

ECHOES FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

John W. Welch

The memorable and impressive words of the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7; 3 Nephi 12–14) reverberate throughout corridors and chambers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In many ways, the Sermon stands at the heart of the teachings of Christ, and if people will build upon these words, by hearing and doing them, they will be built “upon the rock” (Greek *epi tēn petran*, Matthew 7:24) that will withstand the winds and floods of destruction.

Jesus himself and his early disciples set an important example of building upon these words as they went forth to teach and administer. In the following pages, I draw attention to the fact that wording from the Sermon on the Mount is quoted or paraphrased in subsequent sections of the Book of Mormon and the New Testament more often than people typically realize. This pattern of drawing and building on the foundational words of the Sermon was established by Jesus as he gave the Sermon in 3 Nephi 12–14 and then quoted from it significantly in 3 Nephi 15–28. This same practice is evident in the Synoptic Gospels. In particular

John W. Welch is the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University and editor in chief of BYU Studies.

contexts and for important reasons, Jesus quoted or paraphrased from the sermon throughout his ministry, as reported by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Moreover, various uses of the sermon continue into the epistles of Mormon, Peter, James, and Paul. These widespread uses point to the conclusion that the initial iterations of the Sermon on the Mount¹ were accepted and used as a common denominator of what it meant to be a Christian at the earliest stages of Christian life and community.

Identifying and scrutinizing these subsequent quotations may offer modern readers a number of clues about the essential nature and fundamental importance of the sermon. Based on those clues, I conclude that the sermon is best understood as having come first and then having been quoted or used or built upon as a foundational text in laying down the Christian covenantal order. This approach differs from the view that this somehow happened the other way around, for example, by assuming that the sermon was not ever given by Jesus as a coherent text but rather was assembled sometime later as a collection of previously disjointed or independent sayings.²

I have advanced elsewhere the thesis that the sermon should be understood as a unified text that was either used in early Christianity to prepare people to enter into a covenant to obey the commanded teachings of Jesus Christ or, perhaps, as a reflection of a very early Christian ritual ascent text through which people progress stage by stage until they can be admitted into the Lord's presence, as is seen especially in 3 Nephi 11–18.³ Latter-day Saint readers approach the sermon with the understanding that the things found in 3 Nephi 12–14 were indeed taught by Jesus himself in the Old World before his ascension to the Father (see 3 Nephi 15:1), making the Book of Mormon a secure footing on which to build. For that reason, I begin the following discussion with an examination of the use of the words in 3 Nephi 12–14 in the ensuing chapters in 3 Nephi.

USE OF THE SERMON IN 3 NEPHI 15–28

The appearance of the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi extends far beyond 3 Nephi chapters 12–14. Indeed, we are fortunate that pieces of the sermon continue to appear in the subsequent chapters of 3 Nephi,⁴ for these derivatives are used intelligently and not as random fractals or broken sherds. This magisterial sermon was not simply dropped into the

book of 3 Nephi, either in whole or in subsequent parts, by a weary, unimaginative writer or translator, as some detractors have suggested.⁵ Much more sophisticated than that, as I will argue, is the way in which Nephi—the chief disciple who authored the original version of 3 Nephi—introduced the Sermon at the Temple and then composed the latter chapters of 3 Nephi to show Jesus’ implementation of the Sermon at the Temple. These derivative uses of the Sermon on the Mount show that the words of Jesus were understood and utilized from the very outset as an authoritative body of instructions that were intended to be used not merely as ethical or moral encouragement but as guides to religious practices and in the making and keeping of sacred covenants.

Of course, the Sermon on the Mount did not come into the Nephite world out of nowhere. Even before it was presented at the temple in Bountiful, the Nephites were probably aware of many of its words and phrases from their ancient Israelite scriptures and traditions.⁶ For example, the Greek in “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5; paralleled in 3 Nephi 12:5) comes straight from the Greek Septuagint version of Psalm 37:11. The desire to appear before the Lord in righteousness so that “I shall be filled (*chortasthēsomai*)” (Psalm 17:15; LXX 16:15) anticipates the fourth Beatitude’s promise that the righteous will be filled (Matthew 5:6), even with the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 12:6).⁷ “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” in Psalm 6:8 is quoted directly in Matthew 7:23 and 3 Nephi 14:23. The fact that the sermon quotes from previous scriptures⁸ sets the stage for the sermon itself being subsequently quoted in a number of settings.

Then, commencing immediately after he concluded the sermon found in 3 Nephi 12–14 (which, like Matthew 5–7, takes about thirty-five minutes to read out loud and can be divided into twenty-five stages, which makes it possible to memorize and use in covenant-making setting), Jesus continued to make use of passages from the Sermon on the Mount throughout the ensuing ordinance-inclusive chapters of 3 Nephi 15–28.

At first, the immediate reaction of the people was to marvel that “old things had passed away, and that all things had become new” (15:2–3). In wondering this, they were quoting the words Jesus had spoken in 3 Nephi 12:47: “Old things are done away, and all things have become new.”

In response, Jesus first explained that “the law is fulfilled” (15:4–5), reiterating what he had previously said in 3 Nephi 12:18: “In me [the law] hath all been fulfilled.”

Second, he then went on to repeat, “I do not destroy the prophets” (15:6), and to reconfirm, “this is the law and the prophets” (15:10). Here he used words that quote and refer back to 3 Nephi 12:17 (“I am not come to destroy”) and 3 Nephi 14:12 (“This is the law and the prophets”).

Third, he went on to reaffirm, “Ye are a light” (15:12), reiterating the commission he had given to these people in 3 Nephi 12:14 (“I give unto you to be the light of this people”).

Fourth, after explaining what was meant by the saying “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold” (3 Nephi 15:14–16:5), Jesus turned his attention to the Gentiles and in this context used the image of the salt that had lost its savor. “Blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief” (16:6), but “wo, saith the Father, unto the unbelieving Gentiles” (16:8). Jesus then went on to explain that “if the Gentiles will repent and return [unto the Father], they shall be numbered among [the people of the house of Israel],” who shall not be allowed to “tread” the Gentiles down (16:13–14). But if the Gentiles do not return to the original covenant given to them through the Bible, then the righteous “shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel” (16:15). These words draw from 3 Nephi 12:13. There, the covenant people were told that if they failed to be the salt of the earth, as they had been commissioned to be, they would be “trodden under foot by men.” Now Jesus puts the shoe on the other foot. It is understandable that, having introduced this drastic consequence for covenant breaking in the sermon proper, Jesus could well invoke the same sanction in this elaboration about the Gentiles.

Repetition is always part of good pedagogy. It is an even better part of authoritative proclamation. “For God speaketh once, yea twice” (Job 33:14). Moreover, repetition in the opposite order of the original is thought by scholars to be a strong sign, according to what has been identified as Seidel’s Law,⁹ that the repetition in the reverse order is a conscious form of quotation. In this light, it is noteworthy that Jesus’ four main points in 3 Nephi 15–16, immediately following the sermon, appear in

the opposite order from their original order in the sermon. These four headlines had been introduced originally in the sermon in this order:

1. If the salt shall lose its savor (12:13)
2. Be the light unto men (12:14–16)
3. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets (12:16–17)
4. In me it hath all been fulfilled (12:18).

They appear in the opposite sequence in Jesus' peroration in chapters 15–16:

4. The law is fulfilled (15:4–6, 8)
3. I do not destroy the prophets (15:6–7); keep the law and the prophets (15:9–10)
2. Ye are a light unto this remnant (15:12), as I fulfill my covenant (15:13–16:14)
1. Those who will not turn to Christ will be as salt that has lost its savor (16:15).

After administering the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18:1–11, Jesus ended his words to the Nephites on his first day in their midst by again revisiting and expressly applying four of the teachings that he had given in the sermon at the beginning of that day. No allusions back to the sermon occurred in connection with the healings of the sick and the blessings of the parents and children in 3 Nephi 17, but this does not mean that the sermon was not still on everyone's mind.

Right after the people partook of the sacrament, witnessing their willingness to keep the commandments which he had commanded them (18:10), Jesus first promised them that if they would keep that covenant, they would be built upon the rock. Their promise was to remember him always and to keep the commandments which he had just given them, namely in the sermon in 3 Nephi 12–14. By declaring that they will then be "built upon my rock" (18:12), Jesus referred back to 3 Nephi 14:25–26 (and even further back to 3 Nephi 11:39). Likewise, his warning that "whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock" (18:13) echoed 3 Nephi 11:40, "Whoso shall declare more or less than this . . . is not built upon my rock."

Jesus then continued, “But [they] are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall” (18:13), words mentioned previously at the end of the sermon in 3 Nephi 14:27–28 and anticipated in 11:40. Coming at the beginning of this day in chapter 11, then at the culmination of the sermon in chapter 14, and finally at the end of this day in chapter 18, these words draw together and encase everything that happened on that day, emphasizing the need to both hear and do the words of the Lord (14:24).

Second, Jesus promised the people, “Ask . . . it shall be given unto you” (18:20), quoting from the sermon, “Ask, and it shall be given unto you” (14:7).

Third, he also admonished, “Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world” (18:24), amplifying the sermon’s words in 3 Nephi 12:16, “Let your light so shine before this people.”

Finally, he pronounced, “Blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you” (18:34), just as he had begun the sermon with the blessings of the Beatitudes and had commanded at the very outset that “there shall be no disputations among you” (11:28), nor shall you have “ought against” one another (12:23).

Once again, Jesus’ recapitulation of the sermon at the end of this day essentially reiterates these points in the opposite order:

1. No disputations (11:28), blessed are ye (12:1)
2. Let your light so shine (12:16)
3. Ask, and it shall be given (14:7)
4. Built upon a rock (14:24), not upon the sand (14:26)
4. Built upon my rock (18:12), not upon a sandy foundation (18:13)
3. Ask . . . it shall be given (18:20)
2. Hold up your light that it may shine (18:24)
1. Blessed are ye, no disputations (18:34).

Through the literary convention of inverted recapitulation, the Savior encapsulated and embraced the entirety of the sermon.

In the Sermon at the Temple, Jesus said, “*after this manner* therefore pray ye” (13:9) and then gave the Lord’s Prayer. Later, at the very middle of the stretch of text in 3 Nephi 18, Jesus instructed the people, “*As I have*

prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church” (18:16). Even if Jesus gave only general directions about how to pray at this point, his words in 18:16 could well have alluded back to that central passage in the sermon.

This pattern of demonstrably implementing the words of the sermon continued during Jesus’ second day with the Nephites. As they prayed unto the Father (19:6), they “did not multiply many words” (19:24). This attestation confirms that their prayers were in conformance with 3 Nephi 13:7.

As the bodies of disciples became “white even as Jesus” (19:30), they saw the fulfillment of the Sermon’s words, “Thy whole body shall be full of light” (13:22).

As Jesus prayed, his words were so sublime and sacred that they could not be written or “uttered by man” (19:34), reflecting the sermon’s serious requirement that people must keep holy things confidential, “lest [the unworthy] trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (14:6). The point is not just that human language is incapable of saying these things, but that they were “forbidden” to write certain things (27:23) and that it was “forbidden them that they should [even] utter” them (28:14).¹⁰

Carrying on in this same fashion, Jesus’ second and third days (26:13) with his disciples also concluded with strong refrains from the sermon. Its words in chapters 12–14, which were now known verbatim by these disciples (19:8), had probably been repeated several times, especially to those who had missed the first day. As Jesus’ final hours with his disciples commenced, a new culminating beatitude was pronounced: “If ye do these things, blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (27:22). This echoes the promises of the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon that the righteous will “see God” and enter “the kingdom of heaven” (12:8, 10; 14:21).

A renewed plea was also made, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even *as I* am, . . . and I am even *as the Father*” (27:27; 28:10), clearly using the same inviting mood as before: “I would that ye should be perfect even *as I*, or *your Father* who is in heaven is perfect” (12:48, emphasis added).

In saying, “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (27:29), Jesus quoted two of the three phrases from 3 Nephi 14:8.

The regretful reference to those who will reject Christ in exchange for “that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal” (27:32) stands in unmistakable contrast to the incorruptible treasure laid up in heaven beyond the reach of moths and thieves (13:19).

And Jesus’ lengthy concluding admonition, “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein” (27:33), was quoted nearly exactly from, while inverting the order of, 3 Nephi 14:13 (about the wide gate and broad way of death) and 3 Nephi 14:14 (about the strait and narrow way of life). The previous order of wide/narrow here becomes narrow/wide, and in so doing puts the way of life first and foremost in the minds of the disciples and us as readers.

In sum, one sees in 3 Nephi a strong pattern of reuse, in short succession, of the words from the Sermon on the Mount, just recently given to the people at Bountiful in the Sermon at the Temple. It may strike readers as a little odd or a bit redundant for Jesus to have quoted himself so often, but in doing so he taught his people the central importance of this primary sermon, which was to be remembered and used with precision, in some cases “nothing varying” from the words that Jesus himself had used (19:8).

Moreover, with these quotations, the Savior was able to refer back, conveniently and authoritatively, to the fuller teachings that he had already given, precisely because those words had been accepted by these people by way of covenant (18:10). Because of the sacred temple context in which the Sermon at the Temple had been given and received, these words were no longer seen as ordinary words. They were divinely revealed, indisputably established, and sacredly ordained. Thus, the reuse of these holy words by Jesus would have deeply impressed the Nephite audience, indelibly recommitting them to follow these teachings.

The use of these materials throughout 3 Nephi corroborates the idea that the sermon was immediately accepted as scripture, no doubt the most sacred scripture these people had ever known. Although it is unknown what else Jesus taught these people as he spoke to them “for the space of three days” and often thereafter (3 Nephi 26:6, 13), it is certainly possible that he recapitulated the whole of the sermon in the course of

those instructions, for his quoting from the beginning (in 3 Nephi 15) and the ending of the sermon (in 3 Nephi 27) may be a clue that the rest embraced it all.¹¹

USE OF THE SERMON IN THE WRITINGS OF MORMON AND MORONI

These subsequent uses by Jesus of texts from the sermon must have left a deep impression on the succeeding generations of righteous Nephites. Evidence of this is found in the words of Mormon and Moroni, the final abridgers who worked on 3 Nephi and the plates of Mormon, for even at the end of Nephite history these people remained deeply familiar with Jesus' Sermon at the Temple.

Notably, Mormon wove its words and phrases into his impassioned sermon preserved in Moroni 7. The following echoes are unmistakable:

"By their works ye shall know them" (Moroni 7:5) has changed only one word from 3 Nephi 14:20, "fruits" to "works."

"A man being evil cannot do that which is good" (Moroni 7:6) declaratively and deliberately answers the rhetorical question of 3 Nephi 14:6, "Do men gather grapes of thorns?"

"Neither will he give a good gift" (7:10) makes the clearest sense when understood against the background of 3 Nephi 14:11: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children."

"For with *that same* judgment *which* ye judge ye shall *also* be judged" (7:18) simply adds emphasis to the original words of the sermon: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (3 Nephi 14:2).¹²

Mormon's promise, "Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be done unto you" (7:26), repeats, with two qualifications, the words of the sermon: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (14:7; see also 27:29).

Mormon's emphasis on "meekness" (7:39, 43, 44), a virtue that was sorely lacking among his people, who were losing their lands, is likely an elliptical reference to the statement "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (3 Nephi 12:5).

Although some of Mormon's words and teachings can be found scattered among the writings of earlier Nephites before the coming of Christ, the density and proximity of these apparent allusions to the Savior's

preeminent sermon make it the more likely source, rhetorically as well as authoritatively, for the urgent preaching to his faithful few by Mormon, who saw himself first and foremost as “a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . called to declare *his* word” (3 Nephi 5:13; emphasis added).

Moroni also was fully conscious of the instructions given by Jesus in the Sermon at the Temple. His invitation “that by his grace ye may be *perfect in Christ*” (Moroni 10:32) picks up the crucial word in the Lord’s own invitation: “I would that ye should be *perfect even as I*” (12:48; emphasis added).

Moroni incorporated Jesus’ instructions found in 3 Nephi into his report of Nephite religious practices in Moroni 2–6. As Moroni described the religious practices of the Nephites, he faithfully reflected instructions established by the Savior himself in 3 Nephi. Moroni’s little handbook quotes the words spoken by Jesus in giving his disciples the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 2; see 3 Nephi 18:38–39). He quotes the sacrament prayers (Moroni 4–5; see 3 Nephi 18:1–11) and makes special reference to baptism (Moroni 6:2; see 3 Nephi 11:28; 18:16). He goes on to use phrases such as “with a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (6:2; in the sermon at 3 Nephi 12:19), in the “name of Christ” (6:3; see 3 Nephi 18:11); cleansed and led by the Holy Ghost (6:4, 9; see 3 Nephi 18:37; 19:13), in order to “keep them in the right way” (6:4; compare the Sermon at 3 Nephi 14:13). They met often to “fast and pray” (6:5; as directed in the Sermon in 3 Nephi 13:9, 17) and to “partake of bread and wine” (6:6; following 3 Nephi 18:3–12). They allowed “no iniquity among them” (6:7; as instructed in 3 Nephi 18:28), and those who “repented not . . . were blotted out” (6:7; see 3 Nephi 18:31), but “as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven” (6:8; pursuant to 3 Nephi 18:32). Jesus had commanded his twelve disciples, “Ye know the things that ye must do *in my church*; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do” (3 Nephi 27:21, emphasis added). This all seems to leave little doubt that Moroni was doing precisely that, namely using the very words and doing the very things that his predecessors had seen and heard the resurrected Lord do and say.

These texts from Mormon and Moroni, written more than three hundred years after the sermon was given at the temple in Bountiful, show that the words of Jesus were accepted by the disciples of Christ from the

very outset as crystallizing the doctrine of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the will of the Lord, the word of the Lord, his plan of happiness, his path of holiness, the foundation of his new covenant written in the heart, and his covenantal pattern for the life of righteousness.

SUBSEQUENT QUOTATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As in the Book of Mormon, the Sermon on the Mount reverberates throughout the New Testament. Examining every New Testament quotation from the sermon exceeds the scope of this paper, but the following demonstrates that here also quotations were drawn from the sermon, from its beginning to its end, often in sacred or covenantal contexts, and in settings that make the best sense if the authority of the sermon was already firmly established and accepted.

I hasten to state up front that, in my opinion, the Sermon on the Mount should be understood for the most part as a very early Christian text, a primary instantiation of the teachings (the *didache*) of Jesus Christ himself.¹³ Based on various types of evidence, I conclude that Jesus and his early Apostles basically used this text on many occasions to solemnize the commitment of early Church members to obey the teachings of Jesus, on pain of being cast out, trodden under foot, or excommunicated from the Christian community.¹⁴ In this vein, these warnings, as well as the eschatological blessings promised in the Sermon on the Mount, take this text outside of the sphere of mere moral admonition. I agree with Hans Dieter Betz that the “holy thing” mentioned in Matthew 7:6, which the initiate is told must not be cast before swine, may be none other than some “esoteric saying” that was part of “initiation into secrets . . . not to be divulged to the uninitiated outsiders.”¹⁵ This being the case, it makes good sense to understand the following parallels as subsequent quotations from the sermon and not vice versa.

Most New Testament scholars will probably not embrace this view of the Sermon on the Mount readily or entirely, because doing so cuts against many of the common assumptions about how the Gospels were written. For Latter-day Saints, however, several of the assumptions usually entertained in this regard by New Testament scholars are not open to them. Because of Jesus’ own declaration in 3 Nephi 15:1 that he had just given to the Nephites the very words delivered to his Apostles in

Jerusalem before he ascended into heaven, Latter-day Saint readers do not subscribe to the position that Matthew compiled the Sermon on the Mount as a collection of miscellaneous sayings of Jesus. Instead, if Jesus regularly used the sermon (or something like it) in bringing his followers into the full ranks of discipleship, this would explain why bits and pieces of this text appear elsewhere in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as in the letters of James and Paul, even if a direct dependence on the sermon cannot be proven except by circumstantial evidence.

Likewise, it is often assumed that Jesus said something once and only once, or that he always said it in the same way. This assumption lies implicitly behind the quest to ascertain the “original form” of the Beatitudes or the Lord’s Prayer. But if Jesus used the sermon on several occasions, two slightly different performances of that text could both be considered to be original sayings.¹⁶

QUOTATIONS IN MATTHEW

Turning first to the Gospel of Matthew, it is interesting that Matthew employs several quotations from the Sermon on the Mount later in his Gospel. In doing so, Matthew draws upon, utilizes, reinforces, and builds upon the foundation laid in the Sermon in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7.

From Matthew 5. The promise of receiving a great reward (Greek *místhon*) in heaven is a dominant theme in the Sermon on the Mount (5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 5, 16). It remains a persistent precept, more so than in other Gospels, in Matthew 10:41–42, which promises “a prophet’s reward” and a secure “reward,” and also in Matthew 20:8 in the parable about the laborers being paid their “reward” at the end of the day.

The idea of being “the least in the kingdom of heaven” appears first in Matthew 5:19 and then is echoed in Matthew 11:11. On the one hand, the least (*elachistos*) is he who teaches others to break the smallest of the commandments, while the lesser (*mikroteros*) in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist. In Matthew 18:4, completing this sequence, one learns who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, namely he who “humbles himself as this little child.”

The initial theme of settling quickly with a brother in private (Matthew 5:23–25) is amplified in Matthew 18:15–19, which instructs Church leaders how to resolve cases of a brother’s transgression, first in

private and then before witnesses, and then through appropriate Church councils. In both cases, the hope is for reconciliation and “gain[ing] thy brother” (v. 15).

The declaration in Matthew 5:28 about committing adultery in one’s heart is expanded and elaborated seven times over in Matthew 15:18–19, “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

The two sayings in Matthew 18:8–9, about cutting off a hand (or foot) and casting it away, or plucking out an eye and casting it away, are quoted extensively—and in the reverse order—from 5:29–30, which speaks of plucking out thy right eye and casting it away, or cutting off thy right hand and casting it away. In both passages, it is better for a disciple to lose one member of his body than for the entire body “to be cast into hell.” In 5:29–30 this extreme measure is compared to the even more serious offense of committing adultery; in 18:8–10 this saying is invoked in connection with the solemn injunctions not to offend (*skandalizēi*) or to despise (*kataphronēsēte*) even the smallest child. The power of 5:29–30 provides the basis upon which 18:8–10 builds.¹⁷ First the man’s sexual loyalty to his wife must be established; then his commitment not to neglect or abuse his children follows a fortiori. The connection between these two texts says that Jesus has required his men to be completely and equally faithful to both their wives and children.

In the following chapter (Matthew 19:2–9), Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees about the topic of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1–4, which he had taken up in Matthew 5:31–32.¹⁸ Although the subject of divorce is complicated,¹⁹ it seems clear that Jesus understands the Pharisees as viewing marriage in temporal terms, whereas he views true, covenant marriage as something that “God hath joined together” and therefore not to “put asunder” (19:6). In such a celestially sanctioned marriage, Jesus’ restrictive teachings about divorce, quoted from 5:32 in 19:9, make clear sense, as do the reactions of the disciples who then in turn question Jesus in private about what this might mean for them. Having already taken upon themselves the sacred commitment in 5:32 not to divorce or remarry lightly, the disciples rightly understand that no one should lightly enter into or secularly dissolve a covenantal marriage (19:10). To their astute observation, Jesus responds, “All men cannot receive this saying,

save they to whom it is given" (19:11). In other words, the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount about divorce and other subjects and their implied extensions were given by way of covenant between Jesus and the disciples. Having previously accepted this commitment, the disciples were ready to be taught the next step.

From Matthew 6. In the very middle of the sermon, Jesus explains unequivocally that "if ye forgive (*aphēte*) men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive (*aphēsei*) you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses" (6:14–15). For half of Matthew 18, Jesus answers the question, "How oft shall . . . I forgive?" (*aphēsō*, 18:21), by telling the painful story of the unforgiving servant, who was forgiven (*aphēken*, 18:27) by his lord but would not forgive his fellow servant. The application of the story as a model of the behavior of the Father in Heaven set forth in 5:14 is made explicit in 18:35.

Matthew next alludes back to Matthew 6:20, where Jesus admonished his followers to lay up "treasures in heaven" (*thēsaurus en ouranōi*). Now, in 19:21, Jesus invites the rich young ruler to "sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" to have "treasure in heaven" (*thēsauron en ouranois*) and become perfect (*teleios*). Because helping people to become "perfect" (*teleioi*) was the objective of the sermon as stated in Matthew 5:48,²⁰ the disciples and early Christian readers would have understood that this young man went away not only because he "had great possessions" but because he was unwilling to make the covenantal commitment that the sermon required. The disciples, who listened in on those words to the young man (19:23), must have been struck even more clearly by the meaning of the words they had learned in 6:19–24 about loving God by serving only one master and by laying up treasures in heaven.

On several other occasions, Jesus makes similar use of other words and concepts in the sermon. In sending out the Twelve Apostles, he told them not to fear, for not a sparrow falls upon the ground without their Father noticing and "the very hairs (*triches*) of [their] head are all numbered," and surely they as Apostles "are of more value than many sparrows" (10:29–31). That brief statement does not give much assurance (after all, the sparrow has fallen, presumably dead). But having already placed their lives in God's hands, being unable to make one hair (*tricha*) white or black (5:36), and knowing that the Father has promised to clothe

them (see 3 Nephi 13:25) as he “clothes the grass of the field” (6:26, 30), these assurances of the Lord would have been completely reassuring, especially when read in connection with priestly functions of verifying the absence of impurities and being clothed more gloriously than Solomon in all his royal temple splendor.²¹

From Matthew 7. Matthew 21:22, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask (*aitēsēte*) in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,” builds upon and adds needed clarification to Matthew 7:7, “Ask (*aitēite*), and it shall be given you.”

In Matthew 12:31–37, after being accused by the Pharisees of casting out devils by the power of the Satan, Jesus explained the inner, undivided unitary nature of righteousness. “A house divided against itself is brought to desolation” (12:25), “he that is not with me is against me” (12:30), and “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven” (12:31). Why are these things so? Because, as had already been established in Matthew 7, “a tree is known by its fruit” (*ek gar tou karpou to dendron ginōsketai*, 12:33), “a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things (*agatha*): and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (*ponēra*)” (12:35), and therefore “by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (12:37). Several key words here clearly echo 7:17–20, about trees being known by their fruit (*apo tōn karpōn autōn epignōsesthe autous*), and then 7:1–2, about being judged by the judgment one has judged.

The essence of the heart is in doing “the will of my Father which is in heaven” (*poiōn/poiēsēi to thelēma tou patros mou tou en tois ouranois*, virtually identical in 7:21 and 12:50), which explains why it is ultimately impossible for Jesus and his Apostles, who are in harmony with the will of the Father, to speak against the Holy Ghost or to act in concert with the devil. Otherwise, they cannot “enter into the kingdom of heaven” (the same expression being found in both 7:21 and 18:3).

The characteristic summation, “For this is the law and the prophets” (7:12; see also 5:17), marks not only the culmination of the Sermon on the Mount but also the final instruction given by Jesus to his Apostles in Matthew 17–22, which ends with the same words used with distinctive all-inclusiveness. “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (22:40).

Finally, Matthew presents in chapter 25 some of the last teachings of Jesus given before the night of his arrest and trial. Here he tells of the five foolish bridesmaids who come late, saying “Lord, Lord (*kurie, kurie*), open to us,” but who will be told, “I know (*oída*) you not” (25:11-12). These words echo strongly the warning of Matthew 7:21, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord (*kurie, kurie*), shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” for some will be told, “I never knew (*oudepote egnōn*) you.” Here he also speaks on the one hand of the rewards that will be given to those who magnify the unique talents that each has been given (25:13-15), rewards that will be given before all the nations (compare “openly,” in 6:4, 6, 18) in the day of his coming in glory (25:31-32), but on the other hand he also speaks of those who will be asked to leave: “Depart from me (*poreuesthe ap’ emou*), ye cursed” (25:41), words which carry the same condemnation that concludes the Sermon on the Mount: “Depart from me (*apochōreíte ap’ emou*), ye workers of iniquity” (7:23). The fact that Jesus concluded his final instructions to his disciples in Matthew 24-25 by reiterating these final words of the sermon does not seem coincidental.

In Matthew, the disciples know this text; they have been bound to this text. Jesus quotes sections from this text from its beginning, its middle, and its ending; and the disciples understand, without argument or hesitation, the correctness and authoritativeness of its rubrics.

QUOTATIONS IN MARK

In Mark, elements from the Sermon on the Mount appear much less frequently than in Matthew or Luke, but they are present nonetheless. On four occasions, Mark quotes lines found in the Sermon on the Mount.

In Mark 4, after explaining to the disciples in private the meaning of the parable of the sower—namely that all hearers of the word will be judged by the amount of good fruit they bear—Jesus told (or reminded) the Twelve that they too will be judged by what they bring forth: “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?” (Mark 4:21). This truncated statement in Mark makes full sense only if one assumes that the Twelve (and the readers) were aware of what had been said in Matthew 5:14, extending some kind of actual commission or call for action.²² Otherwise the thought is left dangling about the point of this little parable. Mark 4:22 then states that

all that is “hid (*krypton*)” will come abroad openly (*eis phaneron*), reflecting the clear sense, even if not the form of the earliest Greek manuscripts, of Matthew 6:4, 6, which teach that acts of righteousness that are done in secret (*en tōi kryptōi*) will be rewarded openly (*en tōi phanerōi*). Finally, after warning the disciples to have “ears to hear” and to be careful about which voices they obey, Jesus applies the rule that “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you” (Mark 4:24, quoting Matthew 7:2) and that “he that hath not, from him shall be taken” (Mark 4:25, quoting Matthew 25:29). Jesus’ words in this short passage draw again from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Sermon on the Mount, thereby invoking it in its entirety.

In Mark 9, Jesus spoke again to the Twelve in private. In response to their dispute over who was greatest, Jesus told them to receive anyone who casts out devils in his name (Mark 9:38–40) and that, on pain of being cast into hell, they should not offend anyone who so much as gives a disciple of Christ a cup of water (Mark 9:38–48). Again, this brief instruction makes good sense if one assumes that the Twelve have already been told that some who perform miracles in Jesus’ name will be told to depart (Matthew 7:22). Those people, like children, need to grow and should not be offended. For now, they are not against God, and if they come to know the Lord, someday they will enter into his presence. But before that day, “everyone,” including the Twelve, “will be salted with fire” (Mark 9:49, their own sacrifice offered with salt²³), and thus they should have salt, or peace, among themselves. The key premise that stands in Mark 9 behind Jesus’ reprimand—namely that in some way they are the salt that should not lose its savor—remains unstated, presumably because the disciples already know it.

In Mark 10, after answering in public the question raised by the Pharisees about divorcing one’s wife, Jesus again spoke to his disciples in private about this matter, explaining that the rule, which applies among them, applies to husbands as well as to wives who divorce their spouse and marry another (Mark 10:11–12). One can see how a need for clarification could logically have arisen out of the teaching on divorce in Matthew 5, which did not mention this point in specific.

In Mark 11, after cursing the fig tree, Jesus spoke in confidence to Peter: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive

them, and ye shall have them" (11:24, echoing Matthew 7:7–8), and "when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (11:25–26, quoting Matthew 5:23; 6:14–15). Here the obligation to reconcile with "thy brother" (Matthew 5:23) is extended to forgiving anyone, even those in Jerusalem who seek to destroy Jesus (11:18) and will wither like the barren fig tree (illustrating Matthew 7:20, "By their fruits, ye shall know them").

In all these instances in Mark, the words were spoken to disciples in private, consistent with the esoteric, covenantal nature of these teachings. It would seem that each of these reminders and clarifications assumes a previous commitment to the underlying principles involved.

QUOTATIONS IN LUKE

Numerous parallels exist between passages in the Gospel of Luke and the Sermon on the Mount, especially concentrated in the Sermon on the Plain (in Luke 6) and Jesus' teaching to the disciples on prayer (in Luke 11). These parallels have been meticulously examined and extensively discussed for centuries,²⁴ and my intent here is not to consider each of these many points of contact between Luke and Matthew. Instead, I wish to make two arguments.

First, the Sermon on the Plain is a public text, and this accounts for which teachings it includes. In Luke 6, Jesus spoke to a large, diverse audience "from Jewish and Greek cities" (Luke 6:17). At the end of these teachings, Luke continues, "Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum" (Luke 7:1). Many in that audience were not faithful followers, let alone ordained disciples, of Jesus; he cursed them for being rich, haughty, and socially accepted (Luke 6:24–27), and he chided them for not doing the things he said (Luke 6:46). It appears that Jesus limited what he said to them, following his own rule of not giving the holy thing to those who are unprepared to receive it (Matthew 7:6). While the Sermon on the Plain follows the same order as the Sermon on the Mount, it suitably contains only its more public elements.²⁵ Present in Luke 6 are the more ordinary beatitudes of blessing the poor, those who hunger, and those who are reviled

(6:20–23); the more social wisdom of turning the other cheek and loving one’s enemies (6:27–35), not being judgmental (6:37–42), and following the Golden Rule (6:31); the logical truism of knowing a tree by its fruit (6:43–44); the indisputable need to do more than simply say “Lord, Lord” (6:46); and the sensibility of building one’s house on a firm foundation (6:47–49). Likewise, a practical instruction to settle quickly with any adversary (not just a brother as in Matthew 5:22, 24) is given to the people in Luke 12:54, 57–59.

Missing here—outside of the confines of the “mountain” and a covenant community of “his disciples” (as in Matthew 5:1)—are elements that one would expect to be reserved for the closer circle of righteous disciples: for example, certain beatitudes of inner discipleship, with their future blessings of seeing God, becoming children of God, and inheriting the heavenly kingdom; commissions to be salt of the earth and city on a hill; and a demand to keep every provision of the law as stipulations of the covenant (including the avoidance of anger against a brother, the instruction to reconcile with brothers in the community of faith, the higher rules of covenant marriage, the swearing of simple oaths, and giving alms in secret). The saying about becoming perfect is also absent in Luke 6:36, where the public is told instead to be merciful. Gone also are the lines about praying in secret; fasting, washing, and anointing; not casting the holy thing before the dogs; concerns about false prophets; entering through the narrow gate into life eternal; and doing the will of the Father to be allowed to enter into his presence.

Second, I wish to point out that elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke (as we also saw in Matthew and Mark), Jesus privately spoke to his disciples about these more elevated topics: for example, losing one’s savor and being cast out (Luke 14:34–35, a reference to excommunication), not placing one’s lamp under a bushel (8:16, which presupposes a prior commitment to being a light unto the world), needing to pray in a prescribed way (11:1–4), knocking and being assured that the door will be opened and the Holy Spirit given (11:9–13), laying up treasures in heaven (12:33–34), having an eye single to God’s glory (11:34–36), receiving food and clothing in support of their ministry (12:22–32), keeping every jot and tittle of the law (16:16–17), avoiding remarriage after divorce (16:18), serving God and not Mammon (16:13), and entering through the narrow door

(13:24) or being asked to depart from God's presence (13:25–27). In all these cases, Jesus spoke these words to his disciples in private, consistent with a higher state of seriousness, preexisting commitment, or sanctity. On the only other such occasion in Luke, Jesus spoke to an unidentified person about entering in through the narrow gate (13:23–27), but that speaker already began by addressing Jesus as “Lord,” and they spoke together in confidence.

In sum, the Gospel of Luke adds evidence to support the idea that some portions of the Sermon on the Mount were better suited to private settings or were easily adapted for broader use in public declarations. If the Sermon on the Mount was the covenantal fountainhead of these scattered sayings in Luke, this explains why these derivatives carried such numinous power and decisive authority whenever they were used. Luke also gives the distinct impression that selected sentences from the sermon were readily on the lips of Jesus as he walked and talked in public or in private, making it highly unlikely that Jesus would have said these things only once, on some unique occasion or in one particular form.²⁶

ELEMENTS IN 1 PETER

Beyond the ministry of Christ, elements from the Sermon on the Mount continue to appear in the letters of Peter, James, Paul, and elsewhere, which bears out the conclusion that the Sermon on the Mount was coin of the realm for Christians in the third decade of Christianity. Since baptism was understood in 1 Peter 3:21 as necessarily involving a covenantal pledge (*eperōtēma*) to do God's will,²⁷ the pervasive use of phrases from the Sermon on the Mount in the early apostolic writings strongly suggests that the sermon provided basic instructions and stipulations used in the formal process of becoming a member of the early Christian Church.²⁸ Peter himself admonished the Saints to use the very sayings (*logia*) of God: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles (*logia*) of God” (1 Peter 4:11), and indeed he follows his own advice by using the words of Jesus on several instances, ranging from the sermon's very first word and its pointed directions to the disciples, to one of its very last words. For example:

First Peter contains several strong echoes of the Beatitudes, using the sermon's opening word “blessed (*makarioi*)” in two beatitudinal

constructions. 1 Peter 3:14, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake (*día dikaíosynēn makarioi*)” is quite similar to Matthew 5:10, although with an inversion of the Matthean word order, “*makarioi . . . heneken dikaíosyns*.” 1 Peter 4:14 recalls the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake” (Matthew 5:11). Peter says, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” The KJV obscures the parallelism between these passages by inconsistently translating Greek words which appear in each passage. In 1 Peter 4:14, the word *oneidízō* is rendered as “reproached,” but the same word in Matthew 5:11 is translated as “reviled.” The word “happy” in the KJV of 1 Peter 4:14 is *makarioi* (blessed).

The phrase “see your good works” in 1 Peter 2:12 (*ek tōn kalōn ergōn epopteuontes*) has conceptual similarities to the commission in Matthew 5:16, that people may see your good works (*idōsīn hymōn ta kala erga*). Peter encourages his readers to do good works which “the Gentiles” may behold and thereby “glorify God in the day of visitation (*doxasōsīn ton theon en hēmerai episkopēs*),” restating the instruction of Jesus to let your light shine so that when “men” behold it, they may “glorify your Father which is in heaven (*doxasōsīn ton patera ton hymōn ton en tois ouranois*).” Each of these two passages uses the same verb *doxasōsīn* (“that they may glorify”). The object of this verb, whether “your Father which is in heaven” or “God in the day of visitation,” is the same being. The words for “good works” (*kala erga*) in both passages are also the same and somewhat distinctive, because the word *agatha* (the more common word for “good”) could have been used alternatively in either case.

In 1 Peter 2:1, when Peter instructs his followers to lay aside “hypocrisies,” he picks up a theme repeated four times in the Sermon on the Mount about not being “as the hypocrites” (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5). Peter also instructs them to cast all anxiety on the Lord: “casting all your care (*merimnan*) upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7), the verbal form of this word appearing four times in the Sermon on the Mount: “take no thought (*merimnate*) for your life” (Matthew 6:25; see also vv. 27, 28, 31), for the Lord will take care of what his disciples shall eat and drink and wherewith they will be clothed.

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with the extended simile of the wise man who built his house upon the rock, the word for “built”

being the pluperfect form of *themelioō* (Matthew 7:25). Peter likewise ends his first epistle with the assurance that the God of all glory will “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you,” the word translated as “settle” being *themelioō*, a word clearly coming, here as in the sermon, from “the semantic field of building activity.”²⁹

STRONG ALLUSIONS IN JAMES

Although the details are not always unambiguous, it seems quite evident that the Epistle of James also consciously draws on a known body of basic Christian teachings that was used in his community as an accepted, persuasive, binding text that governed daily life. The writer links his letter “intertextually with the authoritative scriptural writings of his day.”³⁰ In particular, I wish to argue that James draws on passages from the Sermon on the Mount, mainly those that have practical, ethical applications. His selection ranges again throughout the entire sermon and includes items that in his context understandably presuppose brotherly relations and obligations of righteousness that would apply more within a faithful community than to the public at large. Without belaboring the pattern seen above, one may compare many passages in James with correspondences in the Sermon on the Mount.³¹ For example, following the order in which these words appear in Matthew 5–7, compare:

- James 1:12 with the form of the Beatitudes (blessed . . . , for . . . ; *makarioi . . . hoti*). James uses the same expression, *makarios . . . hoti*, in another beatitude, this time about enduring temptation: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.”³²
- James 2:13 with Matthew 5:7 (on the merciful being given mercy). Expressing the opposite regarding the unmerciful, in reverse order, James writes, “Judgment without mercy” shall be given to him “that hath shewed no mercy.” James uses the noun for “mercy” *eleos*, while the sermon uses verbal forms of *eleaō* to speak of the merciful receiving mercy.
- James 1:19–20 (telling brothers to be slow to anger) with Matthew 5:22 (telling brothers who are angry that they are in danger of judgment). The message is the same and rather dis-

tinctive. James uses the noun form, *orgē*, while Matthew's account uses a participial form of *orgizō*.

- James 1:14–15 (on lust bringing forth sin and death) with Matthew 5:28 (on lust leading to adultery). Here again, James uses a noun form, *epithymia*, while Matthew uses a verbal form of *epithymēō*.
- James 5:12 with Matthew 5:33–37 (both speaking of not swearing oaths by heaven or earth, but only by yes or no). Each passage uses the verb *omnuō* (to swear), the word pair *ouranos* (heaven) and *gē* (earth), and the injunction to say *naí naí* (yea yea) or *ou ou* (nay nay). These are the only two places in the New Testament where this instruction is given.
- James 1:13 with Matthew 6:13 (on God not tempting, or being tempted by evil). Each passage uses forms of the word, *peírasmos* (temptation): Matthew uses the noun form, *peírasmos*, while James uses a verb form of *peírazō*. The assurance that God does not tempt any man (in James 1:13) seems to be an obvious correction of some misunderstanding of the prayer in Matthew 6:13 asking God to “lead us not into temptation.”
- James 4:11 (“speak not evil one of another, brethren” for he that speaks evil of a brother “judgeth his brother”) with Matthew 7:1–2 (on not judging a brother or worrying first about the mote in a brother's eye). Each discourages disciples from judging brothers unrighteously, and each uses the verb *krinō* (judge).
- James 1:5–6 (ask of God, that giveth to all”) with Matthew 7:7 (also on asking of God). Each passage uses the verb *aíteō* in the imperative (ask), followed by the future passive form of the word *didōmi* (it shall be given).
- James 1:17 with Matthew 7:11 (both dealing with good and perfect gifts coming down from heaven). While Matthew uses *domata agatha* (“good gifts”), and James uses *pasa dosis agathē* (“every good gift”), the phrases are synonymous. In Matthew the gifts come from the Father in Heaven, while in James from the Father of lights.
- James 3:11–12 with Matthew 7:16–22 (in both cases speaking about people not uttering both blessings or curses, as trees can produce either good or bad fruit). Though the vocabulary differs

slightly here, the concept is clearly parallel. James 3:12 speaks of “figs” (*syka*) and a vine (*ampelos*); the Sermon on the Mount (7:16) uses grapes (*staphylas*) and figs (*syka*). The similar use by James of rhetorical questions and impossible botanical contrasts seems to draw very clearly on the dominical language of the Lord, as nowhere else in the New Testament.

- James 1:22–23 (“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”) with Matthew 7:24–27 (on the urgency of both hearing and doing the word). Both passages use variations of the word *poieō* (do). Matthew uses the verb *poieō*, while James uses the noun *poiētēs* (doer); and Matthew uses the verb *akouō* (hear), while James uses the noun *akroatēs* (hearer).

Although some of these words appear elsewhere in the New Testament, the density of words, phrases, ideas, and strong teachings used by James and found in the Sermon on the Mount shows that these two texts are closely associated with each other. Indeed, Jeremias has correctly noted that James and the Sermon on the Mount share the same overall character as bodies of early Christian teachings,³³ and in most cases it makes good sense to see James using the sermon rather than the other way around.

ECHOES FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IN PAUL

Similarly, some of Paul’s letters reflect parts of the Sermon on the Mount, although admittedly less frequently and more loosely than the letters of Peter and James. Nevertheless, these connections are close enough that one may well suspect that Paul knew the provisions of the Sermon on the Mount. Whether Paul’s rhetoric in general reflects written or oral channels of transmission is debatable,³⁴ but in any event the importance of memory must not be discounted,³⁵ especially where foundational documents or ritual texts may have been involved.

Among notable statements in Paul’s letters that rely on language likely from the Sermon on the Mount are the following from the Epistle to the Romans:

- “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (8:4; compare fulfillment of the law in Matthew 5:17–18);

- “sons of God” and “children of God” (8:14, 17; Matthew 5:9);
- cry to God as “Father” (8:15; see Matthew 6:9);
- “bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (12:14; Matthew 5:44);
- “recompense to no man evil for evil” (12:17; Matthew 5:39), but “overcome evil with good” (12:21; Matthew 5:44); “if thine enemy hunger, feed him” (12:20; Matthew 5:44); “but why dost thou judge thy brother?” (14:10; Matthew 7:2–4); and “why dost thou set at nought thy brother?” (14:10; Matthew 5:22).

These final two questions in Romans 14:10 strongly imply that Paul’s audience in Rome already knew of their obligation to “judge not” or to call no brother a fool, stipulations of discipleship found most prominently in the Sermon on the Mount.

Other passages in the letters of Paul are less specific, but significant nonetheless. Consider the resonances between elements in the Sermon on the Mount and the famous “hymn to charity” in 1 Corinthians 13. Here Paul:

- admonishes the Corinthians to earnestly desire (1 Corinthians 12:31; seek, Matthew 7:7) the higher gifts (12:31; Matthew 7:11),
- promises to show them a more excellent or “exalted way” (12:31, *hyperbolēn hodou*; compare the narrow way in Matthew 7:14),
- says even if I were to give away all that I have (13:3; alms, Matthew 6:2) and deliver my body to be burned (13:3; persecution, Matthew 5:11–12) but have not love, I gain nothing,
- describes love as patient and kind (13:4; merciful, Matthew 5:7); not boastful (13:4; but humble or poor in spirit, Matthew 5:3; not doing things to be seen of men, Matthew 6:5); not arrogant (13:4; or proud, like the hypocrites, Matthew 6:5); not rude (13:5; not insulting, Matthew 5:22); not insisting on its own way (13:5; settles quickly, Matthew 5:25; and loves enemies, Matthew 5:44); is not irritable (13:5; is not provoked to anger, Matthew 5:22; turns the other cheek, Matthew 5); does not rationalize evil (13:5; but seeks deliverance from the evil one, Matthew 6:13, and first casts out the beam in own eye, Matthew 7:3); does not rejoice at injustice (13:6, *adikia*; does not judge unrighteously, Matthew 7:1); but

- rejoices in the truth (13:6; Matthew 5:12); bearing all things (13:7; suffering, Matthew 5:10–11), and
- concludes by saying that when perfection (13:10, *to teleion*; compare Matt. 5:48) comes, the imperfect will pass away. Then we will see God face to face (13:12; see Matt. 5:8).

CONCLUSION

Among the many questions and answers that might be advanced at this point, let me return to the limited objectives set forth at the outset of this study. In sum, I submit the following as seven significant findings based on the examples and evidences presented above:

1. Wording from the Sermon on the Mount is subsequently quoted or reused by Jesus in the Book of Mormon and also in the New Testament.
2. The precedent for this pattern of quotation was established by Jesus himself, as unmistakably reported in 3 Nephi, and can be seen operating in a similar fashion in the Gospel of Matthew.
3. Elements from the beginning to the ending of the sermon are quoted. Every major section of the sermon is represented in these early, subsequent uses.
4. Jesus reiterated certain teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in private or confidential circumstances; others he selectively repurposed for public use.
5. In quoting a series of passages from the Sermon on the Mount, original word orders are often inverted. This subtle point strengthens the conclusion that these were conscious quotations.
6. If the Sermon on the Mount was, in fact, used as a very early part of preparing converts for baptism or other covenantal steps, this would explain why its various elements became so widespread and were quoted so often in many of the earliest Christian writings.
7. Early Christian authors, such as Peter, James, and Paul, writing in the mid-first century, assumed that their faithful

readers already knew and were previously committed to obey these commandments and teachings. Their derivative uses of these segments are consistent with an early dating and with authoritative functions of this foundational text.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, I assume that Jesus delivered the essence of the Sermon on the Mount on several occasions as he preached on many occasions throughout Galilee (Matthew 9:35; Mark 6:6; Luke 13:10, 22), perhaps even as he taught in the temple (Matthew 21:23; 26:55), during his forty-day ministry (for he taught the people in the New World the same things that he taught to his disciples in the Old World before ascending to his Father, see 3 Nephi 15:1), and also perhaps on one other occasion when he again went up “into the mountain” (*eis to oros*, Matthew 15:29), which is the same phrase used in Matthew 5:1 at the commencement of the Sermon on the Mount. Thus any quest for “the single original version” of the Sermon on the Mount may be ill conceived, for there may have been many deliveries of the sermon or parts of it that were similar, two of which were found in the sources used by Matthew and Luke and perhaps others.

2. For a superb exposition of the various ways in which the sermon has been analyzed in past centuries, see Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 10–44. Betz mentions several who have seen the sermon variously as “the redactional product of the evangelist [Matthew]” (n. 179), as “a new creation” (n. 180), as built by or for Matthew from additions “borrowed from another memorandum” (n. 190), like other “ancient gnomologies of proverbs and maxims” (n. 214), as “three groupings of sayings” (n. 225), or merely as “sequences of sayings” (n. 280).

3. John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009), see especially 202–7; *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo: FARMS, 1999), 56–96. These works build on *The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990); and “The Sermon at the Temple,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 253–56, based on a FARMS Update, March 1988. In the interest of brevity, this chapter builds upon the conclusions reached in these publications without replicating the explanations and sources previously presented.

4. I am grateful to members of my Provo Utah Edgemont Stake scripture study class and to Corbin Volluz for sharing their thoughts and interests along these lines.

5. Welch, *Illuminating*, 126–28.

6. The common Israelite background is discussed in Welch, *Illuminating*, 151–77, and temple-related texts drawn upon by the Sermon on the Mount are identified in Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, summarized in table 1, pp. 184–87.

7. Krister Stendahl’s erroneous claim that the Greek word “filled” (*chortazō*) cannot be used in the sense of being filled with the Spirit continues to be trumpeted

by critics of the Book of Mormon, even though it has long been shown to be wrong (Welch, *Illuminating*, 152–53). Overlooked by Stendahl and others, Psalms 17:15 uses this word to describe being satisfied or satiated with righteousness upon beholding the face of the Lord. The word is used to describe the filling of the four thousand plus women and children in Matthew 15:33, 37, which may well refer to both spiritual and physical satiation.

8. Throughout this article, the Greek texts in Matthew are always compared with the Greek texts of the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Old Testament, unless otherwise indicated.

9. Seidel's Law is discussed by David Bokovoy, "Inverted Quotations in the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Insights* 13, no. 9 (2000): 2, and "Seidel's Law," in David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes, *Testaments: Links between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Press, 2003), 56–60.

10. Welch, *Illuminating*, 87–90.

11. This may be an example of a "classic rhetorical device" known as merismus, by which "an entire topic or statement is represented by some of its parts" (Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel as Taught by Nephite Prophets," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 258–59, citing Alexander M. Honeyman, "Merismus in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Hebrew* 71 [1952], 15).

12. Mormon's language is very close to that of 3 Nephi 14:2, closer than to the words of Alma about the "restoration" of righteous judgment for righteous judging in Alma 41:14.

13. The view that the Sermon on the Mount was a pre-Matthean source is shared by some New Testament scholars, including Hans Dieter Betz and Alfred M. Perry (Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 13–14, 211).

14. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 63, 70, 97–98, 195.

15. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 495–96.

16. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 215; Welch, *Illuminating*, 80.

17. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 236–39, questions what the right eye and the right hand have to do with adultery, but he agrees that "the connection was made prior to Matthew. That tradition appears to be more specifically the SM itself and not Q."

18. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 258, discusses the relation between Matthew 19:3–12, Mark 10:2–12, and the earlier Matthew 5:31–32. The ideas of covenant marriage are as early as Genesis 1:28; 2:23–24, and Malachi 2:14, "the wife of thy covenant."

19. Discussed at some length in Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 89–98, and sources cited there.

20. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 116–20.

21. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 157–64.

22. The commissioning element is clearer in 3 Nephi 12:13–16, but it is amply present in Matthew 5:13–16 as well (Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 67–76).

23. Several manuscripts, including Alexandrinus and Bezae Cantabrigiensis, add "and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," recalling a Sermon on the Mount connection.

24. See Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 37–44, 69–88, 571–640.

25. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 372.
26. Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 168.
27. John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 680 points out that this word used by Peter can describe either part or all of “a contract involving a pledge or assent given . . . on the occasion of baptism . . . to certain behavioral requirements such as moral commitment, obedience to God’s will, and doing what is right.”
28. For a discussion of the Sermon on the Mount as part of a possible conversion ritual, comparable in some ways to the Jewish Giyyur proselyte ritual, see Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 193–97.
29. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 867.
30. David R. Nienhuis, “James as a Canon-Conscious Pseudepigraph,” in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 195.
31. Mentioned in John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the New Testament,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, 1981; reprinted Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 212; see also Patrick J. Hartin, “James and the Q Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 440–57, and his *James and the “Q” Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 140–72. However, the precise nature of the relationship between James and the sermon remains a puzzle (Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 6 n. 13).
32. Although the word “blessed” is used in many places, such as at the beginning of Psalms 1:1, the formula “blessed . . . , for . . .” is less common.
33. Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 22, using the word *didachē* to describe the Epistle of James, the same word used in Matthew 7:28 to describe the Sermon on the Mount.
34. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 6 n.12.
35. Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); and Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence on the First Three Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 182–85.