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Title Worthy of Another Look: Reusages of the Words of Christ

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Abstract Jesus quoted key phrases, often in inverted order, from the Sermon on the Mount (3 Nephi 12-14) in subsequent Book of Mormon chapters (3 Nephi 15-28), thus demonstrating that the sermon was accepted as an authoritative text establishing and defining Jesus's kingdom on earth. Although rarely considered in this light, Peter, James, Paul, and the gospel writers quoted from all parts of the Sermon on the Mount, similarly substantiating the authoritative functions of the sermon as a foundational text in early Christianity. Literary analysis supports the ideas that these quotations were intentional, that an awareness of the sermon was widespread in the earliest decades of Christianity, and that audiences to which Jesus and his apostles spoke were familiar with the teachings and commandments found in the Sermon on the Mount.





WORTHY OF ANOTHER LOOK

The following is an excerpt from and summary of an article by John W. Welch that appeared as “Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount,” in The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: BYU Religious Studies and Deseret Book, 2010), 312–40.

REUSAGES OF THE WORDS OF CHRIST

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

Minerva Teichert (1888–1976), *The Sacrament*, 1949–1951, oil on masonite, 36 x 48 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art.

FROM THE EDITOR:

I am confident that you, the reader, will enjoy and maybe even be surprised about the sophisticated and, in some cases, uniquely Hebrew way in which paraphrases and quotations of the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi 12–14 are presented in subsequent chapters of 3 Nephi. The excerpt presented here, by permission, is half of a larger paper by Professor John W. Welch that identifies a pattern of subsequent quotations of the Sermon at the Temple in the Book of Mormon and also finds the same pattern in subsequent writings in the New Testament when quoting the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5–7. This pattern of quoting the sermon points strongly to the foundational, authoritative, and catechistic nature of the magisterial Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount.

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 this study, 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 more often than people typically realize. This pattern of drawing and building on the foundational words of that text was set by Jesus himself as he gave the sermon in 3 Nephi 12–14 and then quoted from it significantly in 3 Nephi 15–28. The same pattern can be observed in the New Testament. These uses point to the conclusion that the initial iterations of the Sermon on the Mount¹ were accepted and used as a common

Indeed, we are fortunate that pieces of the sermon continue to appear in the subsequent chapters of 3 Nephi,³ 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.⁴ 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’s 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.

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, for these derivatives are used intelligently and not as random fractals or broken sherds.

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.⁵ For example, “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5; 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).⁶ “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 scriptures⁷ sets the stage for the sermon itself being subsequently quoted in a number of settings.

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 have argued 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.² To illustrate this rarely observed intertextual feature, I begin with an examination of Jesus’s use of the words in 3 Nephi 12–14 in the ensuing chapters in 3 Nephi.

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 a 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.

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.

3 Nephi 12 in 3 Nephi 15–16

At first, the immediate reaction of the people was to marvel that “old things had passed away, and that all things had become new” (3 Nephi 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 reverse order of the original is thought by scholars to be a strong sign, according to what has been identified as Seidel’s Law,⁸ that this is a conscious form of quotation. In this light, it is noteworthy that Jesus’s 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’s 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).

3 Nephi 11–12 and 14 in 3 Nephi 18

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 several 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 given them (18:10), Jesus 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.”

As Jesus prayed, his words were so sublime and sacred that they could not be written or “uttered by man” (3 Nephi 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).

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,



“Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world” (3 Nephi 18:24). This pine torch may be analogous to what Mesoamerican cultures would have used. Jason Schwartz, Rocky Mountain Bushcraft.

emphasizing the need to both hear and do the words of the Lord (14:24).

Second, Jesus promised the people, “Ask . . . behold 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 “aught against” one another (12:23).

Once again, Jesus’s 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). Whether Jesus gave only general directions about how to pray at this point, his central words in 18:16 could well have alluded back to that central passage in the sermon.

3 Nephi 12–14 in 3 Nephi 19

This pattern of demonstrably implementing the words of the sermon continued during Jesus’s 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).⁹

3 Nephi 12–14 in 3 Nephi 27

Carrying on in this same fashion, Jesus’s final days 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.

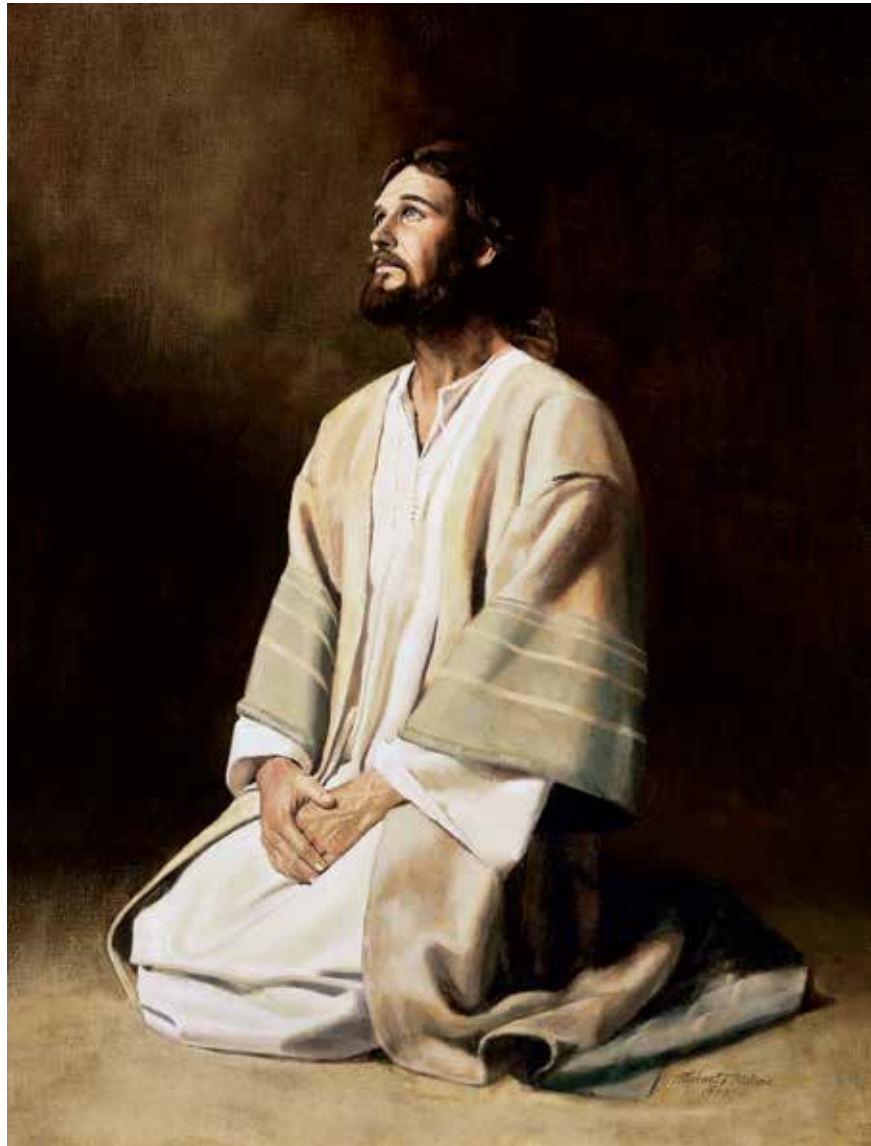
Then, as Jesus’s final hours with his disciples commenced, a new culminating beatitude was pronounced: “If ye do these things, blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (27:22). This echoes the promises of the Beatitudes at the beginning of the sermon that the righteous will “see God” 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).

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’s 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



Jesus Kneeling in Prayer and Meditation, by Michael Jarvis Nelson. Used by permission.

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 of us as readers.

In sum, one sees in 3 Nephi a strong pattern of reuse, in short succession, of 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 of his teachings embraced it all.¹⁰

Use of the Sermon in the Writings of Mormon and Moroni

These uses by Jesus of texts from the Sermon on the Mount 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’s Sermon at the Temple.

Mormon’s Synagogue Speech

Notably, Mormon wove several crucial words and phrases from the Sermon on the Mount into his impassioned speech to his people, which is 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 14:16, “Do men gather *grapes* of *thorns*?” (inverting the good/evil to evil/good).

“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” (words in italics explain why).

“For with *that same* judgment *which* ye judge ye shall *also* be judged” (7:18, changes shown in italics) simply adds emphasis to the original words of the sermon: “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (3 Nephi 14:2).¹¹

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 important 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 most 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).

The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Moroni

Mormon’s son, 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 *perfect* in the Lord’s own invitation made



Look to Your Children. Image by Minerva Teichert © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

at a salient point in the sermon: “I would that ye should be *perfect even as I*” (3 Nephi 12:48).

Moroni also incorporated Jesus’s instructions found elsewhere in 3 Nephi as he recorded important priesthood administrative rules about 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 quoted 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 quoted the sacrament prayers (Moroni 4-5; compare 3 Nephi 18:1-11) and made special reference to baptism (Moroni 6:2; see 3 Nephi 11:28; 18:16). He went 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). The Nephites 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). 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 and other instructions were given by the resurrected Lord 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 the full 2010 version of this article goes on to show in considerable detail, just as the Sermon at

Minerva Teichert (1888-1976), *Moroni: The Last Nephite*, 1949-1951, oil on masonite, 41 9/16 x 53 9/16 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art.



the Temple was subsequently quoted by Jesus and others in the Book of Mormon, likewise the Sermon on the Mount also reverberates throughout the New Testament.¹² Indeed, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, James, and Paul draw quotations out of the sermon, from its beginning to its end, often in sacred or covenantal contexts and in settings that make the best sense if one assumes that the authority of the sermon was already firmly established and accepted. From this, the 2010 article argues that Jesus Christ and his early Apostles used this text on many occasions to solemnize and reinforce 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,¹³ and that those warnings, as well as the eschatological blessings promised in the Sermon on the Mount, take the sermon outside the sphere of mere moral admonition. This agrees with Hans Dieter Betz, who sees the “holy thing” mentioned in Matthew 7:6, which the initiate is told must not be cast before swine, as none other than some “esoteric saying” that was part of “initiation into secrets . . . not to be divulged to the uninitiated outsiders.”¹⁴ All this being the case, it makes good sense to understand Peter, James, Paul, and others as quoting from the sermon and not vice versa. This view, of course, cuts against many of the common assumptions about how the Gospels were written.¹⁵ For Latter-day Saints, however, Jesus’s own declaration that he had just given to the Nephites the very words delivered to his Apostles in Jerusalem before he ascended into heaven (3 Nephi 15:1) changes the assumptions and paradigms within which one can approach the sermon. For example, it is often assumed that Jesus said something once and only once, or that he always said it in the same way, but if Jesus used the sermon on several occasions, two or three somewhat different performances of this text could all be original sayings of Jesus.¹⁶ The article then concludes with the following seven findings based on the examples and evidences that were presented.

Findings

From all this one may draw several useful and interesting conclusions:

1. Distinctive 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 Gospels.

2. The precedent for this subsequent pattern of quotation was established by Jesus himself, as is unmistakably reported in 3 Nephi 15-27 and as can also be seen operating in a similar fashion in Matthew 10-25.
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 or utilizations.
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 (see, for example 3 Nephi 19:8-9), this would explain why its various elements became so widespread and were quoted so often in many subsequent texts, as in Moroni 7 and many of the earliest Christian writings.
7. Early Christian authors, such as Peter, James, and Paul, writing in the mid-first century, as well as Mormon, assumed that their faithful readers already knew and were previously committed to obey these commandments and teachings. These derivative uses are consistent with early and authoritative functions and uses of this foundational text. ■



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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) and 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 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, at least two of which were found in the sources used by Matthew and Luke and perhaps others.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Discussed in Welch, *Illuminating*, 126-28.
5. 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.
6. Krister Stendahl’s erroneous claim that the Greek word meaning “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.
7. 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.
8. Seidel’s Law is discussed by David Bokovoy, “Inverted Quotations in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 20/10 (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. The main scholarly developments and applications of this law are found in Moshe Seidel, “Parallels between Isaiah and Psalms,” *Sinai* 38 (1955-56): 149-72, 229-40, 272-80, 335-55 (Hebrew); reprinted as M. Seidel, *Hiqrei Miqra* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1978), 1-97 (Hebrew); Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 232-74; Pancratius C. Beentjes, “Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern,” *Biblica* 63 (1982): 506-23; and Shemaryahu Talmon, “The Textual Study of the Bible—A New Outlook,” in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*, ed. Frank M. Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 362-63. See also Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18-20, 35; Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems, and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 121-22; Marc Z. Bretler, “Jud 1,1-2,10: From Appendix to Prologue,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101 (1989): 433.
9. Welch, *Illuminating*, 87-90.
10. 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).
11. 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.
12. This section summarizes the lengthy New Testament portion of the full 2010 article.
13. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 63, 70, 97-98, 195.
14. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 495-96.
15. 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 scholars 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).
16. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 215; Welch, *Illuminating*, 80.