

Editing Out the “Bad Grammar” in the Book of Mormon
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An Introduction to *Grammatical Variation*,
Parts 1 and 2 of Volume 3 of the Critical Text of the Book of Mormon,
The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon

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The Book of Mormon critical text project is a multi-volume work. One major highlight in the history of the project was the publication in 2009 by Yale University Press of the definitive, scholarly text, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*. The official project itself, published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies in cooperation with Brigham Young University Studies, contains five volumes:

- ✓ volume 1 (2001) The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon
- ✓ volume 2 (2001) The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon
- ✓ volume 3 (2016-2018) The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon
- ✓ volume 4 (2004-2009) Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon
- volume 5 (2019) Computerized Collation of the Textual Sources

Volumes 1, 2, and 4 have already been published. We are now in the process, over the next three years, of publishing the six parts of volume 3. The corresponding six books of volume 3 are being published in pairs:

The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon

- ✓ parts 1-2 (2016) Grammatical Variation
- parts 3-4 (2017) The Original Language
 Spelling in the Manuscripts and Editions
- parts 5-6 (2018) The Transmission of the Text
 Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon

The official publication in April 2016 of the first two parts of volume 3 of the critical text will fulfill a promise made hundreds of times in volume 4 of the

critical text, namely, that volume 3 would contain a complete description of the grammatical editing in the history of the Book of Mormon. The result is *Grammatical Variation*, published as two large books bound in forest-green cloth and each averaging about 650 pages.

These first two parts of volume 3 deal with the nonstandard English in the original text of the Book of Mormon and how it has been grammatically emended over the years, not only by editors but also in the early transmission of the text by scribes and typesetters. Their task, as they usually viewed it, was to eliminate from the text what they considered ungrammatical English, thus making sure that readers of the book could avoid distractions like “in them days” and “they was yet wroth”. For most readers today, keeping the original, nonstandard language in the current text would only bring attention to itself and get in the way of reading the book for its message.

Volume 4 of the critical text, *Analysis of Textual Variants* (referred to as ATV), was published in six parts from 2004 to 2009. Although it is 4,060 pages long, there was not enough room to describe all the examples for every type of grammatical editing. In ATV, I normally discussed any given type of grammatical editing the first time it occurred in the text, but then indicated that all the remaining examples of that type would be found in volume 3, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*. Occasionally in ATV a few more examples of that type of grammatical editing were discussed, but only for cases that needed some special analysis.

Editorial changes have been so frequent in the history of the text that to list them all in ATV would have been overwhelming. An extreme example of this problem involves the 952 instances of the relative pronoun *which* that Joseph Smith emended to *who* or *whom* in his editing for the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon. In all of these cases, *which* refers to people, a usage that is prevalent in the King James Bible (as in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9: “Our Father **which** art in heaven”). But as the editor for the 1837 edition, Joseph Smith decided to eliminate these instances of *which* from the Book of Mormon (thus he changed the Lord’s Prayer in 3 Nephi 13:9 to read as “Our Father **who** art in heaven”). Interestingly, Joseph neglected to change 80 similar instances of *which* that refer to people. Nearly half of these are in one part of the text, from 2 Nephi 18 through Jacob 5. If all the changes of *which* to *who* or *whom* had been individually listed in ATV, there would have probably been a need to also specify each of the 80 instances where Joseph didn’t make that change. Obviously, introducing this kind of detail into ATV would have defeated the purpose of that volume, namely,

to analyze the significant changes in the textual history of the Book of Mormon. So in ATV, when I discuss the first instance of *which* being emended to *who* or *whom*, I recommend the reader look under WHICH in volume 3, now published as a section in parts 1 and 2. Other types of grammatical change involving large numbers of examples (and thus only briefly discussed in ATV) include INFLECTIONAL ENDINGS, PRONOMINAL DETERMINERS, SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT, and THAT. These are all fully listed and discussed in parts 1 and 2 of volume 3.

In this brief account, I hope to provide an overview of what's in *Grammatical Variation*. I will first describe the four introductory sections at the beginning of part 1. Then I will take up the 68 sections that deal with the actual grammatical editing and explain how they can be most profitably used. Finally, I will describe in a little more detail two of these 68 sections.

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[adapted from an article by Stanford Carmack]

In the introductory part, I begin with a succinct 8-page history of the critical text project, from its beginning in 1988 up to the present, with a description of the important milestones and findings of the project, plus the publication thus far of 11 books in the project as well as the 2009 publication by Yale University Press of *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*.

This brief history of the project is followed by a fairly lengthy foreword to *Grammatical Variation*. Parts 1 and 2 are largely restricted to the editing out of the nonstandard English. The minor editing of archaic word and phrase usage will be found in part 3 of volume 3, which will be published along with part 4 in about

a year. Part 3 will examine the original language of the Book of Mormon and will discuss examples like the following:

- the plural *mights*,
as in Jacob 5:72, “the servants did go and labor with their **mights**”;
- the phrase “a descendant of” with plural subjects,
as in 1 Nephi 6:2, “we are **a descendant of Joseph**”;
- unexpected prepositional usage,
as in 1 Nephi 18:23, “we did arrive **to** the promised land”.

Also in the foreword to *Grammatical Variation*, I provide a complete description of the system I use to cite scriptures as well as quotations from Early Modern English. There is a section devoted to the symbols I use to cite Book of Mormon textual variants. As with all the other books in the critical text series, there is a reference card provided with each book to assist the reader in interpreting the critical text symbols while reading *Grammatical Variation*.

I conclude my foreword with four pages of acknowledgments. There are many excellent people who have helped to bring these two parts of volume 3 to completion (and subsequent parts as well), and I want to make sure that their assistance is acknowledged.

The foreword is followed by two important essays. In the first essay, called “Editing the Nonstandard Grammar in the Book of Mormon”, I examine Joseph Smith’s editing for the 1837 and 1840 editions of the Book of Mormon and argue that his editing for those two editions shows all the signs of human editing. The evidence will not support the claim that for the second and third editions Joseph received a grammatically corrected, revealed text from the Lord. Rather, the unevenness of Joseph’s editing for those two editions clearly shows his struggles (mostly successful, but not always) with trying to create a text that conforms to standard English grammar. Given limitations of time, Joseph was trying to do his best, but the resulting text is in certain respects quite different from the one that he originally received from the Lord in 1828-29. This issue of human editing will be considered more fully in part 5 of volume 3, which will deal with the transmission of the text (from its original dictation onward, through the two manuscripts, and then into the printed editions).

In my essay on Joseph Smith's editing, I list 18 different phrases and word uses that Joseph inconsistently emended in his editing for the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon. And for only seven of these has later editing removed all the remaining nonstandard usage that escaped Joseph's 1837 editing. In the following representative examples of this editing, I mark with an asterisk each case that has ended up being systematically edited; the capital S symbol stands for a finite clause, one that would be equivalent to a complete sentence if it stood alone.

- For some types of editing, the clear majority of instances were removed by Joseph Smith in his editing for the 1837 edition:

which > *who(m)* when *which* refers to people (952 out of 1,032 cases)
[“the Lord of Hosts **which** dwelleth in mount Zion”, 2 Nephi 18:18]

for to > *to* (13 out of 15 cases)
[“**for to** keep these commandments”, Mosiah 13:25]

* *past-tense done* > *did* (9 out of 10 cases)
[“they **done** all these things”, Ether 9:29]

after that S > *after S* (102 out of 114 cases)
[“and **after that** they had done this thing”, Moroni 9:10]

because that S > *because S* (19 out of 32 cases)
[“**because that** they dwindle in unbelief”, Mormon 9:20]

before that S > *before S* (7 out of 8 cases)
[“**before that** I was lifted up by the Jews”, 3 Nephi 28:6]

- For other types of editing, it is not the case that the clear majority of the instances were removed by Joseph Smith in his editing for 1837 edition:

it came to pass > NULL (47 or 48 out of 1,463 cases)
[“and it came to pass that the king hearkened unto the words of Gideon and **it came to pass that** king Limhi caused that his people should gather their flocks together”, Mosiah 22:9-10]

* *exceeding* > *exceedingly* (1 out of 182 cases)
[“and she was **exceeding** fair and white”, 1 Nephi 11:13]

how great things > *what great things* (2 out of 8 cases)

[“and remember **how great things** the Lord hath done for them”,
Mosiah 27:16]

* past participle *arriven* > *arrived* (1 out of 4 cases)

[“when they **had arriven** to the promised land”, Mosiah 10:15]

* past participle *came* > *come* (2 out of 4 cases)

[“after we **had came** down into the wilderness”, 1 Nephi 5:1]

past participle *smote* > *smitten* (1 out of 5 cases)

[“and we **have been** cast out and mocked and spit upon
and **smote** upon our cheeks”, Alma 26:29]

* past participle *wrote* > *written* (3 out of 6 cases)

[“therefore I **have wrote** this epistle”, 3 Nephi 3:5]

* *had ought to* > *ought to* (11 out of 21 cases)

[“yea ye **had ought to** marvel”, Helaman 7:15]

* *had not ought to* > *ought not to* (5 out of 8 cases)

[“and now **had ye not ought to** tremble”, Mosiah 16:13]

much > *many* with a plural noun (3 out of 12 cases)

[“and also **much horses**”, Enos 1:21]

rather than to > *rather than* (4 out of 7 cases)

[“they choosing to repent and work righteousness **rather than to**
perish”, Alma 13:10]

in the which > *in which* and similar variants (27 out of 57 cases)

[“I have seen a vision **in the which** I know that Jerusalem is destroyed”,
2 Nephi 1:4]

□ There is only one significant type of editing where Joseph Smith consistently removed every nonstandard instance in his editing for the 1837 edition:

* prepositional *a* deleted (15 out of 15 cases)

[“as I was **a going** thither”, Alma 10:8]

The replacement of the biblical adverbial *exceeding* with *exceedingly* is the most recent case for which later editing has removed the last remaining instances of nonstandard usage (that is, in accord with today's English). As listed above, Joseph Smith changed only one instance of adverbial *exceeding* to *exceedingly* (in 1 Nephi 11:13). James E. Talmage, in his editing for the 1920 edition, changed 45 more instances of *exceeding* to *exceedingly*, but left 134 unchanged. Finally, in the editing for the 1981 edition, Bruce R. McConkie had all those remaining instances of adverbial *exceeding* changed to *exceedingly*.

adverbial *exceeding* > *exceedingly*

Joseph Smith, 1837 editing: 1 out of 182

James E. Talmage, 1920 editing: 45 out of 179

Bruce R. McConkie, 1981 editing: 134 out of 134

We now turn to the second essay, written by my research collaborator, Stanford Carmack, and entitled “The Nature of the Nonstandard English in the Book of Mormon”. This essay of his here in *Grammatical Variation* derives from a 2014 article he originally published in the *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*. There he argued that virtually all the nonstandard English in the original text of the Book of Mormon is more consistent with Early Modern English than it is with Joseph Smith's dialectal Upstate New York English, dating from the early 1800s. In case after case, Carmack showed that the so-called ungrammatical language of the Book of Mormon could be found in printed sources dating from the 1500s and 1600s (with some examples dating from the 1400s, in late Middle English, plus a few more dating from the early 1700s).

A year earlier, in 2013, I had first brought up the possibility that the Book of Mormon nonstandard grammar may not be dialectal, but rather archaic usage from Early Modern English. In my lecture “The Nature of the Original Text”, given at BYU as the last in a series of lectures on the Book of Mormon critical text project, I considered the obviously dialectal “in them days” that occurs twice in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon:

Helaman 7:8

yea if my days could have been **in them days**

then would my soul have had joy in the righteousness of my brethren

Helaman 13:37

and this shall be your language **in them days**

Ultimately, this phrase was emended to the standard phraseology “in those days”, in the 1906 LDS edition in the first case and in the 1837 edition in the second. Yet it was interesting, even surprising, to find that the noun phrase *them days* actually occurred in academic publishing around 1600 in London:

1598, Robert Barret, *The Theory and Practice of Modern Wars*
the wars and weapons are now altered **from them days**

In earlier English there was nothing particularly inappropriate about “in them days”. It is only nowadays that we are determined to interpret “in them days” as dialectal English and judge it wholly inappropriate for the Book of Mormon.

Carmack’s important contribution was to extend this idea to all the nonstandard grammar in the original text of the Book of Mormon and to discover that virtually all of it is archaic – and some of it is not found in Joseph Smith’s language. Carmack’s work is a strong challenge to those who would argue that Joseph Smith must have been the author of the translated text of the Book of Mormon since “the grammar is so bad” (this from their prescriptive point of view). But their argument is based on a faulty assumption: namely, the “bad grammar” in the original text could never have come from God because the Lord speaks only correct English, so it must be Joseph’s contribution to the text. Of course, what these critics really mean is that God speaks only their English. Carmack’s essay introduces a whole new way of looking at the nonstandard grammar in the Book of Mormon.

In his essay, Carmack considers several dozen grammatical issues, including these:

“thou saidest” versus “thou saidst”
“in them days” versus “in those days”
“I had smote” versus “I had smitten”
“they was yet wroth” versus “they were yet wroth”
“and hid up unto the Lord” versus “and hidden up unto the Lord”
“had spake” versus “had spoke” versus “had spoken”
“they did fall the tree” versus “they did fell the tree”
“he did raise up in rebellion” versus “he did rise up in rebellion”
“there was beasts” versus “there were beasts”
“there were no chance” versus “there was no chance”
“the arms of mercy was extended” versus “the arms of mercy were extended”
“thou received” versus “thou receivedst”
“thou had” versus “thou hadst”
“remember thou” versus “rememberest thou”

“did thou” versus “didst thou”
 “so great was the blessings” versus “so great were the blessings”
 “they dieth” versus “they die”
 dative impersonal constructions, such as “it whispereth me”
 “had arriven” versus “had arrived”
 “with our mights” versus “with our might”
 “nor neither” versus “nor either”
 “exceeding fraid” versus “exceeding afraid” versus “exceedingly afraid”
 “I were about to” versus “I was about to”
 nominative absolute constructions: “the people having loved Nephi exceedingly”
 “beseech of you” versus “beseech you”
 subjunctive versus indicative: “if he go” versus “if he goeth”
 conjoined mixtures of mood in *if*-clauses: “if he confess ... and repenteth”
 conjoined mixtures of person marking: “for thou didst forsake ... and did go”
 “much horses” versus “many horses”
 “faith on the Lord” versus “faith in the Lord”
 “if it so be” versus “if it be so”
 “the more part of the people”
 “by the way of Gentile” versus “by way of the Gentile”
 “in the which things”
 “all your whole soul”

Carmack concludes his essay with this summarizing statement:

In view of the totality of the evidence adduced here, I would assert that it is no longer possible to argue that the earliest text of the Book of Mormon is defective and substandard in its grammar. And that follows in large part because we would then have to call Early Modern English defective and substandard, since so much of what we see in the Book of Mormon is like that stage of the English language. And it was a human language like any other, fraught with variation and exhibiting diverse forms of expression. We need to disabuse ourselves of the idea that the Book of Mormon is full of “errors of grammar and diction” and appreciate the text for what it is – a richly embroidered linguistic work that demonstrates natural language variation appropriately and whose forms and patterns of use are strikingly like those found in the Early Modern English period.

One important aspect of Stanford Carmack’s work is that it supports my earlier finding over a decade ago, in 2003, that the vocabulary of the original text of the Book of Mormon takes on meanings that date chiefly from the 1540s through the 1730s, as in these examples:

but if ‘unless’

- Mosiah 3:19 (*but if* > *unless* in the 1920 LDS edition)
for the natural man is an enemy to God
and has been from the fall of Adam
and will be forever and ever
but if he yieldeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit

- Oxford English Dictionary (with citations from 1200 to 1596)

1580, Philip Sidney, *Arcadia*

He did not like that maids should once stir out of their fathers’ houses
but if it were to milk a cow.

to counsel ‘to counsel with’

- Alma 37:37 (*counsel* > *counsel with*, 1920 LDS edition)
counsel the Lord in all thy doings
and he will direct thee for good

Alma 39:10 (*counsel* > *counsel with*, 1920 LDS edition)

and I command you to take it upon you
to **counsel** your elder brothers in your undertakings ...
and give heed to their counsel

- Oxford English Dictionary (with citations from 1382 to 1547)

1547, John Hooper, *An Answer unto my Lord of Winchester’s Book*

Moses ... **counseled** the Lord
and thereupon advised his subjects what was to be done.

extinct, ‘dead’ (referring to an individual’s death)

- Alma 44:7 (never emended)
and I will command my men
that they shall fall upon you
and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies
that ye may become **extinct**

- Oxford English Dictionary (with citations from 1483 to 1675)

1675, from an English translation of Machiavelli's *The Prince*
The Pope being dead and Valentine **extinct**.

to depart 'to part, divide, separate'

- Helaman 8:11 (*departed* > *parted*, 1830 edition)

have ye not read that God gave power unto one man – even Moses –
to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea
and they **departed** hither and thither

- Oxford English Dictionary (with citations from 1297 to 1677)

1557, John 19:24, the Geneva New Testament
They **departed** my raiment among them.

1611, John 19:24, the King James Bible
They **parted** my raiment among them.

Many readers of the text have challenged our claim of archaic language by listing phrases and word uses that they are sure date no earlier than the late 1700s. They confidently tell us that their searches on Google come up with numerous examples that cannot be found in English before the late 1700s or early 1800s. But then Carmack and I go to Google's advanced search and other databases, especially the Oxford English Dictionary and *Early English Books Online*, and invariably we come up with earlier examples of those very phrases and word uses. Awhile back, I was challenged by a colleague's article to account for 25 proposed examples of Book of Mormon phraseology that supposedly reflected Joseph Smith's language, but not earlier English. Yet for all 25 of those examples, Carmack and I were able to find citations, either exactly or nearly the same, that date from the late 1500s to the early 1700s, a century or more before the 1830 publication of the Book of Mormon. Here are some striking parallel citations for five of those 25 examples:

An infinite atonement

- 2 Nephi 9:7

wherefore it must needs be **an infinite atonement**

- 1654, Anthony Burgess
whether the law be perfectly satisfied and **an infinite atonement** made

*Nourished by the word of God
and The good word of God*

- Jacob 6:7
after that ye have been **nourished by the good word of God**
- 1612, Richard Greenham
so must the children of God be guided
and **nourished by the word of God**
- 1533, Thomas More
Saint Paul here speaketh of them
that have felt the taste of **the good word of God**

*Experience a change of heart
and Sing the song of redeeming love*

- Alma 5:26
if ye have **experienced a change of heart**
and if ye have felt to **sing the song of redeeming love**
I would ask : can ye feel so now
- 1675, Stephen Ford
how few are there among the multitudes of professors
that can indeed **experience a real change of heart** and state
- 1721, Joseph Perry
It is true the Saints do **sing this Song of Redeeming Love**
in a measure now; but they cannot sing it in that high Strain
as they do who are actually in Heaven:
And therefore it is called a New Song.

Save his people in their sins

- Alma 11:36
he shall not **save his people in their sins**

- Helaman 5:10
 - he should not come to redeem them **in their sins**
 - but to redeem them **from their sins**

- Richard Hubberthorn (died 1662)
 - and so would make Christ the minister of sin
 - and to justify or **save his people in their sins** and not **from them**
 - and so by them the doctrine of justification is corrupted

The day of grace was past

- Mormon 2:15
 - and I saw that **the day of grace was past** with them
 - both temporally and spiritually

- 1600, William Perkins
 - yet when **the day of grace is past**
 - they contrariwise shall find themselves
 - to be in the estate of damnation remediless

Too often the advocates of later usage think that all they have to do is type in the phrase and whatever they find gives an accurate picture of its usage. But to actually test whether a given phrase is from earlier English, we must use more sophisticated databases like *Early English Books Online* (with citations from the late 1400s up to 1700). With such databases, alternative spellings must be taken into consideration as well as syntactic and semantic equivalents to the phrase we are looking for. And not surprisingly, sometimes a phrase turns out to be biblical.

It is important to note that there are still a few phrases and word uses that I have not yet found in earlier English or even in the language contemporary with Joseph Smith, such as the noun *view* referring to a spiritual vision or the use of the phrase “a descendent of” with plural subjects (both of which will be discussed in the forthcoming part 3 of volume 3). But overwhelmingly, nearly all the proposed counterexamples to Early Modern English turn out to follow from inadequate search techniques.

After these two essays in the introduction, we come to the main part of *Grammatical Variation*, a complete analysis of all the grammatical editing in the history of the Book of Mormon text:

■ Analysis of Grammatical Variation and Editing

99 A Survey of the Contents

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This constitutes the main body of the text for parts 1 and 2 of volume 3, with 68 grammatical sections arranged alphabetically, from ADVERBS to YE. This complete analysis begins with *A Survey of the Contents*, arranged according to grammatical topic and supplied with examples of the original Book of Mormon language along with references to the sections that discuss those examples.

Grammatical Variation is, foremost, a reference guide. To be sure, some will want to read the two books straight through, but most readers, I suspect, will be interested in seeing what these two books have to say about the editing of certain kinds of nonstandard expressions in the Book of Mormon, maybe even their favorite example of supposedly bad grammar in the original text. The survey of the contents does not intend to be a full index, but it nonetheless allows the reader to find an example for every type of grammatical variant, both standard and nonstandard, and then note where it is discussed in *Grammatical Variation*. Consider, for instance, the first five examples listed at the beginning of the survey:

Nouns

Determiners

I was **an** hungered

an holy city > **a** holy city

an hundredth part > **a** hundredth part

much horses > **many** horses

in **them** days > in **those** days

INDEFINITE ARTICLE

MUCH VERSUS MANY

PRONOMINAL DETERMINERS

Under *Determiners*, I have listed three examples that involve the occurrence of the indefinite article *an* before an *h*-initial word. From the second item listed, we read that the text originally had an example of “an holy city” but this was edited to “a holy city”. So for a discussion of all three of these examples, one should look at the grammatical section entitled INDEFINITE ARTICLE. Similarly, the change of “much horses” to “many horses” is discussed under MUCH VERSUS MANY, while the editing of “in them days” to “in those days” is listed under PRONOMINAL DETERMINERS.

Having examined the 11 pages in the Survey of the Contents, we are now prepared to engage in the 68 sections of *Grammatical Variation*. Over half of the sections (37 of them) refer to a grammatical category, such as NEGATION or RELATIVE CLAUSES. Some of these categories, such as DISPLACED PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES and RESUMPTIVE REPETITION, deal with the special syntax of the Book of Mormon. Readers schooled in traditional English grammar may not be as familiar with these terms, but they are explained at the beginning of each of those sections. And in contrast to these sections dealing with grammatical categories, there are 31 that deal with phrasal and word uses in the Book of Mormon. Again, some are familiar, such as COME TO PASS. Others treat phrases and words that are used in special ways in the Book of Mormon, such as IN THE WHICH.

Finally, I would like to provide an overview of two expressions discussed in *Grammatical Variation*. In the first part of the section entitled HEBRAISMS, I discuss the use of the Hebrew-like *and* that separates a complex subordinate clause from its following main clause. The original Book of Mormon text had at least 41 instances of this unusual construction, but now only seven of them remain in the standard text. In Hebrew itself, we get this extra *and* no matter whether the subordinate clause is simple or complex, as in this contrastive pair:

simple subordination

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| standard English | if you come, then I’ll come |
| ✘ Hebrew-equivalent | if you come, and then I’ll come |

complex subordination

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| standard English | if you come – and surely you should – then I’ll come |
| ✓ Hebrew-equivalent | if you come – and surely you should – and then I’ll come |

In the original Book of Mormon text, there are no examples of the first Hebrew-equivalent (marked with an ✘); in those cases the subordination is simple. But we

typically get the second Hebrew-equivalent in the original Book of Mormon text (marked with a ✓); in these cases the subordination is complex – that is, there is some sort of parenthetical interruption, the insertion of a direct quote, or the addition of one or more extra clauses.

We can see this contrast between the simple and the complex subordination in the following series of three *if*-clauses from 1 Nephi 17:50. Only the middle one is complex: it has the extra Hebrew-like *and*, and that’s because there is a direct quote, “be thou earth”, inserted at the end of the *that*-clause. Here is the text as Oliver Cowdery wrote it down in the original manuscript:

1 Nephi 17:50

if God had commanded me to do all things

✗ I could do it

if he should command me that I should say unto this water : *be thou earth*

✓ **and** it shall be earth

and if I should say it

✗ it would be done

But later, when Oliver copied this passage into the printer’s manuscript, he omitted, perhaps even consciously deleted, the extra Hebrew-like *and* from this verse.

One of the most famous passages in the Book of Mormon text has this extra *and*. In this case, the *and* made it into the 1830 edition, but was deleted by Joseph Smith in his editing for the 1837 edition:

Moroni 10:4

and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart *with real intent having faith in Christ*

✓ **and** he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost

The two examples we have considered thus far involve the subordinate conjunction *if*. Other subordinate conjunctions also take the extra *and*. We get the following distribution for the different subordinate constructions:

| conjunctive form | original text | current text |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>after-S</i> | 5 | |
| <i>as-S</i> | 4 | |
| <i>because-S</i> | 1 | |
| inverted <i>had</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>if-S</i> | 16 | 1 |
| <i>when-S</i> | 13 | 5 |
| <i>while-S</i> | 1 | |
| TOTALS | 41 | 7 |

The inverted *had* at the beginning of a clause shows subordination; and in this example there is an intervening parenthetical clause that has made it difficult for editors to recognize the extra *and* as non-English usage:

Alma 55:18

but **had** they awoke the Lamanites – *behold they were drunken* –
 ✓ **and** the Nephites could have slain them

And here is one of the six unedited cases involving a subordinate conjunction. In this particular instance, the complex subordinate clause begins with *when*, but a long parenthetical intrusion has again prevented editors from noticing the extra Hebrew-like *and* that introduces the main clause:

3 Nephi 12:1

and it came to pass that **when** Jesus had spake these words unto Nephi
and to those which had been called
 – *now the number of them which had been called*
and received power and authority to baptize were twelve –
 ✓ **and** behold he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude
 and cried unto them saying ...

It is interesting to consider the following passage where there are two *if*-clauses. The second *if*-clause involves resumptive repetition, a very common construction in the Book of Mormon. When using resumptive repetition, the speaker (or writer) brings the listener (or reader) back to an earlier expression in

the sentence by repeating it but in an abbreviated form. In this example, Joseph Smith removed the extra Hebrew-like *and* in his editing for the 1837 edition:

Mosiah 2:21

I say unto you that **if** ye should serve him

who hath created you from the beginning

and art preserving you from day to day by lending you breath

that ye may live and move and do according to your own will

and even supporting you from one moment to another

– I say if ye should serve him with all your whole soul –

✓ **and** yet ye would be unprofitable servants

The speaker here, King Benjamin, after reeling off a long list of extra clausal statements, brings the listener back to the beginning of his original *if*-clause by repeating it; only then does he state the main clause, but that is introduced by the extra Hebrew-like *and* because of the long intrusion which ended with the resumptive *if*-clause. There are numerous instances of resumptive repetition in the Book of Mormon. Some of them have been edited in various ways, so it is not surprising that there is a whole section in *Grammatical Variation* dedicated to the topic of RESUMPTIVE REPETITION.

The second section I would like to highlight is COME TO PASS. This ubiquitous phrase acts as a discourse connector throughout the narrative portions of the Book of Mormon. There are 1,463 instances of “it came to pass” (or its equivalent) in the original text. The King James Bible is well-known for the phrase, although there it is not used as frequently as it is in the Book of Mormon. The phrase stands for a Hebrew narrative connector that could be literally translated as “and it was”, but was translated into the Greek Septuagint as “and it happened”. In modern English, we expect something more simple and less intrusive, such as “and then”. William Tyndale, in his translated portions of the Bible (published from 1526 through 1537), variously translated the Hebrew and Greek phrase. For instance, in his 1526 New Testament, we have the following statistics in William Tyndale’s 1526 New Testament:

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| “it fortunéd” | 28 times |
| “it chanced” | 14 times |
| “it came to pass” | 13 times |
| “it followed” | 6 times |
| “it happened” | 3 times |

Similar variety is found in Tyndale’s translation of the Hebrew text for the first half of the Old Testament (the only part he completed before his martyrdom). The 1560 Geneva Bible was the first English translation that removed Tyndale’s variability from the text. That Bible ended up extending Tyndale’s “it came to pass” to virtually all the cases where Tyndale had used different expressions for this narrative connector. The 1611 King James translators followed the example of the Geneva Bible, not only by using just the phrase “it came to pass”, but also by extending it to about 300 places in the Old Testament where the original Hebrew had this narrative connector.

Joseph Smith, in his editing for the 1837 edition, removed 48 instances of the phrase “it came to pass” (although only 47 were implemented in the 1837 edition). Most of Joseph’s editing out of the phrase occurred in spurts, probably when he suddenly noticed an excessive use of this narrative connector. Of the 48 instances, 38 of them (almost 80 percent) are found in six specific narrative sections:

| <i>individual deletions</i> | <i>clumps of deletions</i> | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| 1 Nephi 10:17 | | |
| 2 Nephi 4:10 | | |
| | Mosiah 22-25 | 11 times |
| Mosiah 28:6 | | |
| | Alma 8 | 5 times |
| Alma 10:31 | | |
| | Alma 13-17 | 10 times |
| | Alma 20-24 | 4 times |
| | Alma 27 | 3 times |
| Alma 30:21 | | |
| | Alma 43-44 | 5 times |
| Alma 55:8 | | |
| Helaman 2:8 | | |
| 3 Nephi 7:23 | | |
| 3 Nephi 11:16 | | |
| 3 Nephi 19:30 | | |

But for the vast majority of cases, Joseph retained the original use of “it came to pass”, including other passages with an abundant use of the phrase (for an example, see 1 Nephi 7:1-7, which has seven instances of “it came to pass” following each other closely in the narrative).

Of course, many have felt that Joseph Smith should have removed every instance of the narrative connector “come to pass” from the text of the Book of

Mormon. In fact, some LDS translations of the Book of Mormon in the mid-twentieth century did precisely that. I found this systematic elimination of “come to pass” in the following European editions:

- 1949 Danish *Mormons Bog*
- 1950 German *Das Buch Mormon*
- 1962 French *Le Livre de Mormon*
- 1964 Swedish *Mormons Bok*
- 1968 Dutch *Het Boek van Mormon*

Mark Twain, in chapter 16 of his 1872 *Roughing It*, famously stated that if Joseph Smith had left out this phrase, the Book of Mormon “would have been only a pamphlet”. To put some accuracy to Twain’s statement, we again note that in the original text there were 1,463 instances of “it came to pass” (and variants of it), with an average of between five and six words for each instance of the phrase. Removing all of these from the 270,000-word text would result in an estimated 3 percent reduction in the length of the Book of Mormon. Out of a 500-page edition, this would reduce the text by about 15 pages, a sizeable amount, but nothing near Twain’s facetious estimate. Joseph Smith’s editing out of 47 instances of the phrase for the 1837 edition removed 239 words, nearly 0.1 percent of the text (or less than half a page in a 500-page edition).

I, on the other hand, am happy to accept every word and phrase of the original text, even the ones that have been omitted. The critical text restores the original wording, even the expressions that some of us Latter-day Saints have been embarrassed about and declared to be ungrammatical when, in fact, the evidence argues that these expressions should more properly be characterized as Early Modern English. It is all explained in *Grammatical Variation*, parts 1 and 2 of volume 3 of the critical text.

Postscript

To be sure, many people, both believers and nonbelievers in the Book of Mormon, have found these findings about the Early Modern English in the Book of Mormon disturbing and unexpected, even startling. Many are firmly settled into their own familiar way of interpreting the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith's book, always based on their own pet theory which they cannot let go of. Here I briefly respond to some of the questions I typically get.

(1) *"Why would God reveal a text in archaic English? I can't think of any reason, so he couldn't have done it that way!"* My reaction is: Why don't we research it out first, figure out what is actually there in the text? And whatever it is, it doesn't do us much good to speculate on how it got there. Someday we will find out how the Lord did it or had it done. In the meantime, we're researching this text.

(2) *"God is perfect, God doesn't speak bad English. So God couldn't have given bad English to Joseph Smith."* Similarly, we have B. H. Roberts' response to those that believed that God revealed the nonstandard English of the original text: *"But that is unthinkable, not to say blasphemous."* What B. H. Roberts is really saying is: *"If God gave the actual language of the Book of Mormon, it would have been in my, B. H. Roberts', correct English!"*

(3) *"There were no real gold plates. There were no angels."* These nonbelievers continue to make their claims by simply ignoring the evidence or dismissing it. If they are right, we must reject all 17 of the witnesses: first, the six who described Joseph Smith translating; second, the three witnesses with their miraculous spiritual experience with Moroni and the Lord; and third, the eight witnesses who handled the plates in plain daylight. *"God doesn't work through angels and gold plates. So there has to be some way Joseph Smith perpetrated fraud, only we just can't figure it out. But he must have done it. And he must have faked his dictating of the text for five months."* (That's the time needed to dictate the initial 116 pages and the text as we have it.) The problem is that there are so many of these witnesses, most of which became disaffected with Joseph Smith in one way or another. One of the witnesses, Emma Smith's brother-in-law, was never even a member. And he was amazed at what he saw Joseph doing. And the six who have the best claim as witnesses of the translation process all agree on what they could actually witness. And the original manuscript itself is consistent with what these six witnesses described as Joseph Smith's translating procedure.

(4) *“This nonstandard language must be Joseph Smith’s own language. You just haven’t looked hard enough for this language usage in Joseph Smith’s time. All these forms are relic forms in Upstate New York. It was in Joseph Smith’s speech. Just imagine, expressions like ‘they was yet wroth’ and ‘in them days’! But we have no evidence of how people in Palmyra actually spoke then, so that must be it. It’s Joseph’s speech! You’ll never prove that it wasn’t Upstate New York dialect. And it has to be that because I’ve already decided that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon.”* Well, none of this explains why the entire Book of Mormon text was given, for instance, without any contractions between words (there’s not a hint of *there’s*, *can’t*, and *won’t*, not even *ain’t*). Somehow the farm boy seems to be in complete control of his language. In any event, if the archaic Book of Mormon language was there in Upstate New York, we’re the only ones looking for it. And if we find it, we’ll tell you. We’ll even change our minds on that question. In the meantime, the evidence thus far argues that virtually all of these strange archaic lexical meanings in the Book of Mormon died out at least a century before the text was revealed to Joseph Smith. It just wasn’t his language.