Joseph Smith Read the Words

Stanford Carmack

Offprint Series
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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 thee¹

. . .

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.² 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.³

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.”⁴ 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 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. 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**;

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 reuerend priestes

The **sword of gods 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 + «PAST PARTICIPLE» . . . and hath + «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 my self 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

The verb "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. 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:

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


of Early Modern English.\textsuperscript{13} 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:

\textbf{Mosiah 16:6}

\begin{quote}
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.
\end{quote}

Emphasis added.

In addition, Gardner misses Skousen's treatment of this issue in his \textit{Analysis of Textual Variants}.\textsuperscript{14} 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.”\textsuperscript{15} 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.

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Early English Books Online: 400 million words, 1470s–1690s}, 2013–), and one of my own elaboration with 500 million words.

\textsuperscript{14} Skousen, \textit{Analysis of Textual Variants}, 319–20 (1 Nephi 15:13).

\textsuperscript{15} Gardner, \textit{The Gift and Power}, 164.
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.

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.’” 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 therat:

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 EEBO 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.

1663 EEBO A44832 Richard Hubberthorn [1628–1662] *Works*

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 EEBO 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 EEBO A68954 Robert Bolton [1572–1631] *A three-fold treatise containing the saints sure and perpetuall guide*

it is mens corruptions, 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:

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18. This reads *caused* in the current LDS text. See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 1760–63 (Alma 9:16), for a thorough discussion.


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 Jeremey*

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

1602 EEBO A09809 Sir Thomas North, tr. [1535–1601?] | Simon Goulart, tr. [1543–1628] | Emylius Probus *Lives*

it was *because of* the plague *that* tormented them much:

1627 EEBO A11649 Henry Ainsworth [1571–1622?] *Annotations upon the five booke 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.

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

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Mosiah 7:20

*Our current condition* is because of our iniquities and abominations, *which have* brought us into bondage.
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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*

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it must be an entire heart, and none of *those that has* been pierced with a thousand Arrows;
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1658 EEBO A40227  George Fox [1624–1691]  *The papists strength, principles, and doctrines*

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and strike down all *those that has* got the words but not the power,
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1668 EEBO A47152  George Keith [1639?–1716]  *Immediate revelation*

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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,
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Mosiah 8:17

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

and also of *things which is* to come;
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1696 EEBO A34770  tr. | Gatien Courtilz de Sandras [1644–1712]  *The memoirs of the Count de Rochefort*

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

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the whole strain of *them that has* been taken off by the hand of Justice, . . . *have* so behaved themselves at the last cast,
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Alma 57:36

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and I trust that the souls of *them which has* been slain *have* entered into the rest of their God.
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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.
Nicholas Sander [1530?–1581]  
*The supper of our Lord set forth according to the truth of the Gospels and Catholic faith*

because as the truth of the body was to be eaten,  
so the manner 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.

*Cordyale, or Four last things*

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

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.

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):

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] Diues [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 devoute 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 wolde not suffre / that they shold entre in to the toun

1541  EEBO A21318  Sir Thomas Elyot, tr. [1490?–1546]  The image of gouernance 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:

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

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 ⅓ has, ⅔ 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 edition. 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
1603  EEBO A09800  Philemon Holland, tr. [1552–1637]  |  Plutarch  *The philosophie, commonlie called, the morals*  
But here is the heights of their folly and errour,

1653  EEBO A86328  Henry Haggar  *The foundation of the font discovered to the view of all that desire to behold it*  
observe here is the words of the Prophet Jeremiah fulfilled

1656  EEBO A44342  Thomas Hooker [1586–1647]  *The application of redemption by the effectual work of the word, and spirit of Christ*  
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;

1598  EEBO A06447  Francis Meres, tr. | Luis de Granada [1504–1588]  *The sinners guyde*  
Consider that where much riches is, there are many that eate and devour them, many that covet them, and many that lye in waite to steale them.

**Switching from *that*-complementation to an infinitive**

Mormon 6:6  
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 stucke clean through his heade, to be with force, and violence drawne therout.

1485  EEBO A21703  Sir Thomas Malory [15th cent.]  *Le morte darthur*  
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**

Mosiah 24:23  
for the Lamanites have awoke and doth pursue thee.
when the CHURCHES have felt such dreadful concussions, and bleedeth to this day, by so horrid divisions,

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,

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.

Stanford Carmack has a linguistics and a law degree from Stanford University, as well as a doctorate in Hispanic Languages and Literature from the University of California, Santa Barbara, specializing in historical syntax and textual analysis. In the past he has had articles published on object–participle agreement in Old Catalan and Old Spanish, and on Georgian verb morphology. He currently researches Book of Mormon syntax as it relates to Early Modern English and contributes, by means of textual analysis, to volume 3 of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, directed and edited by Royal Skousen.