [1543?–1600] | Bonaventure Des Périers [1500?–1544?]

*The mirrour of mirth and pleasant conceits*

that the *KINg* and *ALL his people* *was* so amased with feare,  
that they fel downe as deade:

The 1581 example has close variation: “*were* the people” comes right after “*king and people* *was*”. Many of these examples suggest that such immediate variation was not only permissible, but even embraced in Early Modern English. The Book of Mormon exhibits this same phenomenon quite often, as in this example:

Alma 21:21

And he did also declare unto them that *they* *were* a people which  
*was* under him and that *they* *were* a free people,

In looking for “king and people” agreement syntax, I encountered the following:

**1494** EEBO A00525  Robert Fabyan [d.1513]  *Chronicle* (1533)

so that whan all *THINGes necessaraye*  
to the honoure and nede of the kynge and his people  
*was* redy,

Here are two examples of *was* used right after plural noun phrases:

**1523** EEBO A71318  John Bourchier, tr. (Lord Berners) [1466/67–1533] | Jean Froissart [1338?–1410?]

*Chronicles*

*Whan* the frenche kyngis *batayls* [i.e. battalions] *was* ordred  
every lorde under his banner among their owne men:

19. The following examples containing the preposition *with* more naturally take singular *was* and are usually deemed to be prescriptively correct. This syntax may have contributed to *was* usage after the conjunction:

**1533** EEBO A00525  Robert Fabyan [d.1513]  *Chronicle* (1533)

and the *kynge* *with his people* *was* receyved into the cytye.

**1583** EEBO A67922  John Foxe [1516–1587]  *Actes and monumetns of matters most speciall and memoroble, happenyng in the Church*

that the *KING wt* [i.e. with] *his people* *was* not able to resist them.
GOD sheweth the authoritie of a Father in being grieved when the families was not maintayned in Israel:

This is low-frequency language in both the Early Modern period and the Book of Mormon, as in the following example (with close variation):

Mosiah 18:26
And the priests was not to depend upon the people for their support, but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God,

“So great was” with plural noun phrases

In this next group of examples, the Book of Mormon employs singular was after the adjective great and before plural noun phrases:

1 Nephi 17:2
And so great was the blessings of the Lord upon us

2 Nephi 3:4
And great was the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph.

Mosiah 24:10
And . . . so great was their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God.

Alma 4:3
and so great was their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn,

There is variation in the text; three times we read plural were in this context:

3 Nephi 8:22
for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land.

Mormon 5:6
for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet.

Ether 15:16
And so great were their cries, their howlings and lamentations that it did rend the air exceedingly.

20. The resumption of “cries, howlings, lamentations” as singular it is reminiscent of Tyndale, and these other two examples:
Here are several Early Modern English examples of the type “(so) great was ⟨plural noun phrase⟩”:

1571 EEBO A10649 Richard Rainolde [d.1606] *A chronicle of all the noble emperours of the Romaines*

> so great was the calamities of those days in the often change of Princes and officers

1660 EEBO A26603 George Monck, Duke of Albemarle [1608–1670] *The declaration and speech . . . to the right honourable the Lord Mayor, aldermen and common-council of the city of London*

> Upon which, great was the acclamations of the people

1670 EEBO A47947 G.H., tr. | Gregorio Leti [1630–1701] *The history of the cardinals of the Roman Church*

> Yet so great was the differences amongst them,

1698 EEBO A55340 Andrew Tooke, tr. [1673–1732] | François Pomey [1618–1673] *The Pantheon representing the fabulous histories of the heathen gods and most illustrious heroes*

> they are called Hercules Labors, so great was the pains and so infinite the Toil of them.

These next two excerpts deserve special notice because they contain close variation in verb agreement:

1602 EEBO A19029 William Clowes [ca.1540–1604] *A right frutefull and approoued treatise, for the artificiall cure of that malady called in Latin Struma, and in English, the evil*

> for great was the troubles and daungers that was like to haue followed, but happily were they preuented through the helpe of Almighty God, &c.

1673 EEBO A41204 Francis Kirkman, tr. [1632–ca.1680] | Jerónimo Fernández *Don Bellianis of Greece, or, The honour of chivalry*

> Great was the preparations that were made for the Solemnity of the Wedding between the Prince of Greece and the fair Princess of Babylon

1530 EEBO A13203 William Tyndale, tr. [d.1536] *[The Pentateuch]*

> when they sawe the londe of Jaeser and the londe of Gilead that it was an apte place for catell

1655 EEBO A40897 Ralph Farmer *The great mysteries of godlinessse and ungodlinessse*

> So sharp and hot were the flames thereof, that it made the maker of the whole creation groan and cry out,

1680 EEBO A26808 William Bates [1625–1699] *The soveraign and final happiness of man*

> Such were the most precious merits of his Obedience, that it was not only sufficient to free the guilty contaminated race of Mankind from Hell, . . .
The variation seen in the 1673 example is similar to the following:

Omni 1:27

for there was a large number which were desirous
to possess the land of their inheritance;

This next pair of examples also have similar syntax:

1535 EEBO A10349 Miles Coverdale, tr. [1488–1568] Biblia the Byble, that is, the holy Scrypture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully translated in to Englyshe

And they perceaved that it was they which were come agayne out of captivyte,

3 Nephi 10:12

and it was they which had not shed the blood of the saints which were spared.

“There was” with plural noun phrases

There are quite a few instances of “there was + (plural noun phrase)” in the earliest text. This syntax was not uncommon in the Early Modern period. Here are sets of examples that show a high degree of correspondence:

Ether 13:18

there was many people which was slain by the sword

1687 EEBO A47127 George Keith [1639?–1716] The benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings

there was many people both in that Nation and elsewhere, in whom there was some true desires and breathings raised and begot

1 Nephi 18:25

we did find upon the land of promise as we journeyed in the wilderness that there was beasts in the forests of every kind

1598 EEBO A05569 William Phillip, tr. | Jan Huygen van Linschoten [1563–1611] His discours of voyages into ye Easte & West Indies

When the Portingales first discouered it, there was not any beasts, nor fruite, at all within the Iland

1635 EEBO A01108 Luke Foxe [1586–1635] North-west Fox, or, Fox from the North-west passage

for there was Whales, Sea-mors, and Seales,
Alma 4:9

_there was_ envyings and strifes and malice and persecutions and pride,

1688 EEBO A56509 John Partridge [1644–1715] _An astrological judgment on the great and wonderful year 1688_

At that time _there was_ murmurings and plottings against the then Oppressors

3 Nephi 8:7

_And there was_ exceeding sharp lightnings such as never had been known in all the land.

1654 EEBO A91909 John Robotham [fl.1654] _The mystery of the two witnesses unvailed_

_And there was_ lightnings, and voyces, and thundrings, and an earthquake, and great haile.

Mormon 9:19

_And if there was_ miracles wrought,
then why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being?

1688 EEBO A56539 Joseph Walker | Blaise Pascal [1623–1662] _Monsieur Pascall’s thoughts, meditations, and prayers, touching matters moral and divine_

_there was_ also greater miracles wrought in behalf of Truth.

Ether 13:26

_And there was_ robbers,
and in fine, all manner of wickedness upon all the face of the land.

1667 EEBO A40122 George Fox [1624–1691] _The arraignment of popery_

_When Christ was crucified, there was_ two thieves crucified, and one of the thieves reviled Christ

**Conclusion**

The foregoing textual examples show us that the earliest text of the Book of Mormon contains a wide range of diverse expression that matches the Early Modern period, at times unexpectedly. Thanks to the ground-breaking work of Royal Skousen, and texts/corpora provided by EEBO–TCP, ECCO–TCP, Google books, and Mark Davies, this study has been possible. They have provided heretofore inaccessible evidence that it
is reasonable to consider the past-tense verb agreement found in the Book of Mormon to be well-formed Early Modern English. It bears repeating that this view of the earliest text is a comprehensive one that is explanatory. From this rich perspective, the Book of Mormon is full of beautiful old language and intriguing linguistic variation.

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To "See and Hear"

Kevin L. Tolley

The world of the Nephite nation was born out of the world of seventh century BC Jerusalem. The traditions and tragedies of the nation of Judah set the stage for what would happen over the next ten centuries of Book of Mormon history. In his opening statements, Nephi tells of an explosion of divinely commissioned ministers preaching in the holy city. He declares that Jerusalem was a place of “many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent” (1 Nephi 1:4).1 Nephi alludes to the prophetic service of Jeremiah (c. BC 626–587), Zephaniah (c. BC 640–609), Obadiah (c. BC 587), Nahum,2 Habakkuk,3 Urijah,4 and possibly many others.5 This disproportionate number of prophets in the city was accompanied by an increasing wave of imitators.6 Amidst this apparent competition between valid and invalid prophetic representatives, Jeremiah sets a standard of who can be trusted in this visionary arena. As Stephen Smoot has written, “The Book of Mormon exhibits, in many respects, an intimate familiarity with ancient Israelite religious concepts. One such example is the Book of Mormon’s portrayal of the divine council. Following a lucid biblical pattern, the Book of Mormon

1 Compare the description found in 2 Chron. 36:15–16, where God sends many “messengers” during the time of King Zedekiah, but the people “mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets.”

2 Nahum (c. BC 612).

3 Habakkuk (c. BC 626–605).

4 Although the previous prophets have Biblical books named after them, Urijah does not, but is mentioned in Jeremiah 26:20–23.

5 These prophets undoubtedly influenced others, such as Ezekiel and Daniel, who were in Babylonian captivity during the time of Lehi’s flight into the wilderness. 2 Kings 22:14 also mentions “Huldah the prophetess.” In conjunction with the dedication of the St. George Temple, Elder Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal his feelings that Huldah was an authentic Prophetess: “May they influence the daughters of Zion to deeds of virtue, Holiness, Righteousness and truth. May thy Blessings of Sarah, Huldah, Hannah, Anna, & Mary the Ancient Prophetess and Holy women rest upon them.” See Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1985), 7:309.

provides a depiction of the divine council and several examples of those who were introduced into the heavenly assembly and made partakers in divine secrets.” It is this rich heritage of prophetic representatives of deity that so richly influenced Book of Mormon authors. Of these many prophets who were actively preaching in Jerusalem, Jeremiah stands out in Nephi’s writings (1 Nephi 5:13; 7:14). Jeremiah continues to be an influence on Nephite culture throughout their history (Helaman 8:20; cf. 3 Nephi 19:4). It will be Jeremiah’s writings that will influence the Nephite perspective on “Call Narratives” and views of the “Divine Council” throughout the Book of Mormon.

Jeremiah warned the people of Jerusalem of the message of false prophets when he declared:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. (Jeremiah 23:16-17)

Jeremiah will give a clear-cut criterion for a true prophet sent by the Lord when he says, “For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?” (Jeremiah 23:18). Hence, a prophet is specifically identified as one who “hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard [God’s] word” (Jeremiah 23:18). Although this English rendering captures the main concept, it lacks many of the nuances of the Hebrew text. “In Jeremiah 23:18, ‘perceived’ is the King James translation for the Hebrew verb ra’ah, which means, in its most basic sense, ‘to see.’”

Essentially, to be a true messenger one must “see and hear” what has taken place in the “counsel of the LORD.” The latter is another phrase that has deeper meaning than what the English rendering would suggest. The Hebrew term points to “the assembly of Yahweh” or a “council of the

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holy ones,”9 as opposed to “advice” from the Lord, as the KJV proposes. According to Jeremiah, the validity of a prophetic call is contingent upon the experience of standing in the assembly of Jehovah as a witness of one who “saw and heard.”10 It was “the privilege of the truly inspired prophet to stand in its midst and hear the word of Yahweh.”11 From this point the “the prophet was called to proclaim the will of the deity which issued from the assembly.”12 This experience with the divine council is considered the “dominant rubric for authority” for the prophet.13 This was a means of “vindication and legitimization of the prophet in his office.”14 It is clear that “the experience made a man a prophet.”15

9 Koehler and Baumgartner, The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, 1:745. The same word is used in various places in the Old Testament, including Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret [Heb: Sod, or “Council of Yahweh”] unto his servants the prophets.” Joseph Fielding McConkie suggests, “What Amos is telling us is that the Lord does not act independently of the heavenly council where all prophets are instructed and ordained.” (Joseph Fielding McConkie, “Premortal Existence, Foreordinations, and Heavenly Councils,” in Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986], 186.)


15 Gerhard Von Rad, The Message of the Prophets (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 33–34. Being a witness of the “divine council” is not exclusively the only criterion for being a Prophet or “Special Witness.” Obviously, one must be “called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof” (Articles of Faith 1:5). Consider the modern example of Elder Heber J. Grant six months after he was called, sustained, and set apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. His experience of one who has “seen and heard” came while on assignment to Arizona; later as President of the Church, he related the following visionary experience. “As I was riding along … I seemed to see, and I seemed to hear, what to me is one of the most real things in all my life, I seemed to see a Council in Heaven. I seemed to hear the words that were spoken. I listened to the discussion with a great deal of interest. The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles
It is obvious that without this experience with the divine council, one has not been “sent”\textsuperscript{16} by Jehovah. Jeremiah declares, “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel [Heb: \textit{sod}], and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings” (Jeremiah 23:21‒22). “This is the true prophet’s claim to authority. From the pronouncement of the council he receives the decree that he is to deliver. Those prophets who have not participated in the council are unable to proclaim the divine decree.”\textsuperscript{17}

Once a person has legitimately witnessed the divine council and been commissioned to preach, he is obligated to “justify his exceptional status in the eyes of the majority.”\textsuperscript{18} This veiled reference, “saw and heard,” becomes a credential for being a spokesman or messenger of the council of Jehovah. The implication of the phrase is that one has seen the divine council and heard the decrees thereof. A person who claims to have “seen and heard” can be identified as a legitimate representative of Jehovah without going into detail concerning the sacred nature of his experience. The concept of a prophet justifying his claim to divine

had not been able to agree on two men to fill the vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve. There had been a vacancy of one for two years, and a vacancy of two for one year, and the Conference had adjourned without the vacancies being filled. In this Council the Savior was present, my father [Jedediah M. Grant, a member of the First Presidency (11 March 1854 to 1 December 1856)] was there, and the Prophet Joseph Smith was there. They discussed the question that a mistake had been made in not filling those two vacancies and that in all probability it would be another six months before the Quorum would be completed, and they discussed as to whom they wanted to occupy those positions, and decided that the way to remedy the mistake that had been made in not filling these vacancies was to send a revelation. It was given to me that the Prophet Joseph Smith and my father mentioned me and requested that I be called to that position.” (President Heber J. Grant, \textit{Conference Report}, April 1941, 5, emphasis added.) For Elder Heber J. Grant, his “see and hear” experience came after his ordination.

\textsuperscript{16} Consider that the meaning of the word Apostle has a similar meaning as the Hebrew term, \textit{ךָלַש}, or “to send.” “The prophet serves as more than a messenger. He is the herald and courier of the council. The Word that he is to proclaim is placed in his mouth by Yahweh (cf. Numbers 12:6‒8; Deut. 18:15‒18). The prophet is privy to the actions of the assembly. … This position belongs to the prophet alone; it is not a position that can be attained by an ordinary man.” (Mullen, \textit{The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature}, 219).

\textsuperscript{17} Mullen, \textit{The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature}, 219.

\textsuperscript{18} Von Rad, \textit{The Message of the Prophets}, 33‒34.
authority is reduced to what he has “seen and heard.” The concept of seeing and hearing the celestial realm is used by biblical and pseudepigraphal authors.

Jeremiah’s Criteria in Nephi’s View of His Father

In answer to Jeremiah’s question “who hath marked his word, and heard it?” (Jeremiah 23:18), Nephi replies to his biblical contemporary by introducing his father Lehi specifically as one who “saw and heard” (1 Nephi 1:6, 19; 9:1). The small plates of Nephi, along with the brass plates containing “many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah” (1 Nephi 5:13), later became the foundation of the religious life of the Nephite nation. The use of the phrase “saw and heard” establishes future Nephite seers in the same tradition. There is no question that Lehi experienced what is referred to as a “throne-theophany.”

When Deity appears to man, the experience is referred to as a theophany, a Greek term meaning “appearance of god.” Joseph Smith experienced a theophany during the First Vision (Joseph Smith – History 1:16 - 17). A throne-theophany is a more specific term in that it refers to a divine manifestation of God seated on a throne. The question is not whether or not Lehi had such an experience or even the comparison between this experience and countless others, the issue is how Nephi chooses to frame the story and how these elements ultimately influence not only his own experiences but the rest of the Book of Mormon.

As Nephi abridges the writings of his father, he chooses at times to paraphrase his father’s words (1 Nephi 1:15) and at other times directly quotes his father (1 Nephi 1:8; cf. Alma 36:22, a 21-word quote). Out of the details that Nephi chooses to include from the life and writings of Lehi, he is sure to include events that would affect his children the
most, like how to identify a prophet. In rapid succession, Nephi retells two visions of Lehi. The first comprises only two verses (1 Nephi 1:5–6), and only a few details are given, but Nephi is sure to put Jeremiah’s seal of prophetic authenticity on the experience by saying that “he [Lehi] saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly” (1 Nephi 1:6). The phrase “saw and heard” is repeated twice.

In 1 Nephi 1:8–15, more attention is recorded of Lehi’s second visionary experience. The vision begins with “the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne” (1 Nephi 1:8). Clearly Lehi is brought before the throne of God, surrounded by the divine council. The “heavens were opened” for Ezekiel, and this also began his “visions of God” (Ezekiel 1:1). The opening of the heavens is a rare expression in the Hebrew Bible, showing up only in Ezekiel 1:1.22 Although the phrase is rare in biblical writings it shows up eight times in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 1:8; 11:14, 27, 30; 12:6; Helaman 5:48; 3 Nephi 17:24; 28:13), each time associated with the phrase “saw and heard.”

Thus, Nephi makes an effort to ensure in the minds of the reader that his father is a commissioned prophet and has been sent forth with the message from the council that he has both “seen and heard.”23 Unfortunately, the message was not received very well by Lehi’s audience. Lehi’s two-part message included information concerning the people’s “wickedness and their abominations”; the second part of the message was that Lehi was an authorized representative of the divine council as one who “saw and heard.” Nephi points out that the heart of Lehi’s message lies in what he had “both seen and heard” (1 Nephi 1:18–19). Jeremiah, speaking about false prophets, warned the people of Jerusalem when he said, “Hearken not unto the words of the [false] prophets that prophesy unto you” (Jeremiah 23:16, emphasis added). Quoting Jeremiah, Nephi gives the impression that Lehi’s audience did not “believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets”


23 David Bokovoy suggests that “Lehi appears, like Isaiah, as a messenger sent to represent the assembly that had convened in order to pass judgment upon Jerusalem for a violation of God’s holy covenants. Nephi’s account may represent this subtle biblical motif through a reference to Lehi assuming the traditional role of council member, praising the high god of the assembly.” See David E. Bokovoy, “On Christ and Covenants: An LDS Reading of Isaiah’s Prophetic Call,” Studies in the Bible and Antiquity 3 (2011): 37.
(1 Nephi 2:13), believing them to be false prophets. In so doing they actually “rejected the words of the [true] prophets” (1 Nephi 3:18).

Although Lehi was rejected by the people of Jerusalem as a true prophet, he will become the patriarchal prophet of the Book of Mormon peoples. Nephi’s account of Lehi’s early years will be the standard of prophetic calls for the rest of the Book of Mormon.24

Nephi will later attach the phrase “see and hear” to Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. Nephi relates, “all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak” (1 Nephi 9:1) concerning his vision of the tree of life. Nephi saw Lehi’s vision of the tree of life as establishing his father in the same role in the vision as he played among the people in Jerusalem. He was an authorized representative sent to warn others based on his prophetic relationship.

**Nephi, As One Who “Saw and Heard”**

Jeremiah’s criterion for true messengers or prophets will be seen in the lives of future prophets and will become the standard of prophetic calls among the Nephites. Nephi uses this phrase not only to introduce the validity of his father’s commission as a prophet but also to establish himself to his future audience his own call to the ministry.25

Nephi introduces and concludes his first major visionary experience with this same phrase coined by Jeremiah. Nephi begins his four chapter vision (1 Nephi 11-14) with a desire to “see, and hear” (1 Nephi 10:17) the things his father had experienced. At the conclusion of Nephi’s vision, he says that he is forbidden to “write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard” (1 Nephi 14:28).26 The vision will be concluded by another, “the apostle of the Lamb” named John (1 Nephi 14:27). John will later, Revelation 4:1-4, continue where Nephi left off, following his own throne-theophany surrounded by a divine council. Nephi’s vision is therefore sandwiched between two throne theophanies: the vision of his father in 1 Nephi 1:8 and a future vision of John.

26 Some heavenly information is intended to be kept secret; – cf. 2 Corinthians 12:4; 3 Nephi 17:16-17; 28:13-16; Ether 3:21-4:7; Moses 4:32; 4 Ezra 14:6, 45-47.
Although Nephi explains what he had “heard” (1 Nephi 14:27), the real emphasis is on what he “saw.” An angelic guide accompanies him through much of what he would “see and hear.” The angelic guide continually asks Nephi to “look” and then questions him concerning what he has seen (1 Nephi 11:14; 13:2), allowing him to report on what he understands. Compare this with the prophetic call of Jeremiah as found in the first chapter of his book. Jeremiah’s call is followed by a visionary experience that parallels Nephi’s. Jerusalem’s future destruction is laid out in an exchange between the “word of the Lord” and Jeremiah, where he is asked, “what seest thou?” in a vision that depicts Jerusalem’s future. The reply is given by Jeremiah, followed by the Lord saying, “Thou hast well seen” (Jeremiah 1:11-12). The pattern is repeated when “the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou?” Jeremiah recites back what he has seen (Jeremiah 1:13). When writing his history, Nephi continues to connect his prophetic experience with that of Jeremiah.

The timing of Nephi’s declaration is significant; as Stephen Smoot points out, Nephi “established his own credibility as his father’s prophetic

27 In describing his experience with the angelic guide, Nephi uses the word “saw” over 30 times and “look” or “looked” over 20 times. Compare the chiastic inclusion:

(1 Nephi 11:1a) I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord
(1 Nephi 11:2b) the Spirit said unto me
(1 Nephi 11:3c) I desire to behold the things which my father saw
(1 Nephi 14:28d) I saw and heard [expression of being in the divine Council]
(1 Nephi 14:29c) I saw the things which my father saw
(1 Nephi 14:29b) the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me
(1 Nephi 14:30a) I saw while I was carried away in the Spirit

Adapted from Neal Rappleye, “The Things Which my Father Saw’: The Chiastic Inclusio of 1 Nephi 11–14” online at http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/2015/05/the-things-which-my-father-saw-chiastic.html

28 Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and ... I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

29 This interrogative exchange between the Divine and the Prophet during a vision of the future is not limited to this singular example; consider the following:
successor” amidst the tension that arose “between Nephi and his elder brothers over matters relating to the interpretation and meaning of their father’s vision.” Nephi not only solidifies his own prophetic status as one who “saw and heard,” standing shoulder to shoulder with his father and Jeremiah, he sets the standard for the prophetic members of his posterity.

The Tradition Continues

Jacob, the younger brother of Nephi, carries on this tradition. He finds himself in a similar conflict, as Jeremiah had decades before. Jacob has to defend his own prophetic call against the Anti-Christ Sherem. He withstands his critic by declaring that he has “heard and seen” (Jacob 7:12, reversing the word order) and declaring that he is a prophet. Although the particulars are not mentioned, this veiled statement might point back to a previous experience Jacob had with the Savior and the divine council when Jacob had become a witness of the Savior in that Council and was sent forth to declare his word, as others had previously done.

Nephi had previously compared his own experience with that of Isaiah when he said that Isaiah “verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him” (2 Nephi 11:2), thus possibly connecting Isaiah’s experience, outlined in Isaiah 6, with his own. Nephi feels so strongly that his posterity have access to Isaiah’s experience with the divine council that he makes sure it is included in the small plates (2 Nephi 16). Nephi then connects Jacob’s experience with what Nephi and Isaiah had experienced when he writes, “my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him” (2 Nephi 11:3). All three prophets have had a “see and hear” experience (1 Nephi 14:28; Isaiah 6:9; Jacob 7:12).

Jeremiah 24:3‒4: “Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.”

Zechariah 4:2, 5 – “And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick. … Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.” Compare this to 1 Nephi 11:16-17.

Alma Follows the Pattern

Jeremiah’s influence on the formation of the Book of Mormon extends far beyond the small plates. Jeremiah’s criterion of an authentic prophetic call will extend further than those of Lehi and his two apostolic sons, Nephi and Jacob. Another Book of Mormon prophet follows the lead of these foundational Nephite leaders whose writings are found on the small plates. Mormon’s abridgment of the call of Alma the younger to the ministry is clearly influenced by Nephi’s writings. 31

Alma’s call is outlined in the abridgment by Mormon in Mosiah 27 and in Alma’s own words in Alma 36. Piecing together these two accounts, one can clearly see the thumbprints of Jeremiah, Lehi, and Nephi. In Mormon’s abridged account we learn that Alma has seen an angel who has “descended as it were in a cloud” (Mosiah 27:11). Unconscious, Alma is carried back to his father (Mosiah 27:19), not unlike Lehi’s initial experience (1 Nephi 1:5). In his brief description of his visionary journey, Alma hears “the Lord” (Mosiah 27:25) and is snatched from “everlasting burning” and the “darkest abyss” (Mosiah 27:28–29). After Alma’s lifeless body is returned to his father, Alma the Elder “caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God.” The purpose of the prayers was twofold: (1) that God “would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength,” and (2) “that the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God” (Mosiah 27:22).

The answer to both prayers is realized as Alma the Younger awakens and begins “publishing to all the people the things which [he] had heard and seen” (Mosiah 27:32). Apparently the people began to “see and know” the “glory of God” based on what Alma had “heard and seen.” Greater detail on what Alma had “heard and seen” is found in Alma’s rendition of the story in Alma 36. Alma recounts the story of his conversion to his son Helaman in Alma 36. In other ancient writings

prophets are commissioned to specifically recite to their “sons” what they have learned during their time with the heavenly council. Given the similarities to Lehi’s story, Alma 36 might be better referred to as the description of Alma’s prophetic call. The account is directed to Alma’s eldest son Helaman who will follow in the prophetic footsteps of his father.

Alma begins his discourse with the phrase “give ear” (Alma 36:1), a phrase used primarily by those whose writings are found on the small plates, namely Lehi (2 Nephi 4:3), Nephi (2 Nephi 28:30), Jacob (2 Nephi 9:40), and Isaiah (2 Nephi 8:4; 18:9; 25:4). Alma uses what Lehi “saw and heard” (1 Nephi 1:6, 19) to help illustrate what he had “heard and seen” (Mosiah 27:32). Alma did not merely spend his time being unconscious in the abyss; he explains, “methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising

32 Enoch sees God’s throne (2 Enoch 9:4; 14:19; 28:8), and the panoramic vision of the world’s history and judgments) and is commissioned to teach what he has experienced (19:1-29:3). He is later told, “instruct your sons and all the members of your household” in the experience and later declares “hear, ye men of old time, and see” (37:2, emphasis added).

In the Testament of Levi, Levi is told to “listen, therefore concerning the heavens which have been shown you” (3:1 emphasis added), in other words to “hear and see.” Then he is instructed to “give understanding to your sons concerning this” (4:5-6); then immediately after, “the “gates of heaven were opened” and he “saw the holy temple, and the most high sitting on a throne of glory” (5:1-2).

In the Apocalypse of Abraham, Abraham is shown God’s throne (chapter 18). He is told, “hear, Abraham. This which thou seest” (25:9, emphasis added). Then he is asked to go to his posterity or “inheritance” with what he has seen, heard, and known (29:21).

33 After the apparent transfiguration of Alma (Alma 45:18-19), Helaman is shown as the next prophet, following in the same footsteps as Lehi and Nephi. Helaman is commissioned to go “forth among the people to declare the word” (Alma 45:20, compare 1 Nephi 1:18; 1 Nephi 15:1-2), and his message is also rejected (Alma 46:1, compare 1 Nephi 1:19; 15:9-10), and like Lehi and Nephi before him, his life is put in danger (Alma 46:2, compare 1 Nephi 1:20; 5:2).

34 It is notable that all these authors use the phrase “see and hear” in their writings. Samuel the Lamanite is the only other Book of Mormon prophet who uses the term “give ear” (Helaman 12:5). It is also notable that he uses the term to introduce the “counsels” of the “Lord thy God”; this may refer to the same “counsel” ( kjv Jeremiah 23:18) that Jeremiah refers to (see previous note). Alma also uses another phrase unique to the small plates, “both soul and body” (Alma 36:15), previously used only by Lehi (2 Nephi 1:22) and Isaiah (2 Nephi 20:18); Alma does use the phrase again in Alma 40:21.
their God” (Alma 36:22). This is a strong parallel with what Isaiah and others experienced in Isaiah 6, although there is a stark contrast to Isaiah’s throne-theophony: while Alma exclaims, “my soul did long to be there” (Alma 36:22), Isaiah exclaims, “Wo is me! … for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

Thus Alma explains to Helaman, the man who will replace him in his prophetic office, that he has fit the pattern of earlier prophets, namely Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

**Mormon Testifies**

The prophetic heritage outlined by Nephi and Lehi lives on through Mormon, the great compiler of Nephite history. Mormon finally places himself in the same prophetic class as father Lehi as he witnesses to his people as one who “saw and heard” (Mormon 3:16). Just as Lehi’s words to the people of Jerusalem were rejected, so also was Mormon’s prophetic message of what he “saw and heard.”

**Three Hundred “See and Hear”**

Though not formally called to the prophetic office, others occasionally “saw and heard” and therefore became witnesses to the Divine. The concept, which weaves throughout various stories in the Book of Mormon, is not limited to individuals; the experience can be applied to a group. Moses declared, “would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets” (Numbers 11:29). Although this experience does not entitle all to hold all titles held by the president of the church, it does make the group unique witnesses of the reality of heavenly interventions in the affairs of men.

Mormon describes three hundred individuals who saw and heard the “heavens open and angels come down out of heaven” (Helaman 5:48‒49, emphasis added), evidence that the divine council intervenes directly in the affairs of men. The vision seen by three hundred includes an encircling flame; they were “filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory,” “the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven,” a voice was heard, the heavens opened, and ministering angels attended (Helaman 5:43‒48). Once the experience with the divine council was complete, they went out “declaring throughout all the regions round about all the things which they had heard and seen” (Helaman 5:50). Like Lehi (1 Nephi 1:18), Nephi (1 Nephi 15:1), Jacob (Jacob 7:12), and Alma (Mosiah 27:32) earlier, the 300 went out to declare certain aspects of what they had “seen and heard.”
Two Thousand Five Hundred “See and Hear”

Later, during the Savior’s ministry, 2,500 souls witness a unique interaction between the Father and the Son. Mormon writes, “The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak” (3 Nephi 17:16‒17). The experience included the heavens being opened, angels ministering (a possible reference to the divine council), and being “encircled about with fire” (3 Nephi 17:24). At the conclusion, Mormon repeats that the “the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and … did see and hear, every man for himself” (3 Nephi 17:25). Later Mormon writes, that “many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written” (3 Nephi 26:18). The elements that have been mentioned, i.e., an interaction between the Father and Son that could be witnessed, angels, circles of flames,35 etc. — all are elements attributed to a vision of the divine council;36 elements of the divine council are present.

Although details are excluded, the twelve disciples will be introduced and commissioned in a fashion similar to Lehi’s centuries before. Mormon records, “The heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. And it was forbidden them that they should utter; neither was it given unto them power that they could utter the things which they saw and heard” (3 Nephi 28:13‒14). Here the twelve disciples are personally introduced in the council by the Savior himself. Although information here is brief, we can conclude from the other examples some of the things which the twelve “saw and heard.” After seeing the “things of God” (3 Nephi 28:15) they were now commissioned to go forth and preach (3 Nephi 28:17‒18).

35 One element of these types of visions is the concentric circles that surround deity. Consider Lehi’s vision of “God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels” (1 Nephi 1:8); Isaiah sees seraphim around God (Isaiah 6:2); John sees the throne of God with “a rainbow round about the throne,” and “round about the throne were four and twenty seats” (Revelation 4:3‒4); Abraham sees God standing in the “midst” of the “noble and great ones” (Abraham 3:22-23) (Essentially, Abraham is surrounded on all sides; as mentioned before, the 300 in Helaman 5:44 witness a circle of fire, just as did these 2,500).

Conclusion

Because of the influence of Jeremiah’s writings on Nephi, the term “saw and heard” takes on a specially implied meaning throughout the Book of Mormon. Nephi uses this phrase not only to introduce the validity of his father’s commission as a prophet, he also uses the same phrase to establish himself to his future audience as a mark of his own call to the ministry. The phrase “saw and heard” establishes future Nephite seers in the same tradition. Although the experience does not replace the need to be called and set apart, it does describe a divine commission and entitles the individual to carry the title of “witness.” The phrase “see and hear” would in turn become a critical description that points to the sacred experience of being introduced into the presence of the Divine. Because of the abridged nature of the Book of Mormon and the sacred nature of the experience, the idiom “see and hear” was used to describe the commission of a Nephite Prophet in the Council of Heaven.

Appendix

Possible Examples of the Phrase “See and Hear” in Biblical or Pseudepigraphal Literature

Jeremiah’s articulation of the veiled phrase “saw and heard” becomes a standard of credibility as an authorized messenger of the council of Jehovah. This verbal license possibly influences other inspired writers. The following are a few examples from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Pseudepigrapha. Some show stronger connections than others:

Hebrew Bible

Numbers 24:4, 15–16. The Prophet Balaam (although Elder Bruce R. McConkie refers to him as “the mad prophet,” New Era, Apr. 1972, 37 This idea might have influenced the Prophet Joseph Smith’s writings of his own visionary experiences and how he penned the description of others. Joseph describes his own experience with the heavenly council as follows: “For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:23). As a young man, he says that he felt “astonishment at what I had both seen and heard” during his initial visit with the angel Moroni (JS-H 1:46). David Whitmer is told in a revelation directed to him that he will become a “witness of the things of which [he] shall both hear and see” (D&C 14:8).
7) receives a visionary experience in which he “saw the vision of the Almighty” and “heard the words of God” (Numbers 24:4, 15–16, emphasis added). Although the description of the vision is brief, it has a strong parallel to what Lehi “saw and heard” (1 Nephi 1:8). Balaam sees a “Star out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17) whereas Lehi sees “One descending out of the midst of heaven” whose “luster was above that of the sun at noon-day,” who in turn was followed by “twelve others, … following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars” (1 Nephi 1:9–10). Balaam also sees the destruction of the wicked, namely “the corners of Moab” and “all the children of Sheth” (Numbers 24:17), while Lehi sees “concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed” (1 Nephi 1:13). I mention this because of the parallels between Balaam and Lehi.

Isaiah 6. In the call narrative of Isaiah, the vision concludes with a commission to preach to “this people, Hear … and see,” then in parallelistic form concludes with “they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears” (Isaiah 6:9–10). The inhabitants of Jerusalem would not see and hear Isaiah’s message, as Isaiah saw and heard the heavenly council. Undoubtedly Isaiah would have lamented as Moses did: “would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets” (Numbers 11:29). Stephen D. Ricks has called attention to the parallels between the throne theophany of Lehi and that of Isaiah.38 David Bokovoy makes additional parallels between Isaiah and Lehi.39 See the chart below.

Ezekiel 1:28. During his throne theophany, Ezekiel declares, “And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.” As in Balaam’s experience, there are strong similarities between Ezekiel’s visionary experience and Lehi’s. (1) a historical introduction (1 Nephi 1:4; Ezekiel 11:3); (2) a divine confrontation (1 Nephi 1:6; Ezekiel 14:3); (3) a throne theophany (1 Nephi 1:8; Ezekiel 1:26–28); (4) a heavenly book (1 Nephi 1:11–12; Ezek 2:8–10); (5) a Qedussa or angelic songs of praise (1 Nephi 1:14; Ezek 3:12); (6) a commission of the prophet (1 Nephi 1:18–21; Ezekiel 2:2–3); (7) a rejection by his people (1 Nephi 1:19–20; Ezekiel 3:8–9); and (8) reassurance and a promise of deliverance (1 Nephi 1:20; Ezek 3:8).40 See the chart below.

New Testament

The following have possible connections between the phrase “see and hear” and commission narratives:

**Matthew 13:15‒16** (Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). The concept of speaking in layered meanings or parables was introduced to the disciples in conjunction with teaching the mysteries (Matthew 13:11). As an example, Jesus quotes in part the call narrative of Isaiah 6 (Matthew 13:13). The concept of “see and hear” has a layered meaning, as do the parables. In a private tone to his disciples, the Savior complimented them with a phrase that would sit well among the beatitudes: “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear” (Matthew 13:15‒16). This is not merely a compliment for understanding difficult doctrine, but an allusion to an ascension text found in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah is brought into the presence of God, becomes a witness of the divine council, actively participates in his council, and is commissioned to preach. Compare similar statements concerning eyes being opened to introduce visionary experiences of the Divine, D&C 76:12, 19; D&C 110:1; D&C 136:32; D&C 138:11, 29.

**Luke 2:20.** After seeing “the heavenly host praising God” (Luke 2:13) and finding the Christ-child (Luke 2:16), “the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:20). Although this is a reverse of the more common “see and hear,” it is an obvious allusion to an experience with the divine council. One of the roles of the divine council is “praise God,” an element in many ascensions texts, including Isaiah 6:3; Ezekiel 6:12; 1 Nephi 1:14; 1 Enoch 39:6, 10, 12; 2 Enoch 21:1; Apocalypse of Abraham 17:3‒21. This might be an allusion Luke makes that the Christ child is the one mentioned as sitting upon his throne in previous texts. Although the connection may be weak, it is included in the chart below by reason of comparison.

**Luke 7:22.** The disciples of John the Baptist visit the Savior and his disciples — an implied representation of the divine realm — and are commissioned by Jesus to return and report to John what they had “seen and heard” (Luke 7:22).

**Luke 10:24.** After commissioning the “seventy” (Luke 10:17), Jesus said to his disciples, “For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them” (Luke 10:24). The allusion is to previous prophets and Kings who desired a true prophetic commission. Anciently, kings held the three hats of prophet,
priest and king, but through apostasy, the triple-title was lost. There were some who tried to reattain the ancient titles (ex. Uzziah going into the temple, 2 Chronicles 27:2; Isaiah 6:1).

**John 3:32.** Margaret Barker suggests that Jesus himself experienced a commissioning vision and that “Jesus spoke of what he had **seen** and **heard** in heaven (John 3:32), but people did not believe in his **maturion**, his testimony. This testimony, defined in Revelation 1:2 as “all that he saw,” is preserved in the Book of Revelation.”41 JST John 3:32 clarifies this verse and states that “few men receive his testimony.”

**Acts 4:20.** At trial, Peter and John testify before the Sanhedrin of their own prophetic call by declaring that “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Peter and John’s audience surely would have picked up on this subtle clue.

**1 Corinthians 2:9.** “But as it is written, Eye hath not **seen**, nor ear **heard**, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

**1 John 1:3.** John, in his general epistle, introduces himself and his fellow brethren as ones who “**have seen** and **heard**,” and those who believe their testimony might “have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship **is** with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”(1 John 1:3). John’s announcement as one who has “**seen** and **heard**” is verified by his grand revelation in the Book of Revelation.

**Revelation 22:8.** John, like others before him who had “seen and heard,” sees the heavens opened (Revelation 4:1), God on his throne (Revelation 4:2), people surrounding the throne, (Revelation 4:4, 5:11), Christ with others (Revelation 5:5–8), and a book containing future destruction (Revelation 5:1). Throughout the visionary experience, John is continually told to “**see and hear**” (Revelation 4:1, 5:11, 6:1, 3, 7); he testifies at the end of the book as being one who has “**heard** and **seen**” (Revelation 22:8). See the chart below.

**Pseudepigrapha**

Among pseudepigraphal writings, there are a number of ascension texts in which a person is brought into the presence of the divine council. Many will testify of what they “saw and heard.”

**Testament of Levi 1:16** (c. BC 180). Before describing his experience, Levi suggests that he has both seen and heard: “**Hear**, therefore, regarding the heavens which have been **shown** to thee” (1:16). See the chart below.

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41 Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), x.
Ascension of Isaiah 10:3-5. Isaiah “heard and saw the praise [which was directed to] him, and the Lord and the angel of the Spirit heard everything and saw everything. And all the praise which was sent [up] from the six heavens was not only heard, but seen” (10:3-5). See the chart below.

Apocalypse of Abraham 25:11. Abraham’s angelic guide shows him a vision of future events and says, “Hear, Abraham. This which thou seest” (25:11; compare also 27:6-7; 29:9-10). See the chart below.

1 Enoch 59:2 (c. bc 200). Enoch, in his heavenly vision, “saw the secrets of the thunder, and how when it resounds above in the heaven, the sound thereof is heard, and he caused me to see the judgments executed on the earth” (1 Enoch 59:2; compare also 37:2). Later Enoch acknowledges that God “knowest and seest and hearest everything” (1 Enoch 84:3). A similar triplet is found in 1 Nephi 10:17. See the chart below.

Chart

The following chart compiles major themes of a selection of the previous references. Asterisks indicate either (1) that the element is possibly but not certainly present, or (2) it is implicit, or (3) it is minor. The skeleton is based on John J. Collins, “The Jewish Apocalypses,” Semeia 14 (1979): 28 and Ostler, “The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi,” 91.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner of Revelation</th>
<th>Hebrew Bible</th>
<th>Book of Mormon</th>
<th>New Test.</th>
<th>Pseudepigrapha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isaiah 6</td>
<td>Ezekiel 1-4</td>
<td>1 Nephi 1-2</td>
<td>1 Nephi 11-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Visions</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Epiphanies</td>
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<td>1.1.3 Theophanies</td>
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<td>1.2 Dialogue</td>
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<td>Questioning</td>
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<td>1.3 Otherworldly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journey</td>
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<td>1.4 Heavenly</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>2 Otherworldly</td>
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<td>Mediator / Divine</td>
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<td>Encounter</td>
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<td>3 Reaction of</td>
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<td>Reception</td>
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<td>4 Ascension</td>
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<td>Cosmogony /</td>
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<td>Primordial Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Recollection</td>
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<tr>
<td>of Past / Prophesy</td>
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<td>of Future</td>
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<td>7 Persecution /</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eschatological</td>
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<td>Upheaval</td>
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</table>
Kevin Tolley earned a Bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University in Near Eastern Studies with a minor in Hebrew, a Master’s degree from the University of Notre Dame in Theology, and is currently a PhD student in Hebrew Bible at Claremont School of Theology. He has taught seminary for ten years in Salt Lake City and for the last five years has taught in Southern California. He is currently the S&I Coordinator in Pomona, CA. He and his wife (the former RaShelle Wolf) and are the parents of five children. Ed me cone ata orum finem conscep erferet ad rente, detiaeque confirt elutem, ut publicum prox mulicam oca comanteris sicuppl. Ocum cultus publis inatora veri publibunum hocchum efex meri se perendii pro patum porendius acta, quisultus terum hales ia cupio, deteritu vivicularis vituus iusatilius, perimus.
Abstract: During Christ’s mortal ministry at Jerusalem, his teachings often drew upon the writings of Isaiah, Moses, and other prophets with whom his audience was familiar. On the other hand, Christ never seems to quote Nephi, Mosiah, or other Book of Mormon prophets to the Jews and their surrounding neighbors, despite being the ultimate source for their inspired writings. It is because of this apparent confinement to Old Testament sources that intertextual parallels between the words of Christ in Matthew 23–24 and the words of Samuel the Lamanite in Helaman 13–15 jump out as intriguing. This paper explores the intertextual relationship between these chapters in Helaman and Matthew and suggests that the parallels between these texts can be attributed to a common source available to both Samuel and Christ, the writings of the prophet Zenos.

Discovering Old Testament language and phraseology in the Book of Mormon comes as no surprise to those who are familiar with the book. Having left Jerusalem in 600 BC with the writings of ancient prophets contained on plates of brass, individuals such as Nephi and Jacob would have had no difficulty drawing upon the teachings of Isaiah or the Psalms as they preached among their people.\(^1\) Of greater surprise, however, is the fact that nearly 600 years later, the prophet Samuel the Lamanite is found using a higher concentration of biblical language than nearly every other Book of Mormon prophet.\(^2\) Upon further study

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2 Indeed, according to WordCruncher, an eBook Reader that aids in the analysis of texts (available at wordcruncher.byu.edu), Samuel uses common biblical...
of Samuel the Lamanite’s use of biblical language, it was found that, although he does use a lot of Old Testament phraseology, there is an even stronger intertextual relationship between his words and the words spoken by Christ in the book of Matthew. In this paper I provide a closer analysis of these intertextual relationships, arguing that there is evidence that both Samuel and Christ drew upon a common source: the extra-biblical writings of the prophet Zenos.3

To better understand Samuel the Lamanite’s use of biblical language, I used WordCruncher to conduct a “phrase compare report,” comparing Samuel the Lamanite’s words with the prophets from the Old Testament.4 The results from WordCruncher’s report showed a large number of parallel phrases, particularly between the words of Samuel the Lamanite and the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. For example, when compared to phrases of five words spoken by Samuel the Lamanite, the Book of Jeremiah had twenty-seven phrases in common, Isaiah had twenty-six, and Ezekiel had twenty-four.5 This is in contrast to some of the other lengthier books in the Old Testament such as Genesis, which only contained twenty, and Psalms, which only contained twelve phrases in common.6

phrases such as “Lord of Hosts” and “signs and wonders” more so than expected when compared to the total words he actually uses in the Book of Mormon. See Shon Hopkin and John Hilton III, “Samuel’s Reliance on Biblical Language,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, 24 (2015), 31–52.

3 The central arguments presented in this paper rest upon several assumptions. The first is that the scriptural text, as it stands, accurately conveys the words spoken by Samuel the Lamanite, Christ, and others. Thus, it assumes accuracy on the part of the scriptural author in recording the words of the speaker, and I therefore attribute the words of the scriptural text to the speaker, rather than the author. Second, and closely related, is that this paper assumes a Book of Mormon translation process that was “tightly” controlled, with Joseph Smith receiving the revealed text word for word and dictating it to his scribe. Though I am aware that the debate of a “loose” versus a “tight” translation is still ongoing, I have chosen to bracket this argument in the present study.

4 This phrase compare report, along with all the Book of Mormon text in this paper, follows Royal Skousen, The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

5 These numbers are quite high, considering that Samuel’s words are restricted to a mere three chapters in the Book of Mormon.

6 That the closest comparisons of Samuel the Lamanite’s phraseology are with Isaiah and Jeremiah suggests that Samuel the Lamanite was well acquainted with the writings of these authors from the brass plates.
The high rate of common phrases alone, however, is not enough evidence for a relation between the texts. An argument for intertextuality gains more strength by comparing additional criteria, such as related contexts of the passages, the length of the passages, and the rarity of words used in the passages. Applying these criteria to the common phrases shared by Samuel and the Old Testament books listed in the above table showed surprisingly little evidence that the common phrases were anything more than coincidental. Rather, they were mostly sporadic parallels with varying contexts and common words.

Comparing Samuel the Lamanite’s words with the New Testament, however, yielded completely different results, particularly between the words of Samuel the Lamanite in Helaman 13 through 15 and those of Christ in Matthew 23 through 24. There are at least nine examples of close parallels in these passages, including lengthy passages containing words and phrases rare in scripture. The contexts of these passages are also closely related, in that both Samuel and Christ give a message of warning unto a wicked group of people. Samuel the Lamanite and Christ pronounce woe’s upon the wicked cities of Zarahemla and Jerusalem, respectively, and upon a wicked people that ultimately wish to kill them.

The Parallels

With both contexts in mind, we can now examine the passages in Helaman and Matthew that, when combined, contain the strongest evidence of intertextuality. Significant similarities between the verses are shown in italics:
Helaman 13

24. Yea, woe unto this people because of this time which has arriven that ye do cast out the prophets and do mock them and cast stones at them and do slay them and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.

Matthew 23

29. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

These verses are the beginning of a longer thread of intertextuality between the two texts. Each pronounces a warning upon those who have killed the prophets, beginning with the warning indicator “woe.” However, while thematically similar, the strongest evidence that these two passages have intertextual relation comes by looking at the verses that immediately follow:

25. And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them and cast them out.

30. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

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7 “Woe unto,” though found 118 times in scripture, is nevertheless unique in this comparison. WordCruncher uses a custom statistic called a “rating,” which is similar to a chi-square statistic in order to show the relative significance of the differences between actual and expected word and phrase counts. This rating is represented by a number between -10 and 10, with 0 being the expected, and truncating anything beyond these bounds. The phrase “woe unto” is found thirty times in the Old Testament, with a low rating of -3.8. However, the book in the Old Testament with the highest rating is Isaiah, with a rating of 4.4. In the New Testament, the phrase is found in only three books; the Book of Matthew has a rating of 5.9, Luke has a 6.7, and finally Jude has a 0.9. The Isaiah chapters in 2nd Nephi have contributed to a rating of 10 in the Book of Mormon; however, coming in second place is the book of Helaman, with a rating of 2.9. Of the seven instances where this phrase is found in Helaman, six occur within Samuel’s sermon. Thus, while “woe unto” may not be a scripturally unique phrase, these ratings further support the possibility that Samuel, like Christ, may have been well acquainted with the writings of Isaiah.
The similarities between these passages are striking. Samuel the Lamanite and Christ both begin to quote the wicked, who present a hypothetical “if” concerning “the days of [their] fathers” and the claim of not having a part in the death of the prophets. The phrase “in the days of our fathers” followed by “we would not have” are found together in scripture only in these two passages. The allusion to the killing of the prophets in these passages also adds to their uniqueness, strengthening the possibility of a connection between them.

Evidence of intertextuality is further strengthened as the parallels continue, with Samuel the Lamanite and Christ each suggesting where their audience stands in relation to their “fathers” they had previously mentioned:

26. Behold, ye are worse than they ...
32. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Finally, these passages both speak of prophets coming among the wicked, and then the intent to destroy and kill them:

26. … if a prophet come among you and 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 …

34. ¶ Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill …

The parallels above are concentrated into a small number of words in both Helaman and Matthew, making it unlikely that they are a mere coincidence. However, thus far the majority of evidence for intertextuality has been in relation to the context and thematic progression in these passages. As the contextual parallels continue, more and more scripturally unique phrases and words also begin to stand out between the passages. Pressing forward sequentially through Helaman chapter 13, we can briefly backtrack in Matthew 24 and find a unique term used by both Samuel the Lamanite and Jesus Christ:
29. O ye wicked and ye perverse generation, ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?

There are only four instances where the term “blind guides” is used in scripture. Three of those times are cited above, and the last one is in D&C 19:40. Progressing further through both chapters, we come upon another instance of unique parallelism:

33. O that I had repented and had not killed the prophets and stoned them and cast them out …

37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee …

Aside from these passages, the words “kill,” “prophet,” and “stone,” in their various forms, appear together in only two other verses of scripture. One of those verses is in 3 Nephi 8:25, where a direct quotation of the phrase in Helaman is given to illustrate the fulfillment of Samuel’s prophecy. The other instance is in Luke 13:34, which is Luke’s account of the same events described in Matthew.

The final two examples of intertextuality come in the beginning of Helaman 15, but jump around a bit in Matthew between chapters 23 and 24:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helaman 15:1</th>
<th>Matthew 23:38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. …I declare unto you that except ye shall repent, your houses shall be left unto you desolate.</td>
<td>38. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What makes these passages unique is that these are two of only three places where “left unto you desolate” occurs in the scriptures.

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8 In Matthew 24 of the 1526 Tyndale Bible, verses 16 and 24 use “blynd gides” and blinde gydes,” respectively.
9 Romans 2:19 uses a similar phrase, “thou thyself art a guide to the blind.”
The third instance is found in Luke 13:35, where we again find Luke’s account of the same sermon recorded by Matthew. Our final parallel passages are found in the next verse of Helaman 15, and back to chapter 24 in Matthew:

**Helaman 15**

2. Yea, except ye repent, your women shall have great cause to mourn in the day that they shall give suck. For ye shall attempt to flee and there shall be no place for refuge. Yea, and woe unto them which are with child, for they shall be heavy and cannot flee. Therefore, they shall be trodden down and shall be left to perish.

**Matthew 24**

19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

The context for these passages is the same as the examples cited earlier, namely, the destruction that would occur with either the coming or going of the Savior to the earth. The warnings given to nursing and pregnant women in these verses are unique. Aside from the account in Helaman, they only occur in scripture in the same context as found in Matthew.10

**A Common Source**

Looking at each of the examples cited above and viewing them together as a whole, we are presented with compelling evidence that there is some sort of relation between these texts. In addition to the similar context, the unique phrases and total concentration of parallels all within a few chapters adds even further evidence of a connection. However, the possibility of either of them quoting one another presents itself as somewhat problematic for several reasons.

The first reason relates to time and distance. The prophecies of Samuel the Lamanite found in the book of Helaman were not only given several years before the birth of Christ, but on the other side of the globe. This would have made it impossible for him to have the writings of Matthew, seeing as they had not yet been recorded. And, although it is by no means beyond the abilities of Christ to quote from a prophet like Samuel during his earthly ministry, it would arguably be the only instance in which the

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Jesus of the New Testament had quoted from a Book of Mormon prophet. Had Christ been quoting from Samuel, we would be left to wonder why we don’t find the words of Nephi, Jacob, King Benjamin, or other Book of Mormon prophets in the New Testament. Thus, though not impossible, it appears unlikely that Christ would be drawing upon the sermon given by Samuel the Lamanite.

Additionally, though Samuel the Lamanite indicates that he is speaking “whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart” (Helaman 13:4-5), as well as things that an “angel of the Lord hath declared” to him (Helaman 13:7), each of the passages compared above fall within a portion of his speech where he seems to be giving his own commentary rather than an actual quotation from the Lord or an angel. Thus, if we are correct in assuming that Samuel and Christ are both speaking independent from one another, we are left to wonder as to how they come up with much of the same material in their sermons.

It is here that I would suggest that in order to answer that question, we need look no further than the brass plates. We already know that the brass plates contained the writings of Old Testament prophets such as Moses and Isaiah. We know also that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament both referred to and drew upon their writings during his ministry in Jerusalem. Christ, as the premortal Jehovah, rarely, if ever, took the credit for what they wrote. It wouldn’t be too much of a stretch then to imagine that other Old Testament period writings contained on the brass plates, such as those of Zenos, Zenock, or Neum, could also

11 Samuel the Lamanite uses the phrase “saith the Lord,” along with the personal pronoun “I,” in reference to the Lord to indicate when this type of quotation is taking place. However, beginning with Helaman 13:21 Samuel the Lamanite begins to use his own commentary by referring to the Lord by using the third-person pronoun “he” rather than “I.” The personal pronoun “I” is not used in reference to the Lord again until the last two verses of Helaman 15, where Samuel begins to quote the Lord again. Thus, the majority of text that lies in between Helaman 13:21 and 15:15 is a continuation of Samuel’s speech where he provides his own commentary concerning what the Lord and an angel had spoken to him. Interestingly, each of the passages compared with the text in Matthew fall within this “commentary” portion of Samuel the Lamanite’s speech.

12 Throughout the New Testament, Christ demonstrates his familiarity with Old Testament texts and quotes them frequently, both with and without indicating that he is doing so.

13 On the contrary, Christ would often give credit to the Prophets for what they had written or spoken. For example, see Mark 7:6, 10; Matt. 13:14; 15:7, and John 7:19.
have survived in ancient Israel up into the time of Christ and be used by him just as had the writings of Moses or Isaiah.

**Samuel’s Use of the Brass Plates**

While quoting from writings contained on the brass plates is certainly a possibility, there is strong evidence that this is in fact taking place in the case of Samuel the Lamanite. The first and obvious evidence is Samuel’s indication of his own awareness of some of the writings found on the brass plates. In Helaman 15:11, Samuel the Lamanite references “the time … which hath been spoken of by our fathers, and also by the prophet Zenos, and many other prophets.” Additionally, there are parallels between the words of Zenos as recorded by Nephi in 1 Nephi 19:10–17 with the language used by Samuel the Lamanite in Helaman 14:20–27. These parallels are shown in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Nephi 19</th>
<th>Helaman 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi 19:10</td>
<td>…the three days of darkness…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman 15:11</td>
<td>no light…for the space of three days…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi 19:10</td>
<td>…a sign given of his death…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman 14:20, 27</td>
<td>…a sign of his death…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi 19:11</td>
<td>…thunderings and the lightings of his power, by tempest…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helaman 14:21, 23, 26, 27</td>
<td>…thunderings and lightnings…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…there shall be great tempests…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…thunderings and lightnings…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…while the thunder and the lightning lasted, and the tempest…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The shared context and number of words common in both passages above strongly suggest that Samuel the Lamanite was drawing heavily upon the words of Zenos as he prophesied concerning the death of Christ.14 It is also worth noting that, apart from Samuel the Lamanite, Zenos is the only other known prophet to have prophesied concerning “the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death.”15

**Did Christ Draw Upon the Record of Zenos?**

To say that Christ had access to the writings of Zenos and drew upon them is admittedly quite a claim. Some LDS scholars are under the impression that the writings of Zenos had disappeared prior to the ministry of Jesus Christ, while others have argued that some of his writings have survived among the Dead Sea Scrolls.16 Though no definitive statement can presently be made as to whether his writings survived into the time of Christ, there are several parallels between the words of Zenos and those of Christ in Matthew 24:

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14 Mormon also indicates that Zenos had spoken on the topic of the death of Christ. See 3 Nephi 10:16.
15 1 Nephi 19:10; Helaman 14:27.
Admittedly, the first two comparisons differ in context, and the common phrases in these passages do not necessarily contain scripturally unique ideas. However, when coupling these parallels with the parallels that Samuel the Lamanite has with both Christ and Zenos, we are left with the assumption that these parallels are not coincidental. Further, the parallels between Samuel the Lamanite and Zenos fall right in the middle of the parallels found between Samuel and Christ.

The Book of Mormon makes clear the greatness of the words of Zenos, including his prophecies relating to both the life and death of the Savior Jesus Christ. The possibility that both Samuel the Lamanite and Christ drew upon the record of Zenos in their own teaching further amplifies the greatness of Zenos’s prophecies. Though we are left with no complete record extant of the writings of Zenos, the combination of the evidence presented above lends both the possibility and even probability that the record of Zenos survived in ancient Israel at least up into the ministry of Jesus Christ.

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Abstract: Christ’s famous call to take his yoke upon us in Matthew 11 may merit more analysis than it has commonly received. Taking up the yoke may have connections to other things that are taken upon us as well, including the name of Christ, temple covenants, priestly robes, and sacred anointing. These all reflect a relationship of obedience and service to the Master, who set the example by taking the heaviest yoke of all upon him, including the yoke-like beam of the cross that he carried to Golgotha and the full weight of human sin and misery as he suffered for us. Our yoke is easy, and the burden of the cross we are called to take up (Matthew 16:24; 3 Nephi 12:30) is light indeed relative to what he bore or to bearing the weight of our own sins. However, his call, while rooted in grace, implies actual effort and work, not belief alone. It is a call for faithful service, linked to him in sacred covenants most fully expressed in the sacred temple. A review of ancient scripture, early Christian writing, some Jewish perspectives, and modern revelation gives us insights into the richness of meaning that may be associated with taking upon us the yoke of Christ and entering into his rest.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” — Matthew 11: 28–30

The Christian symbol of the yoke of Christ is one often passed over without much reflection. The closing verses of Matthew 11 are frequently repeated in sermons and religious writings, but rarely explored in detail. Yes, follow Christ, for his way is easy. Upon more reflection, we might ask why the way is easy when clearly there is sacrifice and toil involved. However, that problem can be readily resolved by recognizing that the temporary burdens Christ gives us are far lighter from an eternal
perspective than the burden of sin. Indeed, he frees us from the weight of sin and death and brings ultimate joy and victory instead.

We may appreciate the symbolism the yoke provides of humility and obedience. We are called upon to humbly accept not just the burdens and tasks Christ has for us in mortality, but also his guidance as he directs us through the instrument of the yoke. We may recognize that this involves not just yielding to him and carrying the burdens he gives us, but following his example and seeking to be like him in how he served the Father. Accepting the yoke evokes imagery of willing toil, acceptance of guidance and revelation, and of connection to the authority of the Master.

All this suggests that something more than belief alone is required in taking up the yoke of Christ. What Christ seems to point to in Matthew 11 is entry into a covenant relationship that is most fully expressed, as I argue below, in the symbols, covenants, and power of the temple.

The Irony of Taking Up the Light Yoke of Christ

To fully understand the implications of taking up the yoke of Christ, we must first understand what the scriptural authors meant by the term “yoke.” Commentaries often note that yokes are frequently designed for a pair of animals, followed with the speculation that when we take up the yoke, Jesus is there pulling with us as our partner in toil who does most of the work. That may be a fair perspective to add, but it may not be clearly intended in the scriptures. However, it is true that Christ in his Atonement has carried the greatest burdens imaginable for our sake and taken our burdens upon him.

Ancient yokes were often simple, primarily a single beam borne on the back or neck of the load bearer. Humans in servitude were sometimes connected to a staff or rod that acted like a yoke, so the image of oppression and slavery in the scriptures can be represented with terms like staff, rod, and yoke, as in Isaiah 9:4: “For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor.”

The irony of being free from such oppression by taking up a different yoke is worthy of contemplation, as is the greater irony of the Master himself, the one who wishes to guide us under his light yoke. He, the

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1 Here the Hebrew has ‘ōl (זְלִ, Strong’s H5953) for yoke, maṭ-ṭēh (מַּתְתַה, Strong’s H4294) for staff or a bar that goes across the shoulders, and šē-bēt (שֶּבֶת, Strong’s H7626) for rod or staff of the oppressor. See, for example, BlueLetterBible.org, https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/9/4/s_688004, accessed Jan. 17, 2016, and select "interlinear" after clicking on "tools" next to Isaiah 9:4.
Master, accepted the role of the Servant of all and took upon himself the heaviest, most painful yoke imaginable in a process that included literally bearing a yoke, or rather, the beam of the cross that he carried to Golgotha (John 19:7).

That process also included being nailed to that yoke, his shoulders heaving for every painful breath under a weight far greater than the weight of his dying body alone. On that final yoke, on that cross, he completed the divine work of bearing the burden of all our sins to free us from the weight. And now he gently urges us to take up his light yoke and his light burden and move forward under his guidance, that we might learn of him and enter into his majestic rest enabled by the Atonement.

In the Old Testament, the prophesied role of the Messiah involved not only taking upon his shoulders the government (Isaiah 9:6) but far greater burdens as he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4). Consider the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 22 (so identified in the LDS edition of the Old Testament), where Eliakim the son of Hilkiah also symbolically represents the future Messiah:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 22:20–25)

Temple themes are evoked in this passage, which speaks of being clothed in a robe with a sash or girdle, having authority given into his hand, and having keys placed on his shoulder, with references also to the nail in a sure place and the burden attached to that nail.

Temple rituals, the sacrament taken each week, and the rite of baptism as a symbol of death and resurrection all serve to point our minds toward Christ and his unique, incomprehensibly lone and lonely offering for us as he bore the heaviest yoke and took up the unbearable cross on
our behalf, with nails driven into his flesh and the daggers of our guilt driven into his soul. Yet, as singular as his humble and infinitely painful offering was, he nevertheless calls us to imitate him in a sense when he asks us to take up his yoke and to take up our own cross (Matthew 16:24; 3 Nephi 12:30) and follow him. Doing so necessarily implies not just humility but sacrifice. Taking up our cross and taking the Lord’s yoke upon us are similar images pointing to service and sacrifice in his cause. How appropriate that the LDS temple would evoke images related to the crucifixion of Christ as personal, even tactile reminders of our covenants to follow him. Our imitation of Christ will always be pathetically pale and inferior, but we are called nevertheless to follow him by both taking up the yoke and our own cross.

An Early Christian Perspective

To introduce the possibility that taking the yoke upon us may have links to sacred rites and teachings, consider how Matthew 11 is applied in an interesting early Christian passage. Speaking to those caught up in pagan Greek mysteries, the highly respected early Christian Father, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD) in his *Exhortations to the Heathen* (a.k.a. *Protrepticus*, a document believed to have been written around 195 AD), speaks of true mysteries that should replace heathen rites. He refers to the sacred rites, “expounding them after [the] fashion” of the Greeks, describing the Christian mysteries as “dramas of the truth” with a sober choral dance. (I should point out that Hugh Nibley in “The Early Christian Prayer Circle” has noted the parallel between the Greek chorus/choral dance and the early Christian prayer circle.)

2 Here is a passage from Clement:

Come, O madman, not leaning on the thyrsus, not crowned with ivy; throw away the mitre, throw away the fawn-skin; come to thy senses. I will show thee the Word, and the mysteries of the Word, expounding them after thine own fashion. This is the mountain beloved of God … consecrated to dramas of the truth,— a mount of sobriety, shaded with forests of purity; and there revel on it not the Mænades, the sisters of Semele, who was struck by the thunderbolt, practising in their initiatory rites unholy division of flesh, but the daughters of God, the fair lambs,

who celebrate the holy rites of the Word, raising a sober choral dance. The righteous are the chorus; the music is a hymn of the King of the universe. The maidens strike the lyre, the angels praise, the prophets speak; the sound of music issues forth, they run and pursue the jubilant band; those that are called make haste, eagerly desiring to receive the Father.

Come thou also, O aged man, leaving Thebes, and casting away from thee both divination and Bacchic frenzy, allow thyself to be led to the truth. I give thee the staff [of the cross] on which to lean. Haste, Tiresias; believe, and thou wilt see. Christ, by whom the eyes of the blind recover sight, will shed on thee a light brighter than the sun; night will flee from thee, fire will fear, death will be gone; thou, old man, who saw not Thebes, shalt see the heavens. O truly sacred mysteries! O stainless light! My way is lighted with torches, and I survey the heavens and God I become holy whilst I am initiated. The Lord is the hierophant [that which brings someone into the presence of the holy, like the keeper of the gate in 2 Nephi 9], and seals while illuminating him who is initiated, and presents to the Father him who believes, to be kept safe for ever. Such are the reveries of my mysteries. If it is thy wish, be thou also initiated and thou shalt join the choir along with angels around the unbegotten and indestructible and the only true God, the Word of God, raising the hymn with us. This Jesus, who is eternal, the one great High Priest of the one God, and of His Father, prays for and exhorts men.

“Hear, ye myriad tribes, rather whoever among men are endowed with reason, both barbarians and Greeks. I call on the whole race of men, whose Creator I am, by the will of the Father. Come to Me, that you may be put in your due rank under the one God and the one Word of God; and do not only have the advantage of the irrational creatures in the possession of reason; for to you of all mortals I grant the enjoyment of immortality. For I want, I want to impart to you this grace, bestowing on you the perfect boon of immortality; and I confer on you both the Word and the knowledge of God, My complete self. This am I, this God wills, this is symphony, this the harmony of the Father, this is the Son, this is Christ, this the Word of God, the arm of the Lord, the power of the universe, the will of the Father; of which things there were images of old, but not all adequate. I desire to restore you according to the original model, that ye may
become also like Me. I anoint you with the unction of faith, by which you throw off corruption, and show you the naked form of righteousness by which you ascend to God. Come to Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden light.”

Let us haste, let us run, my fellow-men — us, who are God-loving and God-like images of the Word. Let us haste, let us run, let us take His yoke, let us receive, to conduct us to immortality, the good charioteer of men. Let us love Christ. He led the colt with its parent; and having yoked the team of humanity to God, directs His chariot to immortality, hastening clearly to fulfil, by driving now into heaven, what He shadowed forth before by riding into Jerusalem. A spectacle most beautiful to the Father is the eternal Son crowned with victory. Let us aspire, then, after what is good; let us become God-loving men, and obtain the greatest of all things which are incapable of being harmed — God and life. Our helper is the Word; let us put confidence in Him; … There is therefore no room to doubt, the Word will say, whether it is better to be sane or insane; but holding on to truth with our teeth, we must with all our might follow God, and in the exercise of wisdom regard all things to be, as they are, His; and besides, having learned that we are the most excellent of His possessions, let us commit ourselves to God, loving the Lord God, and regarding this as our business all our life long. And if what belongs to friends be reckoned common property, and man be the friend of God — for through the mediation of the Word has he been made the friend of God — then accordingly all things become man’s, because all things are God’s, and the common property of both the friends, God and man.

It is time, then, for us to say that the pious Christian alone is rich and wise, and of noble birth, and thus call and believe him to be God’s image, and also His likeness, having become righteous and holy and wise by Jesus Christ, and so far already like God. Accordingly this grace is indicated by the prophet, when he says, “I said that ye are gods, and all sons of the Highest.” For us, yea us, He has adopted, and wishes to be called the Father of
us alone, not of the unbelieving. Such is then our position who are the attendants of Christ [emphasis added].³

There are surprising connections between the yoke imagery of Matthew 11:28–30 and rites of initiation, including a reference to anointing, which is part of the mysteries aimed at bringing us into the presence of God and becoming more like him. Clement alludes to several temple themes connected to the concept of the yoke, though instead of a heavy yoke for slow and steady oxen, it is the yoke (or bridle) of a charioteer wishing to bring us swiftly home into the presence of God, where it is our destiny to become more like him, even being called “gods” once we have entered into the rest that God gives us. Beginning with the concept of sacred rest, we will explore a variety of these and related concepts from modern and ancient perspectives.

Sacred Rest, the House of Rest, and the Day of Rest

Christ, who has fully come unto the Father and received all things from him, invites us to follow him, to come unto him, and in turn to receive rest. In the Greek, rest in Matthew 11:28 is ἀναπαύσω or anapauō (Strong’s G373). In Hebrew, references to the Sabbath as a day of rest use שַבָּת or shabbathown (Strong’s H7677, see also Strong’s H7676, שַבָּת ‘shabbath’), a sacred day for drawing close to the Lord and renewing covenants. The root נְחוֹן or nwh (nuwach, Strong’s H5117) is also used to describe many concepts related to rest.

What is the significance of rest? Certainly the removal of worry and the pains of sin granted in the next life can be called rest. But the sacred rest of the Lord may entail more still. A hint of something bigger that the Lord has in mind might be found in the preceding verse:

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. (Matthew 11:27)

After this implicit mystery-laden challenge to know the Father, to have him revealed to us by the Son, who inherits all things from the Father, there then comes the invitation: “Come unto me ... and I will give you rest.”

Insight to the concept of rest is found in the Book of Mormon, where Alma gives it special emphasis at the end of chapter 12 and in chapter 13, as discussed by Robert L. Millet, who observes that Alma uses *rest* in several ways:

It would appear that Alma is trying to point out that it is through the atoning blood of Christ and by the power of the holy priesthood that individuals and congregations are prepared and made ready to enter the rest of God. In one sense, a person enters the rest of God when he or she gains a testimony of the gospel, and is brought out of worldly confusion into the peace and security that comes only from God. [This spiritual rest] is to know the peace of the Spirit, to enjoy the blessing of the Comforter. It is what Jesus promised to disciples when he said: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Second, spirits enter the rest of God when they enter paradise, the home of the righteous in the postmortal spirit world at the time of death (Alma 40:11-12; 60:13). A third dimension of the rest of the Lord is that which follows the resurrection and judgment, as we enter the celestial kingdom and receive exaltation. It is interesting that Mormon, speaking to the members of the Church in his day, uses *rest* in at least two ways. “Wherefore,” he said, “I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord,” — meaning here in mortality — ”from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven” (Moroni 7:3).4

That there are different forms of rest that may be described with a single word in the scriptures was recognized by Alfred Edersheim:

[T]he Sabbath-law itself rested on the original ‘hallowing’ of the seventh day, when God rested from all His works (Genesis 2:3). But this was not the only rest to which the Sabbath pointed. There is also a rest of redemption, and the Sabbath was expressly connected with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. ‘Remember

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that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore Jehovah thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day’ (Deuteronomy 5:15). At the close of the workaday week, holy rest in the Lord; at the end of the labour and sorrow of Egypt, redemption and rest; and both pointing forward to the better rest (Hebrews 4:9), and ultimately to the eternal Sabbath of completed work, of completed redemption, and completed ‘hallowing’ (Revelation 11) — was the meaning of the weekly Sabbath. It was because this idea of festive rest and sanctification was so closely connected with the weekly festival that the term Sabbath was also applied to the great festivals (as Leviticus 23:15, 24, 32, 39).5

Millet, in considering meanings of the word rest, turns to Doctrine and Covenants 84 for yet another aspect:

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also (Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–24).6

According to Millet,

This is a significant scriptural statement, especially as we consider Alma’s remarks to the people in Ammonihah. His invitation for

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them to enter into the rest of the Lord is built upon the notion that ancient Israel provoked God and proved unworthy of this blessing (see Alma 12:36–37). Moses desired to make available the highest privilege of the priesthood to Israel — the privilege of seeing the face of God, of coming directly into the divine presence. Of the Israelites, Jehovah said: “I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my presence, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage” (JST, Exodus 34:2; emphasis added). Here the rest of the Lord is equated with being in the personal presence of the Lord while the recipients are still mortal.7

Note also that Exodus 33:14 connects the Lord’s presence with rest: “And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

The temple and its priesthood ordinances and covenants, of course, are aimed at preparing mortals to enter into the Lord’s presence and rest. As Alma said in Alma 13:16 referring to the high priesthood, “these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, … it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.” The ordinances help us follow Christ, learn from him, and enter into his rest. When we speak of this rest, we generally focus on the next life, though we are called to be holy now, to be guided daily by his Spirit, and to seek his face (Psalm 105:4; 1 Chronicles 16:11; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 24:6; Psalm 27:8 — note especially that Psalm 27:4–8 and Psalm 24:3–7 point to the temple as the place where one can seek the Lord’s face).

How does one obtain rest from the Lord? By taking up his yoke, of course, to follow him. Alma says those who humble themselves and “bring forth fruit meet for repentance” will “enter into that rest” (Alma 13:13). Or, as Jeremiah puts it (Jeremiah 6:16), we find rest by following in the Lord’s “old paths” and “good way”:

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

The ways of the Lord, his ancient paths and covenants, bring rest to our souls and bring us into Zion, into the sacred place of the Lord’s rest. Consider Psalm 132, following a discussion of David’s desire to build a house for the Lord:

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7 Millet, “The Holy Order of God,” 1992
Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David’s sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. (Psalm 132:8–14)

In this temple-centric psalm, the priests are clothed in sacred robes of righteousness, the sacred symbol of the ark is mentioned, and the children of the Israel are reminded to keep their covenants with the Lord. Zion is the habitation of the Lord, the place of the Lord’s rest, for there will the Lord dwell. This is, of course, also the role of the house of the Lord, where we most fully take the name of Christ upon us.

**Sabbath Connections**

The temple, when not taken over by forces of wickedness (as in Isaiah 66:1–4), is the place of God’s rest — a house of rest. It is expressly called a “house of rest” in 1 Chronicles 28:2, and the symbolism of its construction in the Old Testament is rich with Sabbath themes. For example, it took Solomon seven years to complete it (1 Kings 6:38), following the Jewish agricultural law in Leviticus 25:1–7 that included a cycle of six years of work and one of rest, with the seventh year called “a sabbath of rest” (v. 4). Solomon dedicated the temple during the festival of tabernacles, a seven-day feast in the seventh month (Deuteronomy 16:13 and I Kings 8:2). Jewish scholar Jon Levenson points out additional connections to the theme of rest linking Solomon’s temple and the Sabbath:

His speech on that occasion [the festival of tabernacles] includes a carefully constructed list of seven specific petitions (1 Kings 8:31–53). In short, both the appurtenances of the temple and the account of its construction reflect the character of the acts of creation narrated in Genesis 1:1–2:4a.

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Since the creation of the world and the construction of the temple are parallel, if not identical, then the experience of the completed universe and that of the completed sanctuary should also be parallel. In fact, the two entities share an interest in rest as the consummation of the processes that produced them. In the case of creation, God “rested” on the seventh day, the primordial Sabbath, after he had completed his labors (wayyanah, Exodus 20:11), and he commands his servants to rest in imitatione Dei in similar language [e.g., Exodus 23:12 and Deuteronomy 5:14, each with yanuah]. The same root (nwh) describes his experience in the temple as well:

13 For yhwh has chosen Zion,
   He has desired it for his seat:
14 “This is my resting place (menuhati) forever;
   Here I shall be enthroned, for I desire it.”
(Psalms 132:13–14)

The book of Chronicles goes so far as even to say that Solomon, and not David, would build the temple because the former is a “man of rest” (menûhâ) and of peace (šalôm), as his name (šelomoh) would imply (1 Chronicles 22:9).

Levenson then summarizes the relationship:

The Sabbatical experience and the temple experience are one. The first represents sanctity in time, the second, sanctity in space, and yet they are somehow the same. The Sabbath is to time and to the work of creation what the temple is to space and to the painful history of Israel which its completion brings to an end, as God has at last given Solomon “rest from all his enemies round about” (1 Chronicles 22:9). “The seventh day is,” in Abraham Joshua Heschel’s splendid phrase, “like a palace in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere.”

The temple is a sacred mountain and a house for entering into the presence of God, as Moses did on Sinai, and for making sacred covenants to advance us in that cause. That well describes the modern LDS temple

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9 Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 144
10 Levenson, 1985, 145
and, as Margaret Barker and others have demonstrated, the early Jewish temple concept.\textsuperscript{11}

Another relevant passage, Isaiah 25:6–10, describes the people of the Lord entering his presence on a mountain — possibly a symbol of the temple.\textsuperscript{12} There they rejoice. Then, “in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest” (v. 10), a passage using the same Hebrew root (Strong’s H5117) used in Exodus 20:11, telling us that on the seventh day, the Lord rested. The Lord can rest when his people enter into his rest, for his work (and his glory) is bringing about their immortality and eternal life (Moses 1:39).

In Psalm 125, Mount Zion, a symbol of the temple, is described as a refuge for the people of the Lord, where he is “round about his people” forever. But there “the rod of the wicked” (like the yoke, a symbol of servitude) “shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous” (v. 3). The wicked will be led away, but “peace [like rest] shall be upon Israel” (v. 5).

The temple as sacred space is a place of rest linked to the day of rest. It is sacred space in a profane world, as the Sabbath is sacred time surrounded by profane time. It is to space as the Sabbath is to time, “a palace in time.”\textsuperscript{13}

Of course, Isaiah in Isaiah 58 reminds us that in fasting and in remembering the Sabbath, we must be sure to not look to our own needs and tasks but serve the Lord and help the needy and indeed, to “break every yoke”:

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye \textbf{break every yoke}?

\textsuperscript{11} Margaret Barker, \textit{Temple Mysticism: An Introduction} (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011). For related reviews and articles at the \textit{Mormon Interpreter}, see http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/tag/margaret-barker/


Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring
the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the
naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from
thine own flesh?

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine
health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go
before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.

Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry,
and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst
of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking
vanity;

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy
the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy
darkness be as the noon day:

And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy
soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a
watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places:
thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and
thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of
paths to dwell in.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy
pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy
of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine
own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine
own words:

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause
thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with
the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath
spoken it. (Isaiah 58:6–14)

The righteous are to take away the yokes of others (vv. 6, 9) and
cease from pursuing their own will and pleasure (v. 13), while implicitly
seeking to serve the Lord instead and delight in him (v. 14). In return
for proper Sabbath observance comes the promise that the Lord shall
guide us continually (v. 11). The gift of personal revelation and guidance
through the Holy Spirit is essential for our quest for rest.

Latter-day Saints familiar with the modern temple may find the
ancient Jewish connections between the temple and the Sabbath still
relevant today. The Sabbath, of course, is the day of rest, a day to help us renew covenants and prepare to enter into the presence of God. The temple is a house of rest, the rest that God provides for his sons and daughters who come unto him.

As Elder Dallin H. Oaks has eloquently pointed out, the LDS sacrament prayer’s statement about being willing to take the name of Christ upon us implies that it is not fully taken upon us by baptism alone. That prayer points us to the place where we more fully taken the name of Christ upon us and more fully take up his yoke. It is in the temple where we take upon us the authority/name of Jesus Christ. I would likewise suggest that temple teachings and covenants more fully bind us to the Lord just as the yoke joins the ox to its master.

The yoke of oxen perhaps should be one of the concepts we consider as we approach the baptismal font in the temple, which was born on the backs of oxen. Baptismal covenants, renewed weekly at the sacrament table, are covenants to take the name of Christ upon us, which is more than just acknowledging his name. It is committing ourselves to follow him. Taking his name upon us is taking his yoke upon us.

Appropriately, the Kirtland Temple had prominently displayed sacrament tables in the shape of a yoke for oxen.

Baptism, the sacrament, burdens on the backs of oxen, and sacred temple covenants all may be connected.

If taking the yoke of Christ upon us is related to taking his name upon us in the temple, then his yoke should be most fully understood to include temple covenants. Is that not how we take his name most fully upon us, and prepare to enter into that rest?

**Mysteries, Rites, and the Yoke?**

What of the mysteries and rites mentioned by Clement of Alexandria above? Could they be related to the sacred ordinances of the modern temple? Could early Christians actually have had hidden rituals outside those published in the canon of the New Testament?

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The LDS faith and significant portions of early Christianity share an important element that divides us from much of modern Christianity, namely, the belief that there are sacred teachings and ceremonies that are not directly found in canonical writings and were simply not meant to be published at all. Such teachings and practices are found in the LDS temple, where we make sacred covenants and obtain sacred insights that we do not discuss in detail outside the temple. To us, those covenants are part of taking on the yoke of Christ. In other words, the teachings of Christ that we take upon us are both the public and the private teachings; those given to the world in open sermons, and those given in further

16 A photo from the Community of Christ showing the yoke-shaped sacrament table on the Kirtland Temple altars is available at http://emp.byui.edu/SATTERFIELDDB/Rel341/Pictures/Kirtland%20Temple%20MelPriesthood%20Pulpits.html, which states: “Across the front of the pulpits is a folding sacrament table shaped like an oxen yoke. The initials P.E.M. on the table stand for Presidency Elders Melchizedek (Elders).”
revelations to his apostles and prophets, including the sacred concepts of the restored temple.

That Christ taught many things beyond what is recorded in the New Testament should be obvious. It is also explicitly taught in the New Testament. Not long before his death, the Savior told his disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). After the Resurrection, Acts 1:1–3 indicates that he showed himself to the Apostles and spoke “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” during a period of forty days. Not a word of what he taught during those forty days is recorded in the canon we now have. Was this all fluff of no importance to Christians, or was it more advanced and sacred material for followers better prepared to understand and bear them? A great deal of early Christian tradition points to the latter.

Lest you think that Clement of Alexandria is just speaking figuratively about the public canon of scripture, elsewhere he explicitly refers to unwritten material from the apostles. For example, in Book 6 of Stromata, at the end of chapters 7 and 8, we find some interesting material as he discusses this higher knowledge, or gnosis.¹⁷ E.g., “And the gnosis itself is that which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles.” Chapter 15 also affirms that there was unwritten knowledge given by Christ to the apostles.

The case for extensive unwritten, sacred rituals among at least some early Christians may be strengthened by a document purportedly from Clement of Alexandria that was discovered just a few decades ago.¹⁸ This document, often known as the Mar Saba Letter, was discovered by Morton Smith in 1958. It has troubled the Christian world and has been said by some to be a forgery, though some scholars dispute allegations of fraud and believe it may be authentic, but not necessarily from Clement of Alexandria himself. The document indicates that the some of the rituals of the Gnostics, featuring many concepts similar to those in the LDS temple, were not originated by the Gnostics but were stolen from the secret sacred rituals of authentic early Christians in Alexandria, who

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received these rituals from Peter via Mark the Evangelist. The fragment from Clement speaks of a legitimate Christian set of secret teachings known as the “the Hierophantic Teaching of the Lord” and secret initiation rituals known as “the Great Mysteries.” These were not written down but were preserved by oral tradition. While Clement refers to the Secret Gospel of Mark, the mysteries and teachings he speaks of were not based on that controversial document.

The concept of secret doctrines and mysteries taught by Christ to his Apostles is attested in several other early Christian documents, as Barry Bickmore has documented. For example, in the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea (c. 330–379) in De Spirito Sancto spoke of doctrines “received from the unwritten tradition of the Fathers” (Chapter 9, verse 22) and said much more in Chapter 27:

66. Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us “in a mystery” by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will gainsay — no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; … Moreover we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of

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Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learned the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents. … In the same manner [this comes after mentioning Moses and his shielding of the Holy of Holies] the Apostles and Fathers who laid down laws for the Church from the beginning thus guarded the awful dignity of the mysteries in secrecy and silence, for what is bruited abroad random among the common folk is no mystery at all. This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten precepts and practices, that the knowledge of our dogmas may not become neglected and contemned by the multitude through familiarity. …

67. Time will fail me if I attempt to recount the unwritten mysteries of the Church. … While the unwritten traditions are so many, and their bearing on the mystery of godliness [1 Timothy 3:16] is so important, can they refuse to allow us a single word which has come down to us from the Fathers; — which we found, derived from untutored custom, abiding in unperverted churches; — a word for which the arguments are strong, and which contributes in no small degree to the completeness of the force of the mystery.22

Lactantius (c. 250–325) spoke of a hidden mystery kept from the world:

…God orders us in quietness and silence to hide His secret, and to keep it within our own conscience; and not to strive with obstinate contention against those who are ignorant of the truth, and who rigorously assail God and His religion not for the sake of learning, but of censuring and jeering. For a mystery ought to be most faithfully concealed and covered, especially by us, who bear the name of faith. But they accuse this silence of ours, as though it were the result of an evil conscience; whence also they

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invent some detestable things respecting those who are holy and blameless, and willingly believe their own inventions.\textsuperscript{23}

If there were more advanced concepts that Christ wanted to teach but which his disciples were not yet ready to “bear them now” as he said in John 16:12, could it be that at a later time, such as during his forty-day ministry, they would receive them and be ready to “bear them”? Could those teachings be part of the full yoke of Christ that we are to bear? One of the earliest Christian documents after the New Testament, the Didache, uses this term, the “full yoke” of the Lord and links it to the goal of perfection: “If you can bear the Lord’s full yoke, you will be perfect. But if you cannot, then do what you can.”\textsuperscript{24} Latter-day Saints would concur that taking up the full yoke of Christ is part of the quest to ultimately be perfected through the grace of Christ.

Augustine, in discussing the yoke of Christ, connects it to sacred sacraments and other practices that are not necessarily contained in scripture:

> [O]ur Lord Jesus Christ has appointed to us a light yoke and an easy burden, as He declares in the Gospel: in accordance with which He has bound His people under the new dispensation together in fellowship by sacraments, which are in number very few, in observance most easy, and in significance most excellent, as baptism solemnized in the name of the Trinity, the communion of His body and blood, and such other things as are prescribed in the canonical Scriptures, with the exception of those enactments which were a yoke of bondage to God’s ancient people, suited to their state of heart and to the times of the prophets, and which are found in the five books of Moses. As to those other things which we hold on the authority, not of Scripture, but of tradition, and which are observed throughout the whole world, it may be understood that they are held as approved and instituted either by the apostles themselves, or by plenary Councils, whose authority in the Church is most useful, e.g. the annual commemoration, by special solemnities,

\begin{footnotes}
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of the Lord’s passion, resurrection, and ascension, and of the
descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven, and whatever else is in
like manner observed by the whole Church wherever it has been
established.25

The extensive literature related to the forty-day ministry of Christ
was explored by Hugh Nibley, who finds evidence for many temple-
related themes.26 That literature is part of a great deal of recent evidence
pointing to ancient roots for the modern LDS temple, roots that cannot
be explained by the several elements that appear to have been borrowed
from modern Masonry or from other modern sources Joseph may have
had access to.27,28

Regarding the forty-day literature, Nibley writes:

The apocryphal teachings of the 40 days taken together comprise
an imposing doctrinal edifice, totally unlike the patchwork
systems of the Gnostics. … The central theme is the Descensus,
a mission to the spirits below closely resembling the Lord’s
earthly calling. He brings the kerygma [the proclamation of the
Gospel] to all, and those who accept it follow him out of the
depths into the light, receive baptism, and hence mount up by
degrees to realms of glory, for as in the Jewish apocrypha the
picture of other worlds is not a simple one. This mounting up is
depicted as the return of the spirit to its heavenly home, where it
existed in glory before coming to earth. This is not the Gnostic
idea of preexistence, however, for the soul is not sent down as

25  Augustine, "Letter 54," Letters of St. Augustine, Chapter 1, in Nicene and
Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight; http://www.newadvent.org/

26 Hugh Nibley, "Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-day Mission
reprinted by the Maxwell Institute, http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/

27 Jeffrey Bradshaw, "Freemasonry and the Origins of Modern Temple
http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/freemasonry-and-the-origins-of-modern-temple-

of the Temple (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 1999). A related
online resource is J. Lindsay, "LDSFAQ: Mormons and Masonry," JeffLindsay.com,
punishment nor imprisoned in the flesh, nor does it fly directly to God after its release from physical confinement; rather it is sent to be tried and tested in “the blessed vessel” of the flesh whose immortality is guaranteed by the resurrection.

There is a strong emphasis in early Christian literature on the doctrine of the Two Ways, depicting life as a time of probation, a constant confrontation with good and evil and the obligation to choose between them. This is conceived as part of a plan laid down “in the presence of the first angels” at the creation of the world, according to which through Adam’s fall the human race would be placed in the position, envied by the angels, of being perfectly free to choose good or evil and thereby fully merit whatever rewards would follow. Satan rebelled against the plan, refused obeisance to Adam, and was cast down upon the earth with his cohorts, to fulfill divine purpose by providing, as “the serpent,” the temptation necessary for an effectual testing of human beings. Through inspired prophets men from time to time are taught the rules of the game, but are prone to cheat, fall away into darkness, and require painful correction before return to divine favor and a new dispensation of heavenly gifts and covenants. The historical picture is a complicated one, culminating in the final return of the Lord, but not before he has made other appearances, notably to a few “righteous and pure souls and faithful,” preparatory to the ultimate and glorious parousia.

What gives substance to this peculiar doctrinal structure is the imposing body of rites and ordinances that goes with it. Ritual and doctrinal elements are inextricably interwoven in a complex in which everything is oddly literal and all fit solidly together: The kerygma, whether above or below, is real and must have a “seal,” which is baptism, though the word is also used to designate rites of washing and anointing that go with it; after such rites the initiate receives a symbolic but real and tangible garment, and then sits down to a sacral meal, a real repast celebrating the perfect unity of the participants with each other and with the Lord, who is present in spirit. Recent findings indicate unusual emphasis placed on a perfect unity of the sexes in marriage ordinances which were real enough and secret enough to excite the scandalized speculations of outsiders and the fantastic imitation of the Gnostics. After all allowances have been made,
there remains a definite residue of early Christian ritual that goes far beyond anything known to later Christianity, which admittedly got its liturgy from the synagogue and the Hellenistic world, while the rites just mentioned all look to the temple and belong to the instructions of the 40 days [emphasis added].

The teachings swirling around the mysteries of the forty-day ministry appear linked to the temple and to its sacred covenants and rites. This is consistent with the LDS view that there is more the Lord has revealed for us than we have in public writings. A few of these rites are explored below.

Anointing

Among the early Christian concepts and practices mentioned by Clement of Alexandria early in this paper and reiterated by Nibley is the ordinance of anointing. To me, this ancient rite, originally used in Old Testament times as a symbol of giving authority to priests and kings and a part of modern LDS temple practice, has parallels to taking on the yoke of Christ.

Daniel Bercera offers a review of some early Christian aspects of the mysterious rite of anointing or chrism. Based on writings in the first four centuries of the early Church, Bercera identifies three persistent themes in the ritual: “first, a literal anointing; second, a symbol for the reception of the Holy Spirit; and third, an endowment of knowledge or power.”

Interestingly, anointing with oil is often associated with the horn of an ox, which may remind us of the attributes of an ox, including the strength it offers in service under the yoke. In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel is told by the Lord to “fill thine horn with oil” to go anoint David as King, (v. 1). “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (v. 13). In 1 Kings 1:39, “Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon.” A different animal is mentioned in a metaphor in Psalm 92:10, though I believe the horn of an

ox is still the tangible object used to contain the oil used for anointing: “But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Tertullian in *On Baptism* wrote:

> When we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed, with a blessed unction, — (a practice derived) from the old discipline, wherein on entering the priesthood, *men* were wont to be anointed with oil from a horn, ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses.31

Thus the horn (of the ox) is associated with authority, anointing, and covenant making.

In the previously quoted statement from *Exhortations to the Heathen* of Clement of Alexandria, anointing is mentioned immediately before he cites Christ’s words about taking on his yoke:

> I desire to restore you according to the original model, that ye may become also like Me. I anoint you with the unction of faith, by which you throw off corruption, and show you the naked form of righteousness by which you ascend to God. Come to Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, …32

The symbol of being anointed is literally one of “taking on” something from the Lord. The oil of anointing is a symbol of divine power and authority, as well as his teachings. Surely it is a symbol of taking on us the name of Christ and his authority. It is a symbol not wholly unrelated to the yoke, recognizing, for example, that the role of the anointed priest or king is ultimately to be a servant and to carry a burden for the Lord.

Regarding some temple-related aspects of anointing, Matthew Brown in the *Gate of Heaven* writes

> Around 350 AD, Cyril of Jerusalem equated the anointing ceremony that was administered under his direction (of the forehead, ears, nose, and chest) with the “unction” or “anointing” that is spoken of in 1 John 2:20, 27. Basil the Great referred to the early Christian anointing ritual as one of the secret teachings “delivered to us ‘in a mystery’ by the traditions of the apostles.”

What did this anointing ceremony consist of? Several historical sources say that the early Saints were anointed on the forehead,

32  Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Heathen*. 
ears, nose, eyes, mouth, and chest, and a formula of words was pronounced as the body parts were anointed. Most sources, however, simply say that the Christian’s entire body was anointed with holy oil. Some ritual texts indicate that the anointing oil was applied to the initiate’s head as a type of “seal,” and then the seal was confirmed upon the initiate in the name of the three members of the Godhead. Around 200 AD Tertullian wrote that the anointing ritual was administered to Christ’s disciples so that they themselves could become “christs,” or anointed ones, like their Master.33

Cyril of Jerusalem said that through this anointing all Christians “were made Christs.” He described this anointing or chrism as essential for those on the path to being Christians. However, it appears to be one of those unwritten mysteries that resonate with LDS practices, and it may be part of what is involved in fully taking up the yoke of Christ and advancing toward him:

3. ... Which ointment is symbolically applied to your forehead and your other senses; and while your body is anointed with the visible ointment, your soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-giving Spirit.

4. And you were first anointed on the forehead, that you might be delivered from the shame, which the first man who transgressed bore about with him everywhere; and that with unveiled face ye might reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord. Then on your ears; that you might receive the ears which are quick to hear the Divine Mysteries, of which Esaias said, The Lord gave me also an ear to hear; and the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, He that has ears to hear let him hear. Then on the nostrils; that receiving the sacred ointment ye may say, We are to God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved. Afterwards on your breast; that having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, you may stand against the wiles of the devil. For as Christ after His Baptism, and the visitation of the Holy Ghost, went forth and vanquished the adversary, so likewise ye, after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Chrism, having put on the whole armour of the Holy Ghost, are to stand against the power of the adversary, and vanquish it, saying, I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

33 Brown, The Gate of Heaven, 1999 (Kindle edition: location 5782 of 9430, Chapter 5).
5. Having been counted worthy of this Holy Chrism, you are called Christians, verifying the name also by your new birth. For before you were deemed worthy of this grace, you had properly no right to this title, but were advancing on your way towards being Christians.\textsuperscript{34}

Maxwell E. Johnson in \textit{The Rites of Christian Initiation} describes the Roman Catholic catechumenal and pre-baptismal rites in Rome for those “elected” for baptism (primarily infants), which rites were described in the Gelasian Sacramentary, one of the oldest western liturgical books dating to the 8th century, and Ordo Romanus XI.

Following a final exorcism, an \textit{apertio} [opening] rite was performed with spittle on the ears and nostrils of the elect, the elect were anointed on the breast and between the shoulder blades with exorcised oil, Satan was renounced in a three-fold question and answer format, the Creed was … recited by the bishop while he imposed hands on the heads of the elect, and the elect were dismissed until the time of the Easter Vigil [where the baptismal and post-baptismal rites were performed].\textsuperscript{35}

In the rites of the Syrian Orthodox Church at Antioch, as described by Whitaker and Johnson, following baptism and anointing, a form of “chrism” or “chrismation” is performed using holy “myron” (chrism) in which the shoulders and back are anointed:

\textit{The priest holds the vessel of the holy Myron (chrism) in his left hand and, laying his right hand upon the child’s head, says the following supplication:}

May this Your servant, who in faith and baptism has been counted among Your servants, be worthy to receive this seal in Your Holy Name….

\textit{The priest moistens his right thumb with the holy Myron and seals the child upon his forehead three times crosswise, saying:}


By the holy myron which is Christ’s sweet fragrance, the seal of the true faith, and perfection of the Holy Spirit’s gifts, N … is sealed …

The priest pours the holy myron upon his palm and anoints the child first on his (her) forehead, then his (her) right ear, arm, shoulder, and all his (her) right side, including the fingers of his (her) right hand and the toes of his (her) right foot. He then anoints the child’s left side, his (her) arm, shoulder, ear, the fingers of his (her) left hand, and the toes of his (her) left foot. He returns to the child’s forehead, head, eyes, chest, and back until the child’s body is completely anointed.36

In other rites (e.g., the Stowe Missal, an Irish manuscript from the late eighth or early ninth century), a catechumen is anointed upon the breast and between the shoulder blades before baptism.37

A review of ancient rites for Extreme Unction shows multiple sources including anointing of the shoulders or neck.38 A ninth-century manuscript directs anointing to be done on the eyes, ears, lips, neck, shoulders, breast, hands, and feet, as well as the umbilicus, or the place where the malady is seated. The Codex Ratoldi offers a similar list: ears, nostrils, lips, breast, shoulders, hands, and feet. The Gregorian Sacramentary specifies anointing of the neck, the throat, the place between the shoulders, and the breast or the place where the pain is entered. In an ancient codex of the Catalanian Church, unctions are to be made on the breast, shoulders, head, hands, and feet.39

Quodvultdeus, a fifth-century church father and bishop of Carthage who was exiled to Naples, preaches to the newly baptized and anointed in his Sermon on the Creed. Regarding the significance of the lengthy ceremonies that have just been performed, including the casting out of Satan, he wrote:

We put the devil to flight and brought Christ in … What was done in the night? Pride was destroyed, humility brought in. The chief of all evil was expelled, the fount of all goodness received.

37 Whitaker and Johnson, Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy, 2003, 279.
You see what good things are prepared for you, and from what labour and what burden of sin you are raised by him who calls you to **take upon you his light yoke and his light burden**. *Casting off therefore the works of darkness, put on the armour of light* [Rom. 13:12].\(^40\)

An early and interesting examination of links between ancient Catholic rituals and the LDS temple was published by Marcus Wellnitz,\(^41\) who refers to a sixth-century Christian ritual of anointing that used these words:

I sign your forehead. … I sign your eyes so that they may see the glory of God. I sign your ears so that you may hear the voice of the Lord. I sign your nostrils so that you may breathe the fragrance of Christ. I sign your lips so that you may speak the words of life. I sign your heart so that you may believe in the Holy Trinity. **I sign your shoulders so that you may bear the yoke of Christ’s service.** … In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, so that you may live forever and ever ["Saeculum saeculorum"].\(^42\)

Here the anointing of the shoulders expressly refers to bearing the yoke of Christ’s service.

In anointing, the concept of taking on a burden such as a yoke may be involved by anointing the back, the shoulder specifically, or the neck. Shoulder and neck are both associated with the yoke in the scriptures. For example, in Isaiah 10:27, we read:

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And it shall come to pass in that day, that his **burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck**, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

Now that we have mentioned the links between the yoke, the temple, and anointing, Latter-day Saints might be intrigued by Isaiah 10:27, which speaks of the yoke of captivity being “destroyed because of the anointing,” but this may be a translation problem in the KJV. The Hebrew word translated as anointing, *shemen*, actually refers to fatness, and it is generally understood now to suggest the image of the fat, healthy neck of the ox swelling to break the yoke. The connection from fat or oil to anointing is not an impossible leap — indeed, Margaret Barker points out that *shemen* can also refer to “the anointing oil, as prescribed for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:24) or for anointing the king, ‘the oil of gladness’ (Psalm 45.7)”⁴³ — but modern translations often do not use “anointing” and see it as unjustified here. For example, the New International Version (NIV) has “the yoke will be broken because you have grown so fat.”

The relationship between anointing, taking on the covenants of Christ, and becoming more like Christ may be implicit in the Greek of Matthew 11:28–30. In verse 30, the yoke is described as “easy” using the Greek word *chrēstos* (χρηστός, G5542 in Strong’s Concordance),⁴⁴ which evokes the name Christos (Χριστός, G5547 in Strong’s Concordance),⁴⁵ meaning the Anointed One.

A related wordplay from Paul is discussed by Matthew Bowen in an exploration of Paul’s writings in Philemon:

Paul also deliberately plays on the name-title “Christ.” The word χρηστός (chrēstos) in the Greek of Paul’s time also sounded almost exactly the same as Χριστός (Christos, “Christ”). Thus Paul is also referencing Onesimus’s conversion to Christ: “in times past he was ‘without Christ’ [i.e., ἄχρηστον ~ achr[i]ston] to you, but now he is indeed ‘Well-in-Christ’ [εὔχρηστον ~ euchr[i]ston] both to you and to me” — a clever pun on χρηστός (-chrēstos). This homophonic wordplay adds additional nuance to Paul’s play on “Onesimus.” F.F. Bruce notes that “in Gentile

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ears Christ was simply an alternative name for Jesus … Christos sounded exactly like a fairly common slave-name, Chrēstos (Latin Chrestus) and among Greeks and Romans there was considerable confusion between the two spellings, as also between christianoi and chrestianoi.” The Latin suffix –ianus, attached to the name Christ, denoted “adherent of.” Thus, a “Christian” was an adherent of Christ, but an ordinary Greek or Roman might have heard “Chrēstianos” and understood it to mean an “adherent of (a slave) Chrestos.”

As a Christian of the Roman Mediterranean world, Philemon would have been sensitive to the pejorative overtones of this terminology. Christ, had in fact, died the ignominious death of a slave, of whom Philemon professed to be an adherent, like Paul and now Onesimus. By calling Onesimus (Ὀνήσιμος, “useful”) -χρηστόν (–chrēston, “useful”), Paul is placing Onesimus on the same level as himself and Philemon within the sphere of their “shared” relationship to Christ (Χριστός/χρηστός, Christos/chrēstos).46 [references omitted]

As recorded in the Greek, when Christ declares that his yoke is “easy” (chrestos), the wording reminds us that it is a genuine burden that we take on as we seek to be servants in Christ, but also that it joins us to the Anointed One. Through acceptance of our own anointing, this easy yoke helps us be united with Christ.

**The Yoke and the Ox**

*Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.*

Proverbs 14:4

The animal most commonly associated with yokes in the Bible is the ox (or bullock). This beast of burden is appreciated for its strength and its temperament. In terms of covenant relationships and ancient biblical rites, the ox plays several notable roles in addition to taking on the yoke of a master.

In the sacrificial rites of the Jewish temple, the ox was the highest level of the sacrificial animals. Its sacrifice was the most significant and holy and served as a symbol of the Lord’s sacrifice and holiness. Ox-related symbols in ancient temple worship include the horn of oil, discussed above, and also the horns of the altar, which were horns rising from each corner of the altar that were anointed with the blood of the ox or bullock (e.g., Exodus 29:12, 37:25; Leviticus 4:7, 18, 25–34; 8:14–15, 9:9, 16:18).

In Solomon’s temple, twelve oxen bore the basin of water that was used for ritual purification, and in the LDS temple, oxen bear the baptismal font. The oxen in groups of three point to the four cardinal directions, symbolizing the gathering of Israel from the four quarters of the earth.

Deuteronomy 33:17, a prophecy often interpreted by LDS people to refer to the gathering of Israel by the house of Joseph, says:

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns [various commentaries indicate that the meaning of the Hebrew is unclear, but could refer to a wild bull or ox-like animal]: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth.

The ox was so important to the people of Israel that in their apostasy, they selected a golden calf to worship as an idol (Exodus 32). As Psalm 106:19–22, describes that incident, they exchanged the glory of God “for the image of an ox that eats grass.” The golden calf can be viewed as Satan’s imitation of the ox associated with the temple, sacrifice, and service. The differences, of course, are significant: one is living, mobile, strong, and obedient, while the other is inanimate, stationary, powerless, and hollow. The ox associated with temple covenants is a sign of obedience, sacrifice, service, strength, steadiness, and reception of divine authority. It is a symbol of serving the Lord and also of working alongside him as he carries the bulk of our burdens. The ox is mature in the service of the Lord, while the calf is young and untried. Indeed, the golden calf is a symbol of rebellion, of false priorities, of betrayed loyalty, of usurped authority, and of lust for material things and fleeting pleasures.
Priestly Robes and the Yoke

The robes of priesthood, both ancient and modern, may also be tied to taking upon us the yoke of Christ. One of the obvious but easily overlooked aspects of the robes of the priesthood, whether ancient or in the modern LDS temple tradition, is that these robes are placed upon the shoulder. Some articles of clothing, such as the ephod or breastplate may have been placed on both shoulders. Other times, a robe may be placed on just the right or left shoulder. In any case, the donning of sacred robes onto the shoulders may well be considered in light of taking the yoke of Christ upon us.

Blake Ostler in a BYU Studies essay summarized several ancient traditions regarding sacred garments and related them to the restored LDS temple concept. After reviewing many temple-relevant connections, he offers a summary listing six symbolic meanings of the sacred garments given in ancient rituals, including:

(5) an added robe represented the righteousness procured for entrance into the kingdom of God and for passing by angels posted there; (6) when one donned the garment, one also took upon himself a name for passing the gate, the name of Jesus Christ, with whom ultimate unity became possible through these ancient ordinances.

In light of Elder Oaks’ statement about the temple being the place where we most fully take the name of Christ upon us, and that we witness our willingness to do so when we partake of the sacrament each week, it should be noted that temple robes donned on the shoulders are a fitting complement to the symbols of the sacrament and of taking up the yoke.

In the New Testament, the Greek word enduo (ἐνδύω, Strong’s G1746: to invest with clothing, literally or figuratively; to array, clothe, endue, put on), related to the English word endowment, is often used to describe the putting on of garments as well as “putting on” Christ. Paul uses inflections of enduo in several passages that may point to temple themes such as sacred clothing and covenant making, for example: “let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12), “put on the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11), and “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). Donald Parry notes

that scholars believe that Paul’s word choice deliberately recalls Old Testament passages that deal with putting on sacred vestments using the Hebrew word *lbsh* or *labash* (Strong’s H3847, meaning to put on or to wear), frequently collocated with various articles of sacred clothing (e.g., Leviticus 6:10, Leviticus 16:4, 23–24, 32; and Leviticus 21:10).⁴⁹ Solomon, for example, uses *labash* in dedicating the temple, invoking the concept of rest at the same time:


The endowing or putting on of sacred robes is preparatory for entering into the rest of God. Parry explains that “it is a symbol for putting on Christ and accepting His Atonement.”⁵⁰

Garments, including priestly robes or other attire, are a common symbol in the scriptures that can describe our spiritual state. They can be white and holy or stained with blood and the sins of the world. In 3 Nephi 27, Christ commands us to take his name upon us (vs. 5–6), to organize and run the Church in his name (vs. 7–11), and to repent and be baptized (vs. 15–16, 20). He then links entering into his rest with the state of our garments:

> 19. And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

Temple robes in the modern LDS temple could well be considered in light of related items of clothing used in early Christian tradition. For example, consider the stole:

> The word *stole* derives via the Latin *stola*, from the Greek στολή (*stolē*), “garment”, originally “array” or “equipment”.

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⁵⁰ Parry, 2014, 225.
The stole was originally a kind of shawl that covered the shoulders and fell down in front of the body; on women they were often very large indeed. After being adopted by the Church of Rome about the seventh century (the stole having also been adopted in other locales prior to this), the stole became gradually narrower and so richly ornamented that it developed into a mark of dignity. Nowadays, the stole is usually wider and can be made from a wide variety of material.

There are many theories as to the “ancestry” of the stole. Some say it came from the tallit (Jewish prayer mantle), because it is very similar to the present usage (as in the minister puts it on when he or she leads in prayer) but this theory is no longer regarded much today. More popular is the theory that the stole originated from a kind of liturgical napkin called an orarium (cf. orarion) very similar to the sudarium. In fact, in many places the stole is called the orarium. Therefore it is linked to the napkin used by Christ in washing the feet of his disciples, and is a fitting symbol of the yoke of Christ, the yoke of service.

The most likely origin for the stole, however, is to be connected with the scarf of office among Imperial officials in the Roman Empire. As members of the clergy became members of the Roman administration ... they were granted certain honors, one specifically being a designator of rank within the imperial (and ecclesiastical) hierarchy. The various configurations of the stole (including the pallium or the omophorion) grew out of this usage. The original intent, then was to designate a person as belonging to a particular organization and to denote their rank within their group, a function which the stole continues to perform today.51

The stole is said “to signify ‘the easy yoke of Christ.’”52 According to a description of Catholic rituals:

The stole is worn by a bishop in the same manner as a priest, except that it is never crossed on the breast, as a bishop wears the

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pectoral cross. As a mark of order the stole is used in a special ceremony, at the ordination of deacons and priests. At the ordination of deacons the bishop places it on the left shoulder of the candidate, saying: “Receive from the hand of God the white garment and fulfil thy duty, for God is mighty enough to give thee His grace in rich measure.” At the ordination of priests the bishop draws the part of the stole that rests at the back of the candidate’s neck forward over the breast and lays the two ends crosswise, saying: “Receive the yoke of the Lord, for His yoke is sweet and His burden is light.” …

At the present time the stole is either traced back to a liturgical napkin, which deacons are said to have carried, or to a neckcloth formerly peculiar to priests or it is regarded as a liturgical badge (introduced at the latest in the fourth century) which first came into use in the East, and then in the West. It was also brought, as it would seem, to Rome, where it was not at first adopted as a badge of the higher orders of the clergy, but as a distinctive mark of the Roman clergy in general.53

The pallium, the simple white woolen cloth worn on the shoulders, was identified by Tertullian as “a Christian’s vesture.”54 To this day it remains in use in the Roman Catholic Church, where it is a sign of both authority and of the duty to serve as a shepherd. For example, when Pope Benedict XVI received 120 pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati in 2010 at St. Peter’s Basilica, he placed a woolen pallium upon the shoulders of Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr and new archbishops.

Placing a woolen band around the shoulders of 38 new archbishops from 26 different nations, Pope Benedict XVI told them it was a Gospel “yoke” — not a heavy burden, but a sign that by remaining united with the church in faith, they will have the strength to face whatever challenges come their way. ...


The pallium is the “yoke” Jesus spoke about; it does not weigh down the person carrying it, but supports him in his unity with the rest of the church, the pope said.

Christian art has also depicted the pallium as if it were a yoke on the shoulders.\textsuperscript{55}

LDS writer Alonzo L. Gaskill offers this interpretation of ancient traditions regarding sacred robes and related garments:

In other words, as the robed priesthood holder moves about in the sanctuary or temple, his \textit{orarion} or priestly robes wave or flap as the wings of angels. Symbolically, those viewing the rites performed are to be reminded that the robes and the rituals are to make those who participate like God and one with God. Related to the idea that the robe, stole, or \textit{orarion} suggests the divinity or potential deification of the wearer, one Catholic text suggests: “The stole... represents immortality, the yoke of obedience, and the reign of Christ.” Those who wear it are committing to take upon themselves a spirit of obedience to Christ in the hope of gaining the immortality that Christ offers to all those who love and serve Him. One author penned this about the priestly robes of antiquity and their connection to immortality: “The classic robe of the initiate throughout the East has always been and still is the pure white wrap thrown over the shoulder, which also represents an embrace” ... Consequently, to take upon oneself the \textit{orarion} or robe was to symbolically take upon oneself Christ (or His attributes). The “white robe reaching to the ground” — worn by Roman Catholic priests, and sometimes called an “alb” — “signifies purity of life and also recalls the white garment in which Christ was robed by the mocking Herod.” \textbf{Consequently, the robe is a call to purity, but also to sacrifice and submission.}\textsuperscript{56}

Gaskill also identified sashes and “cinctures” tied about the waist in some Christian ceremonies as symbols of binding oneself to covenants.\textsuperscript{57}


In some early Christian traditions, white garments were symbols not only of purity and submission to Christ but also may have connoted entering the presence of the Lord. For example, Theodore of Mopsuestia in the fourth century in one of his five homilies on Christian initiation wrote:

Then you come forward to be baptized. First you strip completely. … When you have done this, you are anointed all over with the oil of anointing in the prescribed manner, this is a sign of the garment of immortality you will receive through baptism … When this anointing is conferred upon you, the bishop begins the ceremony with the words: “N. is anointed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”; and the appointed ministers anoint your body all over. Next, at the time I have already explained to you, you go down into the water that has been blessed by the bishop. You are not baptized in ordinary water, but in the water of second birth.

… the bishop stands and lays his hands upon your head saying, “N. is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” He wears the same vestments as before, when he sealed your forehead while you knelt, and when he blessed the water.

Then the bishop lays his hand upon your head with the words, “In the name of the Father,” and while pronouncing them pushes you down into the water. You obediently follow the signal he gives by word and gesture, and bow down under the water. You incline your head to show your consent. … [this is repeated for the Son and the Holy Spirit]

Then you come up out of the font to receive the completion of the mystery.

As soon as you come up out of the font, you put on a dazzling garment of pure white.

When you have received grace by means of baptism, then, and put on this shining white garment, the bishop comes to you and puts a seal in your forehead, saying, “N. is sealed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

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The pressing of the priest’s hands on the head of the Christian, whether in baptism, anointing, or other rites, can be a symbol of submitting to the authority of the Lord and even of bearing burdens that may be placed on the believer through divine channels. Shoulders, back, neck, and head — all may remind us of taking on the yoke of Christ, leading ultimately to entering the presence of God in a “dazzling garment of pure white.”

**Grace and Works: What the Yoke Teaches Us**

Matthew 11:28–30 is an excellent passage for clarifying some of the widespread Christian confusion about grace, works, and salvation. Some of our fellow Christians misunderstand LDS teachings regarding grace, feeling that our choice to obey God and respect his commandments somehow means we think we earn our salvation and thereby deny the mercy and grace of Christ. That confusion sometimes becomes frenetic when our critics discuss the temple, which to them epitomizes Mormon emphasis on works and self-righteousness rather than relying on the merits of Christ. The concept of having to keep specific commandments in order to have a Church leader give you a temple recommend may be at the apex of their loathing of the temple.

Recognizing that Christ gives us commandments in no way undermines the grace that he offers. Christ actually gives two commandments in Matthew 11:28–30. First, he calls us to come unto him. And then we are to take his yoke upon us and learn from him. No aspect of the obvious work involved in taking up the yoke of Christ implies that we earn our ticket to heaven through works, or that we have abandoned grace. Believing in him, acknowledging him, looking to him is the first step. It is not the completion of his plan for us. But it is a wonderful beginning. First, we have faith in Christ and come unto him. Then we follow, serve, obey, and endure to the end. The yoke and the temple help us on that journey.

Clement of Alexandria, in the initial quotation above, refers to the grace of Christ in the same paragraph that invokes taking up the yoke of Christ. An even earlier Christian Clement, Clement of Rome, the first Apostolic Father of the early Church, who died in 99 AD, speaks of the “yoke of his grace” in his epistle, First Clement.59

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Far from denying the grace of Christ, in reality, the temple is a place of turning our hearts to Christ, using teachings, symbols, and covenants to help us focus our lives more fully on him and to more fully receive of his infinite grace. But the temple is a foreign place to us modern people, as it is rooted in ancient Middle Eastern concepts that are a far cry from the mundane world we live in. Recognizing its ancient roots, though, helps us to better appreciate its imagery and meaning.\textsuperscript{60}

When it comes to the issue of grace and obedience in a temple context, the teachings of early Christianity help shed light on modern LDS concepts, as I argue elsewhere.\textsuperscript{61} But useful insights can be found even earlier than that, going back to the ancient Jewish temple itself. The connection between God’s grace and our obedience in the context of temple worship was noted by Jewish scholar Jon D. Levenson in \textit{Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible}.\textsuperscript{62}

Early in his book, Levenson discusses the six ancient steps of the covenant formulary. This is the archetypal pattern of covenant making that scholars only recently recognized in ancient Middle Eastern documents, and which I believe is also exemplified in the LDS temple and in King Benjamin’s covenant-focused speech at the Nephite temple.\textsuperscript{63}

In discussing how the covenant between God and man was repeatedly renewed and how God’s requirements for keeping his commandments were recalled, Levenson reminds us that the basis for the required obedience is God’s past grace, and his desire to transform us into more holy beings. The first step is faith and commitment, followed by taking up the yoke of obedience in a covenant relationship.


What, precisely, did the rabbis think happened when one recites the *Shma* [or *Shema Yisrael*, referring to Deuteronomy 6:4]? We find an answer in the reply of the Tannaitic master Rabbi Joshua ben Korhah to the question of why Deuteronomy 6:4–9 is positioned before 11:13–21:

so that one might accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven first; afterwards, he accepts upon himself the yoke of the commandments.

“Heaven” in Talmudic language is usually a more delicate way of saying “God.” Rabbi Joshua sees the *Shma*, therefore, as the acclamation of God’s kingship. Only in light of such an acclamation do the *mitsvot* [the commandments of the Torah] make sense. In light of the biblical ideas, we can say that one must first accept the suzerainty of the great king, the fact of covenant; only then can he embrace the particulars which the new lord enjoins upon him, the stipulations.64

Levenson also explains that this relationship, which brings one to become a citizen in the kingdom of God, is rooted in the past grace offered by God:

His past grace grounds his present demand. To respond wholeheartedly to that demand, to accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, is to make a radical change, a change at the roots of one’s being. To undertake to live according to *Halakhah* is not a question of merely raising one’s moral aspirations or of affirming “Jewish values,” whatever that means. To recite the *Shma* and mean it is to enter a supramundane sovereignty, to become a citizen of the kingdom of God, not simply in the messianic future to which that term also refers (e.g., Daniel 2:44), but also in the historical present.65

Later, Levenson discusses Jeremiah 7:1–5, Jeremiah’s speech at the temple where Jeremiah challenges the Jewish reliance on the temple as a place that will protect them. The potential grace available from that Holy House will not be afforded if the people do not accept the moral code that goes with the temple and in doing so rely on it as a place instead of

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65 Levenson, 1985, 85.
a sacred tool to build their relationship with deity. Jeremiah opposes the disconnect between our morality and the grace God affords.

As you read the following passage from Levenson, consider it in the context of the misleading grace versus works argument so often levied against LDS religion. I suggest that Jeremiah’s critique of those who claimed “we are safe” because of the temple is not unrelated to some of our critics who say “we are saved” because of their belief in the Bible while claiming that Christ’s call therein to “keep the commandments” somehow cannot mean what it says, and that those who teach that doctrine actually deny God’s grace.

What Jeremiah does oppose is the idea that the divine goodness so evident in the temple is independent of the moral record of those who worship there, in other words, the effort to disengage God’s beneficence from man’s ethical deeds and to rely, as a consequence, on grace alone. To the complacent cry of his audience that “We are safe” (v 10), the prophet responds by noting that the temple is not “a den of robbers” (v 11). The grace of God does not mean exemption from the demands of covenant law, from ultimate ethical accountability. Grace and law belong together. In separation, they become parodies of themselves. For Jeremiah, this means that one cannot ascend into the pure existence of the temple with his impurities intact. He cannot drag his filth into paradise and expect to benefit from paradisical existence. Mount Zion is morally positive. It does not accept the moral debits of those who seek only protection there. Rather, the protection follows naturally from the relationship with God which is appropriate in that place. Such a relationship excludes the practice of the sins prohibited in the Decalogue (v 9) [emphasis added].

Brilliantly stated! The temple is about the relationship between God and man. It is a cosmic mountain intended to pull us higher, but we must seek to climb toward the ideals that are before us. We must seek to shed — or rather, allow God to rip away — the impurities that weigh us down and hold us back from his presence. We cannot cling to him while clinging to our dross; we cannot bear his yoke when we are laden with the lusts of the world. It is in a covenant relationship in the sanctity of Mount Zion (which may be a symbol of the temple, or the temple is a

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66 Levenson, 1985, 168.
symbol of it) where we can most fully receive of his grace. As Levenson puts it, “Grace and law belong together.” Levenson continues:

For them [Jeremiah’s audience], the delicate, highly poetic image of the cosmic mountain has become a matter of doctrine, and the doctrine can be stated in one prosaic sentence: In the Temple one is safe. The Temple does not thrill them and fill them with awe; the vision of it does not transform them. For them, the appropriate response to sight of the Temple is anything but the radical amazement of a pilgrim. Instead, the Temple in their eyes is simply a place like any other, except that there the long arm of moral reckoning will not reach. Hence, they approach Zion in the stance of one about to take possession of what he deserves, not in the stance of one humbly accepting a miraculous gift which no one can deserve. Jeremiah’s audience seeks to profit from the Temple without committing themselves to the moral dynamic that animates it [emphasis added].

Ironically, it may be that some of our critics — some, not all — who speak of the security of grace reach for that gift with the same flawed attitude that Jeremiah condemned in the Jews who misunderstood God’s work and failed to grasp why they needed to repent in order to obtain the true blessings available through the temple of their day. The greatest miraculous gifts of the Gospel, gifts that we cannot possibly deserve, are offered with conditions in covenant relationships that allow God to transform us into the people he wants us to be as we strive to follow him and seek to enter his presence.

As for the notion of standards of worthiness being connected to entry into the temple, the LDS concept may not be as innovative and foreign to the Bible as our critics would like to think. In the paragraphs shortly after the previous quotation, Levenson makes further points about the temple as he discusses Psalm 24:

This psalm [Psalm 24], chanted by Jews today on Sunday mornings, opens with a cosmic perspective. The first stanzas (vv 1–2) reminds us that the earth rests upon the waters of chaos and owes it endurance to the power of the creator who so established it. This image of God’s putting the earth upon a foundation resting over the waters is, once again, a reflection of the idea of the Temple as cosmic capstone, holding back the waters of anti-creation [note: I would add that this resonates

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with the creation story that begins the LDS endowment and with the LDS concept of the baptismal font in the lowest part of the temple, which may be symbolic of the waters of chaos and death conquered by Christ and his Resurrection]. The term “all that it holds” (v 1; literally, “its fulness”) reminds us of the chant of the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision in the Temple:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, The fulness of the whole earth is his glory (Isaiah 6:3)

In Isaiah 6, the “fulness of the earth” is God’s glory; in Psalm 24, it belongs to God, who is the king of glory. In both instances, the term indicates the cosmic scope of the Temple. Thus, the second stanza of the psalm (vv 3–6) does not change the subject significantly. We have simply moved from a description of the cosmic rooting of the universe to the question of who shall be admitted to the mountain shrine which still incarnates that original creative energy. In this and in the last stanza (vv 7–10), there seems to be an antiphonal structure. One group of worshippers asks the questions, and another answers. It is not readily evident how the roles were divided, who said what, but one can imagine that vv 3, 8a, and 10a were recited by worshippers seeking admission to the Temple complex and that vv 4–6, 8b–9, and 10b–c are the answers of the priests who guarded the gates. Alternatively, it may be that the priests asked the questions by way of examining the congregation to determine whether they indeed met the qualifications for entry, and that the answers were supplied by the congregation to demonstrate their mastery of the requirements. In either case, the issue in the second stanza (vv 3–6) is, what are the ethical characteristics of life within the Temple precincts? What must one be like to reach the top of the sacred mountain? The last stanza (vv 7–10) makes it clear that the presence of God enters the Temple only after the ethical prerequisites of vv 3–6 have been met. It may be that these verses accompanied a procession of some sort, with the Ark, perhaps, symbolizing יִהְווּ. At all events, it must not be missed that the second and third stanzas are parallel. Each records an entrance to the Temple complex, one by visiting worshippers and one by יִהְוָה the king. In light of the first stanza, it is clear that יִהְוָה might have chosen to dwell anywhere. The world is his. His presence in the Temple, as I have argued, does not imply his absence elsewhere. Rather,
he intensifies his presence and renders it most dramatic at the cosmic center. It is there that his power and his sovereignty are most vivid, for it is there that we see the palace he founded upon the tamed body of his primal challenger, the seas. Similarly, according to the second stanza (vv 3–6), those who enter there must represent the apex of ethical purity. They must be people of “clean hands and a pure heart” (v 4). **In no way could the cultic and the ethical be more tightly bound together. They are two sides of the same experience.** The cult celebrates the glorious victory of God the king, through which he established order in the universe. The ethical tradition, as it appears in Psalm 24, celebrates the order and lawfulness of man, through which he qualifies for entry into the presence of God in the palace he has won. It is significant that in Hebrew the same term (*sedeq*) can indicate either victory or righteousness/justice. The Temple represents the victory of God and the ethical ascent of man.

The palace of the temple, then, is a tool of grace in which the Lord helps free men from the burdens of sin and, through his light yoke, guides us and even lifts us up the path on Mount Zion where man can, through grace and humble submission to God, enter into his very presence. It is not the victory of human works that is celebrated in the temple, but the victory of the Messiah. The victory of God and the ethical ascent of man are linked, reminding us of what the Gospel is all about. “For this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The victory of God and Christ is about our righteousness and eternal life obtained through the power of the Atonement, enabled by the transformational covenant relationship offered therein, as we humbly accept the yoke of Christ and the attendant commandments to learn of him and enter into his rest.

The yoke of Christ teaches us much that we need to know to better appreciate the relationship between grace, obedience, and salvation.

Finally, returning to the theme of entering the rest of God, Paul in Hebrews 4 clarifies the relationship between the grace that is offered and our need to labor, without which even believing Christians may be at risk of losing the blessing of the Lord’s rest. Paul thus prescribes actions to preserve that blessing, actions which we could call moving forward with the Lord’s yoke:

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68 Levenson, 1985, 170-172.
Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. …

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. (Hebrews 4: 1–5,9–11)

Of course, it is not the labor that merits salvation. Rather, after urging us to labor to gain access to the rest of God, Paul also charges us to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Approaching the throne of grace and entering into the rest of the Lord is the ultimate purpose of the grace and mercy the Lord offers us through the Atonement. Our light burden carried forward along the way gives us no grounds to boast and in no way undermines the reality that it is through grace we are saved.

From the LDS perspective, the yoke of Christ is a useful image to describe the interplay of yielding to Christ, learning from him, and receiving at his hand blessings, guidance, and grace. “Learn of me” reminds us that the yoke is also a teaching tool, a tool for receiving direction and other blessings from the Lord as he leads us along the straight and narrow path, where our diligence is required but where his grace only can save. That perspective is hardly a Mormon innovation, but it resonates well with the teachings of scripture and with early Christian teachings. Consider, for example, the words of a prominent early Christian Father, John Chrysostom (c. 349–407 AD), Archbishop of Constantinople:

Fear thou not therefore, neither start away from the yoke that lightens you of all these things, but put yourself under it with all forwardness, and then you shall know well the pleasure thereof. For it does not at all bruise your neck, but is put on you for good order’s sake only, and to persuade you to walk seemly,
and to lead you unto the royal road, and to deliver you from the precipices on either side, and to make you walk with ease in the narrow way.

Since then so great are its benefits, so great its security, so great its gladness, let us with all our soul, with all our diligence, draw this yoke; that we may both here “find rest unto our souls,” and attain unto the good things to come, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and might, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.69

Summary

Covenants binding man and God are a vital part of our ancient religious roots and a critical part of the Restoration and the modern LDS temple. Making and renewing covenants can involve many symbolic objects, such as the phylacteries worn by ancient Jews or priestly robes and other clothing used in priestly roles, coronation ceremonies, or other rites. It can also involve actions with physical materials such as washing with water and anointing with oil, as found in the Old Testament and some other ancient traditions. The donning of sacred clothing can be considered a symbol of taking the yoke of covenants upon us.

The covenants we make to follow Christ, take his name upon us, and accept his teachings, including baptism and the covenants and teachings of the temple, can be considered as part of Christ’s yoke. The burden we take up is light, and though it is a burden and does demand commitment and endurance from us, our own work, of course, is incapable of saving us. It cannot resurrect us. It cannot wash away our sins. It cannot bring us into the presence of the Father. All this comes through his grace. Thus, it is the “yoke of his grace,” as mentioned in one of the earliest Christian documents, First Clement.70 It is a yoke that involves obedience and service, but brings us to receive the full riches of his grace. That includes realizing our divine potential in a sacred covenant relationship with God, as a later early Christian, Clement of Alexandria, taught, and as many other early Christians understood.


70 Clement of Rome, First Clement 16:17.
The LDS temple truly is a place of grace rooted in great antiquity, a place where we can more fully come unto Christ and take his full yoke upon us.

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Doctrine and Covenants 9

Stan Spencer

Abstract: Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9 is conventionally interpreted as the Lord’s description of the method by which the Book of Mormon was translated. A close reading of the entire revelation, however, suggests that the Lord was not telling Oliver Cowdery how to translate but rather how to know whether it was right for him to translate and how to obtain the faith necessary to do so. Faith would have enabled Oliver Cowdery to overcome his fear and translate, just as it would have enabled Peter (in Matthew 14) to overcome his fear and walk on water.

In April of 1829 while acting as scribe for Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery desired to be given the gift of translation. In response to Oliver Cowdery’s desire, the Lord provided a revelation through Joseph Smith.1 This revelation, contained in Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) section 8, reminded Oliver Cowdery of spiritual gifts he already possessed, through which he could receive answers to his questions, and then gave him these instructions:

Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not. Ask that you may know the mysteries of God,

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and that you may translate ... and according to your faith shall it be done unto you. (D&C 8:10–11)

The only record we have of Oliver Cowdery’s response to these instructions is a second revelation received the same month.\(^2\) This revelation, contained in Doctrine and Covenants section 9, observed that Oliver Cowdery “began to translate” (D&C 9:5) but was ultimately unsuccessful (vv. 10-11). It also provided him additional instructions, including the following:

7. Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.
8. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it be right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.
9. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.

The interpretation of this passage depends on what the pronoun it refers to in the three verses. Conventionally, this passage is interpreted as a description of the technique by which the Book of Mormon was translated. Mormon leader and historian B. H. Roberts promoted this interpretation in the Improvement Era in 1906:\(^3\)

This is the Lord’s description of how Oliver Cowdery could have translated with the aid of Urim and Thummim, and is undoubtedly the manner in which Joseph Smith did translate the Book of Mormon through the medium of Urim and Thummim. This description of the translation destroys the theory that the Urim and Thummim did everything, and the seer nothing;

\(^2\) The introduction to this revelation in the earliest extant manuscript reads, “A Revelation to Oliver he was disrous to know the reason why he could not translate.” Revelation, April 1829–D [D&C 9], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed 15 May 2015, http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-book-1. It is unclear from this statement whether Oliver Cowdery wanted to know why his attempt to translate had failed or why he was no longer permitted to translate. The general theme of this revelation suggests the latter.

that the work of translating was merely a mechanical process of looking at a supplied interpretation, in English, and reading it off to an amanuensis. This description in the Doctrine and Covenants implies great mental effort, of working out the translation in the mind and securing the witness of the Spirit that the translation is correct.

According to this theory, Oliver Cowdery failed in his attempt to translate because he had “not understood” (v. 7) the proper technique, which involved mentally working out a tentative translation and then asking for divine confirmation that it was correct. The summary of section 9 in the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants supports Roberts’s interpretation, stating, “the Book of Mormon is translated by study and by spiritual confirmation.”

However, witness accounts suggest an alternate interpretation. These accounts vary in amount of detail but generally describe Joseph Smith

4 Roberts saw support for this interpretation in D&C 8:2, where the Lord describes the manifestations of the Holy Ghost: “Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.” Roberts, “Translation,” 429. It is not certain, however, that this verse is referring to the process of translation, as it is prefaced by the promise that Oliver Cowdery would “receive a knowledge of whatsoever things” he would ask about in faith, including “a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records.” A knowledge concerning records is not necessarily a translation of those records. Rather than being specific to the gift of translation, the revelation in section 8 appears to address Oliver Cowdery’s spiritual gifts and desires more broadly, discussing both the gift of the Holy Ghost (vv. 2–5) and the “gift of Aaron” (vv. 6–9), also promising Oliver Cowdery knowledge concerning whatever he should ask (v. 9). It mentions translation only near the end (v. 11), with, “Ask … that you may translate and receive knowledge from all these ancient records.” The “gift of Aaron” refers to the use of a divining or dowsing rod. Jeffery G. Cannon, “Oliver Cowdery’s Gift,” Revelations in Context (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 15 December 2012). https://history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-oliver-cowdery. Although the Lord expressed a willingness to provide answers (presumably as “yes” or “no”) to Cowdery’s questions through the movements of a rod (perhaps because Cowdery was accustomed to using that instrument), the instructions in D&C 9:8 (also Moroni 10:4–5) suggest that the Lord prefers to provide yes/no answers through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost.

5 This statement first appeared in the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The prior major edition (1921) instead stated, “It is not sufficient for one merely to ask for a divine gift, without prayerful thought and study.”

6 Much of the translation was done in the Whitmer home in plain view of others, as described by Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery: “I cheerfully certify that
placing one or more seer stones (also referred to as interpreters, directors, or Urim and Thummim by early Mormons) into a hat, drawing the hat close to his face, and dictating the English translation to his scribe. In his public statements, Joseph Smith gave very little information about how he translated, indicating only that it was “through the medium of the Urim and Thummim … by the gift and power of God.” He reportedly provided more information about the process to David Whitmer and others. The following account is representative of those given by David Whitmer and other close associates of Joseph Smith:

I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith’s translating the Book of Mormon. He translated the most of it at my Father’s house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light.” Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, “Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery Affidavit, 15 February 1870,” in Early Mormon Documents, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2003), 5:260.


8 Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904), 4:537. The title page of the Book of Mormon states that it was interpreted “by the gift of God.”

9 As quoted in 1885 by Zenas H. Gurley, editor of the Saint’s Herald, David Whitmer reported Joseph Smith “stating to me and others that the original character appeared upon parchment and under it the translation in English.” “Questions asked of David Whitmer at his home in Richmond, Ray County, MO, Jan. 14, 1885, relating to Book of Mormon and the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, by Elder Z. H. Gurley,” holograph in LDS Church Archives, cited in van Wagoner and Walker, “Gift of Seeing,” 54, emphasis added.

10 David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, MO: n.p., 1887), 12. David Whitmer’s descriptions of the translation process are corroborated by an account by Joseph Knight, Sr., a close friend of Joseph Smith: “Now the way he translated was he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkned his Eyes then he would take a sentance and it would apper in Brite Roman Letters. Then he would tell the writer and he would write it. Then that would go away the next sentance would Come and so on.” Dean Jesse, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” Brigham Young University Studies 17/1 (1976), 35. The
I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated by Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.

David Whitmer apparently believed that the “gift and power of God” referred to Joseph Smith’s gift for seeing words illuminated in the darkness of his hat. In Doctrine and Covenants 3:12, Joseph Smith’s gift is described as the “sight and power to translate;” Brigham Young described it simply as “the gift of seeing.”¹¹ In his use of seer stones, Joseph Smith was a “seer” after the manner of old times (Mosiah 28:13-16; Isaiah 30:10), and his gift was to see what others could not (Mosiah 8:13–17).

According to a straightforward reading of the accounts by David Whitmer and others, there was no need for the translator to mentally work out an English translation, as one was provided in the writing that appeared.¹² In addition to the general lack of support from witness accounts of other witnesses are generally consistent as well. For additional accounts, see Van Wagoner and Walker, “Gift of Seeing,” 57–58.

¹¹ In his Journal entry for May 6, 1849, Brigham Young recorded: “We spent the time in interesting conversation upon old times, Joseph, the plates, Mount Cumorah, treasures and records known to be hid in the earth, the gift of seeing, and how Joseph obtained his first seer stone.” Brigham Young, “May 6, 1849” in Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1847–1850, ed. William S. Harwell (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing, 1997), 200.

¹² Roberts reconciles his interpretation of D&C 9 with the witness accounts by surmising that the translation worked out in Joseph Smith’s mind was only “reflected in the interpreters.” Roberts saw evidence for his theory in the abundance of grammatical errors in the Book of Mormon text, which he believed must have originated with Joseph Smith as he worked out a translation, the only other alternative being “to assign responsibility for … such errors to God. But that is unthinkable, not to say blasphemous.” Roberts, “Translation,” 428–430. There are, however, other plausible origins of the offending grammar. For example, just
accounts, four additional factors give reason to question the conventional theory that the Book of Mormon was translated “by study and by spiritual confirmation” and that Oliver Cowdery failed to translate because of his ignorance of that technique.13

First, neither study nor spiritual confirmation is mentioned as a requirement for translating in the instructions to Oliver Cowdery in section 8 or anywhere else in scripture. Second, before his attempt to translate, Oliver Cowdery had been promised that he would be able to translate “according to [his] faith” (D&C 8:11). Based on this because Joseph Smith received a text through a seer stone doesn’t mean that the text was written by God. It could have been produced by one or more (fallible) mortals under God’s direction. Also, many of the “grammatical errors” were acceptable grammar in Early Modern English — see Stanford Carmack’s “A Look at Some ‘Nonstandard’ Book of Mormon Grammar,” Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture 11 (2014): 209–262. For more analysis of Book of Mormon language by Carmack, see a listing of his papers at http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/author/stanfordc/. Like Carmack, Royal Skousen (based on his monumental study of Book of Mormon manuscript evidence) concludes that, in “translating” the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith was reading a text that was already translated into English rather than working out a translation in his own mind. 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): 95–96. Although Joseph Smith did not translate in the conventional sense, he was an instrument in the miraculous conversion of an ancient text into a modern book, and “translator” may have been the best word at his disposal to describe his role in that miracle. Finally, Joseph Smith and his scribes may have contributed some of the offending grammar to the text inadvertently during dictation. For a brief discussion of evidence for major Book of Mormon translation theories, see Don Bradley, “Written by the Finger of God?: Claims and Controversies of Book of Mormon Translation,” Sunstone 161 (December 2010): 20–29.

13 A role for spiritual confirmation in the translation process does find limited support in the words of Oliver Cowdery: “I … commenced to write the Book of Mormon. These were days never to be forgotten — to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim.” Oliver Cowdery to W.W. Phelps, 7 Sep 1834, Messenger and Advocate 1 (Oct 1834): 14. This statement, however, is not presented as a description of the translation process but rather as a celebration of its sacred nature and of Oliver Cowdery’s privilege in participating. Oliver Cowdery’s tone suggests that he is going more for effect than precision. Also, he may be using the term inspiration in a broad sense of a divine influence (in this case, through the words that appeared) rather than of a direct spiritual communication to Joseph Smith’s mind.
promise, his lack of success would have been due to lack of faith, not improper technique. Third, Doctrine and Covenants 9:5 observes that Oliver Cowdery “began to translate,” which suggests that he actually did translate and must have known how to do so. Fourth, Doctrine and Covenants 9:8 indicates the need to “study it out” and ask “if it be right,” but there is no obvious antecedent for the pronoun it in the revelation that is consistent with the conventional theory.

**An Alternate Interpretation**

A proper interpretation of verses 7–9 must take into account their context, specifically, the remainder of the revelation in section 9:

1. Behold, I say unto you, my son, that because you did not translate according to that which you desired of me, and did commence again to write for my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., even so I would that ye should continue until you have finished this record, which I have entrusted unto him.
2. And then, behold, other records have I, that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate.
3. Be patient, my son, for it is wisdom in me, and it is not expedient that you should translate at this present time.
4. Behold, the work which you are called to do is to write for my servant Joseph.
5. And, behold, it is because that you did not continue as you commenced, when you began to translate, that I have taken away this privilege from you.
6. Do not murmur, my son, for it is wisdom in me that I have dealt with you after this manner. …
10. Now, if you had known this you could have translated; nevertheless, it is not expedient that you should translate now.
11. Behold, it was expedient when you commenced; but you feared, and the time is past, and it is not expedient now;
12. For, do you not behold that I have given unto my servant Joseph sufficient strength, whereby it is made up? And neither of you have I condemned.
13. Do this thing which I have commanded you, and you shall prosper. Be faithful, and yield to no temptation.
14. Stand fast in the work wherewith I have called you, and a hair of your head shall not be lost, and you shall be lifted up at the last day. Amen.
In this revelation, the Lord tells Oliver Cowdery that his service is presently needed as scribe, not translator, but indicates that he will be given power to translate at some future time. He notes that Oliver Cowdery “began to translate” (v. 5), but then feared and chose to go back to writing for Joseph Smith. He states that it was right for Oliver Cowdery to translate when he began, but that it is no longer expedient and the privilege has been taken away. The Lord explains why it is no longer expedient for Oliver Cowdery to translate: because he feared, because he did not continue as he commenced, and because Joseph Smith was blessed with strength to do the work. The Lord tells him to stop murmuring over the loss of the privilege and admonishes him to be content with the work he has been called to do. The theme from the beginning to the end of this revelation is whether and when it is right for Oliver Cowdery to translate. The text does not suggest that Oliver Cowdery questioned why he failed to translate initially, only why he is not permitted to translate presently. Nor does the text suggest that there was a problem with his translating technique.

Therefore, a more conservative interpretation of verses 7–9 would be in accordance with the predominant theme of the entire revelation — namely, whether and when it is right for Oliver Cowdery to translate. Perhaps, in these verses, the Lord is telling Oliver Cowdery that before he asks for the privilege to translate, he must find out if translating is the right thing for him to be doing at the time. Before we can accept this interpretation, however, we must see if it is consistent with the possible antecedents of the pronoun it in each verse.

The most obvious antecedent for it in verse 7 is the privilege to translate that has been taken away from Oliver Cowdery (v. 5). The other possibility is the power to translate that the Lord “will give unto” Oliver Cowdery (v. 2).14 There are no other obvious candidates. As a practical matter, the privilege to translate and the power to translate are the same, and it appears that the two terms are being used interchangeably here. If we substitute the privilege for it, verse 7 reads,

14 Even Roberts understood it in verse 7 to refer to the power to translate, as indicated by the bracketed comment in his quotation of the verse: “Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it [i.e., the power to translate] unto you.” Roberts, “Translation,” 429, brackets in Roberts’s original. Also, Oliver Cowdery had not been told to ask for a translation, but for the privilege of translating (D&C 8:11).
7. Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give [the privilege] unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

If this is the correct interpretation of verse 7, then a likely antecedent for it in verse 8 is the phrase that I would give it unto you from verse 7. Integrating this phrase into verse 8 gives the following:

8. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right [that I give it unto you], and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

In verse 9, the first it refers to the same antecedent as in verse 8 (that I would give it unto you). The next occurrence of it, in it be given, may refer to the preceding phrase that which is sacred (meaning the translated text). However, elsewhere in scripture, variations of it be given often refer to a power or privilege being granted by God. If such is also the case here, then the antecedent of it is the complete phrase write that which is sacred (meaning the privilege of producing sacred scripture) and the verse could be written more clearly as follows:

9. But if it be not right [that I give it unto you], you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save [the privilege] be given you from me.

With this alternate interpretation of verses 7–9, the theme of whether and when it is right for Oliver Cowdery to translate is consistent throughout the revelation rather than interrupted (in the conventional

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15 In John 6:65, we find an example with a form similar to that of D&C 9:9: “No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” Note that it in it were given refers to the entire phrase come unto me. The phrase it be given is used by Moroni in a way that appears to apply directly to Oliver Cowdery’s situation (Mormon 8:15): “For none can have power to bring it [the Book of Mormon] to light save it be given him of God; for God wills that it shall be done with an eye single to his glory.” Oliver Cowdery’s murmuring for having lost the privilege to translate suggests that his eye may not have been single to God’s glory. Alma uses similar language in a statement that could also apply to Oliver Cowdery’s desire to reveal ancient scripture (Alma 26:22): “Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing — unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed.” For more instances in which variations of it be given refer to the granting of a power or privilege, see Job 24:23; John 6:65; Alma 26:22; Mormon 8:15; and D&C 28:1; 42:11; 45:60; 47:4; 48:5; 68:11; and 124:5.
interpretation) by instructions on translation technique. Oliver Cowdery is told to study and seek spiritual confirmation, not in order to verify that a translation is correct, but to learn whether it is expedient for him to be translating at all. If not, he is told, a spiritual silence and accompanying doubt will cause him to “forget,” or give up his intention to translate.16

After teaching Oliver Cowdery how to receive a spiritual confirmation that a decision is correct, the Lord states in verse 10, “Now, if you had known this you could have translated.” This sentence is usually understood as indicating that the Lord had just explained proper translation technique. However, if verses 7–9 are not about translation technique, there must be a different explanation. Verse 11 suggests that Oliver Cowdery abandoned his attempt to translate because of fear. Perhaps the Lord is saying in verse 10 that if Oliver Cowdery had received a spiritual confirmation that he was doing the right thing, he would have had no reason to fear and could have translated with confidence. This raises the question of what reason Oliver Cowdery might have had for fearing in the first place.

**Reason to Fear**

Prior to Oliver Cowdery’s attempt to translate, he was told to “trifle not with these things” and to “not ask for that which [he] ought not” (D&C 8:10). Even though he was also encouraged to ask for the privilege to translate (D&C 8:11), these words of warning may have prompted some anxiety. The warning against asking for what he “ought not” would have been especially salient in light of similar wording in Mosiah 8:13, wherein Ammon describes the two Nephite seer stones initially provided to Joseph Smith for translating:

> He has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish.

16 This is more or less the meaning of *forget* that LDS apostle Melvin J. Ballard uses in his interpretation of D&C 9:9 in a 1931 General Conference talk. “But if it is not right, you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought, and your heart will be turned away from that thing.” *Conference Report* (April 1931), 37–38, cited in Daniel J. Ridges, *Doctrine and Covenants Made Easier*, (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2012), 1:38.
Oliver Cowdery had likely transcribed this very passage sometime during his first few days of writing for Joseph Smith.\textsuperscript{17} Joseph Smith’s previous scribe, Martin Harris, had certainly feared looking into the interpreters:\textsuperscript{18}

I never dared to look into them by placing them in the hat, because Moses said that “no man could see God and live,” and we could see anything we wished by looking into them; and I could not keep the desire to see God out of my mind. And beside, we had a command to let no man look into them, except by the command of God, lest he should “look aught and perish.”

Whether Oliver Cowdery shared Martin Harris’s existential fear of seeing God, or merely lacked confidence that he was really doing what God wanted, is unknown. In any case, after he began to translate, he feared and discontinued the attempt (vv. 5, 11). His story is reminiscent of the apostle Peter’s attempt to walk on water:\textsuperscript{19}

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:28–31)


\textsuperscript{18} “Martin Harris Interview with Joel Tiffany, 1859,” in \textit{Early Mormon Documents}, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 2:305.

\textsuperscript{19} Oliver Cowdery’s and Peter’s experiences are similar in several ways. Both Oliver Cowdery and Peter had seen a miracle and wanted to have the experience themselves. Both had some initial success — Oliver Cowdery “began to translate” and Peter “walked on the water.” Both abandoned their efforts after experiencing fear. Both were instructed on the importance of faith. The opportunity to work the miracle soon passed for both — for Oliver Cowdery because Joseph Smith had been given sufficient strength, and for Peter because he and Jesus had arrived at the boat.
Jesus’s words to Peter suggest that with greater faith he could have overcome fear and completed the miraculous experience he had begun. Maybe greater faith was what Oliver Cowdery needed as well.

**The Miraculous Power of Faith**

The translation of the Book of Mormon was a miracle. The scriptures teach that miracles are wrought by faith (e.g., Moroni 7:37; Matthew 17:19–20; Mormon 9:21; Moroni 10:12,19,23–24). When Peter walked on water, he did not focus on technique; he walked by faith, and for the lack of faith, he began to sink. To move a mountain, the brother of Jared needed only to have faith and say, “remove,” and “it was removed” (Ether 12:30). While God performed the miracle, the actuation of his divine power was dependent on the faith of his servant. The translation of the Book of Mormon was also dependent on faith, as the Lord indicated to Oliver Cowdery: “Ask that you may … translate … and according to your faith shall it be done unto you” (D&C 8:10–11).

A similar emphasis on faith is found in the Book of Mormon relative to the use of oracular instruments. A miraculous brass ball, the Liahona, directed Lehi’s family through the wilderness by pointing the way they should go. Like the interpreters and Joseph Smith’s seer stone, it also displayed writings for their instruction (1 Nephi 16:29). There was no apparent requirement for Lehi and his family to study anything out or receive a spiritual confirmation in order for the pointers to work or for the writing to appear. As Alma explains, the ball’s miraculous function depended solely on faith:

> And it did work for them according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold, it was done; therefore they had this miracle. (Alma 37:40)

Faith is likewise associated with the use of the interpreters, which are described by Ammon as “a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles” (Mosiah 8:18). Other requirements mentioned in the Book of Mormon for translating include looking and divine authorization (Mosiah 8:13). No requirement for study or spiritual confirmation is mentioned.

If faith was what Oliver Cowdery needed to translate, how would the Lord’s instructions in verses 7-9 have helped him obtain that faith?
Faith Burning in the Bosom

Jesus’s disciples received a spiritual witness of truth by a metaphorical burning in their hearts (Luke 24:32): “Did not our hearts burn within us while he … opened to us the scriptures?” Using similar language, the Lord tells Oliver Cowdery, “I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”20 Bosom literally means “chest,” but when used figuratively it can be more or less synonymous with heart as the seat of intimate feelings. The Lord previously told Oliver Cowdery that the Holy Ghost would work through his mind and his heart (D&C 8:2). Now the Lord is being a little more specific, explaining that the Holy Ghost can give him an intimate witness that his desire “is right.”21 Such a witness would have dispelled any fear Oliver Cowdery might have had about asking for what he “ought not” and strengthened his faith in God concerning the miracle he desired. Knowing that his desire to translate aligned with God’s will, he could ask for that miracle with confidence that God would make it happen. Paul taught that faith is a gift of God given by “the manifestation of the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3-11; also Moroni 10:8-17). A burning in the bosom may be the faith-giving manifestation to which Paul referred.

Conclusion

Before attempting to translate, Oliver Cowdery had been told that his success would depend on his faith. Perhaps it was the importance of faith and the process through which it is obtained that Oliver Cowdery (and Peter) had “not understood.” Peter impulsively demanded, “bid me come unto thee on the water.” Had he first asked if the Lord wanted him to walk on the water, he might have received faith enough to walk without fear of sinking. Similarly, Oliver Cowdery “took no thought” before


21 While it’s true that the Lord had already told Oliver Cowdery he could translate (D&C 6:25; D&C 8:11), those words coming through Joseph Smith might not have provided the same faith-producing assurance as a direct spiritual witness.
asking for the privilege to translate.\textsuperscript{22} If he had first asked for a spiritual confirmation that his desire to translate was right, the resultant burning in his bosom might have provided the faith he needed to look without fear and see sacred writings by “the gift and power of God.” Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9 teaches us how to obtain a spiritual confirmation of a righteous desire. A close reading of the context suggests that such a confirmation can not only tell us that our desire is right in the sight of God but can also give us the faith we need to dispel our fear and actuate the power of God in accomplishing that desire.

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\textsuperscript{22} Oliver Cowdery apparently asked twice for the privilege to translate. The first time he asked, the privilege was granted and he “began to translate,” but then the privilege was “taken away” (D&C 9:5) after he feared and chose to return to writing (D&C 9:1,11). The second time he asked, he “supposed that [the Lord] would give it unto” him (D&C 9:7), but that didn’t happen because it was “not expedient that [he] should translate” at the time (D&C 9:3). That time he reacted with impatience and murmuring (D&C 9:3,6).
“THEY WERE MOVED WITH COMPASSION”
(ALMA 27:4; 53:13):
TOPONYMIC WORDPLAY ON ZARAHEMLA
AND JERSHON

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: As in Hebrew biblical narrative, wordplay on (or play on the meaning of) toponyms, or “place names,” is a discernable feature of Book of Mormon narrative. The text repeatedly juxtaposes the toponym Jershon (“place of inheritance” or “place of possession”) with terms inherit, inheritance, possess, possession, etc. Similarly, the Mulekite personal name Zarahemla (“seed of compassion,” “seed of pity”), which becomes the paramount Nephite toponym as their national capital after the time of Mosiah I, is juxtaposed with the term compassion. Both wordplays occur and recur at crucial points in Nephite/Lamanite history. Moreover, both occur in connection with the migration of the first generation Lamanite converts. The Jershon wordplay recurs in the second generation, when the people of Ammon receive the Zoramite (re)converts into the land of Jershon, and wordplay on Zarahemla recurs subsequently, when the sons of these Lamanite converts come to the rescue of the Nephite nation. Rhetorical wordplay on Zarahemla also surfaces in important speeches later in the Book of Mormon.

First proposed by John A. Tvedtnes, “seed of compassion” or “seed of pity” has become the widely accepted etymology for Zarahemla.¹

More recently, David E. Bokovoy and Pedro Olavarria have found support for this etymology in the texts of Mosiah 9:2 (“and we returned, those of us that were spared, to the land of Zarahemla”) and 3 Nephi 8:24 (“and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla”).

In this study, I will explore additional examples of toponymic narration that utilize the name Zarahemla not noted in the aforementioned studies, namely in Alma 27:4-5 and 53:10-13 as well as in the speech of Nephi the son of Helaman, recorded in Helaman 8:21. In the latter verse, Nephi asks the decadent inhabitants of Zarahemla, “Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek [Muloch⁴]? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed [Hebrew zera'] of Zedekiah are with us?” The national capital Zarahemla was named after the first descendant of Mulek encountered by Mosiah I and the righteous Nephites who fled from the land of Nephi (Omni 1:12-13).⁵ The same Zarahemla was, at that time, king of the Mulekites, who subsequently

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3 Other possible examples might include Helaman 13:12-14 (cf. Alma 62:40) and Alma 60:30-32.


5 Omni 1:12-13: “Behold, I am Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. Behold, I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla; for behold, he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness — And it came to pass that he did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesying. And they were admonished continually by the word of God; and they were led by the power of his arm [Hebrew zĕrō ő], through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla.” This would constitute a pun (paronomasia = a play involving similarly sounding, but unrelated word) on Zarahemla and “arm” in Hebrew. Amaleki also begins to close out his record (and the small plates) with an apparent pun on Zarahemla: “… king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of Zarahemla. And it came to pass that I began to be old; and, having no seed (zera’) and knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore, I shall deliver up these plates unto him, exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel …” [Omni 1:24-25].
united with these Nephites (Omni 1:14-19). The wordplay on Zarahemla in Alma 27:4-5 and 53:10-13 emphasizes the latter element\(^6\) in the names pity and compassion (*are hemlä*).\(^7\) “Zarahemla” became not only a symbol of the miraculous survival of Zedekiah’s (and thus King David’s) “seed” among the Nephites, but also the faithful Nephites’ first refuge after their flight from the land of Nephi and later their new homeland and long-term capital city.\(^8\) Moreover, Mormon uses the name “Zarahemla” as a symbol of the acts of “compassion” or “pity” that saved the lives of converted Lamanites who fled from the land of Nephi.

Moreover, I will show how the story of the resettlement of Ammon’s Lamanite converts is told twice, both using the same wordplay involving two toponyms: “Jershon” and “Zarahemla.” Alma 27 emphasizes that while Ammon and his brethren were “moved with compassion” for these converted Lamanites, the Nephites did not admit these Lamanites into the city of Zarahemla but instead gave to them the land of Jershon “for an inheritance.” Alma 53:10-13 emphasizes, rather, that the converted Lamanites were “brought down into the land of Zarahemla” because of the “pity” of Ammon and his brethren. This “pity,” then, constitutes the basis for the later “compassion” of the Lamanite converts who allow their sons to fight on behalf of the Nephites when the survival of the latter is threatened by massive Lamanite military assaults from the land of Nephi (Alma 53). The differences in the narratives’ respective literary emphases reflect the reality that existed during the time of Helaman the son of Alma: the converted Lamanites (the people of Ammon) were then (a generation later) living in the land of Zarahemla, at least near Melek and thus much nearer to the city of Zarahemla rather than in the land of

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\(^6\) Michael P. O’Connor (“The Human Characters’ Names in the Ugaritic Poems: Onomastic Eccentricity in Bronze-Age West Semitic and the Name Daniel in Particular,” in Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives, ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 271) notes that wordplay is often “incomplete, as puns, casual rhymes, and verbal echoes often are, in all literary texts of all types and times.”


\(^8\) Zarahemla is specifically called the Nephite “capital” in Helaman 1:27.
Jershon (see especially Alma 47:29).9 Thus the name Zarahemla not only became a symbol of the “compassion” or “pity” that Ammon and his brethren had for the Lamanites and a symbol the converted Lamanites had a generation later for the Nephoites – but can still be seen as a symbol of the Lord’s “compassion” for the seed of Jacob today.

**Biblical Wordplay Involving Toponymy**

Toponymic wordplay on Zarahemla and Jershon has numerous antecedents in Hebrew biblical narrative,10 examples of which would have been available and familiar to Book of Mormon writers from the brass plates, including later writers like Alma the Younger and Mormon. Toponymic wordplay on the biblical toponym Salem (Hebrew šālēm) in terms of the Hebrew word šālôm (“peace,” Alma 13:17-18) — Hebrew being one of the two languages the Nephites said they used throughout their history11 — is at least one indication that Alma and Mormon were familiar with and incorporated toponymic wordplay in their own narratives, at least in part to show that toponyms were appropriate in light of what occurred there.

Salient examples of biblical toponymic wordplay in Hebrew include the renaming of “Luz” as “Bethel” explained in several biblical passages, beginning in Genesis 28:10-19. At this location, Jacob “dream[ed]” and saw “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (28:12). Jacob also saw “the Lord standing above” the latter (28:13), and here the Lord gives him the Abrahamic promise (28:13-15). Then the narrator records:

> And Jacob awoke out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God [bêt ’ĕlōhîm], and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for

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9 Compare John L. Sorenson’s map (Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient American Book [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2013], map 1), which places Jershon much further away to the north near the narrow neck of land.


11 1 Nephi 1:2; Mormon 9:32-33.
his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el [or, Bethel (bêt-ʾēl)]; but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. (Genesis 28:16-19; cf. 35:6-7; Judges 1:22-26)

In the Genesis narrative, Bethel (“House of el,” or “House of God”) — which becomes an important cultic site within Israel — is described as a place already functioning as a temple: a bêt ʾēlōhîm (“house of God[s]”) with the Lord himself standing at the “gate of heaven” (cf. 2 Nephi 9:41 and Helaman 3:28)\(^\text{12}\) and with the angels of God coming and going like priestly officiants. Even the old name “Luz” (“almond [tree]”) possibly suggests the earlier sacredness and cultic use of this site (cf. Genesis 48:3).\(^\text{13}\) This renaming story is briefly retold again in Genesis 35:6-7, emphasizing the “el” element in the name: “So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there [the] God[s] [ḥāʾ-ʾēlōhîm] appeared [nīglū, plural verb] unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.” In the Genesis 28 version, Jehovah and the angels of God appeared to Jacob at Luz/Bethel.

A later Deuteronomistic narrative in Judges 17–18 polemizes against Bethel as an illicit “house of gods” built by Micah, an Ephraimite who employs a rogue Levite who is later taken away from the former by Danites. The narrator uses the same expression to play on Bethel: “And the man Micah had an house of gods [bêt ʾēlōhîm]” (Judges 17:5). There is in the Deuteronomistic recounting of this story an anticipation of the events of 1 Kings 12-13 and the establishment of Dan and Bethel as the main cult sites in the northern kingdom. As Sergei Frolov observes, “What makes Micah’s artifacts even worse” than the later calves of Dan and Bethel of 1 Kings 12-13 (i.e., bull-images of Jehovah) “is the provenance of the treasure used to manufacture them: according to Judges 17-18, both Bethel and Dan have their origin in blood money.”\(^\text{14}\)

Yet another version, a Josephite conquest of Luz/Bethel is told in

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\(^{12}\) The phrase “gate of heaven” occurs only in Genesis 28:17 and Helaman 3:28. The “gate of heaven” is certainly the gate referred to in 2 Nephi 9:41.

\(^{13}\) The “Menorah,” the stylized “tree of life” of the Jerusalem temple, was an almond tree. Jacob’s statement to Joseph in Genesis 48:3 (yet another brief retelling of this story) resonates temple significance: “And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty [El Shaddai] appeared unto me at Luz [Almond (tree)] in the land of Canaan, and blessed me.”

Judges 1:22-26, a version in which Luz is rebuilt somewhere on Hittite land. The importance of Bethel as an Israelite city is evidenced by the number and variety of stories told about its incorporation into Israel.

Similarly, the toponym Hormah, which Hugh Nibley suggested might stand behind the Book of Mormon toponym “Desolation,” is explained at least twice by wordplay in terms of the Israelite policy of proscription, i.e., “utter destruction” of the Canaanite peoples in the land of promise: “And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed [wayyahārēm] them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah [ḥormāl].” (Numbers 21:3) The narrator suggests that the name Hormah is an appropriate toponym because of the policy of “utter destruction” (*ḥrm) being carried out at this spot.

A different text later in Judges “retells” the naming of Hormah: “And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it [wayyahārimû]. And the name of the city was called Hormah [ḥormā] (Judges 1:17). This time, the naming of “Hormah” is actually a “renaming” of the town Zephath. As Kevin A. Wilson notes, “Numbers 2:3 explains the meaning by saying that the Israelites destroyed the Canaanite towns in the area. According to Judg[es] 1:17, however, the city was originally called ZEPHAT, but its name was changed after Judah helped Simeon destroy it.” It is also noteworthy that Joshua 15:30 assigns the city to the territory of Judah, while Joshua 19:4 (see 19:1-8) and 1 Chronicles 14:30 (see 14:24-31) assign the territory to Simeon. Joshua 15:30 may reflect the later reality already hinted at in Joshua 19:1-8 and 1 Chronicles 14:24-31: the tribal inheritance of Simeon in the south was eventually absorbed into the inheritance of Judah.

In both etiologies (Numbers 21:3 and Judges 1:17), the policy of “utter destruction” is cited as the reason for the appropriateness of the toponym. In the first interpretation (or telling) of the event, the utter destruction of multiple Canaanite towns is given as the basis for the toponym Hormah; in the second interpretation (or retelling), the “utter destruction” of Hormah is ascribed to the town Zephath.

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15 Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (2nd ed.; CWHN 7; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988) 171. Another possibility is ḥârbâ = “site of ruins”; see HALOT, 350. This term is related to “Horeb” (another name for Sinai and its vicinity), which would also mean “desolation.” Cf. ḥâreb/ḥoreb/ḥôreb/ḥôreb, BDB 351-352.


17 Ibid.
destruction” of Zephath is the basis. Moshe Garsiel cites this second example as an instance of toponymic wordplay in which “the author dispenses with … connective words on the assumption that the linkage is clear enough without it.”

Sometimes wordplay in toponymic narrative is even more subtle. The final verses of 2 Samuel 12 describe David’s conquest of the Ammonite capital Rabbah (“great,” “populous,” i.e., “the great city,” a name that we might also interpret as “Bountiful,” i.e., the “Bountiful” city). The biblical text here connects the name “Rabbah” with “great abundance”:

And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah [rabbātā] and fought against it, and took it. And he took their king’s [or, (the god) Milcom’s] crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David’s head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance [harbēh mēʾōd]. (2 Samuel 12:29-30)

The “great abundance” of the spoil taken from Rabbah emphasizes not only the significance of David’s victory over the city but also, within the narrative context, the appropriateness of the name “Rabbah”: a “great abundance” of spoil is to be expected from a capital city whose name denoted “greatness” or “abundance.” Many other such examples of toponymic wordplay in the Hebrew Bible could be cited.

The main point here is that these kinds of toponymic narratives, including toponymic wordplay, constituted an important part of the scriptural/literary heritage the Lehites brought with them from

19 BDB, 913. Note how Alma 18:13 glosses the Lamanite term “Rabbanah”: “And one of the king’s servants said unto him, Rabbanah, which is, being interpreted, powerful or great king, considering their kings to be powerful; and thus he said unto him: Rabbanah, the king desireth thee to stay.”
20 HALOT, 1178.
21 Cf. 1 Nephi 17:5-6, where Nephi glosses the name “Bountiful” in terms of the “much”-ness of what they found there: “And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters. And it came to pass that we did pitch our tents by the seashore; and notwithstanding we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea, even so much that we cannot write them all, we were exceedingly rejoiced when we came to the seashore; and we called the place Bountiful, because of its much fruit.”
Jerusalem. Such toponymic narratives, which sometimes included etiological components, endeavored to show why a toponym was appropriate in light of events that occurred there. As I will endeavor to show, it remained an important part of the Nephite scriptural tradition.

A Tale of Two Toponyms

Robert F. Smith and John W. Welch were the first to correlate a toponym (“place name”) in the Book of Mormon with wordplay in the underlying text when they individually noticed the juxtaposition of “Jershon” with the terms “inherit” and “inheritance” (also “possess” and “possession”) represented by the root *yrš (“to inherit,” “possess”) in Hebrew. This wordplay occurs as a theme in Alma 27:22–26; 35:14; 43:22, 25. The fact that this juxtaposition occurs repeatedly in three separate pericopes suggests that the wordplay is intentional.

The Book of Mormon texts exhibits similar, intentional wordplay on Zarahemla. John Tvedtnes concluded that Zarahemla is formed from the Hebrew elements *zeraʿ (“seed”) + *ḥemlā (“compassion,” “pity”), with the meaning “seed of compassion.”

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22 Robert F. Smith, unpublished manuscript. In a personal communication (October, 2015), he indicated to me that he first noticed the correlation of Jershon and “inheritance” in the late 1960s. Paul Hoskisson (personal communication, August 2015) suggests that Jack Welch “came up with his ideas while learning Hebrew in L[os] A[ngeles].” The idea has been subsequently noted in print by Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” 258-259.


24 *yrš = “take possession of; inherit; dispossess” (see BDB, 439-440); “to take possession of”; see, HALOT, 441-442.


Zarahemla and Jershon represent important test-cases: both constitute Book of Mormon names/toponyms that are not otherwise attested in the biblical record, both of which follow the rules of normal Hebrew name formation and evidence transparent Hebrew etymologies and meanings. It is probably significant, then, that the Book of Mormon text manifests an awareness of the meaning of both Zarahemla and Jershon in the same narrative block (i.e., the resettlement of converted Lamanites in Jershon) and that the juxtaposition of each name with its putative meaning occurs repeatedly throughout interrelated segments of narrative (i.e., the resettlement of Zoramite refugees in Jershon among the converted Lamanites who accepted them and who subsequently migrated, themselves, from Jershon [Alma 35; nearer to or into the city of Zarahemla, see 47:29], and the children of the converted Lamanites coming to the aid of the Nephites against the Lamanites in plight of the former a generation later).

"Compassionate" Lamanite Resettlement in a Place of "Inheritance"

Not long after their conversion, the Lamanites under the leadership of Anti-Nephi-Lehi and Ammon fled the land of Nephi and began a mass migration. The religiously motivated slaughter of the converts forced this dramatic population movement. Mormon states that Ammon and his brethren, out of “compassion,” directed the converted Lamanites’ emigration toward Zarahemla:

Now when Ammon and his brethren saw this work of destruction among those whom they so dearly beloved, and among those who had so dearly beloved them — for they were treated as though they were angels sent from God to save them from everlasting destruction — therefore, when Ammon and his brethren saw this great work of destruction, they were moved with compassion, and they said unto the king: Let us gather together this people of the Lord, and let us go down to the land of Zarahemla [the land of the-seed-of-compassion] to our brethren the Nephites, and flee out of the hands of our enemies, that we be not destroyed. (Alma 27:4-5)

The wordplay on Zarahemla suggests that Zarahemla is the appropriate destination because “compassion” is in the name. The Nephites had taken refuge in the same place a few generations earlier (Omni 1:12-19). Only one generation earlier, the converts of Alma the
Elder — and refugees from the land of Nephi — had been “received with joy” in Zarahemla (Mosiah 24:25) after the Lord had “been merciful unto them … and had delivered them out of bondage” from Amulon (a name which the narrator seems to deliberately tie to the idea of ʿāmāl/ʿāmēl, “toil,” “trouble,” or “travail,” i.e., “man of toil,” “man of trouble” [ʿāmāl + appellative – ʿôn “man/person of”]; see especially Mosiah 23:8-11) and the Lamanites over whom Amulon had authority (Mosiah 24:21). Similarly, when the people of Limhi “arrived in the land of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 22:14) after fleeing out the land of Nephi from the Lamanites, Mormon reports that “Mosiah received them with joy” (Mosiah 22:15).

Significantly however, he also notes that Ammon’s Lamanite convert-refugees were not admitted or received into the city of Zarahemla itself, perhaps due to the inimical relationship that had existed for so long between the Nephites and Lamanites and to the inevitable sociological issues of incorporating disparate cultures — something the Nephites and Mulekites of Zarahemla had experienced recently (see Omni 1:17-19; Mosiah 26:4). When Ammon and his brothers proposed a mission to the Lamanites, at least some Nephites in Zarahemla counter-proposed a preemptive war of genocide against the Lamanites, a decidedly uncompassionate act (Alma 26:23-25; see further below).

It is interesting to recall Zeniff’s apparent wordplay on Zarahemla and ḥāmal (“we returned, those of us that were spared, to the land of Zarahemla,” Mosiah 9:2), which occurs in the context of another proposed preemptive war of genocide against the Lamanites (9:1-2). Zeniff had been part of a party that had gone up from Zarahemla to

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27 Cf. the entries for ʿāmāl and ʿāmēl in HALOT, 845. See also BDB, 765-766.
28 Note the “compassion” that the Lamanites have on the people of Limhi (Mosiah 19:14; 20:26) that preserves them long enough to be “received” in safety in Zarahemla. The Lamanites had similar “compassion” on Amulon and his brethren (Mosiah 23:34) that preserved their lives. According to Robert Cochran, with whom I have taught at BYU-Hawaii, the story in the Book of Mosiah of Nephites returning to Zarahemla is the story of “going home” (personal communication). Zarahemla, thus, stands as a “type” of heaven in the Book of Mosiah: the return to Zarahemla is a metaphor of the theological return to our heavenly home.
29 I believe Mormon is aware of the irony of the meaning of the name Zarahemla (Alma 26:24), “seed of compassion,” in view of what Ammon said the skeptics in Zarahemla had counter-proposed (Alma 26:25-26). The Nephites had been received compassionately into Zarahemla during the time of their great-grandfather (Mosiah I) when they fled and yet their posterity (seed) were unwilling to extend the same compassion toward their Lamanite brethren, fleeing under (perhaps) similar circumstances.
the land of Nephi to “spy out” and “destroy” the Lamanite forces, but “saw that which was good,” i.e., that which was essentially Nephite (a play on the meaning of “Nephi,” “land of Nephi,” and “Nephite”) and “was desirous that they should not be destroyed.” Internecine bloodshed ensued because of Zeniff’s compassion, and fortunately he was one of the “spared.” Mormon seems to allude to Zeniff’s first person account in the wordplay on Zarahemla in Alma 27:4 and perhaps he has all of these events in mind when he describes the genocidal oaths that led to the final destruction of the Nephite nation, which oaths caused Mormon to recuse himself from leading the Nephites (Mormon 3:9-16). Appropriately, Mormon had at that time the toponym Desolation, and the Nephites’ “utter destruction” in view.  

At this stage, however, the Nephites of Zarahemla come up with a more humane solution according to Mormon’s account:

And it came to pass that the chief judge sent a proclamation throughout all the land, desiring the voice of the people concerning the admitting their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying: Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea, which joins the land Bountiful, which is on the south of the land Bountiful; and this land Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance. And behold, we will set our armies between the land Jershon and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land Jershon; and this we do for our brethren, on account of their fear to take up arms against their brethren lest they should commit sin; and this their great fear came because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness. And now behold, this will we do unto our brethren, that they may inherit the land Jershon; and we will guard them from their enemies with


our armies, on condition that they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies. Now, it came to pass that when Ammon had heard this, he returned to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and also Alma with him, into the wilderness, where they had pitched their tents, and made known unto them all these things. And Alma also related unto them his conversion, with Ammon and Aaron, and his brethren. And it came to pass that it did cause great joy among them. And they went down into the land of Jershon, and took possession of the land of Jershon; and they were called by the Nephites the people of Ammon; therefore they were distinguished by that name ever after. (Alma 27:20-26)

The text repeatedly emphasizes that the converted Lamanites, not admitted into the land of Zarahemla, “inherited” the land of Jershon (“place-of-inheritance”) “for an inheritance.” Perhaps the Nephites (and the Nephite leadership) at the time saw the name of the land Jershon as a kind of sign (nomen est omen) of how the inevitable sociological problem of a great and sudden influx of Lamanite converts could best be solved. In any case, the narrator (here Alma or Mormon) recognized that the name Jershon was appropriate because of what happened there on this occasion: because of the “compassion” of Ammon and his brethren, the lives of the Lamanites were saved, and they received “inheritances” in Jershon, the “place-of-inheritance,” and “took possession” of Jershon, the “place-of-possession.” The narratalogical emphasis on this connection suggests that the narrator considered it important. This is subsequently confirmed in Alma chapter 35.

The Resettlement of Poor Zoramite Converts in Jershon and Second Forced Emigration of the People of Ammon (Alma 35)

When mass resettlement next becomes an issue, wordplay on Jershon again resurfaces in the narrative. Ammon’s Lamanite converts did not long remain in Jershon. Even after “a tremendous battle … even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem” (Alma 28:2) in or near Jershon, another contention begins over some Zoramites (Nephite dissenters) who reconvert at the preaching of Alma, Amulek, Zeezrom, and others. These poor “reconverts” are “cast out” by the Zoramite leadership and subsequently seek refuge among Ammon’s Lamanite converts in Jershon. Wordplay involving Jershon and inheritance is again evident:
And it came to pass that after they had found out the minds of all the people, those who were in favor of the words which had been spoken by Alma and his brethren were cast out of the land; and they were many; and they came over also into the land of Jershon [“place of inheritance”]. And it came to pass that Alma and his brethren did minister unto them. Now the people of the Zoramites were angry with the people of Ammon who were in Jershon, and the chief ruler of the Zoramites, being a very wicked man, sent over unto the people of Ammon desiring them that they should cast out of their land all those who came over from them into their land. And he [the leader of the Zoramites] breathed out many threatenings against them. And now the people of Ammon did not fear their words; therefore they did not cast them out, but they did receive all the poor of the Zoramites that came over unto them; and they did nourish them, and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants. (Alma 35:8-9)

The Lamanite converts (the people of Ammon) give the Zoramite reconverts “lands for their inheritance” in “Jershon,” as the Nephites had previously done for them — another wordplay on Jershon. Notably, these Lamanites not only give them lands for their inheritance but also “nourish them” and “clothe them.” The narrative emphasizes that these Lamanites “did receive all the poor of the Zoramites” and “did not cast them out.” The Nephites wanted to protect Ammon’s Lamanite converts, but did not — at least at that time — admit them into the city of Zarahemla itself (see Alma 27:20-24). The converted Lamanites were unable to “protect” those poor Zoramites militarily, but they were able to “administer unto them” in a purely “compassionate” way, just as Ammon and his brethren had ministered to them. (cf. Alma 27:4) This ministration was yet more evidence of the “firmness” of their faith in and the strength of their conversion to Christ,33 versus stereotypical Lamanite “unbelief.”34

But here Mormon further notes that the converted Lamanites did not stop at “giving unto [the converted Zoramites] lands for their

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33 See also Alma 24:19; 27:27; Alma 57:19-20, 27; Helaman 15:8, 10.

34 On “unbelief” (Heb. לֶנַה, cf. Deuteronomy 32:20) as a stereotypical pun on the name Laman and Lamanites that enjoyed currency among the Nephites, see Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit,” 240-263, esp. 242-243.
inheritance” in Jershon, but they gave up their own inheritances in Jershon for the protection of the Zoramite reconverts:

And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon, and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites, that they might contend with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites; and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges; and an account shall be given of their wars hereafter. And Alma, and Ammon, and their brethren, and also the two sons of Alma returned to the land of Zarahemla, after having been instruments in the hands of God of bringing many of the Zoramites to repentance; and as many as were brought to repentance were driven out of their land; but they [the converted Zoramites] have lands for their inheritance in the land of Jershon, and they have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children, and their lands. (Alma 35:13-14)

Here Mormon reports that the people of Ammon migrated en masse out of the land of Jershon into the land of Melek, another Nephite land. Melek was a city/land “on the west of the river Sidon” (Alma 8:3) and “three days’ journey” south of the land of Ammonihah (Alma 8:6) and evidently nearer the land of Zarahemla (see Alma 45:18). This passage reemphasizes the role of the land of Jershon as “place-of-inheritance” — the place where the converted Zoramites received “lands for their inheritance” because of the complete unselfishness of the Lamanite converts. For their part, these Zoramites, unlike Ammon’s converted Lamanites, were able to join the Nephite military defending themselves, their families, and their lands. 35 And yet, these Lamanites — specifically

35 After Alma 35, Mormon inserts first-person paranetic material by Alma directed to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton (Alma 36-42) before resuming his narrative in Alma 43. There Mormon describes the beginning of a battle that will be a kind of sequel to the battle in Alma 47. The Lamanites together with the unconverted Zoramites (who become Lamanites) come against the Nephites first at Jershon, but when the Lamanites see the degree of the Nephite preparation, they attempt to attack them elsewhere in the land of Manti. Mormon notes that Moroni left “a part of his army in the land of Jershon, lest by any means a part of the Lamanites should come into that land and take possession of the city” (Alma 42:25). This last iteration of the “Jershon”/“inherit[ance]”/“possess[ion]” wordplay suggests that the Nephites continued to consider Jershon important as “place-of-inheritance.”
their own sons — would be able to aid the Nephites in their own unique way a generation later.

**Reciprocal “Pity” and “Compassion”**

It may be worth noting here that the emigration movements of Ammon’s Lamanite converts (from the land of Nephi to the land of Jershon to the land of Melek) are not entirely dissimilar to the migratory movements of the early Latter-day Saints from New York to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, to Utah, i.e., being forced to repatriate over great distances every few years. The narrative does not tell us about the movement of the people of Ammon after they evacuate the land of Jershon. However, it would seem that many — perhaps most — of them were by the second generation actually living further south in the land of — if not the city of — Zarahemla rather than in the land of Jershon further north. This would explain why the narrator, when retelling the story of the initial resettlement of the people of Ammon, makes no mention of the land of Jershon. Instead the narrator (Alma or Mormon) emphasizes the connection between the converted Lamanites and the broader land of Zarahemla, rather than including Jershon:

> And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of **Zarahemla**, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites. And because of their oath they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren; for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more; and according to their oath they would have perished; yea, they would have suffered themselves to have fallen into the hands of their brethren, had it not been for the pity and the exceeding love which Ammon and his brethren had had for them. And for this cause they were brought down into the land of **Zarahemla**; and they ever had been protected by the Nephites [cf. Alma 27:23-24]. But it came to pass that when they [the converted Lamanites] saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country. (Alma 53:10-13)

36 See Sorenson’s map (Mormon’s Codex, map 1).
In retelling the story of the emigration of the converted Lamanites out of the land of Nephi, the narrator makes no mention of the fact the Nephites did not initially receive the converts into (the city of) Zarahemla but instead gave them Jershon for an “inheritance” (see again Alma 27:22-26). Rather, he reemphasizes that the Lamanites had dwelt in the land of Zarahemla (in a very broad sense) as well as the protection that the Nephites had given these Lamanite converts (see again Alma 27:23-24), who would not protect themselves because of the covenant they had made with God. By reiterating the wordplay on Zarahemla in Alma 27:4-5, he also reemphasizes “the pity” or “compassion” (ḥ'emlā) that Ammon and his brethren had for their Lamanite converts. The narrative states here that the Lamanites were “brought down into the land of Zarahemla” and makes no mention of the resettlement in Jershon.

In the earlier account, the Lamanites “came into the wilderness that divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla, and came over near the borders of the land” (27:14). Ammon at that time stated: “ye shall remain here until we return; and we will try the hearts of our brethren, whether they will that ye shall come into their land” (Alma 27:15). Ammon had good reason to “try” the hearts of his “brethren” in the land of Zarahemla, who, when Ammon and his brothers proposed their mission to the Lamanites, not only “laughed [them] to scorn” (Alma 26:23) but proposed a preemptive war of genocide against the Lamanites (26:25) — a lack of compassion that contrasts starkly with Ammon and his brothers’ compassion, as noted earlier.

Also as noted previously, the converted Lamanites were subsequently admitted into the land of Jershon but not directly into the city of Zarahemla itself (or its environs, see again Alma 27:20-24). Over the course of a generation, however, the converted Lamanites migrated from Jershon to the land of Melek, nearer the city of Zarahemla. Alma 47:29 explicitly places the Lamanites in the land of Zarahemla37 (“seed of compassion”), if not in the city of Zarahemla itself, and thus they were still the beneficiaries of the “compassion” (Alma 27:4) or “pity” (53:11) that Ammon and his brethren had shown them.

After retelling the story — the Nephites’ being in serious military danger during that subsequent generation — the narrator (Mormon abridging Helaman’s record) gives the wordplay on Zarahemla a new

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37 Alma 47:29: “Now when the servants of the king saw an army pursuing after them, they were frightened again, and fled into the wilderness, and came over into the land of Zarahemla and joined the people of Ammon.” Mormon here places the Ammonites, at long last, in Zarahemla.
twist. The Lamanite converts recognize this danger and are even willing to break their covenant of burying their weapons to come to the Nephites’ aid. The text states that “they were moved with compassion” (Alma 53:13), a verbatim reprise of Alma 27:4. The collocation “they were moved with compassion” is found only in these two passages in the scriptures.

The “pity” or “compassion” of Ammon and his brethren for their Lamanite converts, then, is the basis for their converts’ “compassion” for the Nephites in their moment of need a generation later. The reiteration of the wordplay involving “pity”/“moved with compassion” (*ḥemlā/*ḥml) and “Zarahemla” not only bespeaks the magnanimity of what Ammon and his brethren had done a generation earlier, as well as the Christ-like compassion of the converted Lamanites but also attests the divine providence that continued to attend the Nephites, this often in spite of themselves. The narrative suggests that the name “Zarahemla” was a fitting symbol of divine compassion not because of the Nephites as a whole, but because of Ammon, his brethren, and his Lamanite converts: Ammon and his brethren came up from Zarahemla “not with the intent to destroy [their] brethren, but [to] … save some few of their souls,” and because of their “compassion” and “pity,” they saved many Lamanites lives (both temporally and eternally); then, a generation later, their converts returned the favor for the Nephites, ultimately allowing their own children to go to war on behalf of the Nephites, thus saving or “sparing” the Nephites as a nation. The name “Zarahemla” becomes increasingly ironic in later Nephite history when the Nephites become more wicked than the Lamanites, in the end utterly losing their compassion, and thereafter the Lord will no longer “spare” them (see Mormon 3:9-15).

“The Lord Will Be Merciful … and Increase Their Seed” (Helaman 7:24)

Mormon’s source for much of the material in Alma 53 is Helaman’s letter to Moroni (Alma 56–58) regarding the two thousand sixty Lamanite “stripling” sons who go to war on behalf of the Nephites. From this point

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39 See Alma 57:6, 19-20, 25.
40 The word “stripling” occurs only one time in the KJV, and there it translates the Hebrew word ʿelem (or ʾālem in its pausal form). This word is the source of the name “Alma” (ʾlm), which means “[God’s] young man” or “[God’s] stripling.” The –a (א) on the end of Alma is a theophoric hypocoristic aleph (i.e., representing
forward, for a generation or more, the Lamanites grow greater in their faithfulness, while the Nephites diminish (see, e.g., Helaman 6:34). By the time of Nephi the son of Helaman, the Lamanites are more righteous than the Nephites, as he points out to the Nephites of Zarahemla:

Now therefore, I would that ye should behold, my brethren, that it shall be better\(^{41}\) for the Lamanites than for you except ye shall repent. For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them; yea, he will lengthen out their days and increase their seed [Heb. zar’ām], even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed except thou shalt repent. (Helaman 7:23-24)

In the Zarahemla context of Nephi’s speech, his prophecy that the Lord will “be merciful,” i.e. have compassion on the Lamanites and “increase their seed,” constitutes a plausible play on the name Zarahemla. This speech also may include further example of wordplay on Zarahemla (as noted above): “Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed [zera’] of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem” (Helaman 8:21).

By the time of Nephi the son of Helaman, the Nephites knew what it was like to lose inheritance or “possession”\(^ {42}\) of the land of Zarahemla (the name of a deity). See Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Alma as a Hebrew Name,” \textit{JBMS} 7/1 (1998): 72 — 73; see also Matthew L. Bowen “‘And He Was a Young Man’: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay,” \textit{Insights} 30/4 (2010): 2–3. If ‘elem is indeed the word that represents “stripling” in the underlying text, Mormon has very appropriately included this story in the “the Book of Alma” (cf. “they were all of them very young,” Alma 56:46).

\(^{41}\) Perhaps an allusion to Jacob 3:7: “Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children; and their unbelief and their hatred towards you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; wherefore, how much better are you than they, in the sight of your great Creator?” See Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit,” 245. Note that in Helaman 7:26, Nephi the son of Helaman prophesies to the Nephites of Zarahemla: “Yea, wo shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up beyond that which is good because of your exceedingly great riches!” This is another rhetorical wordplay on Nephi/Nephites.

\(^{42}\) Helaman 5:4: “And in the fifty and seventh year they did come down against the Nephites to battle, and they did commence the work of death; yea, insomuch that in the fifty and eighth year of the reign of the judges they succeeded in obtaining possession of the land of Zarahemla; yea, and also all the lands, even unto the land which was near the land Bountiful.”
(Helaman 4:5) to the Lamanites, even half of their “possessions” (4:13). Yet when these unconverted Lamanites were converted, they not only “yield[ed] up unto the Nephites the lands of their possession (5:51-52), they “did come down into the land of Zarahemla, and did declare unto the people of the Nephites the manner of their conversion, and did exhort them to faith and repentance” (6:4).

The Nephites will experience the destruction (3 Nephi 9:3) and rebuilding of Zarahemla before history again repeats itself. Mormon later informs us that during his youth the war of extinction that culminated in the destruction of the Nephites as a nation began “in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon” (Mormon 1:10). In Mormon 2, Mormon tells us about the Nephites’ finally being “driven” out of (the city and land of) Zarahemla and all of their lands south of the land of Desolation before being “utterly destroyed” as prophesied and promised. What had been a long-lasting symbol of the Lord’s “compassion” for the seed of Mulek [Muloch] and later the seed of Nephi became a symbol of the Lord’s “utter destruction” of the Nephites. And yet the promise still remains that Lord will “be merciful” unto the Lamanites and will “increase [compare Heb. yôsîp] their seed [zarʿām]” (Helaman 7:24), or as Mormon states it elsewhere: “Surely he … hath been merciful unto the seed of Joseph … Yea, and surely shall he again [yôsîp] bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God. And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the

43 Yôsîp - perhaps this Hiphil (causative) form of the Hebrew verb yāsap underlies the English text or is alluded to by a term translated “increase.” “Joseph” (“May he add,” “may he increase”) is also formed from the Hiphil stem of this verb.

44 This same kind of wordplay may be found in the speech of Samuel the Lamanite to the wicked Nephites of Zarahemla: “And this is according to the prophecy, that they shall again be brought to the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep. Therefore I say unto you, it shall be better for them than for you except ye repent. For behold, had the mighty works been shown unto them which have been shown unto you, yea, unto them who have dwindled in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers, ye can see of yourselves that they never would again have dwindled in unbelief. Therefore, saith the Lord: I will not utterly destroy them, but I will cause that in the day of my wisdom they shall return again unto me, saith the Lord. And now behold, saith the Lord, concerning the people of the Nephites: If they will not repent, and observe to do my will, I will utterly destroy them, saith the Lord, because of their unbelief notwithstanding the many mighty works which I have done among them; and as surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be, saith the Lord.”
earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad
upon all the face of the earth” (3 Nephi 5:21, 23-24; cf. Alma 46:23-27).45

Conclusion

Michael O’Connor has observed that, “The ancients display awareness of
the meanings and shapes of names chiefly in literature.”46 This is true of
Hebrew biblical narrative as it is of Book of Mormon narrative. We have
seen in this study that Mormon and his sources for the Book of Alma
(including Alma the Younger and his son Helaman) appear to be very
aware of the Hebrew meaning of the names “Jershon” and “Zarahemla,”
and several of the narratives in Alma that deal with these names are
written in part to show these names are appropriate and ironic in view
of what transpired in their vicinities.

“Jershon” serves as a “place of inheritance” and “Zarahemla” as a
source of life- and soul-saving “compassion” in multiple instances,
even in spite of the lack of “compassion” of many of the Nephites. The
“compassion” that Ammon and his brethren had shown the Lamanites
(Alma 27:4-5; Alma 53:11) and the reciprocal “compassion” shown by
the Lamanites a generation later (Alma 53:13) would have served both
the Nephites and the Lamanites well during Mormon’s own time
when each sought to “utterly destroy” the other near — appropriately
enough — the city of Desolation (Mormon 3-4). The Nephites might
otherwise have retained lands of inheritance and an existence (Mormon
4:4). Furthermore, this kind of “compassion” amongst traditional foes
would serve Mormon’s latter-day audience well (whether Jew or Gentile),
especially those plagued by genocide and war. “Compassion” like the
Savior’s47 is the word.

Yet again we see that the Book of Mormon not only constitutes a
sacred history for a latter-day audience but a highly “literary” work and
a skillfully-woven narrative filled with literary devices and intertextual
allusion. This bespeaks the work of skilled ancient authors and Mormon’s

45 On the wordplay on Joseph in 3 Nephi 5:21-24, see Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He
Shall Add’: Wordplay on the name Joseph and an early instance of Gezera Shawa in
46 O’Connor, “Human Characters’ Names in Ugaritic,” 270.
47 E.g., 2 Chronicles 36:15,17; Malachi 3:17; Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27,
33; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20; Mosiah 15:9; 3
Nephi 17:6-7; Ether 1:35, 37, 40; D&C 88:40; 101:9.
deft editorial work rather than a nineteenth century author with limited literary attainments.⁴⁸

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⁴⁸ Toward the end of her life, Emma Smith Bidamon, the widowed wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith testified: “Joseph Smith … could neither write or dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, it is marvelous to me, ‘a marvel and a wonder,’ as much so as to any one else.” See Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” Saints’ Herald 26/19 (1 October 1879), 290.
Abstract: The Book of Mormon contains several quotations from the Hebrew Bible that have been juxtaposed on the basis of shared words or phrases, this for the purpose of interpreting the cited scriptural passages in light of one another. This exegetical technique — one that Jesus himself used — came to be known in later rabbinic times as Gezera Shawa (“equal statute”). In several additional instances, the use of Gezera Shawa converges with onomastic wordplay. Nephi uses a Gezera Shawa involving Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 twice on the basis of the yâsap verb-forms yôsîp/yôsîp (2 Nephi 25:17 and quoting the Lord in 2 Nephi 29:1) to create a stunning wordplay on the name “Joseph.” In another instance, King Benjamin uses Gezera Shawa involving Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, and Deuteronomy 14:1 (1–2) on the basis of the Hebrew noun bēn (“son”; plural bānîm, bānôt, “sons” and “daughters”) on which to build a rhetorical wordplay on his own name. This second wordplay, which further alludes to Psalm 110:1 on account of the noun yāmin (“right hand”), was ready-made for his temple audience who, on the occasion of Mosiah’s coronation, were receiving their own “endowment” to become “sons” and “daughters” at God’s “right hand.” The use of Gezera Shawa was often christological — e.g., Jacob’s Gezera Shawa on (“stone”) in Jacob 4:15–17 and Alma’s Gezera Shawa on Zenos’s and Zenock’s phrase “because of thy Son” in Alma 33:11–16 (see Alma 33:4-17). Taken together, these examples suggest that we should pay more attention to scripture’s use of scripture and, in particular, the use of this exegetical practice. In doing so, we will better discern the messages intended by ancient prophets whose words the Book of Mormon preserves.

The names of Rachel’s two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, constituted two of the most important proper names in ancient Israel — Joseph as the patriarchal ancestor of the dominant northern half-tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, and Benjamin as the ancestor of the tribe of King Saul and thus of the first “royal” tribe in Israel. Joseph and Benjamin also became important names in their own right in the Book of Mormon.
Lehi names his youngest son after his ancestor, Joseph the patriarch. King Mosiah I names his heir Benjamin, who, according to the textual evidence, emerged as one of the most righteous and influential of the Nephite kings.

As I hope to show in this essay, these two names are to be appreciated within the Nephite literary onomasticon not only for the wordplay on their names evident in the Book of Mormon text but also for the distinctive exegetical way in which we see that wordplay evident. The wordplay on the name Joseph (“may he [God] add”) and Benjamin (“son of the right hand,” often understood to mean “son of the [directional] right hand [i.e., the south],” but also “son of the right hand [of power],” see explanation below) takes the form of Gezera Shawa juxtaposing significant texts — prophetic and liturgical — from the Hebrew Bible. In addition to these, I will offer additional examples of Gezera Shawa that illuminate its importance as an exegetical technique used by ancient prophet-writers whose words and messages the Book of Mormon preserves.

The Etymologies of Joseph and Benjamin

The text of Genesis provides a double-etiology for the name Joseph. The narrative reports that Rachel, the mother of the patriarch Joseph, explains the giving of this name to her son thus: “And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away [ʾāsap, or “gathered in”] my reproach: And she called his name Joseph [yôsēp]; and said, The Lord shall add [yōsēp] to me another son [bēn]” (Genesis 30:22–24). The first etiology, the importance of which will be treated in depth elsewhere, is based on the phonological similarity of Joseph to the Semitic/Hebrew verb ʾāsap “gather” (or “assemble”); “bring in”; to “withdraw”; “take away.” The second etiology, which explains Joseph in terms of the verb yāsap (to “add”; “continue to do, carry on doing” — i.e., “proceed” to do something; “to do again”; “do something yet more”) conforms more strictly to what some would call “scientific” etymology, since this is the verb from which Joseph derives, historically speaking.

1 Study forthcoming.
3 Ibid., 418.
Moshe Garsiel writes: “These homiletic interpretations express two separate emotions – the immense relief experienced by the hitherto barren Rachel when she bears her first child, and her hope of another child to come.” In addition to the juxtaposition of the name Joseph (yôsêp) with yôsêp — both apparently formed from the third person masculine singular jussive conjugation of the Hiphil stem of yāsap (or hôsîp) — the narrator’s inclusion of the term bên (“son”) anticipates and foreshadows the birth and naming of “Benjamin.”

Of course, the Lord did “add” another son to Rachel. Where the text provides almost all the birth reports and etiological explanations for the names of Jacob’s sons as in Genesis 29:31–30:24, the narrative withholds Benjamin’s birth and naming until Genesis 35:17–18: “And it came to pass, when [Rachel] was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son [bên] also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni [ben-ʾônî]: but his father called him Benjamin [binyāmîn].”

The name Benjamin is usually taken to mean “son of the right hand” in “son of the [directional] right” — i.e., “son of the south” (as one faces east).” The medieval rabbinic interpreter and commentator Rashi and the author of the putative medieval Book of Jasher understand the name “Benjamin” in this sense. However, there is evidence that the lexical element yāmîn (“right hand”) was also understood in terms of “right hand [of power].” For example, Judges 3:15-21; 20:16; and 1 Chronicles 12:2 play on the idea of Benjaminites (“sons of Benjamin”) as ʾiṭṭēr


5 The form yôsêp is ambiguous. In addition to reading yôsêp, as a Hiphil jussive form, one could potentially read it as a masculine singular participial form of the Qal stem yāsap. Context dictates the former in Genesis 30:24. Rachel makes an express wish: “May the Lord add to me another son,” rather than, “the Lord is adding to me another son.”


7 Cf. the idea of “orienting” oneself. “South” is the direction of the right hand as one faces the rising sun in the east (Latin orius, orientis).

8 Rashi on Genesis 35:18.

9 Book of Jasher 36:12: “And Jacob called the name of his son that was born to him, which Rachel bare unto him, Benjamin, for he was born to him in the land on the right hand” (emphasis added). Translated text as it appears in The Book of Jasher (Salt Lake City: Parry, 1887), 100.
"yad-yēminō: “bound as to the right hand [of power].” In other words, they were trained to be left-handed by having their “right hand[s] of power” bound.10 Benjamin connoted “son of the right hand [of power]”11 or “son” in the position of (divine) favor.12

The wordplay on Benjamin, then, in Genesis 35:17–18 is twofold: there is the very straightforward polyptoton13 on bēn (“son”) and ben- (in ben-ʾônî) and bin-14 (in binyāmîn). More importantly, there is also the synonymic and antonymic ambiguity between ʾônî and yāmîn rather than the typical transparent etiological pun.

The meaning of the first given name, Ben-oni, is ambiguous and perhaps intentionally so. It can be understood as meaning both “son of my vigor” and “son of my sorrow.”15 As Robert Alter observes, however, “given the freedom with which biblical characters play with names and their meanings, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that Rachel is … invoking both meanings, though the former is more likely: in her death agony, she envisages the continuation of ‘vigor’ after her in the son she has born.”16 The tribe of Benjamin, he further notes, “will become famous for its martial prowess.”17 Thus Ben-oni (“son of my vigor”) and Benjamin (“son of the right hand,” i.e., the “hand of power”) could be understood as nearly synonymous18 but also antonymous (“son of my sorrow” versus “son of the

10 Similarly, Lord’s yāmîn represented his martial prowess (e.g., Psalm 118:15–16; Isaiah 41:10; Habakkuk 2:16; 3 Nephi 29:9). The right hand was symbolically the hand of saving strength (cf. Acts 3:7).
12 Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 7:55–56; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Mosiah 5:9 (see below); Alma 28:12; Helaman 3:30; Ether 12:4; Moroni 7:27; D&C 20:24; 49:6; 66:12; 76:20, 23; 133:56; Moses 7:56–57; Joseph Smith–Matthew 1:1.
13 Polyptoton is a form of wordplay that utilizes a repetition of different forms (cognates) from the same root. Cf. Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1991), 117.
14 Bin is a biform of ben (“son”) found thirty-one times in the Hebrew Bible. E.g., Joshua is denominated “Joshua bin Nun” (Joshua the son of Nun) in numerous passages (29 x; Exodus 33:11, etc.). Proverbs 30:1 mentions “Agur bin Jakeh” (“Agur the son of Jakeh”) and in Deuteronomy 25:2 as an idiom for “worthy.”
16 Alter, Five Books of Moses, 197.
17 Ibid.
18 Regarding additional arguments for synonymy, see, e.g., Stefanie Schäfer-Bossert, “Den Männern die Macht und der Frau die Trauer?: Ein kritischer Blick auf die Deutung
right hand”). In either case, the narrator implies that the name Benjamin is to be understood in this birth narrative as a positive name in the sense of “son of the right hand [of power or strength].”

It is interesting here, however, to consider Lehi’s statement to his son Joseph in the context of the Benjamin etiology: “And now I speak unto you, Joseph, my last-born. Thou wast born in the wilderness of mine afflictions; yea, in the days of my greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee” [cf. Ben-oni] (2 Nephi 3:1). Rachel bestowed the name “Joseph” upon her firstborn with the hope of “adding” another son (Genesis 30:24). Perhaps Lehi and Sariah bestowed this name upon their son Joseph — at least in part — with similar hopes. Instead he was their “last-born,” and he was their “Ben-oni” in the sense of “son of my sorrow” in the “days of [their] greatest sorrow.”

Gezera Shawa

The joining together of biblical texts from isolated passages on the basis of shared terminology and interpreting them in light of each other constituted an exegetical technique that came to be known in later rabbinic times as Gezera Shawa (“equal statute”),19 although the practice is older. Jesus employs one of the clearest examples of Gezera Shawa as recorded in Matthew 22:36–40,20 when he combines what he calls the first commandment “And thou shalt love [wĕʾāhabtâ] the Lord thy God with all thy heart” (Deuteronomy 6:5)21 with the second lesser-quoted commandment “but thou shalt love [wĕʾāhabtâ] thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18), declaring that “on these two commandments
hang all the law and the prophets.” Jesus’s Gezera Shawa makes one commandment of two.

Mark and Matthew both record that Jesus used Gezera Shawa in an earlier exchange with some of the Pharisees in criticizing the practice of Corban: “For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death” (Matthew 15:4; cf. Mark 7:10). Jesus joins the apodictic commandment “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) to the casuistic penalty for cursing one’s parents “he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death” (Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9) on the basis of the words “father” and “mother” and perhaps secondarily on the antonymy of “honor” and “curse.” He does so to emphasize the fact that through the tradition of Corban (i.e., declaring the service that might be rendered to parents to be a temple gift), the Pharisees were both failing to honor their parents (a sin of omission) and actively cursing their parents (a sin of commission). Other such examples might be cited.

22 Jesus's citation of Leviticus 19:18 here — as a commandment summarizing the whole law (Torah) — may originate with Hillel the Elder, a noted rabbi who lived during the time of Jesus’s adolescence [ca. AD 10]. Hillel is reported to have said, “Whatsoever is distasteful to you, do not do to your neighbor: this is the whole Law [d’lk sny lḥbrk l’t byd zw hy’ kl htwrh kwlh],” Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a (translation mine). This statement may also be the basis of the Savior’s Golden Rule: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law [Torah] and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12; cf. Luke 6:31). Jesus’s use of Gezera Shawa adds a vertical dimension (“Love the Lord thy God”) to the horizontal obligation (“Love thy neighbor”) stipulated by Hillel.

23 Mark 7:10: “For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”

24 The Gospel of Mark begins with a Gezera Shawa (“Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,” Mark 1:2-3) that juxtaposes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 on the basis of words translated “prepare” and “way.” In Romans 4, Paul juxtaposes elements of Genesis 15:6 (“And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness …”) cited in Romans 4:3, and Psalm 31:1–2 in Romans 4:7–8 on the basis of “ac[ount]”/”reckon” (Hebrew ḥāšab; Greek logizō). See, e.g., Arland J. Hultgren, Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, MA: Eerdmans, 2011), 182. The author of Hebrews, too, uses Gezera Shawa christologically in several instances. For example, he creates a Gezera Shawa on Hebrews 1:5 similar to Mosiah 5:7 (see below), quoting LXX Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14/1 Chronicles 17:13. Hebrews 1:6–7, quoting LXX Deuteronomy 32:43 and LXX Psalm 96:7 on the basis of “angels” (Greek, angeloi) is another example.
Gezera Shawa existed well before rabbinic times. The evidence of the Book of Mormon suggests that it existed even before the time of the exile (see below). Hillel the Elder is sometimes wrongly said to be the originator of Gezera Shawa. Strack and Stemberger note that Gezera Shawa was “not invented by Hillel” but instead constituted one of “the main types of argument in use at that time.”25 Jesus was employing a technique used before his own time and before Hillel the Elder’s (traditionally ca. 110 BCE-10 CE).

Nephi’s “Joseph” Gezera Shawas

To explain the eventual fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah — prophecies in which his soul delighted26 — Nephi combines wordplay on the name Joseph and Gezera Shawa in at least two instances. Nephi juxtaposes the prophecies of Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 to foretell the gathering and restoration of Israel at the time of the coming forth of additional scripture — the “sealed” book of Isaiah 29.

I have proposed elsewhere27 that the unifying principle upon which Nephi bases his exegetical juxtapositions of these two prophesies, and his interpreting them in light of one another is their shared use of the Hebrew verb yāsap, the most basic sense of which is “to add.” Yāsap also has the more developed senses to “continue” or “proceed to do” something and “to do again.”28 This verb is also the source of the name Joseph, which means “may He [the Lord] add,” “He shall add,” or “He has added.”29

Thus when Nephi conjoined these two prophecies on the basis of a common use of yāsap, he was also forming a wordplay on the name

Critics of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon will be tempted to suggest a textual dependency of Mosiah 5:7 on Hebrews 1:5. However, the manner and context of their respective uses of Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 are radically different (I will discuss King Benjamin’s democratized exegetical use of these texts at length). If anything, the Gezera Shawa in Hebrews 1:5 suggests a longstanding association between the two texts in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

25 Strack and Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, 17.
28 HALOT, 418.
29 Martin Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1928), 212. See also HALOT, 403.
Joseph both to remind us that it was the seed of Joseph — in addition to the seed of Judah\(^{30}\) and the other tribes — that would be gathered and to foretell the involvement of another “Joseph,” the prophet Joseph Smith, in the gathering in the latter days and in the coming forth of additional scripture.

Isaiah 11:11 states: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again (yôsîp) the second time to recover the remnant of his people,” while Isaiah 29:14 declares: “Therefore, behold, I will proceed (yôsîp) to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder.”\(^{31}\) Nephi’s joining of these two passages is most noticeable in 2 Nephi 25:17, where he foretells the latter-day gathering of Judah: “And the Lord will set his hand again (yôsîp) the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed (yôsîp) to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.” Here Nephi states that the Lord “shall bring forth his words unto (his people)” words they have not previously had, “for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah” (25:18) and “that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph (yôsēp)” (25:21).

Recalling Lehi’s prophecy earlier in the same book of 2 Nephi regarding the “promise” made to Joseph regarding the raising up of a choice seer (see especially 2 Nephi 3:5–14) helps us see the connection Nephi makes between the Lord setting his hand again[yôsîp] and proceeding[yôsîp] to do a marvelous work and the name Joseph[yôsēp], both Joseph of old and his descendant Joseph Smith.

In 2 Nephi 3, Lehi quotes prophecies made by the patriarch Joseph in Egypt to his youngest son Joseph in which the patriarch foretells that a “Joseph” would bring about the latter-day gathering and restoration of Israel (see 2 Nephi 3:13–16). This “Joseph” would be raised up “in that day when my work shall commence among all my people unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel” (2 Nephi 3:13). Joseph said he was “sure of the fulfilling of this promise” (3:14), the “promise” that Nephi said would “be fulfilled unto Joseph (yôsēp)” (2 Nephi 25:21) when the Lord would “set his hand again (yôsîp) the second time” and “proceed (yôsîp) to do a marvelous work and a wonder” (2 Nephi 25:17).

Toward the end of his personal writings, Nephi prefaces another prophecy on the coming forth of additional scripture with a revelation

\(^{30}\) Cf. 2 Nephi 25:14–19.

\(^{31}\) The morphological difference between the Hiphil (causative) imperfect (yôsîp) and the Qal participle (yôsîp) is slight (vowel quantity i vs. ɨ). The difference in pronunciation would also have been slight.
from the Lord that juxtaposes the same two Isaiah passages but reverses the order of their quotation: “But behold, there shall be many — at that day when I shall proceed [yōsīp] to do a marvelous work among them [Isaiah 29:14], that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again[*weʾōsīp yādī] the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel [Isaiah 11:11]” (2 Nephi 29:1). Hence, on two separate occasions we see Gezera Shawa applied as an exegetical technique in order to make one prophecy from two separate prophecies of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14. For Nephi, as for the Lord himself, the coming forth of the sealed book (Isaiah 29) and the restoration that would follow meant the gathering of Israel (Isaiah 11).

It should be noted here that Nephi explains in 1 Nephi 22 additional prophecies of Isaiah to his brothers in terms of the verb yāsap from Isaiah 29:14. He begins there by citing Isaiah 29:14: “And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed [yōsīp] to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 22:8). To this he adds, “wherefore, the Lord God will proceed [yōsīp] to make bare his arm in the eyes of all nations” (1 Nephi 22:11; citing Isaiah 29:14 and 52:10); “Wherefore, he will bring them again [yōsīp] out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together [*wayyēʾāsĕpû]34 to the lands of their inheritance” (1 Nephi 22:12; compare Isaiah 11:11–12). Nephi’s joining Isaiah 52:10 to Isaiah 29:14 is particularly noteworthy here, because he has apparently supplied the verb yāsap to Isaiah 52:10, where Isaiah did not previously use that verb. Nephi thus uses the verb form yōsīp to draw an equivalence between the Lord’s “do[ing] a marvelous work [and a wonder] among the Gentiles” and his “mak[ing] bare his arm in the eyes of the nations.” In fact, Nephi saw the Lord’s “adding” to do a marvelous work as an apt summation of Isaiah’s prophecies regarding the gathering and restoration of Israel, including — and perhaps especially — his brothers’ and his own posterity as descendants of Joseph.

Mormon, drawing on the words of Lehi, Nephi, and Isaiah, creates his own clear play on Joseph in this vein: “Yea, and surely shall he

33 See further 3 Nephi 21:1–10.
34 “And they shall be gathered”: possibly a Niphal form of āsap. See HALOT, 1:74.
again [Hebrew yôsîp] bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph [yôsêp] to the knowledge of the Lord their God” (3 Nephi 5:23). 3 Nephi 5:24 continues: “And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in [cf. (wê-) ʾāsap, ‘assemble,’ Isaiah 11:12] from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth” (3 Nephi 5:23–24). If the underlying verb is ʾāsap/yēʾāsēp (rather than qibbēs/yēqabbēs, the name play on Joseph is even richer.

Either way, Mormon’s words unmistakably constitute a citation of Isaiah 11:11–12 (cf. 1 Nephi 22:12). For Mormon and his Josephite ancestors, the nomen (name) Joseph was truly the omen of the Lord’s “proceed[ing] to do a marvelous work,” which was to “set his hand again” to gather Israel — a sure sign of “additional” good things in the latter days.

Benjamin’s Gezera Shawa Involving His Own Name

As the name of Israel’s first royal tribe (as the tribe of King Saul, see 1 Samuel 8–12), the name Benjamin, “son of the right hand” (understanding -yāmîn as “right hand” as the place of divine favor, rather than simply “south”) also seems appropriate as a Nephite royal name. King Benjamin, in the final climactic movement (Mosiah 5:6–15) of his majestic sermon to the Nephites and Mulekites at the temple in Zarahemla, cites several important texts in a remarkable wordplay on his own name. Like Nephi’s wordplays on Joseph in 2 Nephi 25:17 and 29:1, King Benjamin’s rhetorical wordplay on his own name employs Gezera Shawa:

And now, these are the words which king Benjamin [Binyāmîn] desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired. . . . And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children [Hebrew bĕnê] of Christ, his sons [bānâw], and his daughters [ūbĕnôtâw]; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; . . . therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons [bānâw] and his daughters [ūbĕnôtâw]. And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at
the right hand [yāmîn] of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for behold, he shall be called by the name of Christ. (Mosiah 5:6–9)

King Benjamin’s declaration to his people that they would be “called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you” (Mosiah 5:7) constitutes an unmistakable citation of the royal rebirth formula (sometimes called an adoption formula) of Psalm 2:7: “Thou art my Son [bēnî ’attā]; this day have I begotten thee.”

Earlier in the same Psalm, the royal (Davidic) addressee is called the Lord’s “anointed” (mĕšîḥô, i.e., his “messiah” or “Christ”; LXX christos; Psalm 2:2). The newly enthroned Judahite king thus “took upon himself” the name-title “anointed” (măšîaḥ). In other words, he took upon himself the name of “Christ” — which Latter-day Saints covenant their “willingness” to do at baptism and re-covenant their willingness to do in partaking of the sacrament. King Benjamin “likened” this psalm to his audience at the temple in Zarahemla so they too might take upon themselves or “bear” this name (see Mosiah 26:18).

When Benjamin subsequently stated, “And [ye] have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7), he was invoking the covenant rebirth language of 2 Samuel 7:14, where the Lord makes a covenant regarding David’s son Solomon, “I will be ['become, 'ēhyeh] his father, and he shall be my ['become to me a' yihyeh-lî] son [lĕbên, literally ‘for a son’].” A democratized form of the same formula to which Benjamin also seems to allude occurs in Deuteronomy 14:1–2: Ye are children [bānîm] of the Lord. … Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be [lihĕyôt, ‘become’] a peculiar people ['am sĕgullâ] unto himself [lô, 'his'], above all the nations that are upon the

36 2 Nephi 31:13; D&C 20:37.
37 Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:77.
38 Mosiah 26:18: “Yea, blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name; for in my name shall they be called; and they are mine.”
39 Even if this text was part of a pro-Davidic tradition incorporated into a later “Deuteronomistic History” compiled during the exile, as Martin Noth, The Deuteronomistic History, trans. David J. A. Clines, Jane Doull, et al. (1981; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004) and subsequently many other scholars have suggested, a form of this text could have been among the many writings on the brass plates that Lehi brought with him from Jerusalem.
40 The King James translators adopted the reading “populum peculiarem” from the Latin Vulgate. Our English word peculiar originally denoted marked or personal “property” and derives from Latin pecus (“cattle”). Note that animal ownership is
earth.” We recall that King Benjamin had explained to his son Mosiah the purpose of his speech beforehand as follows: “I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (Mosiah 1:11). King Benjamin’s citation of Deuteronomy 14:1–2 in Mosiah 1:11 suggests his deliberate use of it in Mosiah 5:7. The “distinguishing” name is the foundation for the “sealing” King Benjamin promises his people in Mosiah 5:15.41

The key terms that Benjamin cites from Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, and Deuteronomy 14:1–2 are “son” (Hebrew bēn) or “children” (bānîm) — the latter term includes both sons and daughters (compare how Paul expands the royal covenant formula of 2 Samuel 7:14 in 2 Corinthians 6:18)42 — and the verb hayā (a verb that, as Graham S. Ogden has noted, “indicates transition from one sphere of existence to another” and with the formulaic preposition lē-) “conveys the idea of ‘becoming.’”43 More recently, Seock-Tae Sohn has argued that hayā used in the covenant rebirth (or adoption) context “is both connecting and transitional in describing the concept of covenant.”44

This is what John later describes as Christ giving “power [exousia = authority] to become45 the sons of God [tekna theou = “children of God,” one of the metaphors King Benjamin uses here at the end of his sermon (see Mosiah 5:14).


42 In 2 Corinthians 6:18, Paul democratizes the royal covenant formula of 2 Samuel 7:14 to include the early saints, both male and female. King Benjamin similarly adapts the royal covenant on the occasion of his son’s (Mosiah’s) enthronement to expand “son” to “his sons and his daughters.” This terminological expansion is not only emphatically gender inclusive but a remarkable “likening” or application of a key — perhaps the key — Davidic christological text in the corpus of the Hebrew bible.


45 Greek genesthai = Hebrew lihēyōt; the verb gi(g)nomai (gi[g]nomai) is used in a majority of instances in the LXX to render the Hebrew verb היה into Greek.
rendering Hebrew bĕnê 'ĕlōhîm], even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12–13; cf. Mosiah 5:7). Benjamin’s use of the covenant rebirth language in his speech is most striking because it merges the royal (2 Samuel 7:14) and democratized (Deuteronomy 14:1–2) forms in a royal context. In other words, he makes his own son’s divine rebirth, coronation, and enthronement the occasion of the conditional divine rebirth and coronation, and enthronement of his people — predicated on their “retain[ing] the name written always in [their] hearts.” It constituted something of a temple endowment: they were all becoming sons and daughters who were ascending to the true throne — the throne of the divine Son, the “throne of grace” (Hebrew 4:16), of which the “mercy-seat” (kappōret, atonement covering-piece) was a type.

To his Gezera Shawa of Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14/Deuteronomy 14:1–2, King Benjamin then adds another promise: “Whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand [yāmîn] of God” (Mosiah 5:9). The phrase “at the right hand [of God]” in the Hebrew Bible occurs in Psalms 16:11 and 110:1 as a reference to the place of divine favor. The coronation/enthronement context of King Benjamin’s speech suggests that he is specifically alluding to Psalm 110:1: “The Lord [Yahweh] said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand [lîmînî (*lĕ + yĕmînî)], until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” One way of interpreting this verse is that the Israelite king sat (was enthroned) at Yahweh’s right hand. However, a first-century Jewish (and a Latter-day Saint) interpretation

See Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books), 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 256–67. Deuteronomy 4:19 LXX [KJV Deuteronomy 4:20] also uses the form genesthai, and it may be to this text — in addition to 2 Samuel 14:7 — that John specifically alludes.

46 The Greek term tekna, plural of teknon (“child”), is gender neutral. This use of this term, rather than plural huioi (“sons”), perhaps represents John’s efforts to include both genders, as both King Benjamin (Mosiah 5:7) and Paul (2 Corinthians 6:18) do.

47 On the occasion of his son’s royal coronation, Benjamin’s democratization of the enthronement ceremony and his citation of Deuteronomic language elsewhere in his speech and in his paranesis to his sons suggests that he specifically had some version of 2 Samuel 7:14 and Deuteronomy 14:1–2 in mind. On King Benjamin’s use of democratizing language, see John W. Welch, “Democratizing Forces in King Benjamin’s Speech,” in Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 110–26.

48 Mosiah 15:11–12.
of this verse would read it thus: “Jehovah⁴⁹ said to David’s Lord (= the Messiah), sit thou at my right hand [ليمין (*לֶה + יֵמִין)], until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”⁵⁰ Within either interpretive scenario, Psalm 110:1 is describing a divine enthronement following a divine birth (or rebirth) like the divine birth described in Psalm 2:7. Divine birth is also mentioned in Psalm 110:3, further suggesting that King Benjamin had Psalm 110 in mind.

Benjamin joins Psalm 110:1 to his previous Gezera Shawa on Psalm 2:7, Deuteronomy 14:1–2, and 2 Samuel 7:14, not on the basis of the first element, bēn (“son”) but instead on the second element in his name, yāmîn (“right hand”), in a clever wordplay: the royal covenant entailed not merely becoming a son or daughter of God, but also enthronement at the “right hand” of God — becoming a “Benjamin.”

Thus, the philological elements of King Benjamin’s name apparently guided his selection and ordering of the royal/covenant texts quoted. Although a covenant speech might be expected to contain covenant filiation language similar to Deuteronomy 14:1–2, and a coronation ceremony might be expected to allude to texts like Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, and even Psalm 110, it is the application of royal coronation/enthronement texts to his temple audience — texts that grant the possibility, contingent upon individual faithfulness, that they might all become kings and queens, sons and daughters at the right hand — that makes Benjamin’s speech revolutionary.

From an ancient Israelite perspective, Benjamin was already a royal “son” (bēn) who was already at the right hand of God just as Mosiah was becoming a “son” at “the right hand — a “Benjamin” through his coronation on that very day. Benjamin instead deemphasizes this idea, teaching the people about the truly royal and divine Son, Jesus Christ, and how this Son’s atonement made it possible for all of them, through covenant obedience, to become the Son’s sons and daughters and to be enthroned with the Son at God the Father’s right hand. Benjamin’s people did not likely miss the point of King Benjamin’s jarring application of these royal texts to them or the unifying principle behind the texts’ quotation: “son(s)” (and “daughters”) and the allusion to God’s “right hand” (Psalm 110:1) — the elements of their king’s name. Reflecting on

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⁴⁹ In a Latter-day Saint reading of Psalm 110:1, Jehovah (Yahweh) represents God the Father, who addresses the Messiah (himselh) by divine investiture of authority: the Father enthrones his Son as divine vice-regent.

the themes of Mosiah 1–6, we as Mormon’s implied literary audience can also appreciate them.

The occasion for Benjamin’s speech was his own son’s enthronement as Benjamin himself declares: “The Lord God … hath commanded me that I should declare unto you this day [cf. Psalm 2:7], that my son Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you” (Mosiah 2:30). However, from the outset King Benjamin had made an unprecedented effort to put himself on equal grounds with his people (see Mosiah 2:26), as stipulated by Deuteronomy 17:20. By democratizing the language of the royal covenant and enthronement texts on the occasion of his own son’s “adoption”/”rebirth” and enthronement, including the juxtaposition of texts, the key covenant terms (“son,” “right hand”) which constitute the elements of his own name, King Benjamin taught his temple audience — his Nephite and Mulekite subjects — a masterful typological lesson on the necessity of their own rebirth into Christ’s heavenly family so they might receive, as heirs with him, every blessing “in the covenant of the Father.” After all, they were not just receiving the name of their king, “Benjamin,” but were taking upon them, as royal sons and daughters, the name-title of the true “Son of the right hand” — i.e., “Christ.” In so doing, they all were becoming Benjamins (“son[s and daughters] of the right hand”); Mosiahs (“saviors”); and messiahs/christs (“anointed ones”).

51 Deuteronomy 17:14–20 constitutes the so-called Deuteronomical Law of the King. Amaleki infers that Mosiah I and Benjamin were outstanding representatives of the Deuteronomic king. Similarly, between the positive examples of King Benjamin and King Mosiah II, Mormon juxtaposes the negative example of King Noah.  
52 3 Nephi 21:4; Moroni 10:33.  
54 In Mosiah 3:20, Benjamin states in the context of his son Mosiah’s ascension to the throne: “I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior [môšîa’] shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” — a wordplay on his son’s name. King Benjamin’s point is that Christ is the Savior [capital “S”]. His people, by taking upon them the name of Christ, were becoming saviors [small “s”], as we do today. For Latter-day Saints this idea is particularly relevant. In Obadiah 1:21 it is prophesied that “saviours [môšî’im, or, ‘Mosiahs’] shall come up on mount Zion [cf. the Latter-day temple] to judge the mount of Esau [i.e., perhaps, help the dead who died outside the covenant for prepare for the final judgment through the extension of sacred ordinances that offer them the opportunity to come into the covenant]; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (cf. D&C 103:9–10 and the English language wordplay on “saviors” and “savor” there).  
55 There is evidently an additional subtle wordplay running throughout King Benjamin’s sermon on Mosiah [môšîa’, “savior”] and Messiah/Christ [mâšîaḥ]
“Because of Thy Son”: Gezera Shawas of Zenos, Zenock [Zenoch], Isaiah, and Psalms

“Son” is the terminological basis of another Gezera Shawa by Alma the Younger. Two of the dominant issues that confronted Alma during the Zoramite apostasy was their rejection of a Messiah or Christ and their failure to pray and worship apart from weekly rote prayers given atop the Rameumptom. In teaching the Zoramites a better praxis of prayer, Alma uses Gezera Shawa when he draws together two now otherwise unattested passages of scripture from the brass plates: the prayer of Zenos and a statement from Zenock. The lexical basis for the juxtaposition of these two passages of scripture are forms of the word mercy/merciful and the phrase “because of thy Son”:

And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions, for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son. (Alma 33:11)

Alma here emphasizes the phrase “because of thy Son” as key to his whole argument: “And now Alma said unto them: Do ye believe those scriptures which have been written by them of old? Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what Zenos said; for, behold he said: Thou hast turned away thy judgments because of thy Son” (Alma 33:12). He again appeals to the authority of Zenos’s words which some Zoramites still must have accepted as scripture: “Now behold, my brethren, I would ask if ye have read the scriptures? If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God?” Then he invokes Zenock [or Zenoch] as his second witness: “For it is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but Zenock also spake of these things — for behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son” (Alma 33:15–16). Alma cites Zenock [Zenoch] precisely because the latter’s use of the expression “because of thy Son” matches Zenos’s use of the same phrase in his prayer. Their shared use of “merciful”/“mercy”/“mercies” provides a further lexical basis for Alma’s exegesis. Alma concludes that the law of witnesses has been met: “And now, my brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God, and because the people would not understand his words they stoned him to death” (Alma 33:17).

Compare Nephi (or Lehi’s) wordplay (paronomasia) in 1 Nephi 10:4: “… even a Messiah [māṣīḥaḥ], or, in other words, a Savior [mōšī’aḥ] of the world.”
Zenock had, moreover, sealed his testimony with his own blood. For good measure, Alma will also “appeal” to Moses’s testimony in the form of the brazen serpent as a typological third witness (see Alma 33:19–22).

**Jacob’s Use of Gezera Shawa as an Interpretive Lens for Zenos’s Allegory**

Significantly, this is not the first time that the words of Zenos are associated with the use of Gezera Shawa. In creating an introduction for, and a lens through which to interpret, his full length quotation of Zenos’s allegory of the olive trees (Jacob 5), Jacob creates a Gezera Shawa which joins together portions of two prophecies of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16) together with Psalm 118:22 based on shared words like ʾeben (Hebrew “stone” a homonym of bēn, “son”), to create a single prophecy about Jesus Christ (see Jacob 4:15–17).

When we also consider Jacob’s mention of Abraham’s offering of his “son” Isaac in the likeness of God and his “Only Begotten Son” (Jacob 4:5, 11) — which, as I have suggested elsewhere, is the etiological foundation of the ancient Israelite temple — and in the threefold repetition of the verb “build” (Hebrew bānâ < *bny, Jacob 4:15–17) juxtaposed with this Gezera Shawa, we can see Jacob unfolding an elaborate wordplay. Jacob’s wordplay emphasizes Christ as the royal “son” and stone (ʾeben), or corner stone, on which a dynasty, emblemized by a temple made of “stones” — Israel’s “sons” and “daughters” — is built. Zenos’s allegory is an extended parable of how fallen men and women are made divine sons and daughters (i.e., the “natural fruit” or posterity made “good, even like as it was in the beginning”) through the Atonement of the Son, Jesus Christ.

Finally, it should be noted that Jacob deploys Gezera Shawa again at the conclusion of Zenos’s allegory, juxtaposing Isaiah 11:11 and a passage that he has just quoted from Zenos (Jacob 5:61–71): “And the day that he shall set his hand again [yōṣip] the second time to recover

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56 Cf. Amulek’s language in Alma 34:7–8, where Amulek describes the fulfilment of the Law of Witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:5) and then adds his own testimony as a fourth witness.


58 Jacob 5:75.

59 Matthew L. Bowen, “‘I Have Done According to My Will’: Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text” (forthcoming).
his people, *is the day*, yea, even *the last time*, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that the end soon cometh” (Jacob 6:2). This citation begins a string of scriptural citations based on the word(s) “day”/“time” (possibly both Hebrew *yôm*): Isaiah 65:2 and Zenos’s similar image (Jacob 5:47), cited in Jacob 6:4; Psalm 95:7, cited in Jacob 6:5–6; and then Isaiah 65:2/Jacob 5:47 again in Jacob 6:7. Although the primary lexical basis for the Gezera Shawa of Isaiah 11:11 and Zenos’s description of the last “time”/“day” (Jacob 5:62-71) is the term “day”/“time,” a secondary lexical basis for the Gezera Shawa may be the verb *yāsap* — *yôsîp* in Isaiah 11:11 and the possible idiomatic use of *yāsap*, “do something again,” used repeatedly in Jacob 5:62–71 (3 x in v. 63, 67–68) and throughout Zenos’s allegory (see also Jacob 5:29, 33, 58, 60–61 [4 x], 73–75 [3 x], 77). If so, Jacob’s Gezera Shawa in Jacob 6:2 would also constitute a deliberate wordplay on the name “Joseph” like those employed by his brother Nephi.60

**Conclusion and Pragmatics**

Recognizing Nephi’s repeated exegetical juxtaposition of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14 as Gezera Shawa (2 Nephi 25:17; 29:1) on the basis of the verb *yāsap* (in the forms *yôsîp* and *yôsîp*) helps us to appreciate how “after the manner of the things of the Jews” (2 Nephi 25:5) two or more disparate prophecies can be seen as fulfilled in a single divine act of restoration — or rather, in a single person — a “Joseph” (*yôsêp*). Similarly, recognizing King Benjamin’s wordplay on his own name as a Gezera Shawa in the royal context of his temple sermon helps us appreciate how disparate royal covenant texts like Psalm 2:7, Psalm 110:1–3, and 2 Samuel 7:14 can be drawn together on the basis of shared words and onomastic elements. Moreover, it helps us appreciate how these texts can then be reinterpreted — even democratized — through the lens of Deuteronomy 14:1–2 and “likened” to a temple audience in order to help that audience, as a kind of endowment, prepare to become “sons and daughters” at God’s “right hand” — i.e., “Benjamins.” As Jacob, the Nephite high priest and brother of Nephi, recognized, this is precisely what Zenos’s allegory of the olive trees is all about.

Like Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mark, Paul, and the Savior himself, we can increase our understanding and appreciation of the words of Isaiah, Zenos, the Psalms, and other scriptures by adding Gezera Shawa to our scripture study repertoire — the juxtaposing of different passages

60 Isaiah’s and Zenos’s idiomatic use of *yāsap* may also constitute wordplay on the name “Joseph.” That possibility will be explored in a forthcoming study.
sharing the same word(s) and phraseology and integrating them for our “profit and learning” (see 1 Nephi 13:23; 2 Nephi 4:15).

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