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Early Modern English Grammatical Forms

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2C. Early Modern English Grammatical Forms

In analyzing the earliest test of the Book of Mormon, Royal Skousen and Stan Carmack have developed a hypothesis that "the linguistic fingerprint of the Book of Mormon, in hundreds of different ways, is Early Modern English." ("Joseph Smith Read the Words," *Interpreter* 18 (2016:41-64).   As to whether that hypothesis will become theory is a matter of debate. In other words, according to the 2010 *Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary:*

> A hypothesis is a conjecture put forth as a possible explanation of phenomena or relations, which serves as a basis of argument or experimentation to reach the truth . . . . A theory in technical use is a more or less verified or established explanation accounting for known facts or phenomena.

However, I must add that I consider Royal Skousen and Stanford Carmack to be the most pre-eminent linguistic scholars regarding the text of the Book of Mormon. But before I continue with their ideas, let me answer the question: What is Early Modern English?

In a September 12, 2014 blog, Kirk Magleby wrote: "Scholars of English demarcate eras in the evolution of the language." He then lists the following eras:

A.D. 450 was the beginning of Old English which continued until A.D. 1100 - 1170.

A.D. 1100 - 1170 was the beginning of Middle English which continued until A.D. 1300.

A.D. 1300 was the beginning of Late Middle English which continued until A.D. 1470 - 1500.

A.D. 1470 - 1500 was the beginning of Early Modern English which continued until A.D. 1670 - 1700. (Some even put the end of Early Modern English as late as A.D. 1800.

A.D. 1670 - 1700 was the beginning of Modern English aka Late Modern English which has become Earth's lingua franca.

(Source: Kirk Magleby, "Early Modern English," http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com)

In Part 1 of the 3-part Volume 3 of *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation* (2016), Royal Skousen writes [p. 3]:

> The Book of Mormon, when it was first published in 1830 (Palmyra, New York), was immediately recognized as written in a biblical style but also filled with numerous instances of nonstandard English. As might be expected, that earlier text has undergone grammatical editing over the years, especially by Joseph Smith when he prepared the book for its second edition in 1837 (Kirtland, Ohio), along with additional editing by him for the third edition published in 1840 (Cincinnati, Ohio/Nauvoo, Illinois). Virtually all subsequent editions have continued the editing.

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On page 13 Skousen continues:

In quite a few cases, the Book of Mormon usage is restricted to Early Modern English and died out by the 1700s. One surprising finding is that nearly all the Book of Mormon usages that many have thought to be simply Joseph Smith's Upstate New York dialect have actually been identified as Early Modern English. In other words, the original Book of Mormon text is archaic English (dating from Early Modern English) rather than Joseph Smith's dialectal English.

Stanford Carmack writes that much of what we know concerning Early Modern English comes from the KJV Bible. Yet there are multiple Early Modern English grammatical forms in the Book of Mormon that are not found in the Bible, or their usage percentage in the Book of Mormon is not equivalent with that found in KJV Bible text. These grammatical forms in the Book of Mormon have been previously treated as poor English, and edited to a more "acceptable" grammatical form, even by Joseph Smith. However, these phrases, once scorned by critics, now become support for two very important ideas. That

(1) the KJV Bible is a very important companion to the Book of Mormon in phrasing; yet

(2) the Book of Mormon does not represent a plagiarism of the KJV.

Carmack writes:

I would assert that it is no longer possible to argue that the earliest text of the Book of Mormon is defective and substandard in its grammar. . . . [Moreover] Even if the composition of the book had been consciously manipulated by [Joseph] Smith and his associates in order to create a structurally and lexically plausible work of scripture based on the Bible they knew; the evidence is abundantly clear that the language is broader in scope and in many cases deeper in time than what might possibly have been derived from the KJV.

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 258-259)

Although Stanford Carmack and Royal Skousen have published a number of articles (see the list of "Sources" in this Introduction), their work on Early Modern English as it relates to the Book of Mormon is ongoing. Thus I have set aside this special section of my Introduction. My purpose is neither to prove or disprove their hypothesis, as I do not lay claim to any formal training in languages, especially Early Modern English. Rather my intention is to provide a limited perspective of their proposed "discoveries" as they relate to my structured parallelistic text, in the hope that further insight can be achieved and catalogued.

To begin with, and for the benefit of the reader, what follows in this section is mainly derived from Carmack's article, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar."

[Note: As of this date, part 3 of Volume 3 of The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation, *which treats the Early Modern English in the text of the Book of Mormon, has not been published.]*

I will first list some of the topics he covers, and then give more detail.

(1) **The phrase "they <u>was</u>"**

(2) **The phrase "them days"**

(3) "**Smitten" / "Smote"**

(4) **Plural noun / Singular verb**

(5) **Singular noun / Plural verb**

(6) **The phrase "faith on the Lord** [**Jesus Christ**]

(7) **The phrase "it supposeth me"**

(8) **The past participle "arriven"**

(9) **The phrase "the more part of"**

(10) **The use of the phrase "beseech of you/thee"**

(11) **The phrase "much + plurals"**

(12) **The use of the phrase "did go"**

(13) **Miscellaneous examples**

As I have previously mentioned in Part 1 of this Introduction (Method #13), as I list the textual examples from the categories listed above in which there has been a change from Early Modern English to Modern English, I will sometimes color the modern grammar in pink, then a slash, and then the change in pink that has been made to the text. Then at the right margin I will insert a pink {AG}   Other times I will color the present text in pink and insert at the right margin the original grammatical form in pink in brackets, followed by a pink {AG}. I will also alert the reader to the fact that there are some instances in which the archaic grammar is still present in the text. In those cases, I will just color the text in pink and place the customary {AG} ("Archaic Grammar") at the right margin. Sometimes I will note when the archaic grammar was deleted, which in most instances was during the extensive editing of 1837.
[deleted in 1837]

<u>Examples:</u>   (For 1 Nephi 4:4)

[Original text]   1 Nephi 4:4: they <u>was</u> yet wroth

[Present text]   1 Nephi 4:4 they <u>were</u> yet wroth

Example #1:   Now when I had spoken these words they was/were yet wroth   {AG}

Example #2:   Now when I had spoken these words they were yet wroth   ["they was"] {AG}

Example #3:   1 Nephi 16:1

1   Thou hast declared unto us HARD things
                        more than that which we   [thy brethren]   [deleted in 1837]   {AG}
                                    are able to bear

(Early Modern English)

(1) **The phrase "they <u>was</u>":**

According to Stanford Carmack, the phrase "<u>they was</u>" is uncommon in the Book of Mormon. It occurs five times, while "they were" occurs 628 times. Yet it is well attested in Early Modern English where plural pronouns we, ye, you, and they were used with the singular "was."

Example #1: 1 Nephi 4:4
<blockquote><u>they were</u> yet wroth   ["they <u>was</u>"]   {AG}</blockquote>

Example #2: 1 Nephi 17:6

<blockquote>we   <u>were</u> exceedingly rejoiced   ["we <u>was</u>"]   {AG}</blockquote>

Note: In the original text, the phrase "we was" occurs once (1 Nephi 17:6), but "we were" occurs 35 times.

In the original text, the phrase "there was" followed by a plural noun occurs 30 times in the Book of Mormon, compared to 120 instances of the phrase "there were."

Example # 3: 1 Nephi 18:25

<blockquote>there were beasts in the forests of every kind   ["there was"]   {AG}</blockquote>

Originally, the Book of Mormon contained a construction "there were no" followed by a singular noun (see 3 Nephi 4:4; 3 Nephi 11:3; Mormon 1:12). All of these have since been standardized. According to Carmack, the KJV doesn't have any such examples of this construction.

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 217, 221-225)

(2) **The phrase "<u>them</u> days":**

According to Stanford Carmack, we see the phrase "them days" twice in the original text of the Book of Mormon. While not normal Early Modern English, it is not abnormal either.

Example: 1 Nephi 1:20 is similar

<blockquote>20 . . . the **tender mercies** of the Lord is / are over   ALL them / those   [𝒫, 1830 / 1837]   {AG}
            whom He [the Lord] hath_____**chosen**</blockquote>

Other Similar Examples: 1 Nephi 22:20; 22:23

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, p. 217)

(3) **"Smitten" / "Smote"**:

According to Stanford Carmack, the past-participial *smitten* is used 42 times in the Book of Mormon. In the original text, the past-participial form "had smote" is used 6 times.

Example: 1 Nephi 4:19
And after I had smitten off his head   *["had smote"]*   {AG}

Interestingly, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) informs us that "smote" functioned as a past participle for centuries in English, beginning in the 16th century.

 (Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, p. 219)

(4) **Plural noun / Singular verb**:

According to Stanford Carmack, in modern-day noun phrases, we correlate a plural noun with a singular verb. In Early Modern English, this is not always the case:

Examples: (What follows is from the original text):

1 Nephi 2:5   he traveled in the wilderness, in the borders which was nearer the Red Sea

1 Nephi 5:11   Adam and Eve which was our first parents

1 Nephi 10:16; 13:17; 16:30; 17:2; 17:30; 18:15; 18:24; 1825

Third-person plural subjects used with archaic third-person singular inflection:

Example: Preface of First Nephi (archaic forms still present in the 1920 edition)

Nephi & his brethren	returneth
	rebelleth
	dieth
	yieldeth
	sleepeth
Flames	ascendeth
Hearts	delighteth
Gentiles	knoweth
Men	hath
Many	hath

(Sources: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 217, 234. *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, Vol. I, FARMS, 1986.)

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(5) **Singular noun / Plural verb**:

According to Stanford Carmack, the original text of the Book of Mormon not only contains examples of a singular noun used with a plural verb, but some of those examples have never been changed.

Example #1: 1 Nephi 14:23 <u>thou</u> beheld   (this example has never been changed)   {AG}

Example #2:   1 Nephi 14:8   Remember   <u>thou</u> the covenants of the Father

[originally: "<u>Rememberest </u>thou"]   {AG}

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 230-231)

(6) **The phrase "faith on the Lord** [**Jesus Christ**]:

Although the Book of Mormon parallels the Bible in using phrases such as "faith in God," faith in the Lord," and faith in him," according to Carmack, ONLY the Book of Mormon uses phrases like "faith on the Lord," or "faith on the name of the Lord."

Example: 1 Nephi 10:17: he received by faith on the Son of God   {AG}

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 235-236)

(6) **The phrase "it supposeth me"**:

According to Stanford Carmack, phrases like "it supposeth me," "it sorrowth me," and "it whispereth me" are found in the Book of Mormon, but not in the KJV Bible.

Examples: There are NO examples in 1 Nephi

Examples: it supposeth me: Jacob 2:8, Words of Mormon 1:2, Alma 54:11

it sorroweth me: 3 Nephi 27:32

it whispereth me: Words of Mormon 1:7

[Note: The phrase "it repenteth me" is found in Genesis 6:7 and 1 Samuel 15:11.]

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 237-238)

(8) **The past participle "arriven"**:

According to Stanford Carmack, the verb "arrive" or the past participle "arriven" is not used in the KJV, yet Acts 20:15 and Luke 8:26 contain the past tense arrived. The past participle "arriven" (Early Modern English) is used five times in the Earliest Text edition of the Book of Mormon:

Example: 1 Nephi 17:14:

> After ye have arriven / arrived to the promised land   [$\mathcal{P}$, 1830 / 1837]   {AG}

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, p. 238)

Note: In the past-participle form of a verb, the verb form can usually be preceded by the word "had" or "have" ("he has come," "she has arrived," "they have "given"). However, according to Royal Skousen, the Original Manuscript contained many instances where the tense of the verb differs from what we might consider "standard English." Yet these forms were part of "the history of the English language, from Early Modern English to dialectal English today." Skousen lists thirty-six of these nonstandard forms and the number of times they appear in the Original Manuscript. Some examples of using the "simple past-tense" form instead of the standard form are as follows: [had] awoke (4 times) instead of [had] awakened; [had] became (5 times) instead of [had] become; [had] began (6); [had] came (13); [had] drew (1); [had] drank (2); [had] forgat (3); [had] gave (4); [had] went (1); [had] overcame (3); [had] smote (6); [had] spake (13); [had] wrote. Examples of other variances are: [had] arriven (5) instead of arrived, or [had] proved instead of [had] proven.

Skousen writes that "In virtually all instances, the nonstandard past-participial forms in the earliest Book of Mormon text have been grammatically emended."

(Royal Skousen with the collaboration of Stanford Carmack, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation, Part One*. Provo, Utah: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University Studies, 2016, p. 592-593)

Examples:

1 Ne.	5:1	after we had came/come	[*O*, *$\mathcal{P}$* / 1852]
1 Ne.	8:27	those who had came/come	[changed in 1837]
1 Ne	18:7	my father had begat	

(Source: *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, Vol. I. FARMS, 1986)

(9) **The phrase "The more part of"**:

According to Stanford Carmack, while the KJV uses the phrase "the more part" twice (Acts 19:32, 27:12), the full phrase, "the more part of" does not appear in the KJV. Yet it does appear numerous times in the Book of Mormon:

(Early Modern English)

Example: 1 Nephi 9:4

        Wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry   {AG}

Example: 1 Nephi 22:4

        Yea the more part of all the tribes have been led away   {AG}

Apparently, the phrase was in use from about 1380 to about 1610.

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, pp. 240-241)

(10) **The use of the phrase "beseech of you/thee"**:

In the KJV we find the following pattern: " I/we beseech you/thee . . . . . would / might"

In the Book of Mormon we find: I beseech **of** you / thee . . . should

Thus the "of" is left out in the KJV Bible, but the "of" is included in the Book of Mormon.

Example: There are NO examples in 1 Nephi

Other Examples: Jacob 6:5
                        Alma 34:33
                        Alma 36:33
                        Moroni 7:9

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, p. 243)

(11) **The phrase "much + plurals"**:

According to Stanford Carmack, in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon we find the singular modifier "much" connected with a number of plurals, in much the same manner as in Early Modern English.

Example: 1 Nephi 18:6: after we had prepared . . . much fruits   {AG}

Note: In the KJV we find an example of this construction in Luke 12:19: "much goods."

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, p. 253)

(12) **The use of the phrase "did go":**

According to Stanford Carmack, the grammatical form "did go" is very recognizable from the Book of Mormon. It is used in Early Modern English for emphasis and contrast. The phrase "did + infinitive appears more than 1,000 times in the Book of Mormon, and 54 times as "did go" or didst go." In comparison, the KJV never uses "did(st) . . . go", but rather "went" or "wentest"—more than 1400 times.

Example: 1 Nephi 16:30

> I Nephi did go *forth up into the top of the mountain*   {AG}

Other Examples: 1 Nephi 16:14
                       1 Nephi 18:1
                       1 Nephi 18:3
                       1 Nephi 18:6
                       1 Nephi 18:11

(Source: Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209-262, p. 255)

(13) **Miscellaneous examples:**

Some of the other Early Modern English word uses in the Book of Mormon are as follows:

Examples: Title Page   Written by the way of commandment
             Title Page   to come forth in due time by the way of the Gentile
             1 Nephi 3:2   I have dreamed a dream in the which
             1 Nephi 5:5   in the which things I do rejoice
             1 Nephi 13:42   And the time cometh   [present tense to represent the future]
             1 Nephi 14:6   For the time cometh
             1 Nephi 14:17   And when the day cometh
             1 Nephi 22:7   the time cometh
             1 Nephi 22:15   the day cometh
             1 Nephi 2:24   And if it so be that they *[thy seed]*
             1 Nephi 7:13   And if it so be that we are faithful to Him
             1 Nephi 22:17   even if it so be as by Fire
             1 Nephi 13:30   **The Lord God** will NOT suffer that the Gentiles will NOT utterly
                               destroy the mixture of thy seed   [double negative]

Note: Intriguingly, while the phrase "if it so be" is found 9 times in Volume 1 and 11 times in Volume 2 (the writings of Nephi), it is NOT found at all in Volumes 3, 4a, 4b, 4c, or 5 from the abridgment of Mormon.

(Source: "Use of Early Modern English" in the Editor's Preface, page xxxvii, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, edited by Royal Skousen, 2009.)

(Early Modern English)

Note: In an intriguing comment submitted by David Brown on January 8, 2016 in response to Stanford Carmack's article, "Joseph Smith Read the Words" (*Interpreter A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 41-64) he writes:

> Neurolinguistic research conducted at the University of Liverpool has looked at different brain responses to different forms of text. Phillip Davis and his team have discovered that of all the different forms of English, Early Modern English stimulates the brain like no other. While current English texts tend to lull the brain into relative inactivity, EmodE texts excite the brain into a deep, self-assessing state.
>
> A summary of Davis' work stated that, "The research also found that reading poetry in particular, increases activity in the right hemisphere of the brain, an area concerned with 'autobiographical memory', helping the reader to reflect on and reappraise their own experiences in light of what they have read.