

Unity and the King James Bible

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The Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible (KJV)¹ has been the de facto English LDS Bible since the very beginning of the Restoration. The initial reason for this is simple: The KJV was the Bible of American Protestantism in the nineteenth century² and was therefore Joseph Smith's Bible. For example, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery used an 1828 KJV to begin work on the Inspired Version of the Bible, known by Mormons as the "Joseph Smith Translation" (JST).³ As Philip Barlow puts it, "Joseph Smith's generation was raised on the KJV."⁴ However, Joseph never designated the KJV as the "official" LDS Bible. Indeed, recognition of its flaws led him to study the ancient languages, work on the Inspired Version, and seek out alternative translations such as the Luther Bible. Indeed, early Mormons often cited different translations of biblical texts,⁵ and it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the KJV began to acquire official status. In 1956, J. Reuben Clark, a member of the First Presidency, wrote a defence of the KJV,⁶ a work which remained popular for many years and whose influence can still be felt. The KJV's place was later quasi-canonised with the publication of the 1979 LDS version of the Bible, a project begun under Harold B. Lee, a close associate of President Clark. As it currently stands, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shows no sign of wanting to move away from the KJV, and a consideration of this position is theologically and socially revealing.

Some people, particularly those outside the Mormon faith, might rightly ask why Anglophone Latter-day Saints still use the KJV when new translations are available that both represent the ancient sources and their languages in up-to-date ways and that are now more popular than the four-hundred-year-old KJV. Mormon scholar Grant Hardy (see preceding article) has recently ad-

vocated using modern translations alongside the KJV, claiming that the archaic language of the KJV is a hindrance to both missionary work and Bible literacy in the church.⁷ Hardy notes that the KJV is no longer the dominant Bible of the English-speaking world⁸ and that the New International Version (NIV) is now the standard Bible for conservative American Christians. It would seem that the question of why Latter-day Saints still use the KJV is a relevant one.

The purpose of this article is neither to defend the KJV nor to criticise its use. Rather, I will discuss, in ways hopefully illuminating for those both in and outside the tradition, why Mormons use the KJV—or to state it differently, what the use of the KJV might say about the modern Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As we shall see, the KJV stands at the convergence of several important Mormon beliefs and thus serves as an interesting token of the LDS faith. In particular, the KJV seems to underline the importance of unity to the LDS Church: unity with Joseph Smith and the Restoration, unity with the sources of revelation, and unity with traditional Mormon Christology.

Unity with Joseph Smith and the Restoration

Latter-day Saints regard the gospel as a unified, eternal project, its teachings evident from Adam to modern times. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated: “We know that the plan of salvation is always and everlastingly the same; that obedience to the same laws always brings the same reward; that the gospel laws have not changed.”⁹ Similarly, the Lord tells the Latter-day Saints: “If ye are not one, ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). Important to this belief in gospel unity is the King James Version, which, unlike other translations, offers Latter-day Saints a seamless linguistic continuity from ancient writ to latter-day revelation—from Genesis to modern scripture—most transmitted in a Jacobean idiom. As Douglas Davies puts it, for Mormons the KJV is “retained for purposes of coherence, mutual reinforcement and unity of ethos.”¹⁰ Anthony Hutchinson describes it as a “Harmonizing Hermeneutic” and characterises the use of the KJV as supporting the dominant conservative mode of biblical hermeneutics in the LDS Church.¹¹

The KJV reinforces latter-day revelation in two particular and related ways. First, and historically, Smith’s use of the KJV

through his work on the JST acted as a trigger for many of the revelations now printed in the Doctrine and Covenants (e.g., D&C 76, 77, 91, and 132).¹² As J. B. Haws states, regarding Doctrine and Covenants 76, the revelation was “more than anything else a blending of literal readings of the Bible into a revolutionary view of heaven.”¹³ Second, the actual language of the KJV allowed Joseph and his successors to find biblical phraseology for new doctrines. Certain Mormon distinctives would therefore be lost if Mormons were to use newer translations, something of which the First Presidency was no doubt aware when they stated in 1992 that “while other Bible versions may be easier to read than the KJV, in doctrinal matters latter-day revelation supports the KJV.”¹⁴ Compare the following doctrinal phrases found in the KJV with their more modern equivalents and then consider the LDS doctrines that relate closely to the particular language and cadence of the KJV:

- Millenarianism: “dispensation of the fullness of times” (Eph. 1:10) vs. “a plan for the fullness of time” (New Revised Standard Version)
- The Rocky Mountain location of the Salt Lake Temple: “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established *in the top of the mountains*” (Isa. 2:2; emphasis mine) vs. “as the chief of the mountains” (New American Standard Bible)
- Preexistence: “First estate” (Jude 1:6) vs. “Principality” (Douay-Rheims)
- Theology: “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9) vs. “One who had been living forever” (Good News Bible)¹⁵
- Soteriology: “work out your own salvation” (Philip. 2:12) vs. “do the good things that result from being saved” (Living Bible)¹⁶

David Rolph Seely has catalogued the words and phrases crafted by Tyndale, whose translation preceded the KJV and was a major influence upon it. In particular he examines neologisms such as “Jehovah,” “Passover,” “atonement,” “scapegoat,” “mercy seat,” and “shewbread”—words that, he notes, are “significant and

essential in Restoration scripture.”¹⁷ Retaining the KJV maintains a biblical link with Mormon doctrine and language, allowing “all scripture [to be] woven together as one book.”¹⁸ Use of another Bible would orphan some Mormon phraseology, from the “And it came to pass”-es and other Jacobeanisms of the Book of Mormon to the important doctrines listed above. The purpose of the JST—to “improve” the Bible—might also be weakened when using a so-called already “improved” Bible.¹⁹ Thus, the KJV maintains an important unity between the modern church and Joseph Smith and the Restoration.

Unity with the Sources of Revelation

Armand L. Mauss and Philip L. Barlow see the KJV as part of what they call the “Mormon sectarian retrenchment,” although that is only its current use.²⁰ During the first half of the twentieth century, they claim that “the KJV served as a vehicle for Mormon assimilation,”²¹ providing a common scriptural ground with Protestant Christianity. This explanation also remains current in explanations for Latter-day Saints’ continued use of the KJV. The reprinted edition of Clark’s *Why the King James Version* asserts: The “use and acceptance of the King James Version is further enhanced by the fact that it still remains the largest-selling version in the world today.”²² While the KJV no longer has this best-selling status, it does demonstrate the desire to bring the LDS Bible into what was seen as the mainstream. However, Mauss and Barlow see a turn to retrenchment in the decades after World War II in which the KJV promoted Mormon distinctiveness and supported a more conservative and orthodox approach to the Bible.

For Latter-day Saints, the primary route to truth is through revelation, available to the individual through the Holy Spirit, but at all times guided by those authorized to reveal doctrine to the Church, viz. the General Authorities and the institutions of the Church that implement their will. No matter how good the modern translations, they are the products of scholarship, and Mormons typically prefer to subordinate scholarship to revelation (2 Ne 9:28–29). Contrast the revelatory power of the lightly educated Joseph Smith with the famous tale of the Ivy League unbelief of Charles Anthon, professor of classics at Columbia, who could not accept the supernatural nature of the Book of Mormon

translation (JSH–1:64–65). Mormon scripture does not speak highly of attempts to translate and transmit the Bible by those not man-dated by God:

And the angel of the Lord said unto me [Nephi]: Thou hast beheld that the book [the Bible] proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God. . . .

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. (1 Ne. 13:24, 28)

Modern Bible translators, inasmuch as they participate in “higher criticism,” until recently would have found their work referenced with “apostasy” in Bruce R. McConkie’s still-influential *Mormon Doctrine*.²³ Translators of the “liberal” Revised Standard Version (RSV)—the new biblical upstart at the time Clark wrote his defence of the KJV—were, in conservative eyes, scholars first and believers second (if at all). Compare them with the claimed piety of the KJV translators, who prayed to God to guide their work and who received no financial remuneration for their efforts. Tyndale, who exudes the kind of piety inherent in such translations, wrote, “Them that are learned Christenly, I beseche: for as moche as I am sure, and my conscience beareth me recorde, that of a pure entent, singly and faythfully I have interpreted itt, as farre forth as god [sic] gave me the gyfte of knowledge, and understandyng.”²⁴

While obviously not Mormon, these translators are the paragon of the faithful scholar, learned but believing. It is no surprise that they met with the approval of J. Reuben Clark, whom Latter-day Saints considered, by virtue of his status as a member of the LDS First Presidency, as a “prophet, seer, and revelator.” President Clark was both erudite and authorized, and there has simply been no similar Mormon proponent of another translation.²⁵ Indeed, the newest edition of the Church’s administrative handbook reiterates a commitment to the KJV: “English-speaking members should use the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible. . . . Although other versions of the Bi-

ble may be easier to read, in doctrinal matters, latter-day revelation supports the King James Version in preference to other English translations.”²⁶

The language of the KJV has also had an important influence on Mormon prayer language and ideas of deference and reverence. President Clark asked, “Could any language be too great, too elegant, too beautiful, too majestic, too divine-like to record the doings and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ?”²⁷ Mormons tend to encounter the divine in a formal way, an enduring influence of the KJV and to move away from it would be to orphan, among other things, the language of prayer. As Apostle Dallin H. Oaks has stated: “When we address prayers to our Heavenly Father in English, our only available alternatives are the common words of speech like *you* and *your* or the dignified but uncommon words like *thee*, *thou*, and *thy* which were used in the King James Version of the Bible almost five hundred years ago. Latter-day Saints, of course, prefer the latter. In our prayers we use language that is dignified and different, even archaic.”²⁸

Such is the Mormon commitment to the archaic language of the KJV that the original *informal* function of these second-person pronouns is consciously ignored. Terryl L. Givens describes the unifying role of the KJV in Mormon speech as follows: “As an intensely Bible-literate community, immersing itself in not just one, but four volumes of King Jamesian scripture, Latter-day Saint culture was, and continues to be, comfortably familiar with those speech patterns. . . . As a consequence of all this reinforcement, King James English is, in Mormonism, firmly identified with sacred language, and absolutely immune to any modernizing reform in the realms of prayer, ordinances, or the scriptures themselves.”²⁹

To Grant Hardy’s claim that the KJV is too difficult to read, many Latter-day Saints might respond with a certain dispassion, for Mormon scripture reading is often as much a devotional as an educational activity, where the emphasis is on cognition as a spiritual and not just as an intellectual event.³⁰ There is merit in the struggle to understand, as it forces the Latter-day Saints to rely on revelation. For example, Mormons are enjoined to read Isaiah (3 Ne. 23:1–3) but can have difficulty understanding it,³¹ a problem

that might be improved by reading a newer translation. However, to use a modern version of the Bible as a means of better understanding the text is to rely in the first instance on something other than revelation. When Bruce R. McConkie gave his “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” they did not include the suggestion to read a modern version (or learn Hebrew for that matter). Instead, he invited Latter-day Saints to, among other things, “have the spirit of prophecy” and “use the Book of Mormon.”³²

Of course, Latter-day Saints are not the only Christians who struggle to understand ancient scripture whatever the translation, which is why many Bibles include marginal notes and commentaries, but for a Mormon to use such a Bible is to be possibly unduly influenced by non-revelatory voices, no matter how erudite or earnest. Seeking to understand the KJV, Mormons are likely to turn to their own authorized commentaries and aids and to the spirit of revelation through prayer.³³ These are vital tools in the pedagogical life of Mormons.

Unity with Mormon Christology

Despite the complaints of some Christians, Mormon beliefs regarding Christ are in many ways very traditional, so it was no surprise that President Clark (and others) were worried about the RSV’s use of “young woman” rather than “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 to describe the famous Messianic prophecy of the woman (believed by Christians to be Mary) who conceives and bears a son (believed to be Jesus). Such was the indignation surrounding this passage that copies of the RSV were publicly burned by some conservative Christians. Senator Joseph McCarthy even claimed that the translation was part of a Communist plot to undermine American Christianity.³⁴ Thus, at a time when KJV use was being made official in the LDS Church, the KJV was seen as conservative, American, and Christian, a grouping with which Mormons have tended to feel socially comfortable.

Other dissonances with Mormon Christology found outside of the KJV further led President Clark to state that the Church “cannot accept any version that takes from Jesus the Christ any attribute of Godhood.”³⁵ Newer translations, for example, often note textual doubts over the use of “Son of God” in Mark 1:1, highlight the supposed problem of the end of Mark, and cast

doubt on important elements of the Gethsemane narrative. Following are the marginal notes for these passages in the NRSV:

- Mark 1:1—“Other ancient authorities lack *the Son of God*.” As Mark is widely considered to be the earliest Gospel, this alleged later intrusion might be used to support historical Jesus studies which claim that Jesus’s divinity was a later development in Christianity.
- Mark 16:8—“Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8,” i.e., with the empty tomb but before Jesus’s post-resurrection appearances, including his charge to take the gospel into the world, so vital to the concept of Christian evangelism.³⁶
- The most troublesome is the question mark often placed over the story of Christ’s bleeding from every pore in Luke 22, for which a marginal note in the NRSV states, “Other ancient authorities lack verses 43 and 44.” The verses themselves are bracketed in the NRSV text. For Mormons, the Gethsemane narrative—Jesus’s “inner crucifixion”³⁷—is central to their view of the Atonement (Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:16–19).

According to LDS scholars Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment: “Although these important passages are questioned by some textual critics, who note that they are lacking from some, although not all, of the earliest manuscripts, other scholars have pointed out that some early copyists felt that the account of Jesus’ sufferings and need for strength was incompatible with his divinity, which led them to try to delete these ‘plain and precious’ parts of Luke’s account.”³⁸

Lincoln Blumell offers a recent, fuller treatment of these verses and believes that there is good reason to consider them original, although he notes the strong counter-view. Interestingly, his argument uses evidence that further highlights the problem of “plain and precious” deletion by some ancient theologians and will thus ring true to Mormon ears: “It has recently been argued that this account of Gethsemane may have been dropped by certain Christian groups, such as the Marcionites in their copy of the

Gospel of Luke, because it portrayed a side of Jesus that was not only too weak but also too subordinate to the Father (the Demiurge to the Marcionites).”³⁹

The KJV raises none of these problems relating to the “plain and precious” passages and thus supports what is, for Mormons, a faithful view of Christ. Such support should not, however, be taken as a convenient crutch. The Mormon view of Christ’s divinity is robust and reliant on sources, such as the Book of Mormon, which are unequivocal in their testimony. But as already stated, gospel unity is important to Latter-day Saints and thus the KJV serves a useful purpose.

Conclusion

Since President Clark’s apologia for the King James Version, modern LDS authorities have not entered into detailed discussion of the use of the KJV; and thus authoritative explanations, beyond the statement that the KJV supports latter-day revelation, are lacking. However, one can observe how the use of the King James Version by Mormons represents an enlightening token of LDS beliefs and practices and, in particular, how it intersects with the importance of unity in the faith: unity with the Restoration, the sources of revelation, and Christ. For English readers, different Bibles can interfere with this unity and thus there remains no popular movement in the Church to move away from the KJV.

In the meantime, while it may seem increasingly idiosyncratic to outsiders, Anglophonic Mormonism is indebted in vital ways to both the KJV idiom and the kind of Bible the KJV represents, and its importance cannot be overstated. It is true that these are not problems encountered outside of the Anglophone church; it is also true that Mormons are free to use other translations in their reading and scholarship, something even evident in sermons given by Mormon leaders at General Conference.⁴⁰ However, for the time being,⁴¹ and for reasons including those discussed above, the KJV may be considered too useful a tool in the spiritual life of the Latter-day Saints to be set aside in exclusive favour of another translation.

Notes

1. Owing to the 400th anniversary of the King James Version in

2011, numerous works on the KJV have recently been published, including, *inter alia*, Robert Alter, *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010) and, from a Mormon perspective, Kent P. Jackson, ed., *The King James Bible and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011).

2. “For most of our history, to refer to the Bible in America is to refer to the King James Bible.” John Tanner, “The King James Bible in America: Pilgrim, Prophet, President, Preacher,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 3 (2011): 6.

3. See Kent P. Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible: The Historical Context of the Bible Used in the Joseph Smith Translation,” *BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 41–70.

4. Philip Barlow, “Why the King James Version?: From the Common to the Official Bible of Mormonism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 2 (1986): 20. Barlow’s article is summarised online {<http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Why-the-King-James-Version.html>} and is also treated in his book, *Mormons and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Gordon Irving, “The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s,” *BYU Studies* 13, no. 4 (1973): 473–88 and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 130–43.

5. *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1, 1845): 791, quotes from the Bishop’s Bible, the KJV, the Catholic, the Polyglot, and the Hebrew.

6. J. Reuben Clark, *Why the King James Version* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1956). A history of the KJV and a summary of President Clark’s argument can be found in Franklin S. Gonzalez, “The King James Bible,” unpublished handout (University of Utah LDS Institute of Religion, n.d.); copy in the LDS Historical Department Library and in my possession. Clark’s objections to the RSV are also summarised in J. Reuben Clark Jr., “Our Bible,” *Conference Report*, April 1954, 37–47.

7. Grant Hardy, “The King James Bible and the Future of Missionary Work,” *BCC Papers* 6, no. 1 (February 2011), {<http://bycommonconsent.com/2011/02/15/bcc-papers-6-1-hardy-kjv>}. Hardy believes that the LDS Church should “retain the KJV as our official Bible, but at the same time strongly encourage the supplementary study of other translations” (3).

8. I oversee religious instruction at an Anglican prep school and whilst some features of the KJV remain part of Anglican life—notably the text of the Lord’s Prayer—it would be rare to find the KJV in the classroom or in the pews. The NIV now accounts for 45% of Bible sales in the USA, making it the best seller by far. Jennifer Robison, “The Word on Bi-

ble Buying,” *Gallup Polls*, June 18, 2002, {<http://www.gallup.com/poll/6217/word-biblebuying.aspx>}.

9. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 4–5.

10. Douglas Davies, *Introduction to Mormonism* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.

11. Anthony A. Hutchinson, “LDS Approaches to the Bible,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 99–124. Hutchinson describes what he sees as four approaches to the Bible in the Church, each with its advocates: (1) Harmonizing Hermeneutic (Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie, et al.); (2) Critically Modified Harmonizing Hermeneutic (J. Reuben Clark, James E. Talmage); (3) Critical Hermeneutic with Harmonizing (Hugh Nibley, “various LDS literati”); (4) Critical Hermeneutic (Russell Swenson, Sterling McMurrin).

12. On the translation of the Bible by Joseph Smith, see Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible—A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975) and, latterly, Kent P. Jackson, “The King James Bible and the Joseph Smith Translation,” in Kent P. Jackson, ed., *The King James Bible and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 197–214.

13. J. B. Haws, “Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation,” in Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill, eds., *The Doctrine and Covenants, Revelations in Context: The 37th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center/Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 142–67.

14. “First Presidency Statement on the King James Version of the Bible,” *Ensign*, August 1992, 80.

15. Kent P. Jackson has commented on the theology Joseph Smith derived from Daniel in his “Joseph Smith and the Bible,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63, no. 1 (2010): 35–36.

16. Other examples are given in Franklin S. Gonzalez, “I Have a Question: With so many English translations of the Bible that are easy to read, why does the Church still use the King James Version?” *Ensign*, June 1987, 23–25.

17. David Rolph Seely, “‘Words Fitly Spoken’: Tyndale’s Translation of the Bible,” in Steven C. Harper, ed., *Prelude to the Restoration: From Apostasy to the Restored Church* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center/Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 212–27; the quotation is on p. 224.

18. Joseph Fielding McConkie, “Modern Revelation,” in Robert L.

Millet, ed., *To Be Learned Is Good If . . .*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 126.

19. There are different ways in which one can understand the revelatory character of the JST, either as something approaching a standard translation (see Matthews, "A Plainer Translation," 233–53) or as a kind of inspired midrash (see Heikki Räisänen, "Joseph Smith as a Creative Interpreter of the Bible," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1–22). Kevin Barney has summarised these views in "The Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 3 (1986): 85–102. Kent P. Jackson characterises the JST as a revealed "recasting" of the biblical text in his "Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible," in Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2010), 55.

20. Armand L. Mauss and Philip L. Barlow, "Church, Sect, and Scripture: The Protestant Bible and Mormon Sectarian Retrenchment," *Sociological Analysis* 52, no. 4 (1991): 397–414. For Mauss's fuller statement of Mormon assimilation and retrenchment, see *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

21. Mauss and Barlow, "Church, Sect, and Scripture," 409.

22. "Publisher's Preface" to J. Reuben Clark Jr., *Why the King James Version* (1956; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), iv.

23. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966). This book went out of print in the spring of 2010.

24. William Tyndale, *The New Testament 1526 Translated by William Tyndale, Original Spelling Edition*, edited by W. R. Cooper (London: The British Library, 2000), 554.

25. To this reason, one might also add distrust at the time of a peculiarly Mormon version of the Bible (the JST), given that it was owned by a rival faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ). This distrust has largely disappeared, but the LDS Church still does not have the copyright to the JST.

26. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church, 2010* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 180.

27. Clark, *Why the King James Version*, 155.

28. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Language of Prayer," *Ensign*, May 1993, 15.

29. Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 211–12.

30. "The scriptures, in essence, are a written 'recording' of the voice of the Lord—a voice we feel in our hearts more than we hear with our

ears.” David A. Bednar, “Because We Have Them before Our Eyes,” *New Era*, April 2006, <http://www.lds.org/new-era/2006/04/because-we-have-them-before-our-eyes?lang=eng> (accessed May 3, 2012).

31. A search at DeseretBook.com for “Isaiah” produced fifteen study aids and includes such titles as “Isaiah for Airheads.”

32. Bruce R. McConkie, “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” *Ensign*, October 1973, <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1973/10/ten-keys-to-understanding-isaiah?lang=eng> (accessed May 4, 2012). In 1984, Elder McConkie noted that the “key to an understanding of Holy Writ lies not in the wisdom of men, not in cloistered halls, not in academic degrees, [and] not in a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew.” McConkie, “The Bible: A Sealed Book,” in (no editor), *Supplement to a Symposium on the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984), 1. When used properly, McConkie rates skill in the ancient languages as “one and two tenths”; improperly used its worth is “a minus five or a minus ten” (3). The entire sermon is a classic orthodox exposition of Mormon biblical hermeneutics.

33. Elder Bednar’s first principle of scripture study is to “Pray for understanding, and invite the help of the Holy Ghost.” “Because We Have Them before Our Eyes.”

34. Barlow, “Why the King James Version?,” 25.

35. J. Reuben Clark Jr., “Our Bible,” *Conference Report*, April 1964; quoted in W. Jeffrey Marsh, *The Joseph Smith Translation: Precious Truths Restored* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 147.

36. This textual problem is discussed from a Latter-day Saint perspective by Thomas A. Wayment, “The Endings of Mark and Revelation,” in Kent P. Jackson, ed., *The King James Bible and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 75–94.

37. Davies, *Introduction to Mormonism*, 153–54.

38. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 123.

39. Lincoln Blumell, “A Text-Critical Comparison of the King James New Testament with Certain Modern Translations,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 3 (2011): 67–126; quotation is on p. 102. In conclusion he notes: “Despite its largely minor text-critical shortcomings, the KJV is still a respectable edition of the NT that can still, even four hundred years after its publication, be used with much profit, especially if one is made aware of some of those deficiencies” (126).

40. Note, for example, how Elder Juan Uceda of the Seventy used the NIV in his talk in the October 2010 general conference priesthood session. Uceda, “He Teaches Us to Put Off the Natural Man,” <http://>

www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/10/he-teaches-us-to-put-off-the-natural-man?lang=eng (accessed May 4, 2012). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland paraphrased the New Living Translation in his April 2012 general conference talk: “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” <http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-laborers-in-the-vineyard?lang=eng> (accessed May 4, 2012). Holland said:

My friends, I am not being unfair to you. You agreed on the wage for the day, a good wage. You were very happy to get the work, and I am very happy with the way you served. You are paid in full. Take your pay and enjoy the blessing. As for the others, surely I am free to do what I like with my own money.” Then this piercing question to anyone then or now who needs to hear it: “Why should you be jealous because I choose to be kind?”

The NLT version of Matt. 20:13–15 reads: “He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’”

41. Mauss’s view that the Church may be entering a new period of assimilation might suggest that we can expect to see a loosening of the canonicity of the KJV in the future. Mauss, “Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 1–42. It is nearly impossible to imagine a wholesale shift away from the KJV, but the Church has proven itself capable of revolutionary changes while finding effective ways of still promoting unity with tradition and authority. A recent discussion of the possibilities (or not) of non-KJV Bibles in Anglophone Mormonism is Gaye Strathearn, “Modern English Bible translations,” in Kent P. Jackson, ed., *The King James Bible and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 234–59.