

"Without a Cause" and "Ships of Tarshish": A Possible Contemporary Source for Two Unexplained Readings from Joseph Smith

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ON TUESDAY, THE SECOND OF JULY, a fatigued but cheerful Sydney Rigdon took up his pen and addressed himself to a blank sheet of paper laying before him on a wooden writing table. At the top of the sheet he wrote, "To the Brethren of Zion." Then, after a few preliminary niceties, "We this day finished the translating of the Scriptures, for which we returned gratitude to our Heavenly Father."¹ Rigdon was understandably weary as he wrote, because he was doing so almost immediately after finishing work on the Joseph Smith Translation (JST). At that moment, the words we now find written at the end of the manuscript for Malach—"Finished on the 2d day of July 1833"—may still have been damp to the touch. When the letter was finished, it was signed by Rigdon and the other two members of the First Presidency, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Frederick G. Williams. Then it was sent on its way.

That same month the official church newspaper, the *Evening and Morning Star*, published in Independence, Missouri, sought to prepare the way for the JST by explaining its significance under the headings, "Errors of the Bible" and "The New Version":

1. *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1845): 802.

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.²

Then 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!

However, this was not to be. Despite Joseph Smith's best efforts, the JST was not published until 1867, and then only by the RLDS Church (which is now called the Community of Christ). The JST has never been officially recognized by the LDS church, which continues to use the KJV, the Bible damned in the 1833 *Evening and Morning Star* for being "full of errors," as their official version. Since 1979, however, excerpts of the JST have been included in the LDS church's edition of the King James Bible. Popular LDS writers and scholars extol the JST's virtues.

Whatever its admirable qualities, it cannot legitimately be argued that it is a restoration of the original uncorrupted text of scripture. Some have suggested that the almost total lack of support in the ancient biblical manuscripts for the JST corrections only proves that all the ancient manuscripts which exist have already been corrupted by the "Great and Abominable Church," an apostate ecclesiastical organization credited with taking "many plain and precious things" out of the Bible (1 Nephi 13:28). This is merely an argument of convenience that attempts to solve the problem by placing the claim of restoration out of the reach of contradiction by evidence. It is not merely a problem of Joseph Smith making changes where no manuscript evidence can be found to support them, it is also the JST's adherence to the King James readings, even where the ancient manuscript evidence demands that changes ought to have been made.

There are two places, however, where the JST makes a surprising break from its pattern of non-contact with the ancient evidence: Matthew 5:22 and Isaiah 2:16. Interestingly, both verses were incorporated into the Book of Mormon as parts of larger passages taken over from the Bible (Matthew 5:22 [5:24 (JST)] = 3 Nephi 12:22, and Isaiah 2:16 = 2 Nephi 23:1). The purpose of the present article is to suggest two possible sources for these changes, each of which could account for both.

2. *The Evening and Morning Star* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 106.

SHIPS OF TARSHISH (ISAIAH 2:16)

In his recent book *By the Hand of Mormon* (2002), Terryl L. Givens's summary of the significance attached to the unique reading of Isaiah 2:16 is typical of earlier LDS writers:

One variant reading of Isaiah deserved special notice. In Isaiah 2:16, the prophet writes (in the King James version and all other early English versions save Coverdale's), "And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures." The Septuagint version of Isaiah reads, "And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all pleasant pictures." Nephi's version incorporates both: "And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures" (2 Nephi 12:16). Unless Joseph had access to both versions, which seems unlikely, one reasonable implication of such variations is that the Book of Mormon version predates the other two, each of which dropped a different phrase over time.³

Reflection on the history of this passage, and ways in which the differences between its Hebrew and Greek versions might have arisen, suggests a different solution, a solution that goes back to a confusion of words in Greek, but no further. *The sea* in Hebrew (*HYM*) is not likely ever to be confused in either sound or appearance with the Hebrew word *Tarshish* (*TRSHISH*), but the two words might easily be confused in Greek. If, for example, a Greek scribe copying from a poorly written Greek uncial (capital lettered) manuscript encountered a clumsy transliteration of the Hebrew *TRSHISH* as, for example, *tharsses* or *tharasses* (with the final *-es* representing in both cases a first declension genitive ending), he might easily have imagined he was looking at *thalasses*, (of the sea) rather than *tharasses* or *tharsses* (of *Tarshish*). Such a scribe might then, in his manuscript, quite understandably go on to replace the odd transliteration with the more conventional indeclinable one: *tharsis*.⁴ If the error did originate with the Greek translation, a number of significant consequences follow:

3. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), 137.

4. It should be noted, however, that the confusion might go the other direction. The Greek words translated as "every ship of the sea" are *pan ploion thalasses*. The old Greek manuscripts used all uncials (Greek capitals) rather than the miniscules (lower case), so that *thalasses* would have originally appeared as THALASSES. If a scribe accidentally left out the *lamda*, the third letter from the beginning and one of three triangular letters standing side by side, the form of the remaining word would be THAASSES. A scribe later trying to read this word might read it not as *thaasses*, but as *tharsses*. Seeing the *-HC* ending, he then would have believed this must have been a somewhat unconventional transliteration of *tharsses*, cast in the form of a first declension noun with a genitive ending, making it read just as expected: *of Tarshish*. The next natural thing for him to do would have been to replace the unconventional transliteration for the standard one, *tharsis* for *tharsses*. The thing to keep in mind is that, in both cases, the change is secondary, deriving from Greek and not from the original Hebrew.

(1) It was not original to the Hebrew, since it only happened after someone had translated the Hebrew text into Greek. This would be consistent with the fact that the Dead Sea Scrolls support neither the Book of Mormon reading nor the Septuagint [=LXX], but rather the Hebrew.

(2) The suggestion that the Book of Mormon reading is more ancient than the Hebrew reading of the text is not only unlikely, it is impossible, since the text had not yet been translated into Greek. If *of the sea* initially arose out of a confusion of the Greek for *Tarshish* (or visa versa), then very clearly both cannot be original, and Joseph Smith cannot have been right in including both in 2 Nephi 23:1 (=JST Isaiah 2:16). If you have an original reading and a corrupted reading, you cannot have a more original reading that includes both.⁵

(3) The Book of Mormon rendering must be the least original of the three. The Hebrew is the most original,⁶ the Septuagint takes one step away from the original with its confusion of look-alike words, and the Book of Mormon takes yet another step away from the original by combining the correct Hebrew reading and the incorrect Septuagint one.

Givens is not justified in supposing that "unless Joseph had access to both versions [Hebrew and Greek] which seems unlikely," a supernatural source must be sought for this Book of Mormon reading.⁷ He is merely repeating an argument that goes back at least as far as Sidney B. Sperry's *Our Book of Mormon*

5. Joseph did the same thing in his last public sermon (16 June 1844). The first word of the Bible is *Berosheit*, which is also the Hebrew title of the book of Genesis. Most Bible versions translate it in *the beginning*. However, in the King Follett Funeral Sermon (7 April 1844), Joseph said that the *Be* in *Berosheit* was not original, but had been added by "an old Jew without any authority." The *Be* is an attached preposition which means *in* ("in the beginning"). What was originally written, said Joseph, was not *Berosheit*, but *Rosheit*. Joseph then goes on to drop the "grammatical termination" —*eit*, so as to arrive at *Rosh*, which he translates as *head* in "*head* one of the Gods." (The word *head* [*Rosh*] is arrived at by stripping *Berosheit* of its beginning and ending.)

In his final sermon two months later, Joseph again preached on this passage but apparently forgot how he had originally derived *head* (*Rosh*) from *in the beginning* (*Be-rosh-eit*). Instead, he included both: "In the beginning [*berosheit*] the heads [*rosheit*] of the Gods. . . ." Here again, though, it has to be either *in the beginning* or *head(s)*. It cannot be both. If *head(s)* was corrupted by "an old Jew without any authority" to read *in the beginning*, then the most original text could not have included both *head(s)* and *in the beginning* (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1976] 348, 371; and *The Words of Joseph Smith*, Religious Studies Monograph Series 6, comps. and eds. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo Utah: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University, 1980]).

6. However, as noted earlier, someone might legitimately argue that the LXX preserves the more original reading on the grounds that it seems easier to confuse THALASSES with THARSES, than THARSES with THALASSES. Ultimately, it does not matter whether *of the sea* or *Tarshish* was more original, since the confusion occurred on the secondary level of the Greek rather than the primary level of the Hebrew.

7. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 137.

(1947), which was afterward copied verbatim into several of that writer's later books. It has subsequently been included in a number of other works, right down to the present.⁸ Here is Sperry's argument as it appeared in 1947:

In 2 Nephi 12:16 (cf. Isaiah 2:16) the Book of Mormon has a reading of remarkable interest. It prefixes a phrase of eight words not found in the Hebrew or King James Versions. Since the ancient Septuagint (Greek) version concurs with the added phrase in the Book of Mormon, let us exhibit the readings of the Book of Mormon (B.M.), the King James Version (K.J.), and the Septuagint (LXX) as follows:

B.M.	And upon all the ships of the sea,
K.J.
LXX	And upon every ship of the sea,

and upon all the ships of Tarshish
 and upon all the ships of Tarshish

and upon all pleasant pictures.
 and upon all pleasant pictures.
 and upon every display of fine ships.⁹

8. For example, it has been copied more or less verbatim into Monte S. Nyman's *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 33 (CD-ROM version on Infobase); Daniel H. Ludlow's *A Companion to Your Study of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981), 284; and into the Religion 302 student manual, *Old Testament: 1 Kings-Malachi*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 140. It has also been essentially restated in a slightly expanded form by Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30-31; and by Royal Skousen, "Review of Brent Lee Metcalfe's *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 129; and in Skousen's "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 376-77. It is from Skousen that Givens gets the additional detail about the Coverdale Bible not having "ships of Tarshish" in its Isaiah 2:16. Skousen in turn credits Andy Stewart's 1991 unpublished research paper "KJV as a Source for the Biblical Quotations in the Book of Mormon" (see Skousen, "Textual Variants," 376-77, 389n7).

9. Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Steven & Wallace, 1947), 172-73. The same passage appears almost verbatim in Sperry's *The Voice of Israel's Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1965), 90-91; *The Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 92-3 [later renamed *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967) 92-93], and in *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 508.

The Book of Mormon suggests that the original text of this verse contained three phrases, all of which commenced with the same opening words, "and upon all." By a common accident, the original Hebrew (and hence the King James) text lost the first phrase, which was, however, preserved by the Septuagint. The latter lost the second phrase, and seems to have corrupted the third phrase. The Book of Mormon preserved all three phrases. Scholars may suggest that Joseph Smith took the first phrase from the Septuagint, but the prophet did not know Greek, and there is no evidence that he had access to a copy of the Septuagint in 1829-1830¹⁰ then he translated the Book of Mormon.

The only proponent of Sperry's position who has in any way moved beyond him is John A. Tvedtnes, who notes that "the Greek *talassa*, 'sea,' resembles the word Tarshish." However, Tvedtnes appears to miss the significance of this when he points out that "both the Targum and the Vulgate have 'sea' with LXX instead of Tarshish."¹¹ Tvedtnes's claim is the same one made in the textual note for 2 Nephi 12:16 in *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholars*.¹² Two points should be made here:

(1) If the Vulgate agreed with the LXX against the current Hebrew Bible, then possibly Jerome, who translated the Vulgate in the late fourth century and who knew Hebrew, had encountered the reading "ships of the sea" in the Hebrew manuscripts of his day. This would only prove that the confusion of the Greek words had affected the Hebrew manuscript as well as the Greek, a possibility already contemplated here in footnotes 4 and 6. However, this was not the case. Tvedtnes and the *Book of Mormon Critical Text* are simply in error here. The Vulgate actually does have *Tarshish*, not *sea*: "et super omnes naves *Tharsis*." Current editions of the Vulgate also use *Tarshish*. Jerome himself noted that the LXX was alone in having seas here, while all the other versions had *Tarshish* ("Pro *Tharsis*, quod omnes similiter transtulerunt, soli LXX *mare* interpretati sunt").¹³

10. In some of the repetitions of Sperry's passage, the dates are given instead as 1827-1829.

11. John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, Religious Studies Center Monograph Series 10, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 170. Tvedtnes's remark concerning *talassa* may reflect his familiarity with James A. Montgomery's statement that sea in the LXX represents a "phonetic development from a transliteration" of *Tarshish* (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary Series [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926], 409). John W. Welch also repeats Sperry's basic argument, and he mentions the reading of the Targum (*Reexploring the Book of Mormon* [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992], 78).

12. *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference*, 3 vols., 2d ed. (Provo Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986), 1:206: "LXX Isa 2:16 sgl [singular] 'and upon every ship of the sea' (so Targum and Latin Vulgate); not in KJ MT."

13. Quoted in *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive Veterum interpretum graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964), 2:435n15.

(2) While it is true that the Isaiah Targum has *seas*, only one manuscript, B.M. [British Museum] 2211, which is dated around 1475 A.D., has "ships of the sea." A better attested reading is "islands of the sea."¹⁴ The lateness of the Isaiah Targum limits its usefulness as a witness of the original form of the text of Isaiah 2:16. If the very titles of certain Targums actually reflect the names of revisers of the Greek Old Testament (Onkelos and Jonathan = Aquila and Theodotion),¹⁵ how can we be sure that the targumic tendency to translate Tarshish as sea does not ultimately derive from a memory of or familiarity with the variation in the LXX?¹⁶ All that was really necessary for a cross-pollination between Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts was for all three to be available for comparison, as they were for example at Qumran, where Biblical manuscripts in all three languages were discovered together at a single ancient location.¹⁷

The fact that Sperry's argument continues to be repeated, even after half a century, does not mean it is a good argument. Indeed, the logic of Sperry's argument—that there were only two places Joseph Smith could have gotten "every ship of the sea," from divine revelation or from the Septuagint, and since he probably did not know the latter, he had to have gotten it from the former—is specious. If these really were the only two possible sources, there is still no basis for denying that someone who did have access to the Septuagint could have passed the information along to Joseph. However, these were not the only two possible sources, as was made plain more than twenty years ago in Wesley P. Walters's *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon* (1981). Walters wrote:

It should be noted that popular family Bibles and commentaries of the day pointed out the fact that the LXX here read "the ships of the sea," so that such knowledge was available even to the laymen of Joseph Smith's day. In fact, several commentaries of that period give the word of the Greek version as plural, "the ships of the

14. Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 11 (Collegeville, Minn.: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1987), xxix and 6-7.

15. See, e.g., the discussion in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2:574-75.

16. On this tendency in the Targums, see David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, eds. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 188-89.

17. One possible solution to the presence of *seas* in the Targums is that *seas*, after originating in the Greek, had infected the Hebrew text at some later stage as well (as described in footnote 4). While this is not the position defended here, it is a viable one, and in that light, the evidence of the Targums might be interpreted as reflecting an earlier Hebrew tradition which preserved a memory of an original reading *seas*. However, the lateness of the Targums, the absence of earlier evidence in the versions (including the LXX), and the cross-pollination of the versions already referred to, all make such an interpretation somewhat doubtful.

sea," whereas the Greek is really singular as noted above. This could readily indicate that Joseph took his wording verbatim from the commentaries. There is therefore no need to postulate an original text that breaks up the poetic arrangement of the passage, when Joseph could easily have obtained the information from the pool of knowledge available to him at that period.¹⁸

The two sources contemporary to Joseph Smith cited by Walters were Thomas Scott's *The Holy Bible*¹⁹ and Matthew Poole's *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*.²⁰ Walters further notes that "both Poole and Scott picked up the plural reading from Bishop William Lowth's commentary on Isaiah published in the eighteenth century."²¹

Although Walters was responding directly to Sperry's argument as he found it expressed in *The Problems of the Book of Mormon* (1964), most LDS scholars who support Sperry have apparently been unaware of Walters's argument.²² This despite the claim of Tvedtnes that "Walters's master's thesis has been known to Book of Mormon researchers since it was first submitted to the Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1981."²³ Tvedtnes does respond in a general way to Walters's claim that Joseph might have picked up ideas from commentaries and other books of his day by asserting that "our knowledge of the Smith family finances, though, make it difficult to believe that Joseph Smith had access to such books."²⁴ Again Tvedtnes is mistaken, as shall become clear as we proceed.

Two more recent studies by David P. Wright advance Walters's case further.²⁵ Wright likewise mentions the works of Thomas Scott, Matthew Poole, and William Lowth as possible English sources for Joseph Smith's rendering of Isaiah 2:16. In addition to these, he suggests two more possible English sources: (1) John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*,²⁶ and (2) John Fawcett's *Devotional Family Bible*.²⁷ Wright concludes, as Walters had, that

18. Wesley P. Walters, *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 59-60.

19. 3 vols. (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1817).

20. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas and John Turnbull, 1800).

21. Walters, *Use of Old Testament*, 59-60.

22. The one exception known to the author is Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, 30n44.

23. John A. Tvedtnes, "Review of Wesley P. Walters's *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 220. Neither Tvedtnes's review nor the other in the same volume by Stephen D. Ricks interacts with Walters's specific contribution on this point.

24. *Ibid.*, 221.

25. David P. Wright, "Joseph Smith's Interpretations of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 182-206; and Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 157-234.

26. (Bristol, England: William Price, 1765).

27. (London: Suttaby, Evance & Co. and R. Baldwin, 1811).

"Joseph Smith could have become familiar with this translation 'fact' through reading such works or, more likely, though hearing sermons or conversations based on such sources."²⁸

That Wright and Walters were moving in an appropriate direction is seen in comments like that of nineteenth-century Princetonian Joseph Addison Alexander: "It is a very old opinion, that *Tarshish* means the *sea*."²⁹ We shall have more to say on this passage later.

WITHOUT A CAUSE (MATTHEW 5:22)

Perhaps even more familiar than the "ships of Tarshish" parallel is the removal of the phrase "without a cause" in the Book of Mormon version of the Sermon on the Mount (which John W. Welch refers to as the "Sermon at the Temple"), and in the JST Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:22 [5:24 (JST)] = 3 Nephi 12:22). Again we begin with the remarks of Terryl Givens:

This is not to say there are no variations that, on the other hand, suggest an ancient origin for the temple sermon. John Welch considers the counterpart to Matthew 5:22 deserving of recognition. Matthew's Jesus warns that "whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Third Nephi's Jesus omits the qualification, "without a cause." So, Welch points out, "do many of the better early manuscripts."³⁰

Given the abundance of early manuscripts found since 1830, Givens concludes, "[T]his high degree of confirmation of the received Greek [texts] speaks generally in favor of the [Book of Mormon's] Sermon at the Temple, for one could not have gambled wisely on such confirmation a century and a half ago, before the earliest Greek New Testament manuscripts had been discovered." At the end of a moderately lengthy endnote, Givens states: "As [Stan] Larson points out, the omission had also been suggested in Adam Clarke's 1810 commentary, as well as other sources, which might have been known to Joseph through other avenues."

Larson lists, in addition to Clarke, a number of sources through which the information concerning this omission might have made its way to Joseph Smith:

The absence of *eike* was known before 1830 when the Book of Mormon appeared, since it was discussed in Desiderius Erasmus, John Mill, Johann Wettstein, Johann Griesbach, and Andreas Birch in reference to the Greek text, not translated in

28. Wright, "Joseph Smith's Interpretations," 184-85; cf. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 190.

29. Joseph Addison Alexander, *Isaiah Translated and Explained. . . . An Abridgment of the Author's Critical Commentary on Isaiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Wiley & Halsted, 1856), 1:46. The original commentary of which this is an abridgement was published in the mid-1840s.

30. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 138. Brackets are Givens's.

William Tyndale's New Testament from 1526 to 1535, and popularized by various English writers. For example, the Methodist writer, Adam Clarke, whose multi-volume biblical commentary was first published in London in 1810 with at least ten American printings and editions in New York from 1811-1829, suggested that it was a marginal gloss which later entered the text.³¹

Perhaps Givens does not mention any of the sources named by Larson other than Adam Clarke because all, save one, were editors of critical Greek texts. He might well have assumed that Joseph, who supposedly was not very good at reading English, would certainly not be able to negotiate the intricate apparatuses of the critical editions of the Greek New Testament. As for the one English exception, Givens might have suspected that Tyndale's early version of the English Bible would not have been readily available in Joseph Smith's day. However, this kind of information tended to trickle down to the general population through sermons, Bible commentaries, and religious newspapers.

Let us now turn to John Welch. When Joseph Smith transported the Sermon on the Mount from the King James Bible (Matthew 5-7) into the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12-14), he also carried over almost all the textual errors of the King James Version. The basic argument of Welch is that even if these readings are corrupted or wrong, as Larson asserted, it does not matter because when all is said and done, they do not differ much in meaning from the uncorrupted original ones:

In each of these cases, however, the later alternative Greek variants essentially say the same thing as the probable earlier readings. Thus, while the later variants may involve slightly different Greek constructions or vocabulary words, these differences are insignificant from the standpoint of translation.³²

In the one instance where giving preference to the original form of the text would have made a difference, Welch says, Joseph Smith remarkably did so:

In my estimation, this textual variant in favor of the Sermon at the Temple is very meaningful. The removal of *without a cause* has important moral, behavioral, psychological, and religious ramifications, as it is the main place where a significant textual change from the KJV was in fact needed and delivered.³³

31. Stan Larson, "The Historicity of the Matthean Sermon on the Mount," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalf (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 128.

32. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 202.

33. *Ibid.*, 201. Welch restates this opinion as his closing thought in his chapter on the textual problems: "[I]n the one case where the ancient manuscripts convey an important difference in meaning from the King James Version by omitting *without a cause* in Matthew 5:22, the Book of Mormon agrees with the stronger manuscript reading of that text. The Greek manuscripts of the Sermon on the Mount do not discredit the Book of Mormon, and may on balance sustain it" (208).

In a review of Larson's article, Welch refers to the *without a cause* variant as "the Fly in Larson's Ointment," chiding Larson for being "too stingy to count this point for anything," despite the fact that "on this occasion, one encounters quite strong textual evidence that the Book of Mormon contains the same reading that New Testament scholars believe represents the original saying of Jesus."³⁴ Later Welch says:

I do not understand how anyone can say that the agreement between 3 Nephi 12:22 and the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament does not meet sufficient criteria of authenticity, that this is not a significant case of the Book of Mormon agreeing with the better Greek traditions while disagreeing with the KJV, and that this case is therefore worth nothing.³⁵

Is Welch really thinking like a text critic when he chastises Larson for considering the variant in Matthew 5:22 "a genuinely ambiguous case?"³⁶ If it is so obvious to Welch that "the removal of *without a cause* has important moral, behavioral, psychological, and religious ramifications,"³⁷ then surely it would also have been obvious to Joseph Smith or to an early scribe who suspected that the phrase might have been added as a way of watering down our Lord's teaching—an addition that does not even really seem to make sense. After all, who is ever angry at anyone *without a cause*? If there is a conspicuous reason that someone might want to remove the phrase, then perhaps somebody actually did remove it!

This brings us back to the question of English sources from which Joseph Smith might have gotten the idea of removing *without a cause*. Problems like those just mentioned appear to have left a mark on the history of English Bible translations as well. We have already seen that Tyndale's Bible did not have it, but Tyndale was not alone in differing with the KJV at this point. Several Bibles accepted as original the presence of *Eike* in the Greek, but did not translate it *without a cause*. The Bishops' Bible (1568), the Geneva Bible (1560), and the Great Bible (1539) translated it as *unadvisedly*: "whoever is angry with his brother *unadvisedly*." The 1826 first edition of Alexander Campbell's Bible, which would later exercise influence over the titles of the Gospels in the JST, for example,³⁸ translated it as *unjustly*: "Whosoever is angry with his brother *unjustly*."³⁹

34. John W. Welch, "Review of Stan Larson's 'The Historicity of the Matthean Sermon on the Mount,'" *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 164-65.

35. *Ibid.*, 166.

36. Larson, "Historicity of the Matthean Sermon," 128, cf. Welch, "Review of Larson," 167.

37. Welch, *Illuminating*, 201.

38. In 1826 Campbell titled his Gospels, "The Testimony of Matthew. . . Mark. . . Luke. . . John." A few years later, with the former Campbellite Sydney Rigdon serving as his scribe, Joseph Smith titled his Gospels after the same pattern, adding the abbreviation for saint: "The Testimony of St. Matthew. . . ."

39. 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*,

Perhaps Joseph had simply been familiar with the Roman Catholic Bible. Welch noted that the Vulgate does not include an equivalent to *without a cause*.⁴⁰ Nor did the Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims Version, based as it was on the Vulgate. That version reads: "Whoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment." (The first American edition of the Douay-Rheims Version was published in Philadelphia in 1790 by Carey, Stewart & Co.)

Were Tvedtnes correct in saying that the Vulgate agreed with the LXX in having *ships of the sea* instead of *ships of Tarshish*, we would have been able to suggest that perhaps Joseph got both corrections from the Roman Catholic Bible. That is not an option, however, since the Vulgate has *naves Tharsis* which is translated "ships of Tarshish" in the Douay-Rheims Version. And so we must look elsewhere.

A COMMON SOURCE FOR BOTH VARIANTS?

One point that seems obvious is that we should look for the source of these two variants in an influence on Joseph Smith at the time of his first use of them. Both variants appear in the JST, which was produced in 1830-1833, but they are also both in the Book of Mormon. A likely source then would be one which contained both variants and which Joseph Smith might have been able to access while the Book of Mormon was being translated. When the question is posed in this way two sources immediately suggest themselves.

Source 1: Martin Luther's German Bible Mediated through the Whitmers

[T]he old German translators are the most correct; most honest of any of the translators (Joseph Smith, Jr., 12 May 1844).⁴¹

Richard Lloyd Anderson reports that when David Whitmer spoke with George Q. Cannon in 1884, he "still betrayed 'a German twang.'"⁴² The Whitmers derived from Pennsylvania German stock. In fact, the first European-language translation of the Bible published in America (even before English) was Martin Luther's German Bible, published by Johann Christoph Saur in 1743 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Saur moved in the same Pietistic circles as Johann

James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge, *Doctors of the Church of Scotland* (Buffaloe, Brooke County, Va.: Printed and Published by Alexander Campbell, 1826).

40. Welch, *Illuminating*, 200.

41. Thomas Bullock Report in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, Religious Studies Monograph Series 6, comps. and eds. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo Utah: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University, 1980), 366.

42 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981), 67.

Konrad Beissel (1691-1768), who founded the Ephrata Cloister in 1732, a celibate community which practiced Baptism for the Dead and boasted of having a restored Melchizedek Priesthood. In 1790 Peter Whitmer, Sr., lived only four miles from Ephrata.⁴³ Whether or not the Whitmers had any association with the people of Ephrata Cloister, they would have been familiar with Martin Luther's translation via their own Pennsylvania German heritage.

Luther translated Isaiah 2:16 as "ships in the sea" (*Schiffe im Meer*), and he omitted *Eike* ("without a cause") in Matthew 5:22: "Wer mit seinem Bruder zürnt, der ist des Gerichts schuldig." From about 1 June 1829, until the completion of the Book of Mormon one month later, the process of translation was carried on in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., in Fayette, New York. Discussions about what Joseph was finding on the plates occasionally occurred. This is seen, for example, in David Whitmer's comment on the translation of (probably) 1 Nephi 4:4-5, "until we came without the walls of Jerusalem." In 1886 Whitmer recalled that Joseph was "ignorant of the Bible [and] that when translating he first came to where Jerusalem was spoken of as a 'Walled City' he stopped until they got a Bible & showed him where the fact was recorded—Smith not believing it was a walled city."⁴⁴

The one issue that remains unresolved is the fact that although the *ships of Tarshish* passage (2 Nephi 12:16) was translated at the Whitmer's home in June 1829,⁴⁵ the *without a cause* passage (3 Nephi 12:22) had already been translated by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by mid-May.⁴⁶ If Cowdery and Smith had already omitted *without a cause* from 3 Nephi 12:12 before coming to the Whitmer home, the Whitmers could not have been the source for both. It is still possible, however, that the translation Smith and Cowdery had earlier done might have been amended via the influence of the Whitmers. Unfortunately we will probably never know, since the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon is not extant for either passage,⁴⁷ and there is no indication of any changes having been entered into the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon, at these two places. This brings us then to the second and what seems to me the more likely solution.

43. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 239.

44. M. J. Hubble Interview (13 November 1886) in *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, ed. Lyndon W. Cook (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1991), 211.

45. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1984), 105.

46. *Ibid.*, 100.

47. For 2 Nephi 12:16, nothing remains of the original manuscript between 2 Nephi 9:42 and 2 Nephi 23:1. For 3 Nephi 12:22, nothing remains of the original manuscript between 3 Nephi 4:2 and 3 Nephi 19:26 (see *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text*, ed. Royal Skousen (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001), vi.

Source 2: John Wesley And Methodism

Joseph Smith, Jr.'s interest in Methodism is well known. The famous nineteenth-century Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright reported in his autobiography on a visit he had with Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, when the prophet said:

He believed that among all the Churches in the world the Methodist was the nearest right, and that, as far as they went, they were right. But they had stopped short by not claiming the gift of tongues, of prophecy, and of miracles, and then quoted a batch of Scripture to prove his positions correct. . . . "Indeed," said Joe, "if the Methodists would only advance a step or two further, they would take the world. We Latter-day Saints are Methodists, as far as they have gone, only we have advanced further, and if you would come in and go with us, we could sweep not only the Methodist Church, but all others, and you would be looked up to as one of the Lord's greatest prophets."⁴⁸

Cartwright considered these statements of Joseph Smith empty words of flattery, but they were more than that. In the official version of the story of the First Vision, Joseph Smith declared he was "partial to the Methodist sect, and. . . felt some desire to unite with them" (Joseph Smith History 1:8). In 1851 Orsamus Turner, who as a boy had been a member of a debating club with Joseph Smith, recollected that "after catching a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting, way down in the woods, on the Vienna road, he [Joseph] became a very passable exhorter in evening meetings."⁴⁹ The Methodists obtained the property on Vienna road in 1821, and Orsamus Turner left Palmyra in 1822.⁵⁰ If the statement is from memory, then it must relate to 1821 or 1822. If not, then it probably relates to the Palmyra revival of 1824-1825 in which the Methodist preacher George Lane figured prominently.

When Joseph Smith eloped with Emma Hale of Harmony, Pennsylvania, on 18 January 1827, he was running off with a member of a reasonably prominent Methodist family. In the winter of 1827, only a month or two after Joseph obtained the golden plates, he and Emma returned to Harmony and moved in with Emma's father, Isaac Hale. Within a few months they re-located to their own place nearby. Joseph would remain in the vicinity during most of the time the Book of Mormon was being translated, the major exception being the final month of translation work, which, as we have already noted, took place at the

48. *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher*, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curtis; New York: Hunt and Eaton, n.d. [preface dated 1856]). Online text version from Duane Maxey's Holiness Classics Library at the Wesley Center for Applied Theology of Northwest Nazarene College (<http://wesley.nnu.edu/>).

49. *Early Mormon Documents* 3, comp. and ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Press, 2000), 49-50.

50. *Ibid.*, 50n14.

Whitmers's. During this period, Joseph would have been exposed not only to Emma's extended Methodist family, but also perhaps to traveling Methodists who might have visited Emma's father or her uncle, Nathaniel Lewis. An example of such a visitor was George Peck. In the third chapter of his autobiography, Peck describes Hale's home and says that he "often partook at his table."⁵¹ It was probably also Peck who, as editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, wrote in an anonymous 1843 article:

Father Hale's house was the preacher's home, and Em, as she was then called in family parlance, acted in the subordinate part in the work about the house. Elevated as she now is, we in our old times often partook of a good repast of venison, eels, and buckwheat cakes prepared by her hands.⁵²

In June 1828, Joseph suffered two serious setbacks. On the fourteenth of the month, Martin Harris left for Palmyra with the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, which were promptly lost (or stolen). The very next day, 15 June, Emma gave birth to a stillborn child. This was not only a great personal tragedy to Joseph and Emma, but also a considerable blow to the credibility of the Book of Mormon project in the eyes of Emma's family. Joseph had told several of them early on that the golden plates were to be miraculously translated by his and Emma's firstborn son. The death of the child had the effect of permanently fixing the memory of this prediction in their minds.⁵³ It was right around this time that Joseph also sought membership in the Methodist church.⁵⁴ It was Emma's and Joseph's brother-in-law, Michael Morse, who, as Methodist class leader, enrolled Joseph in the class book,⁵⁵ and it was her cousin, Joseph Lewis, who strenuously opposed it on the grounds that Joseph was "a practicing necromancer, [and] a dealer in enchantments."⁵⁶

During this time, Joseph could not have avoided coming into contact with Methodist books. One of the distinctive features of early Methodism was its extensive use and distribution of literature as a means of evangelization and the

51. George Peck, *The Life and Times of George Peck: Written By Himself* (New York: Nelson & Phillips; Cincinnati: Hitchcock & Walden, 1874). Online text version from Duane Maxey's Holiness Classics Library at the Wesley Center for Applied Theology of Northwest Nazarene College (<http://wesley.nnu.edu/>).

52. [George Peck (?)], "Mormonism and the Mormons," 25 [3rd ser. 3] *Methodist Quarterly Review* (Jan 1843): 112.

53. See the affidavits of Isaac Hale (264), Joshua McKune (267-68), and Sophia Lewis (269) in El[ber]. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or a Faithful Account of the Singular Imposition and Delusion, From Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: by the author, 1834).

54. Bushman, *Beginnings*, 94-95. Emma's cousin, Joseph Lewis, remembered June 1828 as the date of Joseph's attempt to join the Methodists (*The [Salt Lake City] Daily Tribune*, 17 Oct. 1879, 2).

55. *The Amboy Journal*, 21 May 1879. According to Morse, Joseph's name remained in the book for about six months.

56. *The Amboy Journal*, 11 June 1879, 1.

promotion of Christian holiness. At one point early in his ministry, John Wesley, the spiritual father of Methodism, had sought the will of God for himself and received the answer: "Preach and Print."⁵⁷ "In an exceptional manner," Klaus Bockmuehl writes, "Wesley stood by this precept until his dying day."⁵⁸ In the process he created the "Christian Library," a collection of about fifty books, some of which he wrote himself and others which he abridged and provided with introductions. These were printed in very inexpensive editions in order to facilitate the widest possible distribution. Wesley encouraged his circuit riders to carry a stock of books with them in their saddlebags as they went. "Take a certain title with you when you first make the round through the congregations," he wrote. "The next time take another book. Preach at every place, and invite the congregation after the sermon to buy the relevant tract and to read it."⁵⁹ This approach was exceedingly effective in the frontier areas of America. The Methodist circuit rider would come through town preaching and distributing books—sometimes he would sell them, other times he would loan them to people until he came through again armed with more books.

One of the most remarkable Methodist publications of the early nineteenth century was a shelf-sagging six-volume set of commentaries on the Bible by Wesley's trusted lieutenant Adam Clarke (whom we have already met). Each volume was ten inches tall, six-and-a-half inches deep, and the entire set took up thirteen inches of shelf space. The thinnest volume measured one-and-two-thirds inches and the thickest, two-and-a-quarter inches. It was, in short, an imposing set of books. Clarke was Methodism's first great Biblical scholar. Although entirely self-educated, Clarke had a remarkable mind, and attained a high level of erudition, which included gaining mastery of numerous languages.

Clarke did not hesitate to apply the full breadth of his knowledge in his commentary, even though he surely knew that its primary audience would be faithful rank and file Methodists rather than the learned. Thus, an antagonistic reviewer in the 1829 *Quarterly Christian Spectator* remarks:

Had Dr. [Thomas] Scott crowded his works, in this way, with learned and abstruse matter, what would have been the result? Could they ever have become generally popular, till the abstruse and the illegible matter was swept from his pages? Would his Bible, especially, ever have become a "*family bible*?" And yet we have now before us an edition of A. Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament, on coarse paper and in cheap binding, to accommodate it to the means of all and even in this edition, the stiff and stately Hebrew, the nimble Greek, the sprawling Arabic, and almost all other conceivable characters, are found parading the pages in dumb show.

57. Klaus Bockmuehl, *Books: God's Tools in the History of Salvation* (Moscow, Idaho: Community Christian Ministries, 1992), 16.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Quoted in *ibid.*, 17.

Had these costly accompaniments been omitted, the paper and execution might have been much better at the same price, and the work equally useful to those for whom it was chiefly designed.⁶⁰

The same reviewer had earlier written: "Precisely what proportion of his [Clarke's] brethren in this country, whether bishops, priests, or laity, will be able to follow him in his quotations from the Saxon, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Samaritan, Arabic, and Ethiopic languages, with which he has variegated his pages, we cannot say."⁶¹ It was just this "veriegation" that provided Emma's uncle, the Rev. Nathaniel Lewis, with a way to test the powers of Joseph Smith's mysterious Urim and Thummim. One day he asked Joseph "if any one but himself could translate other languages into English by the aid of his miraculous spectacles?" When Joseph said yes, Lewis lifted down a large volume from its place on the shelf and opened it. He then "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."⁶² This anecdote reveals that Clarke's commentary was near at hand while the Book of Mormon was being translated and that Nathaniel Lewis had at least made Joseph Smith aware of its existence.⁶³ There is also the possibility that Joseph himself consulted Clarke's Commentary, or had it quoted to (or at) him on other occasions by Uncle Lewis.

What, then, did Clarke's commentary have to say about the two passages under discussion? The response to the Isaiah 2:16 passage began: "[*Ships of Tarshish*] Are in Scripture often used by a metonymy for ships in general."⁶⁴ The 1828 first edition of Noah Webster's Dictionary defined metonymy as follows:

In rhetoric, a trope in which one word is put for another; a change of names which have some relation to each other; as when we say, "a man keeps a good *table*," instead of good *provisions*. "We read *Virgil*," that is, his *poe[m]s* or *writings*. "They have *Moses* and the *prophets*," that is, their *books* or *writings*. A man has a clear *head*, that is, *understanding*, *intellect*; a warm *heart*, that is, *affections*.

60. Anonymous, "Review of Adam Clarke's Discourses," *Quarterly Christian Spectator* 4 (Dec 1829): 554.

61. *Ibid.*, 553-54.

62. Lewis related this story to the anonymous author (probably George Peck) of the "Mormonism and the Mormons" (see p. 113) around 1840.

63. Nathaniel Lewis in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* speaks of himself as "residing near him," (256), i.e., near Joseph Smith.

64. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1827-1831), 3:684. The introduction to Isaiah in this edition is dated 24 Sept. 1823. Late in 1831 a new edition was issued "with the author's final corrections." In that edition, the passage quoted here appears at 4:31 and is identical.

The word *metonymy* might have been a difficult one, although it was used more frequently then than now. Joseph Smith may or may not have learned it in school. In any case, he could have looked it up. What Clarke was saying, then, was that *Ships of Tarshish* was another way of saying *ships in general*. Clarke's extended note on Isaiah 2:16 was taken verbatim from Bishop William Lowth's commentary on Isaiah, which, as we have already seen, had influenced the commentaries of Thomas Scott and Matthew Poole at the same point as well.⁶⁵

When we come to the *without a cause* issue, Clarke was perfectly clear:

Eike, vainly, or, as in the common translation, *without a cause*, is wanting in the famous Vatican MS. [i.e., Vaticanus], and two others, the *Ethiopic*, latter *Arabic*, *Saxon*, *Vulgate*, two copies of the old *itala*, *J. Martyr*, *Ptolemy*, *Origen*, *Tertullian*, and by all the ancient copies quoted by St. *Jerom[e]*. It was probably a marginal gloss originally, which in the process of time crept into the text.⁶⁶

In other words, *without a cause* was not in the original. Some of the writers discussed here noticed that this was Clarke's position on one or the other of these passages. They have not, however, mentioned Joseph's access to Clarke.

Yet Clarke's views of these two passages were not strictly his own. Most likely they were influenced at least by John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes and Standard Sermons*. In his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* (1765), Wesley had this to say about Isaiah 2:16: "Tarshish—The Ships of the Sea, as that word is used, Psal. xliii. 7. whereby you fetched riches from remote parts of the world."⁶⁷ And then in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (1755) he says of Matthew 5:22:

Whosoever is angry with his brother—Some copies add, without a cause—But this is utterly foreign to the whole scope and tenor of our Lord's discourse. If he had only forbidden the being angry without a cause, there was no manner of need of that solemn declaration, I say unto you; for the scribes and Pharisees themselves said as much as this. Even they taught, men ought not to be angry without a cause. So that this righteousness does not exceed theirs. But Christ teaches, that we ought

65. Clarke did not make his source clear in earlier editions of his commentary. Later ones, however, include a simple L. at the end of the note. Clarke had already explained his dependence on Lowth in his introduction to Isaiah.

66. *Ibid.*, 5:57. The introduction to Matthew in this edition is dated 21 February 1814. The introduction in the 1831, "with the author's final corrections," is dated 20 November 1831. The passage quoted here appears at 5:71 and is identical except for correcting *Jerom* to read *Jerome*.

67. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes* (in many editions from 1765). This was taken by Wesley from the seventeenth century English Annotations of Matthew Poole, whom in the preface to the work Wesley acknowledges as one of his basic sources. Poole's note was almost identical: "The ships of Tarshish; the ships of the sea, as that word is used, Psalm. xliii. 7, whereby you fetched riches and precious things from the remote parts of the world."

not, for any cause, to be so angry as to call any man Raca, or fool. We ought not, for any cause, to be angry at the person of the sinner, but at his sins only."⁶⁸

The same view is reflected in Wesley's translation of the New Testament (1790): "whosoever is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment."⁶⁹ Wesley reinforces this idea in Sermon XVII of his *Standard Sermons* (Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse II):

But would not one be inclined to prefer the reading of those copies which omit the word. . . *without a cause*? Is it not entirely superfluous? For if *anger at persons* be a temper contrary to love, how can there be a cause, a sufficient cause for it,—any that will justify it in the sight of God?⁷⁰

To understand early Methodism, one has to grasp the supreme importance of Wesley's *Explanatory Notes* (especially those on the New Testament) and his *Standard Sermons*. They were the doctrinal standards of the Methodist church and served as the more-or-less standard-issue basic theological library for Methodist circuit preachers. In 1763 Wesley had drawn up a "model deed," which was to appear in that year's *Larger Minutes*.⁷¹ Among its stipulations was that Methodist preachers must "preach no other Doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes Upon the New Testament, and four volumes of Sermons."⁷² This directive was subsequently applied to all Methodist preachers, including those laboring in America. In 1775 Wesley sent copies of his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* to every American Methodist preacher attending conference that year.

In 1783, on the occasion of the appointment of Francis Asbury to the office of General Assistant overseeing American Methodism, Wesley directed a letter "To the Preachers in America," insisting that they all "be determined to abide by

68. Ibid. (in multiple editions from 1755).

69. Ibid. (in multiple editions from 1790).

70. Multiple editions. We follow here the numbering in *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 7th ed., 2 vols., ed. Edward H. Sugden (London: The Epworth Press, 1968). The traditional number for this sermon was XXII.

71. Quoted in Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1989), 193, from *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. John and Charles Wesley and Others* (London: Paramore, 1780), 43. This model deed was also included in the earlier editions of 1770 and 1772.

72. In the 1771 edition of Wesley's collected works, the first four volumes of sermons contained fifty-three sermons. On the rationale for limiting the standard sermons to only forty-four, see Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons* 1:13-16. Sugden points out: (1) when the "model deed" first appeared in 1763, the four volumes of sermons contained forty-four sermons; (2) the first four volumes of an eight-volume set of Wesley's sermons issued in 1787-1788 did not include the nine additional sermons that had been added to the 1771 edition; and (3) "[a]fter 1787 the form of the words in the Model Deed was altered to 'the first four volumes of sermons.'"

the Methodist doctrine and discipline, published in the four volumes of *Sermons*, and the *Notes on the New Testament*, together with the *Larger Minutes* of the Conference."⁷³ These instructions were formally accepted at the next conference of American Methodist preachers (May 1784) where those present bound themselves to "preach the doctrines taught in the four volumes of *Sermons* and the *Notes on the New Testament*."⁷⁴

Even after the Christmas Conference of 1784, at which American Methodists, following a plan drawn up by Wesley himself, formed themselves into an independent body, Wesley's *Standard Sermons* and his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* continued to play an important role. The 1805 *Discipline's* section on the "Duty of Preachers" enjoins: "From four to five in the morning and from five to six in the evening, to meditate, pray, and read the Scriptures with notes [i.e., the explanatory notes], and the closely practical parts of what Mr. Wesley has published."⁷⁵ "The 'practical parts' referred to," writes Thomas C. Oden, "are largely found in the last half of the four volumes of *Sermons*." Wesley's *Sermons* and *Explanatory Notes* are still doctrinal standards of the United Methodist Church, due to the first Restrictive Rule of 1808, which stipulated that "The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or *establish any new standards* or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing standards of doctrine" (italics added).⁷⁶ However, it would be wrong to think that Wesley's standards continue to exercise today the kind of authority they had in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In early Methodism, anything that Wesley wrote had considerable weight. The fact that his *Standard Sermons* and *Explanatory Notes* had been elevated to the status of doctrinal standards for Methodism gave these works even more weight. Even though the *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* were not actually included in the doctrinal standards, their common title and purpose with the *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* would have endowed them, one would think, with a certain uplift of authority by association.

We are thus not surprised to see Wesley's views on Isaiah 2:16 and Matthew 5:22 trickling down into, or otherwise influencing, other early Methodist sources, just as they had with Adam Clarke's commentary. Another example is seen in the *Biblical and Theological Dictionary* by the prominent early Methodist writer Richard Watson (1781-1833). In his article on Tarshish, he de-

73. Frank Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1976), 171n. Quoted in Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury, 1988), 31.

74. Norman Spellman, "The Formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church," in *A History of American Methodism*, 3 vols., ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (New York, Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 1:225.

75. Quoted in Oden, *Doctrinal Standards*, 52.

76. Quoted in Oden, *Doctrinal Standards*, 17-18: See also appropriate pages of the United Methodist Church web-site: www.umc.org.

clared: "The LXX translate Tarshish sometimes by 'the sea.'"⁷⁷ Consider also Joseph Benson (d. 1821), who had been directed in 1808 to produce a multi-volume commentary on the Bible, published in about 1816. In Benson's treatment of Matthew 5:22, he says:

It must be observed that the word *ἐκτὴ* here rendered *without cause*, and which might properly be translated *rashly*, or *inconsiderately* is wanting in some old versions and manuscripts, and, it seems, ought not to be inserted, being. . . .⁷⁸

After the word *being*, Benson reproduces verbatim a large portion of the comment from Wesley's *Explanatory Notes* on the passage.

It is also highly likely that copies of Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* and his *Standard Sermons* were distributed in the homes of Emma Smith's relatives. Emma herself might have had a copy of Wesley's *New Testament* and/or his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. In view of the fact that Nathaniel Lewis was a serious enough Methodist to want to own Clarke's commentary, it would hardly stretch the imagination to think that he might also own a work like the *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, even though it was a three-volume set.⁷⁹

When we examine the JST and the King James excerpts that have been transported into the Book of Mormon, it becomes quite clear that Joseph Smith gave no systematic attention to questions of textual criticism. In an earlier study, the author has described the situation this way:

That Smith was not interested in correcting the [Bible] 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 [King James Bible] 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, the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11), the replacement of "tree" with "book" (Rev 22:19), and—by far the most debated biblical verse in Smith's day—1 John 5:7, the so-called *comma Johanneum*. All of these were known to Smith's contemporaries.⁸⁰

It seems much more likely that Joseph would have acquired information on a variant here and there, in conversation, or by reading or listening to preachers.

77. Richard Watson, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary* (London: J. Mason, 1831), 962. The first American edition, "revised by American editors," was published in 1832 in New York by Nelson & Phillips (see same quotation on p. 903).

78. Joseph Benson, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1854-1856), 1:62-3.

79. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 3 vols. (Bristol: William Pine, 1765).

80. Ronald V. Huggins, "Joseph Smith's 'Inspired Translation' of Romans 7," in *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretative Essays on Joseph Smith*, ed. Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 267. See related footnotes for contemporary sources.

From first-hand descriptions of the translation process, it is clear that things were not carried on in secret. We have already recalled how a discussion arose about the walls of Jerusalem in the context of translating 1 Nephi 4:4-5. To this we might add a number of other instances where someone else besides Joseph and his scribe were in the room during the process of translation. For example David Whitmer's daughter Elizabeth Ann, who would become Oliver Cowdery's wife in 1832, later recalled that she "often sat by and saw and heard them [Joseph and his scribe] translate and write for hours together."⁸¹ Emma herself told Joseph Smith III in 1879 that "Oliver Cowdery and your father wrote in the room where I was at work."⁸² Even Isaac Hale himself recalls being present while Joseph and Martin Harris were working:

I went to the house where Joseph Smith Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the Book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were. . . . I enquired whose words they were, and was informed by Joseph or Emma, (I rather think it was the former) that they were the words of Jesus Christ. I told them, that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it.⁸³

Here Isaac Hale has described something that might have occurred regularly: Hale overhears something, which in turn leads him to inquire into it, and then to challenge Emma and Joseph about it. Even when members of Emma's family, who listened to the translation process, did not challenge Smith directly, they might well have talked about it afterward, perhaps even to Uncle Nathaniel Lewis. We can also imagine Emma dropping in on a relative and being asked something like: "Well, Em, what did the golden plates say today?" All such encounters might easily have resulted in discussions between Emma's relatives and Joseph, which might have included pulling Methodist books down from the shelf and consulting them. Then again, there is the possibility that Emma herself may have been familiar enough with the Methodist views to comment when Joseph said something that struck her as discrepant. We see something like this when Emma, like Whitmer, recalled Joseph's question about the walls of Jerusalem in 1 Nephi 4:4-5: "[O]ne time while translating where it speaks of the walls of Jerusalem, he [Joseph] stopped and said, 'Emma, did Jerusalem have walls surrounding it?'"⁸⁴ According to her memory it was she who informed him that it did.

81. Quoted in Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *Joseph Smith: The Gift of Seeing*, in Waterman, *Prophet Puzzle*, 90.

82. *Early Mormon Documents 1*, comp. and ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 542.

83. Isaac Hale's Affidavit in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 26.

84. Quoted in Brent Lee Metcalfe, "The Priority of Mosiah," in Metcalfe, *New Approaches*, 401.

CONCLUSION

Writers like Terryl Givens, John A. Tvedtnes, and John W. Welsh have been too quick to deny that Joseph Smith could have known what anybody with religious curiosity might have known in his day. Smith's renderings of these verses do, however, raise the question of how he came to them. The best answer seems to be that he learned of them while interacting with Emma Smith's Methodist relatives. They are, in fact, just the kind of changes one might expect to find given such a context. The most immediate source that might be suggested for both readings is Wesley's *Explanatory Notes on the Old and New Testament*. It is also possible that Joseph learned of them indirectly from Luther's German Bible, through the mediation of the Whitmer family. Or perhaps he learned of them from one and had them reinforced by the other.