*Paper Proposal*

“Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the King James Bible”

*Presenter and Title*

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*Description of Presentation*

To the surprise of many, the Bible has in the past played and does now play a deeply significant role in the personal and institutional life of Latter-day Saints or Mormons. The Smith family was rooted and grounded in the Bible, and, according to Joseph Jr.’s own account, it was through a personal reading of James 1:5 in 1820 in upstate New York that he felt inspired to seek for divine guidance and thereafter received his “First Vision.” Joseph’s teaching ministry was inextricably linked with the KJV for the next twenty-four years of his life, in at least the following ways:

• The LDS companion volume to the Bible, the Book of Mormon, draws heavily upon King James language and style and contains many KJV passages, particularly from Isaiah and the Sermon on the Mount.

• In June 1830 Joseph began what he called a “new translation” or what is known today as “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible,” meaning the KJV. Some 3,410 verses from both the Old and New Testaments were in some way altered by Joseph (expanded upon, deleted, reworded) in his Bible translation, a labor that occupied him until his death in 1844. A large number of these changes are found in today’s Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible (1979).

• The Doctrine and Covenants, a collection of revelations to Joseph Smith, is couched in KJV speech and in many cases expands upon and refers to doctrinal matters in the Bible.

• Scores of sermons by the Mormon prophet/leader contain biblical quotations, paraphrasing summaries, or explicit scriptural allusions, most all of these in KJV language.

Further, while Latter-day Saints in the 21st century are well aware of the presence and value of modern translations of the Bible, the KJV remains the authorized Bible of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is no indication that this will change in the foreseeable future.

This presentation will seek to demonstrate, in spite of the expanded LDS canon, (1) the biblical basis of Mormonism; (2) why an acceptance of other scriptural records (including a “new translation”) does not weaken the LDS hold on the Bible or lead them to doubt its historicity or question its relevance; (3) how and why the followers of Joseph Smith have become more biblically literate in the last three decades; and (4) why the Mormon Church continues to hold to and stand by the KJV as its Bible of choice.