

Joseph Smith's "Inspired Translation" of Romans 7

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THIS ESSAY EXAMINES MORMON FOUNDER Joseph Smith's treatment of Romans 7 in the Joseph Smith Translation or "Inspired Version" of the King James Bible (JST). First, Smith's modifications of the chapter are compared to the King James Version (KJV), upon which it is primarily based, and to the Greek manuscript tradition. Second, the early nineteenth-century interpretation of the chapter is outlined as background to understanding Smith's rendition. Finally, Smith's rendition of the chapter is investigated.

JOSEPH SMITH'S MODIFICATIONS, THE KING JAMES VERSION, AND THE GREEK TEXT

Basic sources for the study of the relation between the JST and the KJV for Romans 7 are (1) the Joseph Smith-Oliver Cowdery Bible (SCB) and (2) New Testament Manuscript 2 (NT MS 2) of the JST. The SCB (or "Marked Bible") is a stereotype edition of the KJV printed by H. & E. Phinney in Cooperstown, New York, in 1828. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery bought it jointly from Palmyra printer and bookseller Egbert B. Grandin on 8 October 1829. The SCB is an 8-by-11-by-2-inch pulpit-style Bible weighing just under five pounds.¹ Into it marks were entered (with varying consistency) indicating where and what sort of changes were to be made. These changes were then entered into separate hand-written manuscripts. The manuscript containing Romans 7 is commonly referred to as NT MS 2. NT MS 2 is made up of four folios and totals 154 pages. Romans 7 is treated on pages 123-25 of folio four.²

1. Robert J. Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 56.

2. For a detailed account of the manuscript history of the JST, see *ibid.*, 55-81. The SCB and the various manuscripts of the JST are currently housed in the archives of the

The following is the full text of Romans 7 with all the changes made in the SCB and NT MS 2 noted.

(1) Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man ONLY as long as he liveth? (2) For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to >her< husband, ONLY {so} AS long as he liveth; {but} FOR if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of >her< husband. (3) So then, if, while >her< husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, {even} to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (5) For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were {by} NOT ACCORDING TO the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. (6) But now we are delivered from the law <wherein we were held>, {that} being dead <\> TO THE LAW, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not >in< the oldness of /the/ the letter. (7) What shall we say then? >Is< the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (8) But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin >was< dead. (9) For <once> I was alive without TRANSGRESSION OF the law <\>, but when the commandment OF CHRIST came, sin revived, and I died. (10) and WHEN I BELIEVED NOT the commandment OF CHRIST WHICH CAME, which >was ordained< to life, I found {to-be} IT CONDEMNED ME unto death. (11) For sin, taking occasion, {/by/} DENYED the commandment, AND deceived me; and by it {slew-me} [I WAS SLAIN. (12) {Wherefore} NEVERTHELESS I FOUND the law {is} TO BE holy, and the commandment TO BE holy, and just, and good. (13) Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid; But sin, that it might appear sin </> by that which is good, <working death in me>; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (14) For we know that the {law} COMMANDMENT is spiritual; but WHEN I WAS UNDER THE LAW,] I {am} [WAS YET carnal, sold under sin. (15) BUT NOW I AM SPIRITUAL For that which [I AM COMMANDED TO DO,] I do; AND THAT WHICH I AM COMMANDED NOT TO ALLOW,] I allow not. (NT MS 2 = vs 16) For what I] KNOW IS NOT RIGHT,] <I (1)> would <not (2)> {that} do <1\> <2\>; {but-what} FOR THAT WHICH IS SIN,] I hate {that do-I}. (vs 16 = vs 17) If then /f/ I do NOT that which I would not ALLOW, I consent unto the law, that >it is< good, AND I AM NOT CONDEMNED. (vs 17 = vs 18) Now then, it is no more I that do {it} SIN; but [I SEEK TO SUBDUETHAT sin {that} WHICH dwelleth in me. (vs 18 = vs 19) For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present

with me; but {~~how~~} to perform that which is good I find not, ONLY IN CHRIST. (vs 19 = vss 20-21) For the good the I would HAVE DONE WHEN UNDER THE LAW, I FIND NOT TO BE GOOD; THEREFORE,] I do IT not. (NT MS 2: vs 21) But the evil which I would not DO UNDER THE LAW, I FIND TO BE GOOD; that, I do. (vs 20 = vs 22) Now if I do that, THROUGH THE ASSISTENCE OF CHRIST,) I would not DO UNDER THE LAW, /~~no more~~/ I AM NOT UNDER THE LAW; AND it is no more /~~i~~/ <that> I [SEEK TO <\> do (it) [W]RONG, but TO SUBDUE sin that dwelleth in me. (vss 21-2 = vs 23) I find then {~~a~~} THAT UNDER THE law, that when I would do good evil {~~is~~} WAS present with me; (SCB: vs 22) for I delight in the law of God after the inward man. (vs 23 = vss 24-/25/ vs 18) {~~but~~} AND NOW] I see another law, EVEN THE COMMANDMENT OF CHRIST, AND IT IS IMPRINTED IN MY MIND (NT MS 2: vs 18; JST: /25/) {~~in~~} BUT my members ARE warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me in to captivity /~~unto~~ sin/ to the law of sin which is in my members. (24 = JST: 26) AND IF I SUBDUE NOT THE SIN WHICH IS IN ME, <but with the flesh /is subject to/ SERVE the law of sin>; O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver *me* from the body of this death? (25 = JST: 27) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, <then>, THAT /{~~wit~~} (?)/ so <\> with the mind, I, myself serve the law of God <vs 23\>.

Sigla:

1. Additions to the SCB are in capital letters (where confusion might arise due to the close proximity of "I," this is marked by [or]).
2. Deletions from the SCB: {—}
3. Italicized words in the SCB which were *not* marked for removal: > <
4. Transpositions from SCB order: < > with </> or <\> in the place from which it was removed. The direction of the slash marks indicate whether the word(s) has been moved forward or backward in the text.
5. Words crossed out in NT MS 2: /—/
6. Words written between the lines in NT MS 2 are underlined.

Joseph Smith's adaptation of the SCB for Romans 7 is conservative with regard to deletions. In contrast to the 168 words introduced by Smith (thirty-seven in 7:14-15 alone), only twenty-seven words were deleted from the entire chapter. Of these, ten are due to minor clarifications or stylistic changes³; five are due to changes in verb tense or mood⁴; and four are due

3. SCB: but //JST: for (v. 2); so long as//*only as* long as (v. 2); wherefore//nevertheless (v. 12); law//commandment (v. 14) (but see n32); but what//for that which (v. 15); it//sin (v. 17 = 18); that//which (v. 17 = 18); it//wrong (v. 20 = 22); but//and now (v. 23 = 24).

4. Slew *me*//I was slain (v. 11); the law *is* holy//the law *to be* holy (v. 12); I *am*

to the removal of italicized words.⁵ This leaves only nine deletions unaccounted for, all of which Smith probably considered unimportant: “by” twice (vv. 5 and 11); “that” three times (vv. 6, 15 = 16²); “do” (v. 15 = 16); “I” (v. 15 = 16); “a” (v. 21 = 23); and “in” (v. 23 = 25). Considerable pains then were taken to retain as many original SCB words as possible. Seven transpositions, however, do occur (vv. 6, 9, 13, 15 = 16, 20 = 22, 24 = 26, and 25 = 27), but these are handled in such a way as to keep as many original SCB words as possible. Indeed, the very act of transposing suggests restoration of words and phrases from incorrect secondary locations to correct original ones.

That Joseph Smith felt the KJV contained many errors and corruptions is well known.⁶ The kinds of modifications he made in Romans 7 lead us further to conclude that he understood such corruptions to consist primarily of things removed or left out.⁷ This observation confirms certain of

carnal // I was yet carnal (v. 14); evil is with me // evil was with me (v. 21 = 23).

5. Even (v. 4); to be (v. 10); how (v. 18 = 19). The only point where modern editions of the JST differ in Romans 7 from the changes indicated by Smith is in the retention of the “even” at Romans 7:4.

6. Belief in the Bible’s corruption was common in early nineteenth-century America. In 1804, for example, Thomas Jefferson, then president of the United States, spent a few evenings clipping and pasting two KJVs with a view toward “Abstracting what is really his [Jesus’] from the rubbish in which it is buried, easily distinguished by it’s luster from the dross of his biographers, and as separable from that as a diamond from the dung hill” (Dickenson W. Adams, ed., *Jefferson’s Extracts from the Gospels: “The Philosophy of Jesus” and “The Life And Morals of Jesus,”* in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 2d. Series [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983], 388). Similarly, Thomas Paine, in his *Age of Reason* (1794; P. S. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. [New York: Citadel, 1969], 472-73), remarked: “It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and New Testaments are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged or dressed them up.” Lucy Mack Smith reported that in 1803 Asael Smith, grandfather of Mormonism’s founder, heard that his son (Joseph Smith, Sr.) was interested in Methodism and so, “came to the door one day and threw Tom Paine’s *Age of Reason* into the house and angrily bade him read that until he believed it” (Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* 4th ed. [Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1982], 373; Richard L. Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971], 207).

7. This confirms for a specific passage the general contention of Kevin L. Barney (“The Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 [Fall 1986]: 87) that “the JST is almost entirely comprised of additions to the KJV” (see also Robert J. Matthews, “Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST),” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols., ed. Daniel H. Ludlow [New York: Macmillan, 1992], 2:764). Barney’s otherwise excellent study is flawed in its assumption that it “was not a common practice to compare textual variants until the middle and late nineteenth century” (87). This, as will become plain, is incorrect. Thus, for example, in the first passage Barney discusses (Matt. 5:22) he has some trouble explaining why the JST agrees

Smith's own statements from around the same time. In Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, prefacing a "revelation" dated 16 February 1832 (now D&C 76; 1835 ed., XCI), Smith reports: "Upon my return from the Amherst conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man *had been taken from the Bible*, or lost before it was compiled" (italics added).

This remark provides insight into Smith's approach to the Bible within at most only a few months of his "translation" of Romans 7.⁸ A similar statement occurs in a "revelation" dated June 1830 in which God tells Moses of a time when: "[T]he children of men shall esteem my words as nought, and *take many of them from the book* which thou shall write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee [i.e., Joseph Smith], and they shall be had again among the children of men . . ." (italics added; HC 1:245-52; Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:41 [1851 ed., 10]).⁹ The conservatism in handling the SCB for Romans 7, then, in light of these statements, suggests that Joseph Smith *did* intend to restore the ancient text of the New Testament. He apparently felt this could be best accomplished by rearranging the words of the SCB, leaving out as little as possible, and then adding whatever seemed to be lacking.¹⁰

together with ancient manuscripts against the KJV in deleting "without a cause." Barney would have been able to make his case more pointedly for this passage had he been aware that such variants were known and discussed in Smith's day—and not only among scholars. So the popular *Clarke's Commentary* (Adam Clarke, *New Testament . . . With Commentary . . . A New Edition with the Author's Final Corrections* [New York: Carlton & Porter, n.d. (1832), 1:712]), for example, which Smith appears to have known (see n19), remarks: "[W]ithout a cause, is wanting in the famous *Vatican MS*. and two others, the *Ethiopic*, latter *Arabic*, *Saxon*, *Vulgate*, two copies of the old *Itala*, *J. Martyr*, *Ptolemeus*, *Origen*, *Tertullian*, and by all the ancient copies quoted by *St. Jerome*. It was probably a marginal gloss originally, which in the process of time crept into the text."

8. On 16 February 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were modifying John 5:29 (D&C 76; 1835 ed., XCI). They continued their work until 20 March and picked up again in June to carry on throughout the summer and winter. On 2 February 1833 the project was declared complete. H. Michael Marquardt has suggested that Romans 7 may have been modified "during February or early March 1832" (letter to the writer, 4 Sept. 1991), but it may have been slightly later in the year.

9. Similarly, in the Book of Mormon an angel tells Nephi in a *vaticinium ex eventu* of a time when the Bible will fall into the hands of a "great and abominable church" and, as a result, there will be, "many plain and precious things taken away" from it (1 Ne. 13:28). For a recent discussion of the types of changes made by Smith, see Philip L. Barlow, "Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible: Fraudulent, Pathologic, or Prophetic?" *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 54-60.

10. That Smith depends in his modifications on the English rather than the Greek Bible is especially clear in cases where they make sense in English but are impossible in Greek. For example, Romans 1:11, in which the KJV has Paul wanting to see the Romans

However, we shall seek to demonstrate here, in agreement with several earlier studies,¹¹ that JST Romans 7 does not represent a restoration of the original text. If the JST is not a restoration, what is it? If what we have said is true—that Joseph Smith claimed to restore the text to its original form but did not actually do so—the issue of the validity of the JST as a revelation comes to the fore. Broadly speaking, Mormon scholars have responded to this in two ways. Some have attempted to undermine the validity of modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament by asserting that the earliest extant Greek manuscripts already represent a widely corrupted text. These writers seek to place the JST earlier still and thus for all practical purposes beyond contradiction.¹² However the abundance of early evidence makes such a position difficult to maintain. Others have sought instead to cast doubt on Smith's restorational intent.¹³ Though this position is more plausible in that it deals realistically with the textual data, it still suffers from a seeming readiness to assume that if the JST is not a restoration, Smith never intended it as one. But this does not necessarily follow. Perhaps Smith honestly believed he was restoring the ancient text but failed in reality to do so. Or, worse, perhaps he was consciously involved in imposture. If Smith did not intend a restoration, why is it that "many of the early Mormon people were conditioned to think of the revision [of the Bible] as a restoration of original, lost texts," and why did Smith himself say in his journal for 15 October 1843: "I believe in the Bible, as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers"?¹⁴ Or why a decade

so as to "impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established," Smith changes to read: "impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established," Smith changes it to read: "impart unto you some spiritual gift </> THAT [ye] IT may be established IN YOU <to the end>." By repositioning "to the end," Smith changes the meaning by moving but not altering the words. In the KJV the phrase "to the end" serves as a simple purpose clause: "to the end that" = *in order that*. The underlying Greek likewise is a purpose clause composed of *hina* + subjunctive. If this phrase were moved to the end of the sentence in Greek, it would not yield the meaning Smith wants. In order to arrive at that, something like *eos telous* (1 Cor. 1:8), *eis telos* (Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13), or *achri telous* (Heb. 6:11; Rev. 2:26) would be required.

11. For example, Richard P. Howard, "Some Observations on Joseph Smith, Jr.'s Revision of Romans 3:21-8:31," privately circulated, 1975; Barney; and Stan Larson, "The Sermon on the Mount: What Its Textual Transformation Discloses Concerning the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," *Trinity Journal* 7 (1986): 39.

12. See R. J. Matthews in Monte S. Nyman and Robert Millet, eds., *The Joseph Smith Translation* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1985), 286.

13. See Barlow, 57; also Barney, 85-86; Howard, 4-5; and Dale E. Luffman, "The Roman Letter: An Occasion to Reflect on 'Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible,'" in Maurice L. Draper, ed., *Restoration Studies III* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1986), 198-99.

14. Howard, 4; Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith

earlier did he allow statements like the following to appear in *The Evening and the Morning Star* (July 1833):

As to the errors in the bible, any man possessed of common understanding, knows, that both the old and new testaments are filled with errors, obscurities, italics and contradictions, which must be the work of men. As the church of Christ will soon have the scriptures, in their *original purity* it may not be amiss for us to show a few of the gross errors, or, as they might be termed, contradictions [italics added].

And later:

With the old copy full of errors; with Dickinson's and Webster's polite translation, with Campbell's improved, and many more from different persuasions, how will a person of common understanding know which is right without the gift of the Holy Spirit? . . . *the bible . . . must be PURIFIED!* . . . O what a blessing, that the Lord will bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit, upon the meek and humble, whereby they can know of a surety, *his words from the words of men!* [italics added]

Or again why did he say, as already noted, that "I resumed the translation of the Scriptures . . . it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man had been taken from the Bible or lost before it was compiled"? And finally why does the very manner in which Smith treats the text of JST Romans 7 imply (in agreement with his statements on the matter) that he considered the language of the KJV to be essentially authentic except where (1) transpositions have occurred or (2) something has been left out? In view of these facts it seems clear that Philip Barlow's claim that "Joseph Smith himself never explained exactly how he understood his revision of the Bible" is misleading.¹⁵ Rather the message communicated to early Mormons, whether by Smith himself or other representatives of the church, was that the JST *was* to be a restoration of the scriptures to their original purity. The actual manner in which Smith modified the text of the SCB indicates that he was attempting to carry out in practice what he had elsewhere indicated was necessary due to textual corruption. But the principles he used, starting with an English text, proceeding with a mix of common-sense corrections and harmonizations plus sporadic revelations and his own doctrinal expansions—without knowledge of the original languages and without an adequate grasp or even an interest in textual criticism—were simply not adequate to accomplish his restorational task.

Research Associates), 1989.

15. Barlow, 57.

Does the evidence of JST Romans 7 suggest that Smith either through “revelation” or the employment of available resources bring readers closer to the original Greek text for the chapter? From a historical point of view, a comparison between the JST and current critical editions of the Greek New Testament is out of order because Smith could not have had access to them. The appropriate procedure is to compare the JST with the Greek New Testament as it was known in his day. Still the view of some recent writers—that the JST represents, in some sense, a supernatural restoration of the original Greek text—lifts the question to another level. Smith would not need to have access to more modern editions since he would have already moved beyond them. His modifications, if fact, should be increasingly confirmed as textual criticism brings us closer to the original New Testament text. The fact that this restorationist view exists makes at least a brief comparison of the JST with the most current edition of the Greek New Testament relevant.

As represented in the *Nestle-Aland*²⁶, the following activity is recorded for the Greek manuscript tradition for Romans 7: At four points insertions have been made; at four more, deletions occur; and at eleven, variant readings occur. In each of these cases Smith follows the SCB whether it reflects the best and earliest manuscript evidence or not. In addition, not one of the 168 words Smith introduces, nor any of the seven transpositions of words and phrases, has any manuscript support. The situation is the same when comparing JST Romans 7 with the New Testament Greek text as understood in Smith’s day.

Comment should be made in two cases having to do not with the Greek manuscript tradition but with the conjectural emendation of it. In Romans 7:6 an erroneous reading, without support from any Greek manuscript, found its way into the so-called *Textus Receptus*,¹⁶ where it passed into the KJV: “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead [*apothanontos*] wherein we were held . . .” This, by way of a deletion, a transposition, and an insertion, Smith changed to “But now we are delivered from the law <wherein we were held>, {that} being dead <\> TO THE LAW . . .” The genitive *apothanontos* is linked to *tou nomou* (the law) in the text underlying the KJV, but in the JST it now refers to the subject of the sentence (i.e., “we”): “we are delivered . . . *being dead* to the law.” In this Smith agrees with the Greek manuscripts, most of which have the nominative participle *apothanontes*.¹⁷ Yet he need not have depended on revelation for this correction since it had already been made in a number of English sources familiar to his circles. Through his Methodist connection, Smith might have

16. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, cor. ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 514.

17. A few manuscripts read *tou thanatou* (e.g., D, F, G).

come into contact with it either in Wesley's *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (1754)¹⁸ or with *Clarke's Commentary* (1825)¹⁹; or, through the Campbellite connection of Sidney Rigdon (who served as scribe for JST Romans 7) and several other early Mormons, in Alexander Campbell's edition of the Bible.²⁰ But Smith may have simply changed the passage independently because the idea of the law dying seemed unacceptable to him, either doctrinally or because of its conceptual peculiarity.

A second and similar instance is the relocating in the JST of the latter

18. Wesley's *Explanatory Notes*, a work of premier authority among American Methodists, rendered the passage: "But now we are freed from the law, being dead unto that whereby we were held."

Joseph Smith's early interest in Methodism is well known from his account of the 1824 Lane and Stockton Revival at Palmyra (Smith's incorrect date is 1820): "My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith" but "my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to become united with them" (JS-H 1:7, Pearl of Great Price; 1851 ed., 37; Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989). Smith goes on to say in the same context however that he was kept from joining the Methodists or any other sect by a vision: "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt . . ." (JS-H 1:19, Pearl of Great Price; 1851 ed., 38). Nevertheless, according to Emma Smith's cousins Joseph and Heil Lewis, Smith later took steps to become a member of the Methodist church in 1828 at Harmony, Pennsylvania (*Amboy Journal*, 30 Apr., 21 May, 11 June, 2 July, 1879; cf. L. K. Newell and V. T. Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], 25, 314n2).

19. Clarke includes a marginal reading that had been present in the KJV from 1611: "Or, being dead to that" (2:79). The SCB did not include this marginal reading. Perhaps Smith had another KJV that did. In any case, regarding Smith's knowledge of *Clarke's Commentary*, H. Michael Marquardt provided the following reference to remarks by Smith's wife's uncle, Rev. Nathaniel C. Lewis, as reported in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* (Jan. 1843): 113: "[W]hen the story came out about the 'gold plates,' and the 'great spectacles,' he (Lewis) asked Joe if any one but himself could translate other languages into English by the aid of his miraculous spectacles? On being answered in the affirmative, he proposed to Joe to let him make the experiment upon some of the strange languages he found in Clarke's Commentary, and stated to him if it was even so, and the experiment proved successful, he would then believe the story about the gold plates. But at this proposition Joe was much offended, and never undertook to convert 'uncle Lewis' afterward."

20. Alexander Campbell, *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly Styled the New Testament: Translated from the Original Greek, by George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge, Doctors of the Church of Scotland* (Buffaloe, VA: Printed and Published by Alexander Campbell, 1826, 1828). Late in 1832 Campbell, in response to six years of public reaction, issued a third revised and enlarged edition. In this he reflects even more clearly the correct reading *apothanontes*: "But now having died with Christ, we are released from the law." This edition was issued later in the same year that Smith "translated" Romans 7 (the copyright was entered on 6 August 1832 and Campbell's preface carries the date 10 October 1832).

half of verse 25b to a position between verses 23 and 24 (after some words added by Smith):

(v. 24 = JST v. 26) AND IF I SUBDUE NOT THE SIN WHICH IS IN ME, <but with the flesh /is subject to/ SERVE the law of sin>; O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (v. 25 = JST v. 27) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, <then>, THAT /wit [?]/ so <\> with the mind, I, myself serve the law of God <v. 23\>.

Here again there is no evidence for this in the Greek manuscripts themselves. A similar suggestion, however, had been made by eighteenth-century Dutch scholar Herman Venema.²¹ Venema, however, favored moving the whole of verse 25b rather than only half of it, as Smith did.²² In suggesting this modification, both men were responding to a difficulty in the text that continues to trouble interpreters: how is it that we find sandwiched between the two upbeat remarks of verses 7:25a and 8:1 the decidedly downbeat restatement of verse 7:25b? In the present century a number of scholars have dealt with this problem either by considering verse 25b a secondary gloss²³ or by rearranging the passage in which it stands (usually 7:23, 25b, 24, 25a, 8:2, 1, 3).²⁴

Smith was probably unaware of Venema's position, since it does not seem to have been widely known in America at the time. That is not to say, however, that no one struggled with the apparent difficulty Venema was trying to correct. Campbell's Bible, for example, which incorporated James MacKnight's translation of the epistles, dealt with this by casting verse 25b as a question, a "diatribal false conclusion," such as occurs throughout the Romans letter (for example, 3:1, 6:1, 7:7, 13; 9:14). First, the phrase is transformed into a question, and then a standard Pauline form of emphatic denial *me genoito!* (by no means) is added²⁵: "Do I

21. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Commentary in the Epistle of Romans (International Critical Commentary)*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:368.

22. Venema's suggestion is better since, in moving all of verse 25b, rather than only the latter half, as Smith did, he retains Paul's "in the mind"/"in the flesh" contrast.

23. Rudolf Bultmann, "Glossen im Römerbrief," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 72 (1972): col. 198; Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle of Romans: A Commentary*, trans. H. Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1961), 195 and 200; John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SMC / London, Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989), 199.

24. Matthew Black, *Romans (New Century Commentary)*, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 102; James Moffatt, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton/George H. Doran [1913]), 194; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Moffatt New Testament Commentary)* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), 114-15; J. Müller, "Zwei Marginalien im Brief des Paulus an die Römer," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (1941): 249-54.

25. In the diatribe "a speaker or writer makes use of an imaginary interlocutor to

myself then as a slave serve with my mind the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin? [By no means.]” Campbell includes a note setting forth MacKnight’s reasoning²⁶:

Translated in this manner, interrogatively, the passage contains a strong denial, that the person spoken of, after being delivered from the body of this death, any longer serves, as formerly, with the mind only, the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin in his members, whereas, translated as in our English Bible [KJV] . . . it represents the delivered person as still continuing in that very slavery to sin . . .

As it stands, according to MacKnight, the KJV rendering of verse 25 is “utterly wrong, and even dangerous.” Yet in the 1832 revised edition Campbell dropped this reading in favor of one much closer to the KJV: “Wherefore, then, indeed, I myself serve, with my mind, the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.”

That Smith was not interested in correcting the SCB in light of the best available manuscript evidence of his day is demonstrated on a larger scale at those points where the JST adopts readings from the SCB which were even then widely recognized as inferior. This becomes immediately apparent, for example, in reference to the most familiar disputed texts: the longer ending of Mark 16:9-20,²⁷ the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11),²⁸ the replacement of “tree” with “book” (Rev 22:19),²⁹ and—by far the most

ask questions of or raise objections to the arguments or affirmations that are made. These responses are frequently stupid and are then summarily rejected by the speaker or writer . . .” (Abraham J. Malherbe, “*Me Genoito* in the Diatribe and Paul,” *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989], 23-25, esp. 25). The standard older work on Paul’s use of the diatribe is by Rudolf Bultmann (*Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe*. FRLANT 13 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910]); more recently, see Stanley Stowers (*The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans*. SBLDS 57 [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981]).

26. Campbell, appen. xxv; 1828, 425.

27. See, for example, Clarke, 1:343. The language of the passage is echoed further in D&C 24:13 (1835 ed., IX:6 = Book of Commandments 25:23) where it is put into the mouth of God.

28. Clarke, 1:576.

29. This error developed only in the Latin manuscript tradition from an apparent confusion between the original Latin *ligno* and *libro* in some Vulgate manuscripts. This occurred because of (1) a similarity in appearance or sound of the two words, (2) a conscious assimilation to Revelation 3:5, 13:8, and 20:15, or (3) an accidental assimilation to the word *libro* which occurs three other times in the immediate context. Erasmus, lacking a complete Greek manuscript of the Apocalypse when hastily preparing his edition of the Greek New Testament, made do by translating Revelation 22:16-19 from the Latin Vulgate into Greek. This situation was noted, for example, in two review articles in the *North American Review*, a journal which Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn says

debated biblical verse in Smith's day—1 John 5:7, the so-called *comma Johanneum*.³⁰ All of these were known to Smith's contemporaries.

This is *not* to say Smith did not intend to restore the Bible to its original condition, which I believe he did, only that in doing so he did not pay attention to the work of scholars. Perhaps their efforts were beyond him. The nearest we come to seeing this in JST Romans 7 is in verses 18b = 19b, where the JST takes over from the SCB a reading based on the inferior *oux eurisko*. The best manuscripts have simply *ou* here, which makes for an abrupt termination.³¹

was "frequently advertised for sale in the Palmyra area" (*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987], 174). The first, by James Diman Green, appeared in October 1822 (see 465-66), and the second, by John Gordon Palfry, in July 1830 (see 267). The location of Erasmus's Apocalypse manuscript was not at that time known, but has since been rediscovered. Still, as Green remarked, Erasmus had acknowledged Revelation 22:19 "to have been made in this manner; though it is evident that the whole of the six last verses had no better origin . . ."

30. The controversy over this classic trinitarian text raged throughout Smith's lifetime, largely in connection with the Unitarian controversy. Joseph Steven Buckminster, popular Unitarian preacher and Boston minister, remarked that among the small number of "wilful interpolations" into the Greek text, "1 John, V. 7, is by far the most notorious, and most universally acknowledged and reprobated" (Joseph Stevens Buckminster, "Abstract of Interesting Facts Relating to the New Testament," *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, Dec. 1808, 639). It would be impossible to offer anything like a comprehensive list of relevant contemporary literature. Closest to home, Smith's copy of Thomas Hartwell Horne's *Introduction* (currently in possession of the RLDS church) devoted no less than thirty-one pages to the issue (Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, 4 vols. 4th ed. [Philadelphia: E. Littell, 1825], 4:435-66). (On the fly-leaf of the first volume Joseph Smith's name is written in pencil along with "Kirtland, Ohio, 1834.") Clarke's *Commentary* also included "Observations on the Text of the Three Divine Witnesses" at the end of its treatment of 1 John. Alexander Campbell (*The Christian Baptist* 5 [1827]: 363-64) spoke forcefully against the authenticity of the passage, preferring instead to "literally translate the Greek text of Griesbach, which reading is moreover approved and confirmed by Michaelis, and other great critics and collators of ancient MSS." At the time Campbell wrote, John David Michaelis's *Einleitung in die gottlichen Schriften des Neuen Bundes* (1750) was widely available in America in Herbert Marsh's English translation of the 1788 fourth edition (1802), which included an extensive "Dissertation on 1 John V. 7." John Michael Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 4 vols., 2d. ed., trans. Herbert Marsh (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1802 [orig. Eng. ed. 1793], 4:412-41); see also William H. Hunt, "Authenticity of 1 Jn 5:7, 8," *Literary and Theological Review* 2 (1835): 141-48. The 1840 edition of Horne's *Introduction*, finally, includes a forty-eight-entry annotated bibliography of "Treatises on the Genuineness of the Disputed Clauses in 1 John v. 7, 8."

31. Metzger, 514. The UBS committee gave the reading only a C rating. Yet *ou* is not only supported by the earliest and best manuscripts (for example, A, B, C) and had made its way into all forms of the Coptic version, but it is also supported by the principle *lectio difficilior lectio potior* (the more difficult reading is to be preferred). In other words in this instance it is easier to imagine someone transforming a sentence in order to correct awkward style than to envision someone changing perfectly good style and making it

At a relatively early stage in the history of the manuscript tradition *oux eurisko* was introduced as a stylistic improvement. The shorter and more difficult reading had been adopted by Mill, Griesbach, and Lachmann. Still it is not at all certain that this textual decision had trickled down to the circles in which Smith lived and moved. Campbell's Bible, for example, while resorting to Griesbach on several occasions, still prefers *oux eurisko*: "Indeed to incline lies near me; but to work out what is excellent, *I do not find* near me" (italics mine). Even Charles Hodge, while noting the variant, insisted in 1835 that the "common text is retained by most editors on the authority of the great majority of MSS. versions and fathers."³²

ROMANS 7 IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Interpretation of Romans 7 in the first decades of the nineteenth century was closely linked to the lively debated issue of the extent of human depravity and the nature and existence of original sin. The Old-Calvinist interpretation—which would have been the time-honored one in America,³³ and at this time was most ardently defended at Princeton Seminary—read the chapter in a way consistent with the reformed doctrine of total depravity, as set out in the classical reformed statements such as the Westminster Confession (VI, 2, 4); the Canons of Dort (III-IV, Art. 4, 6; and "Rejection of Errors," Par. 4); the Belgic Confession (Art. XIV); and the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day III). The corruption of the unregenerate is so complete that it is not possible to describe them with phrases like "I delight in the law of God after the inner man" (Rom 7:22) or "I consent to

awkward for no apparent reason.

32. Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Designed for Students of the English Bible* (Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliot, 1835), 290.

33. See, for example, the poem of Anne Bradstreet (d. 1672) about the two sisters Flesh and Spirit ("The Flesh and the Spirit," in Harrison T. Meserole, ed., *Seventeenth-Century American Poetry* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1968], 20-22), and Jonathan Edwards's *Original Sin* (*Original Sin [The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin defended; Evidences of its Truth Produced . . . Containing, in Particular, a Reply to the Objections and Arguings of Dr. John Taylor . . .]*, ed. Clyde A. Holbrook [New Haven, CT: Yale University 1970 (1758)], 304-305). David Brainerd's diary frequently contains the missionary's despairing cry of wretchedness, patterned after Romans 7:24 "O Wretched man . . ." (Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985 (Orig. 1749)], 100, 108, 109, 123, 181, cf. 186). In the early part of the nineteenth century, Unitarian William E. Channing described the Calvinist view as follows in his "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism": "Calvinism teaches that, in consequence of Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, God brings into life all his posterity with a nature wholly corrupt, so that they are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually" (*The Works of William E. Channing, D.D.* [Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1890], 461).

God's law" (Rom 7:16). Therefore the struggle described in 7:14-25, by a simple process of elimination, *has to* reflect Christian experience. Once this is admitted, it further follows that, even after regeneration, indwelling sin remains a real and constant problem in the Christian life. Thus, Princeton's Charles Hodge who without doubt would have been the most representative defender of the Old-Calvinist view, remarks in his 1835 commentary³⁴:

Paul merely asserts that the believer is, and ever remains in this life, imperfectly sanctified; that sin continues to dwell within him; that he never comes up to the full requisitions of the law, however anxiously he may desire it. Often as he subdues one spiritual foe, another rises in a different form; so that he cannot do the things that he would; that is, cannot be perfectly conformed in heart and life to the image of God.³⁵

So intense was this tension for Paul as he wrote Romans 7 that, as

34. This same year also brought forth a commentary on Romans by the controversial New-School Presbyterian, Albert Barnes. It was felt by many within the Presbyterian fold that Barnes had departed in serious ways from the Westminster Confession in a number of key doctrinal areas, including original sin. Charles Hodge reviewed this commentary in his *Biblical Repertory* (7 [1835]: 285-340). And, while much was said that was critical, still Hodge was "happy to report that the view of the latter part of the seventh chapter is in accordance with the *ordinary interpretation* of Calvinistic interpreters" (318); i.e., it was understood to refer to an exclusively Christian experience. This same understanding was retained by Barnes in subsequent editions (e.g., Albert Barnes, *Notes Explanatory and Practical on the Epistle to the Romans: Designed for Bible Classes and Sunday Schools*, 9th ed. [New York: Harper, 1869], 153-4).

Charles Hodge also treats Romans 7 elsewhere (e.g., *The Way of Life* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977 (orig. 1841)], 58, 110-15; *Conference Papers* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879], 93-4; *Systematic Theology* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872], III, 247). The same understanding of Romans 7 is also seen, for example, in the works of the great Southern Presbyterian theologian Robert L. Dabney (*Lectures in Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972 (orig., 1878)], I, 193; 1972, 675).

Finally, Charles G. Finney later in the century wrote: "One opinion that has extensively prevailed, and still prevails, is that the latter part of the chapter is an epitome of Christian experience . . . The only other interpretation given is that which prevailed in the first centuries, and which is still generally adopted on the continent of Europe, as well as by a considerable number of writers in England and in America, that this passage describes the experience of a sinner under conviction, who was acting under the motives of the law, and not yet brought to the experience of the gospel. In this country, the most prevalent opinion is that of the seventh chapter of Romans delineates the experience of a Christian" (Finney, "Legal Experience," in Louis Parkhurst, Jr., *Principles of Victory* [Minneapolis: Bethany, 1981], 87-108 [originally *Lectures to Professing Christians* (1880), 320-38]).

35. Hodge, *Romans*, 299.

Matthew Henry's popular commentary said, it was "as if he had a dead body tied to him, which he must have carried about with him."³⁶

This dark vision of human nature, however, did not strike a sympathetic cord with the self-confident temper of the newly formed nation, in which even the religious outlook was, to use Nathan Hatch's apt term, quickly becoming "democratized."³⁷ On most fronts the general attitude was one of self-reliance and confidence, even over confidence, in human potential.³⁸ In addition, the Old Calvinism had begun for many to take on, if not the sinister appearance of a tyrannical clerical elite, at least the near ridiculous appearance of high-flying irrelevance. Nowhere is this more symbolically portrayed, and perhaps with more historical significance, than in Charles Finney's refusal to study at Princeton on the ground "that I would not put myself under such an influence as they had been under. I was confident that they had been wrongly educated and were not ministers that met my ideal of what a minister of Christ should be."³⁹ It was in some part due to this shift in temper that the second dominant view, the Methodist-Revivalist interpretation, would increase in importance as the century progressed.

The famous 24 May 1738 entry in Wesley's *Journal*, where he tells how his heart was "strangely warmed" while listening to Luther's *Preface to the Epistle of the Romans* at Aldersgate Street, already contains the understanding of Romans 7 which was to become standard in Methodism. All his prior religious experience is described there in terms of Romans 7:14-25:

36. Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible . . . with Practical Remarks and Observations*, 6 vols. (London: Ward, Lock, Boden, n.d. [Orig. ed. 1707-12]), 6:960. Henry's commentary was being published in America by 1816, first at Philadelphia. Concerning the authorship of the Romans section of the final volume of Matthew Henry, an anonymous article in Nathaniel Taylor's *Quarterly Christian Spectator* (2 [1830]: 283) remarked: "Dr. Watts, in his copy of the Exposition, upon a blank leaf at the beginning of the last volume, wrote the following statement:—

"The Rev. Mr. Matthew Henry, before his death had made some small preperations for the last volume. The Epistle of Romans indeed, was explained so largely by his own hand, that it needed only the labor of epitomizing . . ." This epitomizing was done by Mr. John Evans.

37. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

38. As exemplified in Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous 1841 essay, "Self-Reliance" (Robert E. Spiller et al., eds. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971-87], 2:27-51), and his mentor, William Ellery Channing's 1838 "Self-Culture" (Channing, 12-36), and his *The Perfect Life*, a series of twelve discourses put together by Channing's nephew after his death (*ibid.*, 925-1020).

39. Charles G. Finney, *The Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney: Written by Himself* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1876), 45-46.

9. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ . . . I sought to establish my own righteousness, and so labored in the fire all my days. I was now properly *under the law*. I knew that *the law of God was spiritual; I consented to it that it was good. Yea, I delighted in it after the inner man. Yet was I carnal, sold under sin.* Every day was I constrained to cry out, *What I do, I allow not: for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do . . . I find . . . the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and still bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.*

10. In this state I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly, but I still served it.

The “I” of Romans 7:14-25, then, is not a Christian but one who is yet “under law,” for whom the religious life is one of almost continual frustration. By applying the passage to himself, Wesley reveals his belief that it does not describe an experience unique to Jews—such a view had been championed by the English Unitarian John Taylor—but rather, as he says in another place, to “the state of all those, Jews and Gentiles, who *saw* and *felt* the wickedness both of their hearts and lives, and groaned to be delivered from it.”⁴⁰ Essentially the same view is given later in Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (1754). Except there, perhaps only because the explanation is more pointed, Wesley gives the whole chapter from verses 7-25 a developmental pitch. For verse 7 he comments: “The character here assumed is that of a man, first ignorant of the law, then under it and sincerely, but ineffectually, striving to serve God”. By verse 24 the “struggle is now come to the height; and the man, finding there is no help in himself, begins almost unawares to pray, *Who shall deliver me?*” At the very end of the chapter, he “is now utterly weary of his bondage, and upon the brink of liberty.” The liberty itself only comes in 8:1. In reading the chapter as a dramatic narrative Wesley reveals his close dependence on the Pietist Johann Albrecht Bengel’s *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (1742).⁴¹

Of equal importance for our period is Adam Clarke’s *Commentary*, which presents the same view in greater depth. *Clarke’s Commentary*, not to mention Clarke himself, was immensely popular in America. And this in spite of its disproportionate size (six large volumes for both Testaments). As we have already related, Emma Smith’s uncle Lewis seems to have

40. John Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience: In Answer to Dr. Taylor* (New-York: J. Soule and T. Mason, 1817 [orig. 1756]), 145-46.

41. In the “Preface,” Wesley declares that “Many of his [Bengel’s] excellent notes I have therefore translated; many more I have abridged . . .” In his notes on Romans 7, Wesley follows Bengel closely, often almost word for word.

owned a set. Clarke's position on Romans 7 was essentially that of Wesley's, though set forward with greater erudition. (Even the great German F. A. G. Tholuck thought fit to familiarize himself with Clarke's remarks on the chapter, and he quotes from them in his own 1824 commentary on Romans).⁴² Also Clarke does not bring in from Wesley and Bengel the desire to read the chapter as a dramatic narrative. Rather he grounds the argument in the contrasting affirmations of verses 5 and 6, which are then understood as expanded upon in 7:7-25 and 8:1-11 respectively.⁴³

This view gained a new impetus beyond the boundaries of Methodism in the influential Moses Stuart, professor at Andover from 1812. The importance of Moses Stuart to early nineteenth-century American Christianity is hard to overestimate. He is viewed as one of the key figures in the resurgence of critical biblical scholarship in America and a great defender of the Orthodox cause against Unitarianism. As a student of Yale's Timothy Dwight, Stuart was closely tied to the "moderate Calvinism" of New Divinity circles, and was thus able to provide a way for those circles to entertain an understanding of Romans 7 that previously might have been viewed with suspicion because of its connection with Methodism and Unitarianism.⁴⁴

When tracing lines of dependence, therefore, for the interpretation of Romans 7 as held by the later perfectionists of Oberlin College and by John Humphrey Noyes and his Oneida Community, we are lead first back to Stuart rather than Methodism. In 1831 Noyes learned this position under Stuart himself at Andover⁴⁵ as did Oberlin's future president, Asa Mahan,

42. Friedrich August Tholuck, *Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: With Extracts from the Exegetical Works of the Fathers and Reformers*, trans. Robert Menzies (Philadelphia: Sorin and Ball, 1844), 210-11. Princeton's Charles Hodge chalked up Tholuck's approbatory quotation of Clarke to "a moment of forgetfulness" on the part of the great man (Hodge, *Romans*, 199).

43. Clarke, 2:77-89.

44. This same view was also set forth by the English Unitarian John Taylor (d. 1761) in his *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* (1740) (not accessible to me). The importance of Taylor's work is seen in the fact that it drew fire from both John Wesley (145-46, on Rom. 7) and Jonathan Edwards (304-305 and 331-32n9, on Rom. 7).

45. John H. Noyes, "The Way of Holiness." *A Series of Papers Formerly Published in The Perfectionist at New Haven* (Putney VT: J. H. Noyes & Co., 1838), i: "The author was taught by Prof. Stuart, that the seventh chapter of Romans is not a description of Christian experience"; John H. Noyes, *Salvation From Sin, The End of Christian Faith* (Oneida, NY: The Oneida Community, 1876), 21-3; Ethelbert D. Warfield et al., eds., *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, 10 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 8:254. A full paraphrase of Romans 7:7-25 was also published by John H. Noyes, "Paul Not Carnal. Exposition of Romans vii 7-25," *The Perfectionist* 1 (20 Oct. 1834): 11-12; also in "Way of Holiness," 37-64 and *The Berean: A Manual for the Help of Those Who Seek the Faith of the*

a few years earlier.⁴⁶ So even though Stuart's commentary on Romans did not actually appear until 1832, his interpretation of Romans 7 had already been exercising wide influence through his students.⁴⁷ Despite the difference of confessional context, Stuart's arguments are not essentially different from Clarke's. Again the contrast between 7:5 and 6 is seen painted large in 7:7-25 and 8:1-11 (or 17), thus limiting the entire discussion of Romans 7:7-25 to those yet under law.⁴⁸ Indeed, insists Stuart, the language of 7:14-25 could not possibly refer to Christian experience since "if Christians, who are of course under grace and are dead to the law (6:14. 7:6), are actually in the state here represented, then would it follow, that neither grace nor law hinders them from being the servants of sin."⁴⁹

Closer to Joseph Smith's circle, Alexander Campbell championed his own version of this view according to which the "I" had a more generalized symbolic reference to Israel, Paul "in his own person represents the Jew from the days of Abraham down to his own conversion." In the 1827 *Christian Baptist*, Campbell paraphrases several key passages in the chapter.⁵⁰ Israel was "alive without law" (v. 9) in the days of the patriarchs before the law of Moses had been given. At that time "I [=Israel] never felt myself subject to death, for where no law is there is no transgression." But with the coming of the commandment from Sinai, sin "revived or came to life, and . . . death was inflicted upon us Jews in a way of which there was no example before the promulgation of the law . . ." In verse 14 the law is called "spiritual" because it "has respect not only to the outward actions, but in some of its precepts reaches to the thoughts." In contrast, the "I" is called "carnal" because "the people, of which I am one, to whom that law

Primitive Church (Putney, VT: Published at the Office of the Spiritual Magazine, 1847), 188-99. Consistent with his Princetonian background B. B. Warfield, the great chronicler of Perfectionism, speaks contemptuously of the adoption of Stuart's view. At Andover, we are told, Mahan "learned at least to deal with the seventh chapter of Romans so that it would interpose no obstacle to his later theories" (8:43). And of the Oneida Perfectionists, Warfield comments that "Of course Noyes begins by setting aside Rom. VII. 14ff" (8:320).

46. Warfield, 8:43; Asa Mahan, *Autobiography: Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual* (London: T. Woolmer, 1882), 346-47.

47. For other examples of this view from Oberlin, see Samuel D. Cochran, "Chalmers on Romans," *Oberlin Quarterly Review*, 1846, 18-24; and Finney, in Parkhurst, 87-108.

48. Moses Stuart, *Commentary to the Epistle to the Romans with a Translation and Various Excursus* (Andover: Flagg & Gould, 1832), 283.

49. *Ibid.*, 556. The uniqueness of Stuart's view to American Calvinism of all stripes is reflected in the fact that he is the only example Hodge cites in support of there being "distinguished writers of England and our own country" who held it (Hodge, *Romans*, 297). Similarly, Stuart himself, when listing supporters for his own position, includes no Americans (Stuart, 561).

50. Campbell, 424-25.

was given, were a fleshly people enslaved to appetite." "[I]t was not," Campbell goes on to say for verses 22-23, "owing to any defect in the law, nor in my perceptions and approbation of it mentally, but in the inclinations and propensities to which a human being in this present state is unavoidably subjected—that I failed in finding happiness, peace, or comfort under the law." As to the question whether JST Romans 7 clearly depends on the Campbell Bible, the answer is: it does not.

THE JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION AND ROMANS 7

Joseph Smith's rendering of Romans 7 appears to be motivated by two concerns: (1) finding a solution that strikes a balance between the two dominant interpretations of his day, and (2) furnishing a "biblical basis" for his own restorationist program in relation to the idea of Christianity as a renewed and, therefore, a better kind of law-keeping, and (perhaps) the legitimation of "polygamy."

With the Old-Calvinist interpreters, Smith sets as the overall temporal horizon of verses 14-25 the apostle's *present* Christian experience. Yet at the same time he tempered those statements deemed by Methodist-Revivalist interpreters to reflect sub-Christian sentiments of regular spiritual frustration and defeat; placing at least some of these in the past. This is evident at a number of points, most obviously at 7:14 itself: "For we know that the {law} COMMANDMENT is spiritual; but WHEN I WAS UNDER THE LAW,] I {am} [WAS YET carnal, sold under sin." Smith further makes the chapter refer not to one law but to two: (1) the Mosaic law, which the "I" used to be under (e.g., vv. 6, 14, 21 = 23), and (2) the "commandment of Christ," which the "I" is now under as a Christian (vv. 9, 14, 23 = 24). This "commandment of Christ" is imprinted on the mind of the believer, and it is against it that the indwelling sinful principle is at war (v. 23 = 25). The cry of wretchedness (v. 24 = 26) has to do not with the ongoing state of the "I"—as was the case in *both* contemporary prevailing interpretations—but with the condition of a Christian who fails for whatever reason to subdue indwelling sin.

Also more in line with Old-Calvinist than the Methodist-Revivalist interpreters is Smith's not making the chapter turn, in any sense, on a radical change of nature within the regenerated believer; i.e., there is no hint of latent perfectionism.⁵¹ Instead the old law/restored law contrast is

51. Both Smith's previous interest and familiarity with Methodism and Sidney Rigdon's former association with Campbell would naturally incline these two participants in JST Romans 7 to understand verses 14-25 as describing pre-Christian experience. Because of these prior influences it becomes striking that Smith would understand at least some of these verses to describe present Christian rather than past

pivotal. The basis for this is Smith's idea that the Mosaic law had been intentionally made deficient by God. According to JST Exodus, after the original set of tablets of the law had been broken in anger by Moses (Ex. 32:19), a second set was prepared and God again wrote. But this time, Smith tells us, the Lord left out certain essential matters originally included in the first set: "[B]ut it shall not be according to the first, for I will take away the priesthood out of their midst: therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them . . . But I will give unto them the law of a carnal commandment . . ." (34:1-2; also JST Deut. 10:1-2). The phrase "law of a carnal commandment" was imported from the KJV Hebrews 7:16.⁵² The law then is inadequate for salvation not because it is "weakened by the flesh," as Paul would have it (Rom. 8:1), but because it had been made defective by God. The new law is better and more effective because it is a restored law, while the old "law of a carnal commandment" was part of an inferior "preparatory gospel" (D&C 34:26; 1835 ed. IV:4).

The same old law/restored law distinction is reflected at a number of points in JST Romans where the issue of the relation of the law and salvation is being discussed. Thus in 4:5 the SCB's "him that worketh not, but believeth" is changed in NT MS 2 to "him that {~~worketh~~} SEEKETH NOT TO BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW OF WORKS, but believeth"; and in 4:6 "righteousness without works" is changed to "righteousness without THE LAW OF works."⁵³ The "law of works" in each case appears to be synonymous with the "law according to a carnal commandment." This same understanding continues into JST Romans 7. Interestingly, however, it is not the law of Moses, the "law of a carnal commandment," that strikes the "I" of Romans 7 dead. Rather this occurs in relation to the "commandment of Christ." Throughout the chapter the instrumentality of the law in the

pre-Christian experience. In the minds of Methodist-Revivalist interpreters, as we have seen, the dire wretchedness of the man of Romans 7:14-25 is scarcely an acceptable description of the Christian life. Smith feels sympathy with this objection and so makes some of the darker statements in the chapter refer to the pre-Christian past. Had Smith really had no intention of balancing the two dominant views of his day, we should not have expected him to make the primary reference of the passage the canonical author's present Christian experience as the Old-Calvinist interpreters did.

52. Further reference to it was also inserted by Smith after John 1:17: "For the law [of Moses] was after a carnal commandment, to the administration of death; but the gospel was after the power of an endless life . . ." Dependence on Hebrews 7:16 is obvious because of the reference to the "power of an endless life." This process of transporting verses and terminology from one book to another is further proof of the view of Richard P. Howard (4) and others that the JST is not a restoration of the ancient text. Further discussion of the "law of the carnal commandment" also appears under the dates 22 and 23 September 1832 (D&C 84:23-8; 1835 ed. IV, 4).

53. NT MS 2, folio 4, p. 123; also Rom. 4:2.

death of the "I" is played down and the blame laid exclusively at the feet of sin:

(5) . . . the motions of sins, which were (by) NOT ACCORDING TO the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.

(10) And WHEN I BELIEVED NOT the commandment OF CHRIST WHICH CAME, which >was ordained< to life, I found (~~to be~~) IT CONDEMNED ME unto death.

(11) FOR sin, taking occasion, (/by/) DENYED the commandment, AND deceived me, and by it (~~slew me~~) I WAS SLAIN.⁵⁴

The last two verses quoted reveal that the "I" dies because it has been tricked by sin into not *believing* the commandment of Christ.

Also intriguing in light of the overall restorational focus of the chapter is verse 19 (= JST vv. 20-21):

For the good that I would HAVE DONE WHEN UNDER THE LAW, I FIND NOT TO BE GOOD; THEREFORE] I do IT not: (JST 21) but the evil which I would not DO UNDER THE LAW, I FIND TO BE GOOD; that, I do."

Certain behavior, previously considered evil, has now under the restoration become acceptable. But what behavior does Smith have in mind? Certainly this might be nothing more than a general reference to the comparative level of freedom enjoyed under the new law of Christ. But the language seems too strong for this. There is some evidence, in fact, that the reference may be to a more specific concern: providing a theological justification for the reintroduction of polygamy. Perhaps a clue is to be found in possible psychological self-legitimation implied in the next verse (20 = 22). When he does the "evil" which he formerly would not do, "it is no more <that> I [SEEK TO <\> do (it) [W]RONG, but TO SUBDUE sin that dwelleth in me."

Significantly, the same basic argument appears a full decade later in an 1842 letter to Sidney Rigdon's unmarried daughter, Nancy. A day or two after an attempt at winning her as one of his plural wives was rebuffed, Smith dictated a letter, apparently intended to weaken her resolve by insinuating that her resistance amounted to disobedience to God's law. His arguments echo significantly the language of the JST rendition of Romans 7:19-20 (= JST 20-22): "That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another . . . Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is . . . even things which might be considered abominable to

54. The apparent motive behind changing the voice of the SCB's "slew" from active to passive ("was slain") was to transfer the reference of the preceding pronoun "it" from *the law* to *sin*.

all who understand the order of Heaven only in part, but which, in reality, were right, because God gave and sanctioned by special revelation."⁵⁵ It seems especially fitting that a consideration of Smith's changing sexual standards and practices should come to mind in the context where the old "law of a carnal commandment" is being contrasted with the restored "commandment of Christ." Needless to say, explicit reference to what remained a secret practice until after Smith's death would not have yet been possible, especially in a work slated for public consumption like the JST. If this understanding of the JST rendering of Romans 7:19-20 (= 20-22) is correct, then it represents one of the earliest justifications of polygamy from the hand of Smith.⁵⁶

Although the revelation permitting plural marriage (D&C 132 in LDS editions) was not given until 12 April 1843, it is now widely recognized that even long before that time Smith's sexual activities exceeded the limits laid down by it—most notably in his taking of married women as plural wives.⁵⁷ Allegations of sexual impropriety had dogged Smith's heels from the earliest days of the church. Our interest in this regard is limited to the period around the time Smith was involved in the production of the JST. In 1834, an affidavit by Emma Smith's cousin, Levi Lewis, referred to a

55. John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; Or An Exposé of Joe Smith And Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 243-45; also Jessee.

56. The only earlier example mentioned in standard treatments comes from the Book of Mormon itself. Though the Book of Mormon adopts a clear anti-polygamous stance (e.g., Jacob 1:15, 2:23-35, 3:5; Mosiah 11:2, 4, 14; Ether 10:5), in one instance a comment appears which, in light of later developments, may have been intended to leave the door open to the eventual introduction of polygamy. The passage begins with a standard renunciation of the practice: "Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none" (Jacob 2:27). Yet, a few lines later he says: "For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people: otherwise, they shall hearken unto these things" (italics mine; see Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1981], 132-33).

57. The polygamy revelation specified that plural wives are to be taken from among virgins: "[I]f any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent; and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then he is justified; he cannot commit adultery . . ." (*Deseret News, Extra*, 14 Sept. 1852, 27; reprinted in Foster, 254, and D&C 132:61). Examples of married women Smith is thought to have pursued include Prescinda (Mrs. Norman) Buell; Sarah (Mrs. John) Cleveland; Mrs. Durfee; Mrs. Robert D. Foster; Sally (Mrs. Samuel) Gulley; Clarissa (Mrs. Levi) Hancock; Lucinda (Mrs. George W.) Harris; Zina (Mrs. Henry) Jacobs; Sarah (Mrs. Hiram) Kimball; Jane (Mrs. William) Law; Mary (Mrs. Adam) Lightner; Fanny (Mrs. Roswell) Murray; Sarah (Mrs. Orson) Pratt; Mary (Mrs. Parley) Pratt; Ruth (Mrs. Edward) Sayers; and Patty (Mrs. David) Sessions. John C. Bennett (1842, 256) also mentions an as yet unidentified Mrs. A**** S****.

remark by Martin Harris five years previous that "he [Harris] did not blame Smith for his attempt to seduce Eliza Winters &c."⁵⁸ The year 1832 (especially important as that in which Smith produced JST Romans 7) was particularly eventful in this regard. Since these facts are known and have been investigated, only a brief review, drawing primarily on Richard Van Wagoner's *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, will be necessary. On 24 March 1832 Smith was tarred and feathered, according to one account, for seducing Nancy Marinda Johnson, in whose father's house he was residing. A certain Eli, identified (apparently erroneously) as Nancy's brother, is said to have called for Smith's castration.⁵⁹ Later testimony also mentions liaisons in this year between Joseph and two servant girls employed in the Smith household: one named Miss Hill, and the other unnamed.⁶⁰ Another name coming down to us from roughly this period is Vienna Jacques.⁶¹ Emma Smith spent much of 1832 pregnant with Joseph Smith III (b. 6 November 1832).

Later evidence further suggests that Smith was already at this time trying to hammer out a theological basis for an eventual turn to open polygamy. Joseph B. Noble, a close friend of the Mormon leader, later related that Smith had become convinced of the legitimacy of polygamy "while . . . engaged in the work of translation of the Scriptures."⁶² Orson Pratt, noted Mormon missionary and apostle, also pointed to early 1832 as the time when Smith told certain individuals that "the principle of taking more wives than one is a true principle, but the time had not yet come for it to be practiced."⁶³

Four points, then, suggest that JST Romans 7 may reflect this same concern: (1) the parallel argumentation in the letter to Nancy Rigdon ten years later⁶⁴; (2) the evidence implying that Smith was involved in various

58. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonsim Unveiled, or a Faithful Account of the Singular Imposition and Delusion, From its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: Published by the author, 1834), 268. Lewis also claimed to have "heard them both [Joseph Smith and Martin Harris] say, adultery was no crime."

59. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2d. ed. rev. (New York: Knopf, 1971), 119. But see the reservations of Richard S. Van Wagoner (*Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989], 13n4). That John Johnson had no son Eli is not enough to dismiss this account entirely. Reference is also made to the apparent involvement of an Eli in Smith's own version of the incident (William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons* [New York: Knopf, 1969], 67).

60. Van Wagoner, 4-5.

61. *Ibid.*, 4.

62. *Ibid.*, 3.

63. *Ibid.*, 3.

64. Though to be sure it could also be argued that this case represents a specific application of the principle previously presented in JST Romans 7; a principle which may

extramarital liaisons in that year, behavior that could be described as "evil which I would not DO UNDER THE LAW"⁶⁵; (3) the later testimony of friends pointing on the one hand to 1832 and on the other to the time of the production of the JST as when Smith began to formulate his reasons for an eventual return to open polygamy; and (4) the overall restorational focus of JST Romans 7 itself.

CONCLUSION

Joseph Smith's rendition of Romans 7 offers little in terms of real insight into Paul's meaning, and Smith's "restorations" bring us no closer to the form of the text as it "came from the pen of the original writers." Still it provides an interesting window to understanding the passage as it was debated in the early decades of the nineteenth century and to the Mormon prophet himself; his developing teaching and character, and his methods and motives for producing the JST. Whatever else might be said, one of the secrets of Smith's success was his ability to focus the attention of followers around some revelational project; thereby keeping the sense of eschatological expectation high. The first such project, of course, was the Book of Mormon. The JST followed quickly in June 1830, only two months after the organization of the church. Romans 7 provided a special opportunity in this regard. Not only was Smith able to rule authoritatively in a passage that had been debated for centuries (with the inevitable consequence of increasing his prestige in the eyes of his followers) but at the same time he was able to use the occasion to create a "biblical basis" for his own restorationist program through the "clarification" of obscurities in this difficult chapter.⁶⁶

have originated under different circumstances and with a different original point of reference.

65. This could not be said, however, of polygamy proper since that *was* tolerated under the law of Moses. This points up the difficulty of trying to describe Smith's activities prior to the revelation of April 1843 as "early examples of polygamy." This use of the word is really anachronistic.

66. Romans 7 is the most heavily reworked chapter in the whole of JST Romans.