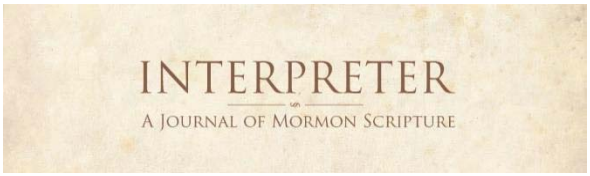
BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL
http://bookofmormoncentral.org/



The Interpreter Foundation
https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/

Tyndale Versus More in the Book of Mormon

Author(s): Royal Skousen
Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, Volume 13 (2015), pp. 1-8
Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

Abstract: No abstract available.

The Interpreter Foundation is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to scholarly research on the Book of Mormon. Items are archived by the permission of the Interpreter Foundation.
https://mormoninterpreter.com/

INTERPRETER

A JOURNAL OF MORMON SCRIPTURE

Volume 13 · 2015 · Pages 1-8

Tyndale Versus More in the Book of Mormon

Royal Skousen

Offprint Series

© 2014 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication. Visit us at MormonInterpreter.com

Tyndale Versus More in the Book of Mormon

Royal Skousen

In 1526 William Tyndale's English-language *The New Testament* started showing up in England, printed in the Low Lands and smuggled into England because it was an illegal book. It represented an unapproved translation of the scriptures into the English language. In theory, a translation would have been allowed if the Church had approved it in advance. In reality, the Church was not interested in any translation of the scriptures since that would allow lay readers to interpret the scriptures on their own and to come to different conclusions regarding Church practices and doctrine. Moreover, scripture formed a fundamental role in the rise of the Protestant Reformation and, in particular, Lutheranism, which King Henry VIII had officially opposed, in the governing of his realm and in his own writings in defense of the Catholic Church (for which the Church had honored him with the title of Defender of the Faith).

Tyndale's translation was vigorously attacked by Sir Thomas More, the King's minister and counselor (and later chancellor), in his *Dialogue*, published in 1528. (Today this work of More's is generally referred to as *Dialogue concerning Heresies,* but that was not its original title.) More not only attacked Tyndale for his supposed Lutheranism but also for how he had translated the Greek original into English in his 1526 New Testament. In part III, section 8 of *Dialogue*, More argues against Tyndale's 1526 translations of *ecclesia* as 'congregation', *presbyteros* as 'senior', and *agape* as 'love'. Near the end of this section, More also mentions his disapproval of Tyndale referring to 'penance' as 'repentance'. In his later translation of the New Testament

(1534), Tyndale adopted 'elder' for *presbyteros*, which More had nonetheless ridiculed in his *Dialogue*, giving the argument that "elders" in the New Testament were not necessarily old. In More's view, these "elders" were priests, even though the Latin word in the Vulgate was either the Greek loanword *presbyter* or the Latin *senior*. In all these cases, the New Testament never used the Greek or Latin word for 'priest' (*hieros* or *sacerdos*). And the argument over 'penance' later became one of whether the Greek verb for 'repent', *metanoeo*, should be translated as 'repent' or as the more Catholic 'do penance', from the Vulgate (*paenitentiam ago*).

The Protestant Reformation adopted much of Tyndale's terminology, as in, for instance, the names of churches: the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and the Congregational Church in New England. This tradition continues in the use of synonyms for *congregation* in church names, such as "the Assembly of God" and "the Community of Christ". Throughout the 1500s and early 1600s, we can see a tug of war over which of all these debated terms would end up in the English Bible. By the time we get to the 1611 King James Bible (KJB), the translation issues that Thomas More viciously attacked William Tyndale over were settled as follows: (1) *love* is used throughout except in the latter part of the New Testament where *charity* is sometimes used in place of *love*, chiefly in the letters of Paul; (2) *church* is used for both the general organization and the individual congregation, with the reader determining which meaning is meant in any given passage; (3) *elder* is used for the church office, not *priest;* and (4) *repent* is used throughout, never the Catholic *do penance*.

In reviewing these decisions in the King James Bible, we can see that some deference is paid to More in the epistles with the use of *charity* rather than *love* in certain phrases (thus "faith hope charity" in 1 Corinthians 13:13), otherwise the New Testament word is *love*, Tyndale's word, especially in the gospels where even the Vulgate has *amo* 'love' (thus "lovest thou me" in John 21). For sure, More wins with the word *church;* the Protestant *congregation* is avoided, although one can tell from

context which meaning for *church* is intended. But Tyndale wins with *elder* and *repent*. (The word *priest* occurs in referring to the Jewish priests, but not as an office in the Christian church.)

In the following summary, I set out the history of these four words for certain key New Testament passages. We see for selected translations how the original Greek and the secondary Latin (the Vulgate) ended up in the English Bible in the 1500s and early 1600s. I also provide a modern translation from the 1989 Revised English Bible (REB), which has been approved by both the Catholic Church and Protestant churches for use in the British Isles. Even the Catholics have now accepted the King James translation of all these terms.

The Debate Over the Four Words in the 1500s and 1600s

(1) *agape* 'love' versus 'charity' (from the Latin *caritas*)

in the epistles, the Rheims New Testament and the King James Bible use *charity* as well as *love*

1 Corinthians 13:13

Tyndale NT 1526	now abideth faith hope and love
Tyndale NT 1534	now abideth faith hope and love
Geneva Bible 1560	and now abideth faith hope *and* love
Rheims NT 1582	and now there remain faith hope *and* **charity**
KJB 1611	and now abideth faith hope **charity**
REB 1989	there are three things that last for ever : faith hope and love

in the gospels, all use *love*, never *charity*

Matthew 22:39

Tyndale NT 1526	thou shalt love thine neighbor as thyself
Tyndale NT 1534	love thine neighbor as thyself
Geneva Bible 1560	thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
Rheims NT 1582	thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
KJB 1611	thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
REB 1989	love your neighbor as yourself

(2) *ecclesia* 'congregation' versus 'church'
(3) *presbyteros* 'elder, senior' versus 'priest'

Acts 15:4

Tyndale NT 1526	they were received of the **congregation** and of the apostles and **seniors**
Tyndale NT 1534	they were received of the **congregation** and of the apostles and elders
Geneva Bible 1560	they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders
Rheims NT 1582	they were received by the church and by the apostles and **ancients**
KJB 1611	they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders

REB 1989	they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders

Note that *church* is decided early on (for instance, in the 1560 Geneva Bible, a Protestant Bible).

(4) *metanoeo* 'repent' versus 'do penance' (from the Latin *paenitentiam ago*)

Mark 6:12

Tyndale NT 1526	and they went out and preached that they should repent
Tyndale NT 1534	and they went out and preached that they should repent
Geneva Bible 1560	and they went out and preached that *men* should **amend their lives**
Rheims NT 1582	and going forth they preached that *men* should **do penance**
KJB 1611	and they went out and preached that men should repent
REB 1989	so they set out and proclaimed the need for repentance

The Ecumenical Book of Mormon!

Interestingly, the Book of Mormon is in full agreement with the vocabulary decisions made in the King James Bible, yet it makes adjustments for the original debate by making sure that you, the reader, correctly understand how to interpret these words. Thus we find that the Book of Mormon often tells the reader that the word *charity* is 'love' – that is, in various places

it adds the word *love* so that you won't think that the text is referring to alms giving (Tyndale's complaint about the Latinate word *charity*). When the word *church* is used in the Book of Mormon, the text will let you know that *church* can be used to mean both the organization and the individual congregation. And interestingly, the church in the Book of Mormon has both elders and priests, not just one or the other. In each case the Book of Mormon builds upon the original debate, yet resolves it according to the King James translation. Even then, the resolution follows Tyndale's interpretation.

love and *charity*

2 Nephi 26:30	that all men should have charity which charity is love
Ether 12:34	this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity
Moroni 7:47	but charity is the pure love of Christ
Moroni 8:17	and I am filled with charity which is everlasting love

church and *churches*

Mosiah 25:21	they did assemble themselves together in different bodies being called churches
Mosiah 25:22	and thus notwithstanding there being many churches they were all one church yea even the church of God

elders and *priests*

Alma 4:7	yea and to many of the people which Alma had consecrated to be teachers and priests and elders over the church

Alma 6:1	he ordained priests and elders by laying on his hands
Moroni 3:1	the manner which the disciples – which were called the elders of the church – ordained priests and teachers
Moroni 4:1	the manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church
Moroni 6:1	behold elders priests and teachers were baptized

Note that Moroni 3:1 sets the elders hierarchically over the priests and teachers.

repent, but no "do penance" at all in the Book of Mormon

Alexander Campbell claimed in his early review of the Book of Mormon (in 1831) that Joseph Smith's golden bible was simply commenting on the religious issues of the early 1800s in America. To the contrary, there is considerable evidence that the issues and the cultural milieu of the text date more from the late 1600s than the early 1800s, during a time when the conflicts between the low-church Protestants, high-church Anglicans, and Catholics had been basically resolved (or at least reached a kind of peaceful truce in England). References to "secret combinations" and to "standing at the bar of God to be judged" can be more reasonably traced to this period, not to the early 1800s (or to biblical usage). The translation issues that Thomas More attacked William Tyndale over were basically settled in the King James Bible (1611), yet the Book of Mormon takes those translation issues to their final conclusion by explicitly resolving the conflict by (1) frequently declaring *charity* to be love, as in the "pure love of Christ", (2) allowing for both elders and priests as offices in the church, and (3) explicitly stating that the word *church* refers to both congregation and God's

organization. The Book of Mormon resolves the controversy in favor of the King James solution but from the point of view of William Tyndale.

Royal Skousen, professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, has been the editor of the Book of Mormon critical text project since 1988. Volumes 1, 2, and 4 of the critical text are published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. In 2009, Skousen published with Yale University Press the culmination of his critical text work, The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text. *He is also known for his work on exemplar-based theories of language and quantum computing of analogical modeling.*