In our concluding remarks in Part 1 of this article, which appeared in the previous issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, we noted that, speaking for God. This practice resulted in a myriad of anachronisms being introduced throughout the Book of Mormon text. Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick in their recent faith-promoting book about Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones, states the matter in a way that provides a convenient entry point into the sort of King James influence I mean to explore. They write:

[How can a text written centuries prior to the King James Bible, and supposedly translated through a seer stone, contain so much of it? Hundreds, if not thousands, of unique phrases from the King James Bible can be found in the Book of Mormon . . . how can Lehi, a prophet living in 600 B.C., have a discussion with his son in which he quotes from the Gospel of John, a text that is still 700 years in the future (2 Nephi 2:6 cf. John 1:14)? Such a literal translation of the Egyptian from the gold plates would not produce such obvious parallels with the King James Bible.]¹

Okay, so what are MacKay and Frederick talking about exactly when they say that Lehi in 600 B.C. quoted a passage from the first century A.D. Gospel of John? Here is what Lehi says in the passage they are referring to:

¹ Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick, Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University/Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2016), 113.
Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah: for he is full of grace and truth. (p. 63)

The page number following the above passage (and those that follow) indicates where it appears in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. In each case I will quote the form of the passage from that edition, but with the chapter and verse references of the current Book of Mormon.

I have bolded the phrase MacKay and Frederick were referring to in the passage, “full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 reads in the KJV:

and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

In referring to this MacKay and Frederick have opened the door just a little on something that, as we said, is very prominent in the prophetic productions of Joseph Smith, namely that whether he presents himself as translating an ancient Nephite text (the Book of Mormon), or restoring the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek text of the Bible (the Joseph Smith Translation), or simply delivering direct communications from God (the Doctrine and Covenants), Joseph tended in each case to mix in variations of a number of his favorite Bible passages from the KJV. In this he especially favors passages taken from the New Testament books traditionally attributed to the Apostle John son of Zebedee, namely the Gospel of John, the first, second and third epistle of John, and the book of Revelation. Most scholars agree, both liberal and conservative, that all of these books (indeed all the books of the New Testament) were written in the first century A.D., which is to say within living memory of the life of Jesus. Following MacKay and Frederick’s lead then we shall focus in this section of our article on favored passages of Joseph’s drawn from the New Testament writings attributed to the Apostle John.

It wasn’t only the little phrase “full of grace and truth” that Joseph liked repeating from John 1:14 but the rest of the passage as well, including the very important theological expression only begotten, which we will discuss further after first displaying other examples of Joseph’s use of the passage:

John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.) full of grace and truth. The following are dependent on John 1:14

Alma 5:48 . . . the Son of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. (p. 236; about 83 B.C.)

Alma 9:26: . . . the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering . . . . (p. 247; about 82 B.C.)

Alma 13:9: . . . the Son of the only begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years (=echo of Hebrews 7:3), who is full of grace, equity, and truth. (p. 259, about 82 B.C.)

In the Book of Mormon Jesus is called the Only Begotten nine times. As a Christological title this designation, which translates the Greek word monogenes, appears only in the writings of John (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). As such it becomes an easily recognizable marker indicating dependence on John. It also serves as the basis for Christ’s being described as “begotten not made,” in the fourth-century Nicene Creed. The most obvious points of contact (3 of 9) between the Book of Mormon and John are with John 1:14.

Given the above evidence from the Book of Mormon suggesting that Joseph liked spinning off variations of John 1:14, we are not surprised to find him doing the same thing as well in the Pearl of Great Price.

The Pearl of Great Price included a selection from the Joseph Smith Translation, an alleged revelatory restoration of the Bible to its original uncorrupted condition, which Joseph began on March 26, 1830, and finished July 3, 1833. This portion covers several chapters of Joseph’s

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“restored” version of the Book of Genesis and presents itself as having been written by Moses (usually dated to the latter half of the second millennium B.C.). It includes an extensive first person account allegedly given by the pre-flood figure Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam and Eve. This section of the Pearl of Great Price is called the Book of Moses.

Here again, Joseph presents us with God allegedly quoting John 1:14 to Adam, Moses, and Enoch. The number of cribbed Johannine only begotten appears more than twice as many times in a few chapters in this section of the Pearl of Great Price than in the whole of the Book of Mormon. Four of these are conspicuously derived from John 1:14.

In order to remain close to the form of the text as originally dictated, I rely in my quotations here on the transcript of the original dictation manuscript of the Book of Moses (including corrections) prepared by Kent P. Jackson.7 Again I begin by reproducing John 1:14 as it appears in the KJV:

KJV John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The following are dependent on John 1:14:

Moses 1:6: . . . mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth. . . . (God speaking to Moses)

Moses 1:32: mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. (God speaking to Moses)

Moses 5:7: the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. (God telling Moses what the Angel of the Lord said to Adam)

Moses 6:52: . . . mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ. . . . (Enoch quoting what God said to Adam)

Finally there is a revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants in which Jesus quotes variations of several other passages from the Gospel of John along with the promise that “the fulness of John’s record is hereafter to be revealed.” The prophesy is dated May 1833, only a couple of months before his “restored” version of the Bible was completed (July 3, 1833) and so presumably was intended as a sort of direct divine infomercial for the soon-to-be-released Joseph Smith Translation. As it

would happen, Jesus’s prediction in this prophesy did not come true during Joseph’s lifetime, nor has it ever come true for the LDS Church, which never accepted the Joseph Smith Translation as scripture.8 In any case here again we give John 1:14 followed by Jesus’s quotation of a variation on the passage in a revelation given to Joseph. I give the text as it appeared in the original 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (D&C):

John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

D&C 93:11: And I John’s bare record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth [see John 14:17], which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us. (sec. LXXXII, p. 211)

Jesus as the Lamb of God

The Apostle Paul speaks of “Christ our Passover” being “sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7), and Peter, of how we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). But it is in the Gospel of John that we are introduced to the designation Lamb of God, and in the Revelation of John where Christ is called the lamb 26 times (in the KJV).10 And it is these two sources that influenced Joseph Smith’s use of the term in the Book of Mormon. Indeed the Book of Mormon calls John “the Apostle of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 14:27, p. 34).

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7 Kent P. Jackson, The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 143-71. This transcription standardizes spelling.

8 Except the small selections appearing in the Pearl of Great Price.

9 Here we should pause a moment to discuss the words “I John” in the above passage. “The formula I + NAME is quite rare in the Bible. There is no I David, I Solomon, I Abraham, I Moses, or I Isaiah in the Bible. There is, of course, I Paul six times (1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Cor. 10:1; Philm. 1:19; Gal. 5:2; Eph. 3:1; Col. 1:23) in the New Testament, but it is from the book of the Revelation with its I Jesus and three occurrences of I John (1:9; 21:2; 22:8) that Joseph probably derived the formula. Smith uses I John several times in D&C 93 (11, 12, 15, 16). We also find I Jesus in D&C 17:9 and 18:23, 47. The I+ NAME formula is a constant of Joseph Smith’s favored prophetic vocabulary. It occurs very frequently in the Book of Mormon. I Nephi, for example, occurs 87 times, I Jacob 16 times, I Enos 5 times, I Mormon 15 times, I Moroni 17 times. And then we find I Abraham 11 times in the Book of Abraham. The I God formula that appears upwards of 30 times in the Pearl of Great Price Book of Moses does not occur at all in the KJV.

10 There have been those from very early times who doubted that the Book of Revelation was written by the author of the Gospel of John. And there are those today who would no doubt hesitate to include it among the writings of the author of the Gospel of John. I do so here partly for convenience and partly because Joseph Smith takes for granted, both in the Book of Mormon and elsewhere, that the Apostle John was the author of both (e.g., 1 Nephi 10:4; D&C’93).
The designation Lamb of God occurs no less than 25 times in the Book of Mormon. The very first occurrence plainly reveals Joseph Smith’s dependence on the Gospel of John in the King James Bible. Nephi records how his father Lehi prophesied in great detail how the Messiah was going to appear “six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 10:4). And, as is typical of vaticinia ex eventu, that is, prophecies after the fact, Lehi’s description is too obvious in revealing its literary dependence on the King James translation of the Gospel of John to easily pass as an authentic before-the-fact prediction. And so we read there concerning the coming Messiah:

1 Nephi 10:9-10: And my father saith that he [the Baptist] should baptise in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also spake, that he should baptise with water; yea, even that he should baptise the Messiah with water. And after that he had baptised the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record, that he had baptised the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world. (1 Nephi 10:9-10)

The claim that this text originated centuries before Christ again runs into trouble by its clear derivation from John 1:28-32:

John 1:28-32: These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. (29) The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world . . . (31) And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. (32) And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

Of particular note is the phrase in 1 Nephi, “the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world,” which closely echoes John’s “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” here in John 1:29. The same is true of Alma 7:14 of the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.”

But in this case, it is not only the title Lamb of God that is significant, but also its contextual embedding that establishes the Book of Mormon’s reliance on John. We recall from our discussion in the last issue of the Messenger how Hugh Nibley had asserted that “the Book of Mormon follows the language of the King James Bible only as far as the latter conveys the correct meaning of the original.”11 But in this case the towering majority of New Testament scholars would not hesitate to say that Nibley was flat wrong. The reference to “Bethabara” beyond Jordan, in fact, reflects Joseph’s taking over an inferior reading from the KJV, a reading he also left unchanged in his Joseph Smith Translation (John 1:34). The earliest and best Greek manuscripts have “Bethany” there, even the heretic Heracleon’s second-century commentary on John agreed with the texts used by the Orthodox commentators in reading “Bethany” rather than “Bethabara” in John 1:28.12 Consequently virtually all current English translations, read “Bethany,” there (not to be confused with the other Bethany near Jerusalem mentioned, for example, in John 12:1).

The replacement of “Bethany” with “Bethabara” in a few manuscripts is usually credited to the promotion of the latter reading by the third-century writer Origen of Alexandria.13 Origen himself admitted that in his day “Bethany” appeared in “almost all the copies,” but

11 Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1967), 129. Sidney B. Sperry noted how “interesting” it is that “the Book of Mormon verifies the reading of the Received Text of John 1:28 instead of the one accepted by scholars which is based on textual criticism and which reads ‘Bethany.’” (Sidney B. Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium [Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1968], 115). Sperry even went so far as to affirm that “The inspired Book of Mormon . . . says that ‘Bethabara’ is the correct reading and that our modern scholars are wrong in choosing the reading ‘Bethany’” (“Special Issue: The Book of Mormon Writings of Sidney B. Sperry,” FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 4.1 [Spring 1995]: 183). But, as a number of studies have shown, the mere fact that Joseph Smith follows the KJV where it contradicts the critical Greek text is no safe basis for determining where the latter is wrong. See, e.g., Kevin L. Barney, “The Joseph Smith ‘Translation and the Ancient Texts of the Bible,’” in The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture (ed., Dan Vogel; Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 143-60 and Ronald V. Huggins, “Joseph Smith’s ‘Inspired Translation’ of Romans 7,” in Bryan Waterman, ed., The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1999), 259-87. Nor even does Mormon apologist/scholar John W. Welch try to insist that whenever Joseph Smith departs from the KJV text it should be assumed that he is adopting instead the correct ancient reading. Rather Welch argues, for example, that when Joseph Smith reworked the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation, he only departs from the KJV text where it really matters (Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999], 208).

12 Origen of Alexandria, Commentary on John 4.24. The lion’s share of the surviving fragments from Heracleon’s commentary are found in Origen’s third-century commentary on the same book.

was convinced “that we should not read ‘Bethany,’ but ‘Bethabara.’”

But his reasons for thinking so fall short of being persuasive. Origen had actually visited the area himself but couldn’t find any Bethany in Transjordan. Instead he reports that “they say that Bethabara is pointed out on the banks of the Jordan, and that John is said to have baptized there.” As likely as not the location of the original Bethany beyond Jordan was lost in the wake of the Romans’ devastating military sweep down the east side of the Jordan in the spring of 68 A.D., making it necessary for a new location to be arrived at later on due to the increasing number of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land and wanting to see where Jesus had been baptized.

But to return to our point about the connection of John 1 to 1 Nephi 10. In both passages the title Lamb of God is followed with a reference to the fact that he “tooketh away the sin of the world.” The same is true of Alma 7:14, which, with its “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world” is virtually identical to what John’s gospel has.

Both occurrences of this expression in the Gospel of John are also preceded with the word behold: “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29 and 35). This too impressed itself in the Book of Mormon, where “Behold, the Lamb of God” occurs twice (1 Nephi 11:21 and Mormon 9:3) and “beheld the Lamb of God,” once (1 Nephi 11:31-32).

Even more conspicuous is the reliance of the Book of Mormon on the lamb language of the book of Revelation. Two passages from that book (Rev. 7:14 and 21:14) are quoted especially often in the Book of Mormon:

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14)

From this passage Joseph Smith derived:

1 Nephi 12:11: These are made white in the blood of the Lamb. (p. 27, 600-592 B.C.)

Alma 13:11: their garments were washed white, through the blood of the Lamb. (p. 259, about 82 B.C.)

Alma 34:36: their garments should be made white, through the blood of the Lamb. (p. 321, c. 82 B.C.)

Mormon 9:6: found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. (p. 535, 401-421 A.D.)

Ether 13:10: whose garment are white through the blood of the Lamb. (p. 567, from Jaredite record of Ether from the 24 plates found by the people of Limhi in about 121 B.C.)

Ether 13:11: for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. (p. 567, from Jaredite record of Ether from the 24 plates found by the people of Limhi in about 121 B.C.)

The second passage is Rev. 21:14: “‘the twelve apostles of the Lamb,’ which is taken over by the Book of Mormon at 1 Nephi 11:35, 36; 12:9; 13:26, 39, 40, 41; and 14:20. For the sake of space I leave my readers to look up these parallels themselves.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

In John 10:16 we find the famous phrase: “. . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (first century A.D.). This is taken over by the Book of Mormon at 1 Nephi 22:25: “. . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (sixth century B.C.). The words come from Jesus’s Good Shepherd sermon in the Gospel of John:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (John 10:16)

Mormons have traditionally interpreted the above passage as a veiled prophetic reference to Christ’s post-resurrection labors among the ancient Nephites. They are not, however, the only newer religion to appeal to this verse as evidence that Jesus traveled far beyond the boundaries of his native homeland. The Ahmadiyya movement in Islam, for example, uses the same verse to argue that Jesus traveled to India and Kashmir in search of the lost tribes of Israel, whom, they say, settled in Kashmir and Afghanistan. It is to them Jesus is referring when he speaks of the “other sheep” of John 10:16. They say that Jesus traveled east to preach to the lost sheep and then, in the course of time, he died and was buried.
there in the city of Srinagar where his tomb is pointed out to this day.15

The supposed link between the tomb in Srinagar and Jesus is not ancient, rather it was “discovered” around the turn of the last century by the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who needed a dead Jesus to make way for his claim to represent in his own person both the promised Messiah and the Second Coming of Christ. The idea was that just as the promise of the coming of Elijah was fulfilled not in the return of Elijah in person, but in the coming of John the Baptist, so too the promised return of Jesus was fulfilled not in the return of the person of Jesus but in the coming of . . . himself, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad!16 In 1890 it had been told in a revelation that “Jesus son of Mary is dead and that you are sent, as was promised, in his power and spirit.” Then in 1895 he conveniently “discovered” the tomb of Jesus.17

The Mormon interpretation of the passage goes back to the Book of Mormon itself, which presents Jesus as quoting verbatim the King James rendering of this verse from the Gospel of John. The Mormon Jesus tells us that the Father had not commanded him to inform his old-world disciples about the Jewish migration to the Americas, but that he could inform his twelve new-world disciples about it:

This much did the Father command me, That I should tell unto them, that other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (3 Nephi 15:16-17)

Given that Jesus had already made that statement about the other sheep in other folds in the Old World, one might not object to simply viewing this Book of Mormon quotation as a case where Joseph encountered the saying on the plates, and then simply chose to recast it in the familiar form in which it appeared in the King James Gospel of John. Given the brevity of the text it would not even be necessary to bring the suggestion into conflict with Emma’s claim that he consulted no books or manuscripts during the course of translation. He may have known the text well enough to recite it to the scribe without taking his eyes off the stone. But the problem, again, is that John 10:16 is part of a larger passage from John anachronistically quoted and commented on in other parts of the Book of Mormon.

At the beginning of this section we have already given an example of Nephi quoting the closing phrase of John 10:16 in what was being presented as a document composed in the sixth century B.C. Similarly, Alma gave a sermon to the Church at Zarahemla around 83 B.C.,18 which it is hard to view as anything other than an expanded homily on John 10:16 in its larger context:

Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd. And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the Devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now who can deny this? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever denieth this, is a liar and a child of the Devil; for I say unto you, that whosoever is good, cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil, cometh from the Devil; therefore, if a man bringeth forth good works, he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a child of the Devil: for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him. . . . For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep, doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock, doth he not drive him out? Yea, and

15 Aziz A. Chaudhary, “The Israelite Origin of People of Afghanistan and Kashmir,” Review of Religions (April 2002): 45: “This was the reason that Jesus undertook the long and arduous journey to Afghanistan and later to India and Kashmir, where he settled, in search of those lost tribes whom he referred to as ‘lost sheep’ and ‘other sheep’. He did this migration in his post crucifixion period of his life when he had despaired of the Jews in Palestine.” Naturally the literature on the alleged tomb of Jesus in Kashmir is quite extensive. For the Hazrat’s own original presentation see, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Jesus in India: An Account of Jesus’ Escape from Death on the Cross and His Journey to India (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2004 [orig. 1899]). For a recent overview of the Ahmadiyya case as it is generally articulated today, see Abubakr Ben Ishmael Salahuddin, “Evidence of Jesus in India,” Review of Religions 97.4 (April 2002): 48-68. For a (well deserved) critical response see Paul C. Pappas, Jesus Tomb in India: Debate on His Resurrection (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991).

16 Bashir Ahmad Orchard “Lord of the Universe,” Review of Religions 80.9 [Sept. 1985]: 11: “The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam claims that the expected Promised Messiah has appeared in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, who proclaimed his mission in 1889. Contrary to the general Christian belief that Jesus is to return from the sky in a miraculous manner as they believe he ascended into the sky, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that he had appeared in the power and spirit of Jesus. He proved from the Quran, Bible and historical sources that Jesus never did die on the cross in the first place but died a natural death in Kashmir where he had travelled in search of the Lost Sheep of Israel after the event of the crucifixion from which he survived.”


18 According to the chronology given in the current LDS edition of the Book of Mormon.
at the last, if he can he will destroy him. And now I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice, he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed. (Alma 5:38-41, 59-60 / pp. 235-38)

Nephi also refers to the “voice of the Good Shepherd,” in a sermon he preached in around 23-20 B.C., one of four occurrences of that phrase in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 5:38, 41, 57). The language of John 10:16 is also echoed in God’s words to Alma in Mosiah 26:21: “And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep.”

**In Spirit and in Truth**

In John 4:23-24, in the famous story of the woman at the well, Jesus tells the woman:

> But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We find the same expression used in pre-Christian times in the Book of Mormon:

- Alma 34:38: *worship* God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth. (p. 321, c. 74 B.C.)
- Alma 43:10: whosoever should *worship* God, in spirit and in truth. (p. 341, c. 74 B.C.)

**You Must Be Born Again!**

There is scarcely any passage in the New Testament more familiar than Jesus’s words to Nicodemus when he came to speak to Jesus at night:

> John 3:3-5: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

From this passage Joseph Smith derived:

- Mosiah 27:25: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God. (p. 214, 100-92 B.C.)
- Alma 5:49: I say unto you, the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again. (p. 236, about 83 B.C.)

**Alma 7:14:** Now I say unto you, that ye must repent, and be born again; for the spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. (p. 240, about 83 B.C.)

So, too, in the Pearl of Great Price Book of Moses, where Joseph was supposedly restoring the text of Genesis to its original uncorrupted form, we find God paraphrasing John 3 to Adam:

- Moses 6:59: even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit.

The extensive dependence of both the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation book of Genesis (Pearl of Great Price Book of Moses) on the Gospel of John in the language of the King James Bible all but proves that Joseph was not, in either case, miraculously translating or restoring ancient texts, and even more to the point, was not engaging in the process described by those who observed him translating the Book of Mormon. The simplest answer to Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick’s question “how can a text written centuries prior to the King James Bible, and supposedly translated through a seer stone, contain so much of it?” is “it can’t.” The simplest explanation in the case of the above quotations and allusions is that in contrast to the larger chunks of the King James, they probably could not have found their way into the Book of Mormon at all unless Joseph had copied them directly. Here we see revelatory texts of various kinds being produced out of the storehouse of Joseph’s own familiarity with the King James text. Joseph regularly bulked up whatever he happened to be working on with stock phrases from the King James Bible.

Many more examples from the Gospel of John and other New Testament books could be noted, but I will limit myself to a single example where Jesus repeatedly speaks of himself in words taken from the author of the Gospel of John in its King James dress when giving revelations to Joseph. The example I have in mind represents a pastiche of John in its King James dress when giving revelations to Joseph. The example I have in mind represents a pastiche of John 1:5 and 11-12, and the examples are going to be drawn from the Doctrine and Covenants (and its precursor, the Book of Commandments). Again in order to get close to the form given by Joseph himself I present the passages as they appeared in the 1833 Book of Commandments or in the 1835 first edition of the Doctrine & Covenants, in cases where no parallel version appeared in the Book of...
Commandments (BC). In each case I give the references where the passages can now be found in the current edition of the Doctrine & Covenants:

KJV John 1:5, 11-12: And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not . . . He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

From this passage Joseph Smith derived:


D&C 11:11 / BC 10:5 (1835 D&C 37:5): I am the light which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee.

D&C 34:2 / BC 36:2-3 (1835 D&C 56:1): the light and the life of the world: A light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: Who so loved the world that he gave his own life [ = added echo of John 3:16], that as many as would believe might become the sons of God.

D&C 39:2-3 / BC 41:1 (1835 D&C 59:1): . . . the light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: The same which came in the meridian of time unto my own, and my own received me not; but to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons.

D&C 11:28-29 / BC 10:12 (1835 D&C 37:12): Behold I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God: I am the life and the light of the world: I am the same who came unto my own, and my own received me not: but verily, verily I say unto you, that as many as receiveth me, them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name: Amen.

D&C 45:7-8 / BC 48:8-10 (1835 D&C 15:2): . . . the light and the life of the world, a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: I came unto mine own and mine own received me not: But unto as many as received me, gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God.

D&C 88:48-49 (1835 D&C 7:12): he who came unto his own was not comprehended. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. 20

The phrase “I am the light and the life of the world,” which is in evidence in two of the passages just looked at, appears to be a hybrid of John 8:12 “I am the light of the world,” with John 1:4: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Interestingly this hybrid begins to appear on the lips of God/Jesus in Joseph Smith’s early revelations (D&C 10:70, 11:28, 12:9, 34:2, 39:2, 45:7) and in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 16:9, Alma 38:9, 3 Nephi 11:11, Ether 4:12) at roughly the same time, i.e., when Joseph was working on both. This in turn raises the question of whether we should view it in both cases as a contemporaneous invention of Joseph Smith.

Anachronistic Quotations of the King James Point to Bible Forgery

After Wesley P. Walters described the Book of Mormon as being “generously sprinkled with passages lifted from the King James Version” back in 1960, 21 Hugh Nibley attempted to brushed the whole thing off by saying “people are preached to from their own Bible. To the world to which the English translation of the Book of Mormon was addressed there was the only one acceptable Bible, the King James translation.” 22 In the recent book by Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick we find a similar attempt at minimizing the significance of the Book of Mormon’s reliance on the King James Bible: “Many nineteenth-century readers, particularly those involved in the Restorationist movement, would have expected any word from God to sound like the words from God they already had (in other words, the KJV).” 23

In both cases the authors appear to have been speaking beyond their ken, since, in fact, for many nineteenth-century Christians, the King James Bible was not “the only one acceptable Bible.” The Methodists were encouraged to prefer Wesley’s New Testament translation along with its Explanatory Notes (1755) and those involved in the Restorationist movement, far from preferring the King James more than what was usual among other Christians, had the Alexander Campbell New Testament produced in

20 The Book of Commandments does not have a parallel to this passage.
22 Hugh Nibley, Since Cumorah: The Bible in the Modern World (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1967), 129.
23 Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick, Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University/Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2016), 115.

the 1820s. Although both Wesley’s and Campbell’s New Testaments were based on earlier translations, neither of them built off the King James.24

Yet, however that may be, if the Book of Mormon was presented in King James dress as a way of appealing to how people in those days would have expected words from God to sound like, as the authors just cited claimed, that does nothing to give us confidence regarding its potential authenticity, rather it should be regarded as a mark against it. It is good to remember that after Joseph died, most of the surviving signers of the testimonies to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon became followers of James Strang. After claiming to be Smith’s divinely appointed successor, he miraculously translated his own new scriptures from his own set of newly discovered ancient plates, this time called the Book of the Law of the Lord, which had supposedly been “kept in the ark of the covenant, and was held too sacred to go into the hands of strangers.”25 This volume again began with the identical proclamationary statement that we find in the Book of Mormon testimonies—“BE it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come . . .”—and it included a page giving a statement of testimony signed by a number of witnesses who testified to having seen and handled the ostensibly ancient plates. But most importantly for what we are saying here, it too was “generously sprinkled with passages lifted from the King James Version,” and it too mimicked the King James style throughout.

Likewise the book that Shaker Philemon Stewart, claimed he received by Revelation, A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; from The Lord of Heaven, to the

Inhabitants of Earth, also adopted the King James style.26 It was Stewart’s book that Martin Harris is reported to have “declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon.”27 In each case the use of the King James style may have enhanced the works believability, but it did nothing toward establishing its divine authenticity.

The presence of the stock phrases from the King James Version’s Gospel of John as filler in the Book of Mormon and Joseph’s prophetically restored Book of Genesis shows that in both cases we are dealing with more than his simply preferring to use the King James text when encountering parallel texts in the Book of Mormon. Even if we were willing to grant that Nephi might have quoted numerous passages from Isaiah or that Jesus might have repeated his Sermon on the Mount over again in the New World, the regular appearance of stock phrases from the King James padding the Book of Mormon from end to end still points in the direction of the very extensive anachronistic literary dependence of the Book of Mormon on the King James throughout. And that in turn points in the direction of the Book of Mormon being another Bible forgery rather than another Bible.

Contradicting the Grand Narrative

So far in our attempt to discover whether the Book of Mormon is another Bible or another Bible forgery we have focused on whether or not Joseph’s actions were consistent with a belief in the story of divine dictation told by his close associates. And the answer is that those actions were not. Yet there is another side to the question that is equally important to our investigation, namely— Were the descriptions of Joseph’s close associates as to what they saw Joseph doing consistent with the story he himself put before the public? And here again the answer is no.

The story Joseph put before the public only spoke of one supernatural instrument used in the process of translating the Book of Mormon: the Urim and Thummim. The discovery of this unique instrument along with the golden plates is an essential feature of the foundation story of Mormonism that is not only enshrined in Mormon scripture, but has also been a persistent part of standard


26 Philemon Stewart, A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; from The Lord of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth; Revealed to the United Society at New Lebanon. . . . (2 Parts; Canterbury, NH: United Society, 1843).

27 Public Discussion of the Issues Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884 Between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ (St. Louis, MO: Clark Braden, 1884), 173.
LDS missionary presentations. According to the story the angel Moroni, one of the Book of Mormon's ancient authors, appeared to Joseph on the evening of September 21, 1823, and informed him of the existence of “a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent,” which contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel . . . as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants,” and that along with it, “there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates, and the possession and use of these stones was what constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times, and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 34-35).

The story goes on to say that on September 22, 1827, Joseph finally manages to recover the gold plates along with the Urim and Thummim from their ancient hiding place in the Hill Cumorah. As Joseph reported the story in the 1838 Elders’ Journal, “I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them; by means of which, I translated the plates; and thus came the Book of Mormon.” Joseph makes the same claim in a letter he wrote in 1842 to John Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat:

> With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called “Urim and Thummim,” which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate.

> Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift, and power of God.

The unique significance of this supernaturally appointed and preserved instrument, however, was not only an integral part of the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as Joseph told it, but of the grand narrative of the Book of Mormon itself. Indeed the story of the instrument, according to the Book of Mormon, dated back to the time of the confusion of languages in the generation of the Tower of Babel. At that time, says the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ gave a number of great revelations, including a revelation of himself (even his name), to the pious brother of Jared and instructed him to write a record of it and to seal it up. At the same time he provided the brother of Jared with the two stones of the Urim and Thummim because “the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify the eyes of men these things which ye shall write” (Ether 3:24). (The two stones are called “the interpreters” in the Book of Mormon not “Urim and Thummim”).

After this the brother of Jared along with other members of his extended family, came to be called Jaredites, and they were eventually destroyed. A record of their history was written by the Jaredite Ether on twenty-four gold plates, which he, in turn, hid away along with the Urim and Thummim (Ether 4:5, 15:33). Both were rediscovered in the second century B.C. by some people from king Limhi (Mosiah 8:9), who in turn brought them to Ammon asking whether he might be able to translate them. Ammon suggests Mosiah, who he says, can translate the records: for he hath wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. 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. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer. (Mosiah 8:13)

The plates were duly brought to king Mosiah (Mosiah 21:27, Ether 1:2), who eventually translated them “by the means of those two stones which was fastened into the two rims of a bow. Now these things were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages; And they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord” (Mosiah 28:13-15).

When Joseph described the Urim and Thummim to John Wentworth as “two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow,” it is hard to believe that he did not have explicitly in mind Mosiah’s description above—“two stones which was fastened into the two rims of a bow.” In other words, by his statement Joseph clearly seemed to be equating his Urim and Thummim with Mosiah’s Urim and Thummim.

In any case, Mosiah then passes all the records along with the “interpreters,” and commands they be preserved (Mosiah 28:20). Then finally Moroni, at the end of the Book of Mormon period, is commanded to seal up the records along with the interpreters by hiding them “again

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28 See for example, the long-used pamphlet “The Prophet Joseph Smith’s Testimony.”
29 Times and Seasons 3.12 (April 15, 1842): 753.
31 Elder’s Journal 1.3 (July 1838): 43.
32 Times and Seasons 3.9 (March 1, 1842): 707.
33 The implication is that the interpreters came into Mosiah’s hands prior to the discovery of Ether’s Jaredite record, which raises the question whether the record of the brother of Jared and the Jaredite record were separate or the Jaredite record including the record of the brother of Jared somehow got separated from the brother of Jared’s interpreters.
34 Times and Seasons 3.9 (March 1, 1842): 707.
in the earth” in the fifth century A.D. (Ether 4:3-5). It is this same Moroni then, who afterward appears, more than a thousand years later, to Joseph in his bedroom on the evening of September 21, 1823, to tell him about the existence of the ancient record hidden away with the brother of Jared’s/Mosiah’s interpreters and to explain how he has been chosen to become the new seer and custodian of the ongoing grand narrative. But there’s only one problem. Where is the ongoing central role of the Interpreters (the Urim and Thummim) in the ongoing grand narrative? The answer apparently is nowhere at all! According to both Emma Smith and David Whitmer none of the current Book of Mormon was produced using the Urim and Thummim. Here’s what happened.

Martin Harris’s service as scribe to Joseph Smith, which began on April 12, 1828, came to a sudden end on June 14, 1828, after he’d borrowed and irretrievably lost the manuscript of the first 116 pages translated to that point. Joseph, who apparently feared that if he were to try to replicate what he had already written (which shouldn’t have been a problem if he had really simply read it off the stone as reported) was ostensibly told by God that he should not retranslate the portion he’d already done, which was called the Book of Lehi. Instead he was to translate another account also available among the plates which covered the same basic material. As a result none of the text included in the 116 pages was ever retranslated into what eventually became the Book of Mormon.

Joseph reports further that as a result of God’s anger at him for entrusting the 116 pages “into the hands of a wicked man,” (D&C 10:1) “both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but,” he continues, “in a few days they were returned to me.”35

But the claim that the Urim and Thummim were returned is inconsistent with the accounts of the same incident by Emma Smith and David Whitmer, both of whom claimed Joseph didn’t use the Urim and Thummim in translating after having them taken away. In an 1870 letter the Prophet’s wife wrote:36 “Now the first that my husband translated, [the book] was translated by the use of the Urim, and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly, black, but was rather a dark color.” David Whitmer similarly recounts how the loss of the 116 pages, evoked the stormiest kind of chastisement from the Lord, who took from the prophet the Urim and Thummim and otherwise expressed his condemnation. For fervent prayer and by otherwise humbling himself, the prophet, however, again found favor, and was presented with a strange, oval-shaped, chocolate-colored stone, about the size of an egg, only more flat, which, it was promised, should serve the same purpose as the missing Urim and Thummim . . . With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated.37

Whitmer told John Traughber in 1879 that he actually never saw Joseph use the Urim and Thummim at all.38

Further, the testimony of Martin Harris, who only served as scribe during the production of the lost 116 pages, suggests that Joseph used a seer stone rather than the Urim and Thummim at least some of the time even before the pages were lost: “He [Martin Harris] said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone.”39

The very fact that Harris presents a picture of Joseph being able to use the Urim and Thummim or not according to his “convenience,” greatly reduces the significance of the instrument to the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And if the Urim and Thummim were not used at all during the process of translating the current Book of Mormon, as Emma and David Whitmer reported, then the claim by Joseph in the Elders’ Journal and Wentworth letter, are simply misrepresentations in which Joseph was saying the Book of Mormon came forth in one manner, when really it came forth in another. And in fact even if Joseph did not use seer stones in a hat to translate the entire text of the present Book of Mormon there can now be no doubt that he used them in translating a good portion of it. This is something even the LDS Church itself has recently formally admitted, even publishing, for example, a photograph of the brown seer stone Joseph used in translating the Book of Mormon in the October 2015 issue of its official Ensign magazine.40 This was

35 Times and Seasons 3.15 (June 1, 1842): 801.
36 Letter to Mrs. Pilgrim, March 27, 1870; Early Mormon Documents 1:532. Brackets indicate a conjectural emendation by Dan Vogel, the editor of Early Mormon Documents. I have left some of Vogel’s less important critical markings out.
38 “With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state that he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim; but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone, called a ‘Seer Stone,’ which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light.” (“Testimony of David Whitmer,” Saints’ Herald 26 [Nov. 15, 1879]: 341.)
followed up by a faith-promoting book, *Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones*, by two BYU professors, bolstered up with an introduction by Mark Ashurst-McGee, Senior Historian at the Church History Library, and published jointly by the BYU’s Religious Studies Center and the Church-owned Deseret Book.41 The purpose of the book, quite clearly, is to ease faithful LDS Church members into the idea that Joseph translated using seer stones along with/instead of the Urim and Thummim without such a fact leading to a crisis of faith. Finding out about their use, as it stressed near the beginning of the book, is not supposed to be something to be alarmed about, but rather it is “deep doctrine,” that resulted in a “deep theological tradition” representing a part of the LDS Church’s “rich history . . . ripe for exploration.”42

The LDS Church’s recent attempts at normalizing Joseph Smith’s uses of seer stones even extends to materials produced for children. We see this in the February 2017 *Friend*, the LDS Church’s children’s magazine, which shows a cartoon picture of Joseph Smith holding a seer stone in his hand, and the explanation:

Joseph used a special rock called a seer stone to translate the plates. He also used a tool called the Urim and Thummim, two clear rocks bound together with metal that looked like a pair of glasses.43

It is, of course, perfectly legitimate for faithful Mormons to both admit that Joseph used seer stones and to do all they can to integrate that fact into a faithful understanding of what it means. In our quest to discover whether the Book of Mormon was another Bible or another Bible forgery, the issue of Joseph’s use of the seer stones plays a much simpler role, namely showing that although he told one story publicly about how the Book of Mormon came about, those who saw it in the process of happening, contradict him. Joseph said one thing, and did another. And because of this the issue of the seer stones versus the Urim and Thummim once again points in the direction of considering the Book of Mormon a forgery.

**The Gold Plates**

The other half of the formula in Joseph’s public descriptions of the process of translation, was the gold plates, that is to say the claim that he used the Urim and Thummim to translate the gold plates. Yet according to the testimonies quoted earlier from those who observed the process, it is not clear that the plates played any direct role in the process at all. As he translated Joseph wasn’t looking at the plates, he was looking in his hat. Consequently it would be more correct to say that the Book of Mormon came not from the plates but from the seer stone. And this contradicts not only the basic story Joseph presented to the public about what he was supposedly doing in translating the plates, but also the representation of what he was doing in LDS Church materials ever since. We see this perhaps most strikingly in the Church’s artistic depictions of the translation process, which, until very recently, have invariably shown Joseph with the plates before him as he translated.44 So what is the significance of this?

Presenting the Book of Mormon’s coming forth from the gold plates through the Urim and Thummim provided the project with an aura of respectability that it would not have had if Joseph’s actual translation process had been known, a process, moreover, which would likely have been generally disapproved of due to its occult associations. And if it were known that Joseph had earlier used the same seer stones while working as a conjurer for money-diggers, that would have only made things much worse. And so the real story was concealed, even from many of his earliest followers, some of whom had knowledge of the stone but, given their reactions to other people who were doing precisely what Joseph had done, had somehow failed to put two and two together. We see this very strikingly in two cases where Mormons were disciplined while Joseph was still living for doing the same thing Joseph did. The first involved a young

42 Ibid., xvi, 2, 3.
man who both pretended to recover an ancient text and used a stone to find treasure. The story was told in the December 1, 1842, issue of the LDS Church’s *Times and Seasons* newspaper:

We have lately seen a pamphlet, written, and published by James C. Brewster; purporting to be one of the lost books of Esdras; and to be written by the gift and power of God. We consider it a perfect humbug, and should not have noticed it, had it not been assiduously circulated, in several branches of the church.

This said Brewster is a minor; but has professed for several years to have the gift of seeing and looking through or into a a [sic] stone; and has thought that he has discovered money hid in the ground in Kirtland, Ohio.45

The boy and his father were suspended and only escaped being actually cut off from the Church by promising “to desist from their ridiculous and pernicious ways.”

The author of the piece further writes: “We . . . should not have noticed it [the incident],” had it not been for the fact that “His father and some of our weak brethren, who perhaps have some confidence in the ridiculous stories that are propagated concerning Joseph Smith, about money digging.”

A second incident, which occurred among the Latter-day Saints in England, involved a certain Brother Monford (Mumford? Mountford?), who was “disfellowshiped by the council of officers, for using magic, and telling fortunes &c.”46

Among those participating in deciding Monford’s fate were Mormon leaders Alfred Cordon and Wilford Woodruff, both of whom left an account of the event in their diaries. According to Cordon:

bro Mountford had in his possession several Glasses or Chrystals as he called them. they are about the size of a Gooses Egg made flat at each end. he also had a long list of prayers wrote down which he used. The prayer was unto certain Spirits which he said was in the Air which says he when I pray to them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, any thing that I want will come into the Glass. for instance if A Young woman had a desire to know who she would have for an Husband, she came to him and made the case known, and he brought out his Chrystals and prayed unto a certain Spirit then she must peep into the Chrystal and in it she would see the Young man that would become her husband Elder Woodruff made some observations on the subject. when it was moved and Unanimously carried that no such Magic work be allowed in the Church.47

Woodruff, for his part, reported:

Brother Mumford who was ingaged in the Magic or Blackart fortune telling &c which prevails to a great extent in this Country. But as he persisted in his course after being laboured with the Council Withdrew fellowship from him. He was holding the office of a Priest & one thing is worthy of notice that while the Priesthood was upon him, he could not se[ll?]48 his majic glasses as before untill after he ceased to fill the Priest office & rejected our council.49

These Mormons in both cases were condemned for doing the very thing Joseph had done and yet were treated as though they were engaging in things that were obviously unacceptable for anyone wanting to remain in the LDS Church. The reference to the “ridiculous stories” of Joseph’s career as a money-digger, in the account of the first case, implies that the LDS Church at the time either did not generally know or was denying the truth about Joseph’s earlier years. In their recent book on Joseph’s seer stones cited earlier, Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick both admit this aspect of Joseph’s earlier career, and attempt to justify it by blurring the distinction between occult magic and orthodox Christianity by pretending people didn’t draw clear distinctions between the two in Joseph’s day: “Early believers did not necessarily struggle with the fusion of Joseph the treasure seeker and Joseph the translator.”50 Yet how could they “struggle,” given that Joseph hid it from them? And why did he hide it if such distinctions really didn’t matter? In the same question and answer article in the *Elders’ Journal* quoted above, where the claim is made that Joseph translated the gold plates with the Urim and Thummim, there also appeared the following question and answer about the Prophet’s previous career as a money-digger:

**Question 10. Was not Jo Smith a money digger?**

**Answer.** Yes. But it was never a very profitable job for him, as he only got fourteen dollars a month for it.51

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45 “Notice,” *Times and Seasons* 4.2 (December 1, 1842): 32.
46 “To The Saints Abroad,” *Times and Seasons* 2.15 (June 1841): 434.
48 Or perhaps “se[e]”
51 Elders’ Journal (July 1838): 43.
The answer, however, evades the extent of Joseph’s real involvement by presenting Joseph as a simple workman who was just trying to make a few dollars digging holes.

One of the most significant remarks in the two accounts cited above is Wilford Woodruff’s description of what Monford was doing as “Blackart,” indicating that the early Mormon leader Woodruff viewed the practice as more akin to witchcraft than to Christianity. A similar attitude to Woodruff’s toward the connection between seer stones and money digging and the black arts is also well illustrated in John G. C. Brainard’s 1827 poem, The Money Diggers:

THUS saith The Book—“Permit no witch to live;”
Hence, Massachusetts hath expelled the race,—
Connecticut, where swap and dicker thrive,
Admits not to their foot a resting-place.
With more of hardihood and less of grace,
Vermont receives the sisters gray and lean,
Allows each witch her airy broomstick race,
O’er mighty rocks and mountains dark with green,
Where tempests wake their voice, and torrents roar between.

And one there was among that wicked crew,
To whom the enemy a pebble gave,
Through which, at long-off distance, she might view
All treasures of the fathomable wave;
And where the Thames’ bright billows gently lave,
The grass-grown piles that flank the ruined wharf,
She sent them forth, those two adventurers brave. . . .

By using the story of the gold plates translated through the ancient Urim and Thummim as a cover for the actual manner in which he’d produced the Book of Mormon, Joseph shielded it from immediately being recognized as what would more recently come to be called a “channeled” text, a kind of text produced sometimes with, sometimes without, the aid of occult mantic devices, which was already a familiar genre of literature in Joseph’s time, and would become increasingly so after. Joseph claimed to be able to recover ancient texts with or without plates, and to be able to translate them with or without his seer stones. With the seer stone, for example, he claimed to recover and translate the “record made on parchment by John [the Apostle] and hidden up by himself” that now appears as part of D&C 7. Then without his seer stone he also claimed to produce his Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, restoring lost sections that had allegedly been taken out by the Great and Abominable Church (1 Nephi 13) or otherwise lost.

In either case Joseph’s claiming to have obtained texts in such a manner was hardly a novel activity. The occult art of obtaining books by scrying, which is what Joseph was doing with his stone, was well known. We may think, for example, of the legendary occultist John Dee (1527-1608), who’d received a number of books in the 1580s, including the Liber Logaeth and De heptarchia mystica, with the help of his scryer, Edward Kelly.53

Or again, we might think of Emanuel Swedenborg with his many interactions with the other side reported in books like Concerning Heaven and its Wonders and Concerning Hell from Things Heard and Seen (1768).

Then there was the 1852 book Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind described on its title pages as being “by and through” the Poughkeepsie Seer, Andrew Jackson Davies.

Or to mention once more John Ballou Newbrough’s—“I . . . beheld the line of light that rested on my hands extending heavenward like a telegraph wire toward the sky”—book the Oahspe Bible.54 We spoke of this work in the first part of our article, where we mentioned also the Aquarian Gospel, a work psychically downloaded from the Akashic Records by Levi Dowling.

To this list we could add as well the famed Mahatma letters, allegedly written by the two prolific ascended masters named Morya and Koot Hoomi. These were claimed to have miraculously appeared in a shrine cabinet at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India, but upon more careful examination they turned out to have been penned by the hand of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the ever colorful, chain-smoking, theosophical prophetess from Yekaterinoslav, who afterward slipped them into the cabinet through a hidden sliding panel in the back.55

Then there was C. G. Jung’s Septem Sermones ad Mortuos, attributed to the second-century Gnostic teacher Basilides of Alexandria, which was dictated to (and through) Jung one Sunday afternoon in 1916 just after


54 “J. B. Newbrough to the Editor of the Banner of Light, Boston, MA (Jan 21, 1883),” in Oahspe: Epoch-Making Revelations of Grave Importance to Everyone: Booklet Number 1 (Los Angeles, CA: repr. Walter Wiers, n.d.), [iv].

the front doorbell had begun ringing frantically at the instigation of an invisible hand. The house, Jung recalled, was “crammed full of spirits . . . and the air was so thick it was scarcely possible to breathe.” Jung himself was “all a-quer” and asked, “‘For God sakes, what in the world is this?’ Then they [the spirits] cried out in chorus, ‘We have come back from Jerusalem where we found not what we sought.’” After which, Jung reports, the rest of the Septem Sermones “began to flow out of me.”

Nor is there any lack of more recent examples of such texts, including for example, the Urantia Book, communicated by masters from other spheres with outlandish names like “a Secondary Lanonandek Son,” “the Chief of the Archangels of Nebadon,” and “a Mighty Messenger temporarily sojourning on Urantia” (i.e., Earth), and A Course in Miracles, dictated to Helen Schucman by “the Voice.”

If you want something with a more Mormon feel, try The Book of Azrael, consisting of a retake on the history of the world from Adam and Eve to Abraham, set out with chapters and verses like the Bible. And who is Azrael? He’s Archie Dean Wood of Pocatello, Idaho, “Teacher of Righteousness in the School of the Prophets,” whose ministry is announced in the first chapter of his book, where God says:

And I shall set over them a new shepherd [i.e., Archie], who will watch over them, who will lead them in the words of the Lord, for I shall stretch forth my hand into a desert place [i.e., Pocatello, Idaho] to bring forth my servant. Him shall I prepare from youth that he may teach my people; a teacher of righteousness shall he be unto me, for I shall hide up in his inward parts the power of my word. (Book of Azrael, 1.1.11-12)

Like the Book of Mormon and James Strang’s book, Archie’s book also adopts the King James style and includes a “testimony” statement signed by 13 witnesses, this time affirming having seen a vision of Christ on a mountain outside of Pocatello.

In each case the production of the Book of Mormon has more in common with these books than it does with the Bible, and people who find the comparison between the Book of Mormon and these other texts offensive or absurd need to address the question for themselves that if the Book of Mormon is somehow different from all the rest, how does it stand out from the group, and why is it different? Very often Mormons insinuate that Christians reject the Book of Mormon simply because they believe in a closed canon and are therefore “not open to new revelation.” Yet to a Mormon bringing such an accusation I can only ask, “So then, are you open to the ‘new revelations’ I have just been describing? And if not, why not? How can you accuse me of being closed to new revelation when your ‘new revelation’ looks to me pretty much how I imagine the ‘new revelations’ I have just been describing looks to you? And how is it that your book, produced in much the same way as these other books, is somehow legitimate while they are not?”

**Conclusion**

Is the Book of Mormon another Bible or another Bible forgery? Think, if you will, of each of the issues raised in this article as possible red flags against the Book of Mormon’s claim to be another Bible. Very often when people lose faith in the Book of Mormon they not only reject it but they reject the Bible also, on the grounds, they say, that the Bible “has the same kind of problems,” as the Book of Mormon. But that is exactly what is not the case. The Bible actually is what it presents itself to be, i.e., many separate works written by many different authors over many centuries, eventually collected together into one book. The Book of Mormon only pretends to be that. And it is precisely here that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are most definitely not alike, and do not have the “same kind of problems.” Please understand, I am not saying that the Bible has no “problems,” only that they are very different problems from what we face with the Book of Mormon. Many questions arise from the very fact that the Bible really was written by many authors over a large period of time with later authors interpreting earlier ones and different authors giving different accounts of the same events, influenced perhaps by somewhat differing purposes and theology. Are we always sure, for example, that the New Testament authors get it right when quoting the Psalms or Isaiah? Is it more appropriate to try to harmonize the cosmological descriptions in the Bible with ancient cosmology, with modern science, or with both? Did Jesus’s followers accurately represent his teachings? Which Greek manuscript families represent the earliest form of the New Testament text? Are the Roman Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, or the Protestants right when it comes to their understanding of the boundaries of the Biblical canon (i.e., which books should be included

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57 The Urantia Book (Chicago, IL: Urantia Foundation, 1955), 588, 373, 1277.
60 Ibid., [180].
in the Bible)? Should we prefer the Hebrew or the Greek text of the Old Testament as more authoritative? Can we really know what this or that ancient Hebrew/Greek word really meant in its ancient context? Were particular books included in the Bible written by the authors traditionally attached to them? Did the Apostle Paul write Hebrews, for example, or did the same John write both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, or were there perhaps two different Johns, as certain early Church writers suspected? Careful students of the Bible regularly face questions like these from time to time as they try to better understand their Bibles.

But these are not the kind of questions the Book of Mormon poses. There we are faced with an entirely different set of questions. Given that the book is written with perfect hindsight, there is no need to wonder whether Alma understood Nephi correctly. Since the entire Book of Mormon is written from the perspective of one who is totally familiar with the King James Bible, there is no question of earlier authors being misrepresented by later. As we have seen the name Jesus Christ is already revealed by the time of the building of the Tower of Babel and all the details of his life, death, and resurrection, fully revealed long before he arrives on the scene. As a result serious efforts to place the separate books within the Book of Mormon into their alleged ancient contexts lead to little and dubious results. Efforts at placing the whole against its nineteenth-century background, however, has proven much more fruitful for the simple reason that that is its true background. Similarly, its heavy reliance on the King James Bible makes it more productive to investigate the relationship of that text to the Book of Mormon, rather than, say, to the Dead Sea Scrolls, with which, as an early nineteenth-century production, the Book of Mormon has no relation.

Two different kinds of problems arising from dealing with two different kinds of books. The problems attending the Bible arise from the Bible’s being what it is. The problems attending the Book of Mormon arise from its pretending to be what it’s not. The Book of Mormon is not another Bible; it is another Bible forgery, and therefore rejecting the Bible along with the Book of Mormon because they “have the same kind of problems” is simply absurd. Mark Hofmann, the famous forger of Mormon documents, also branched out on at least one occasion to try his hand at composing an Emily Dickinson poem, which he then used to produce a forgery in the poet’s own handwriting. The forgery eventually came up for auction at Sotheby’s and was sold to the library in Dickinson’s hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts for $24,150. Naturally much consternation followed the eventual discovery that the poem was a fake. How could an auction house of Sotheby’s reputation have been so careless as to present a faked Dickinson as real? Selby Kiffer, of Sotheby’s, could only say, that it had been “an extraordinarily good forgery,” even to the point that it used the “correct paper for the period and, the correct writing instrument for the period, the literary tone was quite good—and the imitation of the writing.” Still, even granting it was a good forgery didn’t put it in anybody’s mind on the same level of an original Emily Dickinson. Nor was anybody foolish enough to propose discarding real original Emily Dickinson poems as an appropriate response to somebody’s forging an Emily Dickinson poem. How is it less absurd, then, to jettison the Bible after losing faith in the Book of Mormon?

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Excerpts from Letters and Emails

October 2016: Dear Sandra,

My “shelf broke” about a year ago and my wife has finally agreed to hear my concerns about the LDS church. This has been a very difficult time for our family as my wife is a direct descendant of Heber C Kimball and has a lot of her personal identity wrapped up in the church. She is VERY worried about “anti-mormon” literature. But has finally agreed to listen to my concern . . .

October 2016: I am a young lds, and I have a few questions to ask Sandra.
1. Why did you fall away from the church?
2. Do you not realise that this only strengthens the truth of the gospel?
3. The only thing that you can’t realise is that faith is the step to know that Joseph Smith did see the Lord our God and, his son Jesus Christ?
4. Why do you seek to destroy the church?

You do not have to answer these questions, only ponder them.

[Anyone wanting to know the answer to his questions can read our story at www.utlm.org]

October 2016: I just wanted you to know that when God saved me from Mormonism in 1992, the Utah Light House

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Ministry helped me. . . . Thank you so much for all you do! May God bless you and your important ministry! In His precious name.

**October 2016:** I, myself, left the church after graduating BYU-I[daho] just about a year ago. I have absolutely no doubt of its falsehood but I find myself wanting to help others open their eyes. It is difficult, as I can only imagine you know better than I, but I feel like truth and reason will eventually manifest through all of the cognitive dissonance. I feel like the average LDS member is simply oblivious, naive, and ignorant of the church’s history. I have experienced this by asking questions such as “Why was Joseph incarcerated in Carthage?” The following answers are always amusing and seldom even close to accurate. Thank you so much for all you have done to help people, such as myself.

**October 2016:** I had an easy time leaving the church, I said to myself, “I will never let my children go thru the guilt that I have felt.”

My entire [family] is totally LDS, I mean 200% . . . I admire your work, I know you receive much hatred, I believe that you touch many lives that you will never even know of.

I send you blessings and Praise to Him who saved us.

**November 2016:** LDS lady in Utah:
I am almost done reading this book, “Starting at the Finish Line.” Sooooo, perfect!!! Soooo good!!! Thank you for your recommendation to read it! 😊

I feel like God is revealing himself to me a bit at a time. . . . probably all I can handle at once . . . already my mind is blown!! Wow!!! He really did ALL!!! My heart is overflowing with gratitude! Thank you, thank you, thank you again—for the role you played in bringing me to real truth!!! Hallelujah!! Praise God!!! ♡ I am free in Jesus!! I am free from the tyranny and bondage of man made “shoulds”!!!!

**December 2016:** Thank you to Sandra and all those at utlm. I am not LDS however my long time fiancé of 6 years was raised LDS and quit attending. . . . Being around his family of whom I greatly care about, I was very confused of things they spoke of so several months ago I began researching the history of modern day mormons and the history. I told my fiancé one day I’ll know more than you and last week I stunned him (he is well versed in literature and books). Big thank you to Sandra for her and Jerald’s teachings. Now I must learn to watch my tongue around them because they will be greatly offended and label me anti mormon. Listening to recordings and other materials I have also learned of more biblical teachings. . . . again thank you.

**December 2016:** Sandra this is T___ J____ (I am a Ukrainian who came by to buy a book on polygamy last Friday). It was so nice to visit with you! I feel so lucky that I found your ministry. It will help me in my transition out of Mormonism. Thank you.

**January 2017:** I discovered this website in my research of how to help my Mormon friends see the Light of Jesus. All I can really say is thank you. Thank you for making this website. Thank you for providing everyone with this knowledge.

**February 2017:** I am disturbed. The leaders are intelligent men. Most are leaders in their field. One was Vice President of Bank of America. One was a pilot for Lufthansa and a pilot instructor. They have to know what they are doing. I am a high school graduate but I uncovered so much on my little iPad. How can they continue to lie to millions? Don’t they fear God?

**February 2017:** Ms. Tanner, I grew up in the Netherlands in a strict LDS family. We sometimes heard about you, being portrayed as the evil anti-LDS machine. Well, I just wanted to thank you for all your work. It has helped me greatly! With admiration and respect.

**February 2017:** I appreciate all the work you have done exposing the errors of Mormonism, and envy the time and resources you have to do so living in Salt Lake City. I actually grew up in Salt Lake City and spent the first 20 years of my life in the Mormon faith. I am now 44, so it has been a long while since I studied my own way out of it. . . . [I] never removed my name from the records. My reason has always been that since they have my info and are able to track me down, it is a good opportunity to tell them I am no longer a part of it. Most are curious which is why I try to use it as a stepping stone. Some have called me all kinds of names, which I’m sure you have heard as well. However, I am at a point where I am considering removing my name. . . . If I were to write a letter, I have no idea who the Bishop may be or even where my records are at this point. . . . I appreciate any insight you can offer pertaining to this. Thanks again for your effort and material you make available.

[For help resigning from the LDS Church, go to www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nameremovalletter.htm]

**February 2017:** Hello Sandra,
You helped me when I wrote to you about 1991. I want to express my gratitude for a changed, very happy and content life.

Back then I was studying for an MBA in Canada. As I studied Organizational Behaviour I immediately identified how the church controls and manipulates its members. The page with a descriptive list of such organizations jumped out at me.
I was a Temple Recommend holder, married to an active LDS High Priest with four active children. For years I had concerns with the temple ordinances and temple garments. Whenever I mentioned my concerns at Bishop interviews I was told to attend the Temple more regularly, fast and pray.

As I studied this university course I became more uneasy about the church especially since I already had doubts about church history during the four years I taught the Gospel Doctrine class. I explained my concerns to a Religion professor and asked if he knew how I could find objective, well researched information regarding LDS history that wasn’t just hateful anti-Mormon literature. He recommended I contact you, which I did. You wrote a supportive letter and over the following months I read a few of your books.

Fortunately when I told my husband I couldn’t sit through another church meeting he said he had already come to the same conclusion but for different reasons. Much to my surprise three of our children were happy to leave the church. We sent an exit letter and totally cut our ties with the church.

It wasn’t easy dealing with our LDS family and friends. Like you we received hate letters.

After moving to Australia I attended a Stake conference with family. I could hardly sit and listen as young people were being taught how to behave in a guilt promoting talk. It’s the only time I’ve attended the LDS church since I left except for a wedding and funeral.

In those pre Internet days you and Gerald were a blessed resource for people like me. I still enjoy listening to you on You Tube. I’m happy that so much of the truth is now on-line, people are writing books, there are blogs, podcasts, ex-Mormon groups and lots of people are leaving the church. I wish my extensive Mormon family would leave.

I’m so grateful to you. If I hadn’t left the church it’s possible my children would have gone on missions and/or married in the church. When I left I felt an urgency as I didn’t want the church carried into another generation. My fourth child officially left the church when he dated (later married) the daughter of an Anglican Church minister. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

February 2017: I owe to you and your late husband Jerald Tanner much of what I’ve learned about the “untruth” of the LDS church. Your book “The Changing World of Mormonism” was INDEED a terrific eye-opener to me. I shed tears, I suffered a great deal! But I am thankful to both of you for the freedom my immediate family and I enjoy nowadays. It’s been seven years I’ve officially renounced my membership in the church. It’s been indeed the VERY BEST decision I’ve ever taken in my life, after 30 long years! Thank you for your book!

[The Changing World of Mormonism, is posted on our web site: utlm.org/onlinebooks/changecontents.htm]

March 2017: Great talking with you the other day. I’ve downloaded M.T. Lamb’s book [The Golden Bible] and am going through that—very interesting.

I did some math [on the weight of the Book of Mormon plates, see www.utlm.org/newsletters/no105.htm ] and I thought I’d share it with you.

If the plates were tumbaga as some have claimed, and realizing that the ratios for tumbaga varied widely, at a ratio of 77% copper and 23% gold, they’d still weigh as much as your 100% lead plates that you have. Further, the lifting of your plates while certainly difficult, is made somewhat easier by the wood base under which one can place their hands and get a good grip. By themselves, the plates would be much harder to manage—finger strength becomes an issue in holding them.

Anyway, just thought I’d share that math with you. :) Thanks again for your time the other day.

March 2017: In my self-righteous zeal, and fear instilled in me by the church to not seek out “anti-Mormon” materials, all my life, I use to avoid your site like the plague, believing it was anti Mormon of the worst degree. How wrong I was! I find myself watching Youtube videos of interviews with you, as well as visiting your site often.

I can’t imagine the courage it has taken for you and your husband to have stepped up to the plate to make materials available to Mormons who are seeking truth. It makes me mad that I have been lied to by my church, all my life, in some degree or other. Where was the honesty, the integrity, the holding to God’s word?

It makes me mad that I brought up my nine children to believe in the Book of Mormon, sent two on foreign missions, and served in many capacities in the church and often nearly killing myself off in fulfilling callings.

Service opportunities and such, in the church, made me who I am today, and it wasn’t all trial and tribulation. But I see that even such good things we do, do not buy our way into heaven. So many years of constantly wondering if this or that “good” thing I did would get God’s notice and earn me points. How vain I have been.

I’m grateful for the thorough documentation you and other historians have done on Mormonism. There is no doubt in my mind that I have been, as it says in the South Pacific movie, “carefully taught”—another gospel Paul warned against doing if an angel should come and deliver other than what Christ taught and gave us. It is obvious that an angel did come that delivered another gospel, with another way to heaven by our own efforts of our own fleshly works instead of softened hearts with Christ’s law of love written on them.
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