



Chap. xiii.

Joseph Smith and the King James Bible

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Historians have long recognized that the America of Joseph Smith's day was profoundly and pervasively influenced by the King James Bible. Expanding the words of one scholar, the Bible was "so omnipresent" in the American culture of the early 1800s that "historians have as much difficulty taking cognizance of it as of the air the people breathed."¹ This characterization certainly applies to Joseph Smith's extensive engagement with the King James Bible, and yet we can at least begin to take cognizance of it by probing the Prophet's interaction with the Bible under four broad categories—additional scripture, theological reflection, rhetorical style, and liturgical development. In the first category—additional scripture—I include all the multitudinous ways in which the ideas, vocabulary, and verbiage of the King James Bible have influenced not only the conceptual content but the very wording of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. A wide range of scholarship in this realm has explored everything from textual parallels to the ways in which these other standard works correct, amplify, and elaborate on what is found in the King James Bible.² Given the substantial attention devoted to this phenomenon elsewhere, I will deal only with the three less-studied categories—theological reflection, liturgical development, and rhetorical style.



*The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) with a Bible in his hand;
drawing by Sutcliffe Maudsley, 1844.*

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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Although there is much that is theological in how the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and JST engage the Bible, this category excludes canonized theological reflection (properly addressed in other scholarship about additional scripture) and examines instead what Joseph Smith said or wrote in the normal course of his ministry. Among the most noticeable characteristics of the Prophet's theological reflection outside the Restoration scriptures is the way in which a literal, face-value reading of the King James Bible shaped and influenced his doctrinal expressions. Consider, for instance, how he interpreted Amos 3:7 to refute speculation about the date of the Second Coming. After one enthusiast claimed to have seen the "sign of the Son of man" predicted in Matthew 24:30, Joseph wrote to the editor of the Church's *Times and Seasons*, "He has not seen the sign of the Son of Man, as foretold by Jesus; neither has any man . . . for the Lord hath not shown me any such sign; and as the prophet saith, so it must be—'Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.'"³

Literal interpretation sometimes produced novel insights. At a Nauvoo Lyceum lecture in the winter of 1841, Joseph reportedly "said in answer to Mr. Stout that Adam Did Not Commit sin in eating the fruits for God decreed that he should Eat & fall . . . in compliance with the Decree [Genesis 2:17] he should Die—only he should Die was the saying of the Lord therefore the Lord appointed us to fall & also Redeemed us."⁴ It appears that on this occasion Joseph interpreted the scriptural passage "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17) as a command or "decree" rather than as a warning. As for the "day" in which Adam would die, a month later the Prophet returned to this passage and remarked, "Now the Day the Lord has Refferance too is spoke of by Petter a thousand of our years is with the Lord as one Day."⁵ Thus Adam's death at 930 fell within a scriptural definition of one "day."

On the other hand, the Prophet sometimes corrected what he considered overly literalistic readings of scripture. Such was the case with the traditional interpretation of the Holy Ghost descending as a dove after Jesus' baptism. In this instance, the correction came as part of Joseph's later public teachings rather than in the JST or other Restoration scriptures. Twice in the Book of Mormon, Nephi says the Holy Ghost descended

upon Christ “in the *form* of a dove” (1 Nephi 11:27; 2 Nephi 31:8; emphasis added), and D&C 93:15 reports that “the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the *form* of a dove, *and sat upon him*” (emphasis added). Subsequently, Joseph elaborated, “The dove which sat upon Christ’s shoulder was a sure testimony that he was of God. . . . Any spirit or body that is attended by a dove you may know to be a pure spirit.”⁶ This insight was given more detailed formulation two years later. “The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a Dove,” Joseph reportedly explained, “but the sign of a Dove was given to John to signify the Truth of the Deed as the Dove was an emblem or Token of Truth.” Or, as Willard Richards recorded the Prophet’s remarks on that same occasion, “The Holy Ghost is a personage in the form of a personage [and] does not confine itself to [the] form of a dove—but in the sign of a dove.”⁷

This repudiation of the idea of a shape-shifting Holy Ghost, which historically some derived from Luke’s statement that “the Holy Ghost descended *in a bodily shape like a dove* upon him” (Luke 3:22; emphasis added), makes clear that the descending dove was simply a sign of, and was not to be confused with, the descending Holy Ghost. Several months before his sermon, Joseph published for the first time Facsimile No. 2 from the Book of Abraham. In that facsimile, in a scene explained in figure 7, God is depicted seated on a throne with a dove hovering in the air in front of him. The explanation reads, “The sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of the dove.”⁸ Thus, as Joseph remarked in his sermon, the sign of the dove was manifest not just once at Christ’s baptism but had been “instituted before the creation.”⁹

Careful study reveals that the topics Joseph Smith discussed most frequently in his theological reflections on the Bible were “the first principles and ordinances” (Articles of Faith 1:4) of the gospel, the gifts of the Spirit, the gathering of Israel, and the latter days. Joseph often tethered his discussion of the first principles and ordinances to Acts 2:38, which contains Peter’s counsel to the multitude gathered on the Day of Pentecost: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The Prophet used this passage to teach two key ideas. First, remission of sins was inextricably linked to baptism. As Joseph phrased it, the two are “connected by . . . promise inseparably.”¹⁰ Second, he stressed the unbreakable

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link between baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost: one “might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man if not done in view of the getting of the Holy Ghost.—baptism by water is but $\frac{1}{2}$ a baptism—& is good for nothing without the other, the Holy Ghost.”¹¹ Linking the two ideas, he wrote on another occasion, “We learn from Peter that remission of sins is obtained by baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Ghost follows inevitably.”¹²

Contemplation of the case of Cornelius, the Roman centurion who seemingly defied this law by receiving the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues *before* being baptized, led Joseph to these reflections: “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost & the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was Baptized which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost untill after he was Baptized, & had he not taken this . . . ordinance upon him the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God would have left him[.] [U]ntill he obeyed these ordinances & received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands according to the order of God,” he could not have continued exercising the gifts of the Spirit.¹³

To the Prophet Joseph Smith and his followers, the presence of such miraculous gifts was a crucial mark of Christ’s true church. In this regard, Joseph often referenced Mark’s version of Jesus’ departing commission to the Apostles to “go . . . into all the world” because it specifically promised that certain spiritual gifts or signs “shall follow them that believe” (Mark 16:15, 17). An 1832 revelation explicitly brought the commission into the present: “As I said unto mine apostles I say unto you again, that every soul who believeth on your words, and is baptized by water for the remission of sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost. And these signs shall follow them that believe” (D&C 84:64–65). Moreover, emphasized the Prophet, the “signs following faith” were not gender specific: “No matter who believeth, these signs, such as healing the sick, casting out devils, and so forth, should follow all that believe, whether male or female.”¹⁴

A full restoration of the spiritual gifts portrayed in the New Testament, however, was beyond what most contemporary Christians were willing to expect. In 1831, while passing through Cincinnati, Joseph Smith met with the famed evangelist Walter Scott and later had this account recorded in

his history: "I had an interview with the Rev. Walter Scott, one of the fathers of the Campbellite . . . church. Before the close of our interview, he manifested one of the bitterest spirits against the doctrine of the New Testament (that 'these signs shall follow them that believe,' as recorded in 16th chapter of . . . St. Mark,) that I ever witnessed among men."¹⁵ For Joseph Smith and the early Saints, the "signs following faith" were the sine qua non of authentic Christianity. Indeed, by the gauge of spiritual giftedness, one "may look at the Christian world," wrote Joseph Smith, "and see the apostasy there has been from the apostolic platform."¹⁶

Yet Joseph Smith had to spend a good deal of his time, particularly after moving to Ohio in 1831, teaching Church members about the true nature of spiritual gifts. Even a decade later, he was still acquainting the Saints with the operations of the Holy Ghost. As editor of the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, he issued two major essays to educate Church members on the topic—"Try the Spirits" (a title that used King James wording from 1 John 4:1) and "The Gift of the Holy Ghost."¹⁷ Among the most challenging gifts to regulate was the gift of tongues. In an address to the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, Joseph read from 1 Corinthians and then warned, "Do not indulge too much in the gift of tongues."¹⁸ Tongues, as he had explained in his first recorded discourse in Nauvoo, "were given for the purpose of preaching among those whose language is not understood as on the day of Pentecost."¹⁹ Echoing Paul's counsel to the Corinthians, Joseph told the sisters, "If any have a matter to reveal, let it be in your own tongue," and "I lay this down for a rule, that if anything is taught by the gift of tongues, it is not to be received for doctrine."²⁰

Nearly as frequently discussed as spiritual gifts or first principles were biblical passages that Joseph interpreted as relating to the gathering of Israel and the latter-day glory. And few examples would have a more far-reaching effect than Joseph's reading of such passages as Isaiah 2:3, which announced that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Here the Prophet interpreted "Zion" and "Jerusalem" as two *different* places, rather than viewing the passage as a manifestation of Hebrew poetic parallelism which would make the terms synonymous. Thenceforth, nearly every mention of "Zion" in the Bible could be read as having reference to the New (read "other") Jerusalem to be built in America. This important interpretive move suddenly opened

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countless Old Testament prophecies to New World fulfillment and thrust the Saints into the center of prophetic history. Joseph Smith taught that the whole prophetic scenario of Israel's temporal and spiritual restoration was to be dually enacted—in the Old World by the Jews and also in the New World by Lamanite Israel and Gentile Israel, the latter being American and European LDS converts who through baptism were adopted into or numbered with the house of Israel.

In part, Joseph based this scenario on the periodization of prophetic history found in Romans 11, a chapter that is little used among Latter-day Saints today. In 1833, however, Paul's schema was central to the voice of warning Joseph prepared for publication in the *American Revivalist and Rochester Observer*. As Joseph outlined redemptive history, God first offered the covenant and kingdom to his chosen people Israel. When in the first century AD the Jews ceased "bringing forth the fruits thereof," the kingdom was taken from them and given to the Gentiles (Matthew 21:43). Yet, in his epistle to the Romans, Paul warned that should the Gentiles cease to produce the fruits of godliness, they too would be "cut off," and Israel would be grafted back in (Romans 11:22–23). In that day, when "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in . . . all Israel shall be saved" (vv. 25–26). Primarily because of the absence of spiritual gifts in contemporary Christendom, Joseph argued in his open letter to the public that the fulness of Gentile Christian apostasy had "come in" and that it was now time for the final shift back of divine favor to historic Israel. "The time has at last arrived," he wrote, "when the God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob has [quoting Isaiah 11:11] set his hand again the second time to recover the remnants of his people." That, in Joseph's mind, was a key event in the march to the Millennium.

As part of latter-day Israel's destiny to regain its former glory, Joseph expected that many ancient biblical practices would be restored, including even plural marriage and ritual sacrifice. Plural marriage has been much discussed elsewhere, but it is worth noting here that the revelation commanding polygamy was influenced by Joseph's theological reflection on biblical narratives: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David, and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle

and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter” (D&C 132:1–2).

Joseph’s contemplated restoration of ritual sacrifice was also influenced by his reading of the King James Bible. Two passages from the New Testament that he cited provide the framework for his comments. Acts 3:21 speaks of the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his the holy prophets,” and Ephesians 1:10 notes that “in the dispensation of the fulness of times,” God would “gather together in one all things in Christ.” Since Joseph’s periodization of redemptive history linked the “dispensation of the fulness of times” to his day, these two verses suggested to him that a complete restoration of ancient principles and practices could be expected. In particular, Joseph emphasized the uniformity across time of priesthood rights and powers and concluded that “all things had under the Authority of the Priesthood at any former period shall be had again.”²¹ Malachi 3:3–4 specifically promises a future day in which righteous offerings would be presented by a purified Levitical priesthood. “These sacrifices,” explained Joseph Smith, “as well as every ordinance belonging to the priesthood will when the temple of the Lord shall be built and the Sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to. . . . Else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by all the Holy Prophets be brought to pass.”²² Clearly, a literal reading of the King James Bible deeply influenced the Prophet’s theological reflections.

The particulars of the Saints’ lived experiences, especially the nearly constant presence of persecution, also provided grist for the Prophet’s theological reflection on the Bible. In one epistle to the elders of the Church, Joseph quoted Deuteronomy 30:7—“And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee”—and remarked, “Now this promise is good to any, if there should be such, that are driven out, even in the last days, therefore, [we] have claim unto this day.”²³ Joseph Smith himself had been told by revelation that “whosoever shall lay their hands upon you by violence, ye shall command to be smitten in my name; and, behold, I will smite them according to your words, in mine own due time” (D&C 24:16). And from early on, Jesus’ counsel to the ancient Apostles was also reiterated: “In whatsoever place ye shall enter, and they receive you not in my name, ye

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shall leave a cursing instead of a blessing, by casting off the dust of your feet against them as a testimony, and cleansing your feet by the wayside" (D&C 24:15).²⁴

Joseph made, of course, numerous entreaties to patient submission in the face of persecution, but toward the end of a life filled with such antagonism, and after relentless pursuit by Missouri authorities seeking to convict him of the assassination attempt on Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, Joseph made it clear that "the time has come when forbearance is no longer a virtue."²⁵ Just hours after being acquitted of the third extradition attempt by Missouri officers, Joseph declared, "Before I will bear this unhallowed persecution any longer I will spill . . . the last drop of Blood I have."²⁶ In one memorable statement from that same speech, Joseph exclaimed, as recorded by Wilford Woodruff, "If mobs come upon you any more here, dung your gardings [gardens] with them."²⁷ And yet Joseph also realized that most of the battles would be fought by the Lord and that ultimate victory and recompense would come only with the Savior's Second Coming. If "God will strike through kings in the day of his wrath [Psalm 110:5]," asked Joseph, "what do you suppose he could do with a few mobbers in Jackson County, where, ere long, he will set his feet when earth & heaven shall tremble."²⁸

Some of Joseph's biblically based theological reflection resulted not from the distinctive English renderings of the King James translators but from the Prophet's grappling with the undergirding languages. His study of Hebrew, for instance, led him to find linguistic support in Genesis for his emerging understanding of the plurality of Gods. In the King Follett discourse, Joseph combined linguistics and theology to render the first three words of the Bible—*berē'sīt bārā' 'elōhim*, typically translated "In the beginning God created"—as "The Head one of the Gods brought forth the Gods."²⁹ Or, as he revised it slightly in an address the following month, "In the beginning the heads of the Gods organized the heaven & the Earth."³⁰

Although Joseph Smith had only limited familiarity with New Testament Greek, he occasionally came to new insights with respect to certain Greek words in the Bible. "Elias," for instance, is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name "Elijah" or "Eliyah." Yet, because the King James translators consistently rendered or transliterated names into English

directly from the language with which they were working, “Elijah” never appears in the New Testament. Even in passages such as James 5:17 or Romans 11:2, where the accompanying text refers unmistakably to the Old Testament prophet Elijah, the King James translators used the transliteration “Elias.” Contemplation of the somewhat ambiguous Elias references in the New Testament led the Prophet to the novel realization that Elias was more than a single person, that Elias was actually a name-title for different individuals who, like John the Baptist, functioned “in the spirit and power of Elias . . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17) or who assisted in the “restoration of all things” (D&C 27:6). In addition to John the Baptist, Joseph Smith learned that the angel Gabriel who visited Zacharias was an Elias (see D&C 27:7) and that John the Revelator’s end-time mission to assist in gathering the tribes of Israel qualified him to be a latter-day Elias as well (see D&C 77:14). Moreover, prior to Elijah’s visit to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple, yet another Elias appeared “and committed . . . the gospel of Abraham” (D&C 110:12).³¹

Before concluding our consideration of Joseph’s theological reflections on the King James Bible, several other prominent examples merit at least passing mention. These include the Prophet’s extensive reflections on Malachi 4 and Elijah’s turning of the hearts, his related ruminations on 1 Peter and preaching to the spirits in prison, his discussion of the statement in Hebrews 11 that “they without us should not be made perfect” (v. 40), and his profound engagement with 1 Corinthians 15:29 and baptism for the dead. All of these reflections have profoundly influenced LDS theology and practice. So, too, have the Prophet’s insights into the meaning of the rock upon which Christ said he would build his Church, or Joseph’s consideration of Hebrews 7 and the “oath and covenant” of the Melchizedek Priesthood, or the Prophet’s theological explication of the 2 Peter phrases “more sure word of prophecy” and making one’s “calling and election sure,” or the related insight that Christ is the Second or “other Comforter” promised in John 14 and 16.

RHETORICAL STYLE

Beyond its considerable theological impact, the King James Bible also exerted a profound influence on Joseph Smith’s rhetorical style. Indeed,

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within such a categorization, we encounter Joseph's most pervasive engagement with the King James Bible. Literally hundreds of verbal images, words, and phrases in the language of the King James translators are discernible in the Prophet's prose. This includes most of his distinctive metaphors or peculiar idiomatic expressions. Here is a brief sampling: milk before meat (see 1 Corinthians 3:2), "perverse and crooked generation" (Deuteronomy 32:5), wresting the scriptures (see 2 Peter 3:16), "bind up the testimony, seal the law" (Isaiah 8:16), "weighed in the balances" (Daniel 5:27), "furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10), "dividing asunder . . . joints and marrow" (Hebrews 4:12), and "broken heart" and "contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). One of Joseph's most oft-used King James snippets was from Isaiah 29:21—"make a man an offender for a word." He employed this passage, for example, after a debating-school scuffle with his brother William. "Duty binds us," he wrote, "not to make each others offenders for a word."³² And to Oliver Granger he expressed hope "that even in Kirtland, their are some who do not make a man an 'offender for a word.'"³³

Other phrases sound less familiar to modern ears. On occasion, Joseph would remark in the words of Proverbs 25:11 that someone's words or letter were "like apples of God in pictures of Silver."³⁴ Less pleasantly, he promised "that this arm shall fall from my shoulder [see Job 31:22] and this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth [see Psalm 137:6] before I will vote for them."³⁵ At times his words contain a dense mass of such allusions. In a letter from Liberty Jail, he invoked phrases or expressions from three different Psalms. The Spirit, he wrote, "gave me great comfort: and although the heathen raged, and the people imagined vain things [see Psalm 2:1], yet the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, was my refuge [see Psalm 46:7]; and when I cried unto him in the day of trouble [see Psalm 50:15], he delivered me."³⁶ The Prophet also incorporated imagery and phraseology from the King James Bible in the blessings he pronounced. For instance, in language echoing Isaiah 49:2, Joseph blessed Hyrum Smith that he would be "a shaft in the hand of his God" and "shall be hid by the hand of the Lord." Drawing on Isaiah 3:17, he also promised him that "none of his secret parts shall be discovered unto his hurt."³⁷ What seems apparent in all this is that Joseph used the Bible in much the same way as did the Apostle Paul, whose mind, according to one study, "moves allusively, intuitively, by verbal association" and who, therefore, like

the author of Hebrews, “writes with frequent offhand allusions to numerous verses of scripture which he recalls from memory.”³⁸

One of Joseph’s most common rhetorical approaches to the Bible was to employ typology. Any time an earlier event is seen to anticipate or foreshadow a later one, or whenever later experience seems to be a recapitulation or fulfillment of an earlier event, typological thinking is taking place. Biblical action is felt to take place in two realms—in antiquity as literal event and again in current history, though with different characters and settings. With typological readings of texts, the historical meaning and situation of scripture are clearly subordinated to its present significations. In the New Testament, typology was the chief method for making the Old Testament meaningful. New Testament authors were “not really concerned with the Old Testament as source book for history.” Rather, it was their “Christocentric interpretation of scripture alone” that gave “meaning to the Old Testament.”³⁹ Similarly, Joseph Smith’s typological rhetoric facilitated a Restoration-centric interpretation of the Bible. The Prophet and the early Saints displayed a profound faith in the reliveability of biblical narratives. Indeed, we miss or misconstrue much of the felt significance of the Saints’ experiences if we disregard this pervasive feature of their mental universe. It is almost as if the Old Testament were a script and the Saints were the actors destined to reenact it on a nineteenth-century stage.

Consider just a few examples. After the Saints’ expulsion from Missouri, Joseph Smith endeavored to comfort the scattered Saints with these words: “Those who bear false witness against us do seem to have a great triumph over us for the present. But we want you to remember Haman and Mordecai. You know that Haman . . . sought the life of Mordecai and the people of jews. But the Lord so ordered that Haman was hanged upon his own gallows. So shall it come to pass with poor Haman in the last days. . . . I say unto you that those who have thus vilely treated us like Haman shall be hanged upon their own gallows, or in other words shall fall.”⁴⁰ Later, when W. W. Phelps repented for having betrayed the Prophet during the difficult, final days in Missouri and wished to return to the fold, the Prophet freely forgave him, but he also taught Phelps the seriousness of what he had done. This he did by making figural application of a pair of verses from Obadiah: “In that day that thou stoodest on the

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other side, in the day when Strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Far West [originally it read “Jerusalem”] even thou wast one of them. But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.”⁴¹

The Bible proved to be a veritable treasure trove of types for the Prophet to use in making sense of the opposition he was experiencing. On one occasion he referred to the apostates around him and remarked, “We classify them in the error of Balaam and in the gainsaying of Core and with the, company of Cora and Dathan and Abiram.”⁴² “Core,” or Korah, and Dathan and Abiram were the leaders of a revolt against Moses and Aaron who were swallowed up in the earth for their rebellion (see Numbers 16). In another instance, Joseph chose the first-century “Nicolaitans,” whose deeds God “hatest” (Revelation 2:6), as a label for a group of dissenters: “Let my Servant Newel K. Whitney be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations” (D&C 117:11).

It is hard to resist the editorializing impression that most Latter-day Saints today are probably unfamiliar with the passage in Obadiah that the Prophet referenced. Yet, its appropriateness to the situation is impressively obvious. When today’s troublemakers seem to have the upper hand, do we take courage by recalling the story of Haman and Mordecai? When religious treachery is afoot, are we reminded of Korah and Abiram? Or when imagining evil conspiracies, do we think of the Nicolaitans? Perhaps the Gadiantons, but probably not the Nicolaitans. Clearly, the manner in which the Bible dominated the framework of Joseph’s thought and expression is profound indeed.

Types were more than nice figures of speech or clever metaphors, however. They were compelling models for behavior. When John E. Page abandoned Orson Hyde on their mission to the Middle East, and the case was brought before the Church, Joseph Smith explained that the problem was that they did not follow biblical precedent. “He said that no two men when they agreed to go together ought to separate, that the prophets of old would not and quoted the circumstance of Elijah and Elisha [2] Kings 2 chap. when about to go to Gilgal, also when about to go to Jericho, and the Jordan, that Elisha could not get clear of Elijah, that he clung to his garment until he was taken to heaven and that Elder Page should have

stuck by Elder Hyde.”⁴³ Even more revealing is a single sentence from the Prophet’s letter to John Sims Carter: “You quoted a passage in Jeremiah with regard to Journey[ing] to Zion the word of God stands sure so let it be done.”⁴⁴

When engaging the Bible typologically, what stands out is the almost matter-of-fact manner in which Joseph Smith cites biblical narratives as if they were actual scripts delineating precisely how the divine drama might be played out in his day. Just as typology permitted Jesus’ followers to read the Hebrew Bible from a Christocentric perspective, typological rhetoric enabled Joseph to build a powerful bridge between the sacred past of the Bible and the sacred present of Latter-day Saint experience. To be sure, this often means that, like Paul, he may be taking “liberties with the original meaning of passages he cites,” but his overarching objective seems to be to make the biblical text relevant to the Restoration.⁴⁵

LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENT

A final category focuses attention on the influence of the King James Bible on Joseph’s development of the Church’s liturgy, its rites and ceremonies. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are clearly biblical and, in one form or another, are nearly universal in Christianity. The Prophet’s interpretive literalism, however, led him to understand biblical statements about baptism, including passages such as Romans 6:3–5, to mean that the only proper mode of baptism was by immersion. Moreover, his typical face-value reading of the Bible also caused him to find precedent for a weekly distribution of the sacramental bread and wine in such passages as Acts 20:7. Yet the Prophet went much farther than most Christians in adopting and adapting biblical practices in the new church. Consider, for example, how he often reenacted the biblical pattern of pronouncing blessings on individuals or anointing someone’s head with olive oil. An early “washing of feet” ceremony among priesthood holders in Kirtland was explicitly linked “to the pattern given in the thirteenth chapter of John” (D&C 88:141). “Solemn assembly” is a translation choice made in the King James Bible that was directly appropriated by Joseph Smith and his successors to designate certain sacred gatherings. What Latter-day Saints came to call the “Hosanna Shout” was a creative liturgical ritual that echoed parallel biblical moments of spiritual adulation.

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The influence of the Bible on Latter-day Saint liturgy may have reached a high point in 1836 at the time of the dedication of the House of the Lord in Kirtland. Biblical mimesis, or imitation, was widespread. The dedicatory ceremony and prayer recalled the consecration of Solomon's temple. The building's assembly areas were known as "inner courts," and the canvas partitions that divided them were called "veils." "Door keepers," important ancient temple personnel, were appointed for the Kirtland Temple. Direct links to the New Testament were also envisioned. Regarding a great sacramental "feast" held in the House of the Lord, Joseph Smith's journal echoes the New Testament: "As the Saviour did so shall we do on this occasion, we shall bless the bread and give it to the 12 and they to the multitude."⁴⁶ Other Saints saw additional biblical mimesis in this event. W. W. Phelps wrote, "The sacrament was administered as the feast of the Passover for the first time in more than 1800 years." And Stephen Post saw it as "commemoration of the marriage supper of the Lamb" mentioned in Revelation 19:9.⁴⁷

The "endowment," however, provided the most profound example of liturgical mimesis. The sacred temple ceremony known today as the endowment was first experienced on May 4, 1842, but in the 1830s what was termed "the endowment" was something different, something specifically linked to passages in Luke–Acts. There the risen Lord instructs his disciples: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), and "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem . . . and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As described in Acts 2, the promised spiritual outpouring occurred on the Day of Pentecost when the Apostles "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance," and "the same day there were added unto [the believers] about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:4, 41). Thus commenced the promised promulgation in power of Christ's gospel.

Both in revelation texts and in public instruction, Joseph Smith spoke of this early endowment in terms explicitly linked to these Lucan texts as a Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit designed to empower the elders for missionary work. An early revelation made the connection unmistakable: "I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high;

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For this is the promise of the Father unto you; therefore I command you to tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem" (D&C 95:8–9). Three years later, the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple petitioned, "Let it be fulfilled upon them, as upon those on the day of Pentecost; let the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof. And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory."⁴⁸ Joseph's journal entry for several days later records the fulfillment: "The brethren continued exhorting, prophesying and speaking in tongues until 5 o'clock in the morning—the Saviour made his appearance to some, while angels ministered unto others, and it was a pentecost and enduement indeed, long to be remembered for the sound shall go forth from this place into all the world, and the occurrences of this day shall be hande[d] down upon the pages of sacred history to all generations, as the day of Pentecost, so shall this day be numbered and celebrated as a year of Jubilee and time of rejoicing to the saints of the most high God."⁴⁹

Although much more could be said about the various ways in which Joseph Smith engaged the King James Bible, even this brief overview, which has focused on theological reflection, rhetorical style, and liturgical development, makes abundantly clear how profoundly indebted the Prophet was to this spiritual and literary masterwork completed four hundred years ago. No wonder Joseph Smith included what he called "our great love for the bible" among those treasures without which "we must fall, we cannot stand, we cannot be saved."⁵⁰

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NOTES

1. Perry Miller, "The Old Testament in Colonial America," in *Historical Viewpoints*, ed. John A. Garraty (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 1:95.
2. A sampling of such scholarship includes Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT:

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- Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004); Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet, eds., *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985); Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968); Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), 139–54; Heikki Räisänen, "Joseph Smith as a Creative Interpreter of the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 64–85; Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Textual Parallels to the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Commandments as Found in the Bible" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1951); Lois Jean Smutz, "Textual Parallels to the Doctrine and Covenants (Sections 65 to 133) as Found in the Bible" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971).
3. *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 8 (March 1, 1843): 113.
 4. "McIntire Minute Book," February 9, 1841, in *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 63. Virtually no word-for-word transcripts of Joseph's sermons have survived. Instead, students of the Prophet must rely on note takers' accounts to gain some idea of what he said during a sermon. For stylistic reasons, I will not constantly qualify my Joseph Smith "said" statements with adverbs such as "reportedly." Readers, however, should keep in mind the reality that only a fraction of the words attributed to Joseph Smith are unqualifiedly his.
 5. "McIntire Minute Book," March 9, 1841, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 64–65.
 6. "McIntire Minute Book," March 21, 1841, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 66.
 7. Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items," January 29, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 163; and "Joseph Smith Diary by Willard Richards," January 29, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 160.
 8. *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 720–21.
 9. "Joseph Smith Diary by Willard Richards," January 29, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 160.
 10. Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, March 22, 1839, in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 460.
 11. "Joseph Smith Diary by Willard Richards," July 9, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 230.
 12. *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 12 (September 1835): 181.
 13. "Wilford Woodruff Journal," March 20, 1842, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 108.
 14. "Nauvoo Relief Society Minutes," April 28, 1842, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 115.
 15. "Manuscript History of the Church," in *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, vol. 1, *Autobiographical and Historical Writings*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:356.
 16. Joseph Smith to N. C. Saxton, January 4, 1833, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 296.

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17. "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 11 (April 1, 1842): 743–48; and "The Gift of the Holy Ghost," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 16 (June 15, 1842): 823–26.
18. "Manuscript History of the Church," April 28, 1842, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 119.
19. "Willard Richards Pocket Companion," June 27, 1839, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 3.
20. "Manuscript History of the Church," April 28, 1842, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 119.
21. "Original Manuscript, in the hand of Robert B. Thompson," October 5, 1840, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 42.
22. "Original Manuscript, in the hand of Robert B. Thompson," October 5, 1840, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 43–44.
23. *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 2 (November 1835): 210.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 60:15 instructs the brethren to do this "not in their presence, lest thou provoke them, but in secret . . . as a testimony against them in the day of judgment."
25. "Wilford Woodruff Journal," June 30, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 217.
26. "Wilford Woodruff Journal," June 30, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 217–18.
27. "Wilford Woodruff Journal," June 30, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 219.
28. Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge and others, March 30, 1834, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 338.
29. "Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards," April 7, 1844, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 341.
30. "Thomas Bullock Report," June 16, 1844, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379. Compare Abraham 4:26: "And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image."
31. It is not clear whether this account refers to an unidentified individual acting as an Elias or to "a man called Elias [who] apparently lived in mortality in the days of Abraham" and regarding whom "we have no specific information as to the details of his mortal life or ministry." Bible Dictionary in the LDS edition of the Bible, "Elias," 663. That there could have been an ancient individual with the personal name Elias, in addition to other individuals functioning in a forerunner or restorationist capacity as Eliases, is suggested by the parallel mention in D&C 84:11–13 of an ancient prophet named Esaias, who also happened to live in the days of Abraham. Esaias is the Greek form of Isaiah. Just as the King James translators exclusively used Elias for Elijah in the New Testament, they consistently used Esaias for Isaiah. Individuals named Elias and Esaias are also mentioned in D&C 76:100. Some have opined that Joseph was merely ignorant of Greek forms of Hebrew names, but there is reasonable evidence that although he never stated it explicitly, he knew that in some New Testament passages Elias referred to Elijah.
32. "Journal, 1835–1836," December 18, 1835, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 140.
33. Joseph Smith to Oliver Granger, July 1840, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 513.
34. "Journal, 1835–1836," November 29, 1835, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 123, 557.
35. "Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards," August 13, 1843, in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 242.
36. "Journal Extract, November 1839," in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 480.

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37. Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 1, 1832–1839* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 23.
38. Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 18, 32.
39. Grant and Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 32.
40. Joseph Smith to the Church in Caldwell County, December 16, 1838, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 415–16.
41. Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, July 22, 1840, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 509. Compare Obadiah 1:11–12.
42. Joseph Smith to the Church in Caldwell County, December 16, 1838, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 417.
43. "Conference Minutes," in *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 12 (April 15, 1842): 761–62.
44. Joseph Smith to Brother [John Sims] Carter, April 13, 1833, Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1:31, Joseph Smith Collection (box 2, folder 1), Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
45. Grant and Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 23.
46. *Joseph Smith Papers: Journals*, 1:214.
47. Both Phelps's comment and Post's are found in *Joseph Smith Papers: Journals*, 1:214n454.
48. *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 6 (March 1836): 278; compare D&C 109:36–37.
49. *Joseph Smith Papers: Journals*, 1:215–16.
50. Notes of Discourse at Norton, Medina County, Ohio, April 21, 1834, reported in Kirtland Council Minutes, 43–44. See *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 2:52.