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TOWARD A GREATER APPRECIATION OF THE WORD *ADIEU* IN JACOB 7:27

Godfrey J. Ellis

Abstract: *The phrase “Brethren, adieu” (Jacob 7:27) has been criticized over the years as an obvious anachronism in the Book of Mormon. That criticism holds no validity whatsoever, as others have pointed out, since many English words have French origins. It’s worth considering, though, a deeper meaning of the word. In French, it carries a nuance of finality — that the separation will last until a reunion following death (à Dieu, or until God). This deeper meaning of adieu appears to have been known by Shakespeare and frontier Americans although the second meaning is not generally recognized by English speakers today. However, Jacob 7:27 appears to reflect this deeper meaning as do certain uses of another valediction in the Book of Mormon — that of farewell. With the deeper meaning of adieu in mind, the parallel structure in Jacob 7:27 — “down to the grave,” reflecting the finality of adieu — becomes more apparent. The question of whether Joseph Smith was aware of the deeper meaning of adieu is taken up by looking at how the word was used in the Joseph Smith Papers. The take-away is that rather than reflecting an error on the part of Joseph Smith, the word adieu, with its deeper nuance of finality until God, is not only an appropriate term, it appears to strengthen rather than undermine the case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.*

The presence of the unusual phrase “Brethren, adieu” in Jacob 7:27 resulted in one of the earliest criticisms of the Book of Mormon by those who rejected its ancient origins. It was judged to be a ridiculous blunder on the part of Joseph Smith and was often cited as a classic anachronism that proved the book had no true historicity but was the product of a naïve nineteenth-century farm boy who happened to have unusual intelligence and writing ability. Many guffawed from the sidelines: “The Nephites, had they really existed, would not have known

French! This proves Joseph Smith was a fraud!” This criticism has been extensively countered by numerous Latter-day Saint authors, scholars, and teachers¹ and it is not the main intent of this present study to repeat this defense in detail. Still, there are two valid reasons why it is worth at least a summary of the defense against the charge that the word *adieu* is an anachronism that disqualifies the Book of Mormon.

Perceived Issues With the Word *Adieu*

One reason for rehearsing the defense of *adieu* yet again is that its use as an argument against the Book of Mormon is still alive and well and out there on the Internet and in print. As recently as 19 July 2022, the word was listed in the widely read information source, *Wikipedia*. It came under the topic of “Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon.”² Fortunately, that assertion was eventually removed for not being a “serious scholarly claim.” While I am grateful that it was deleted, it is concerning that the criticism was available that widely and that recently.³ Unfortunately, there are still books, websites, and some church groups that pass the objection along. Paul J. Gassman in a 2014 book, for example, makes this declaration:

[Jacob 7:27] ends the Book of Jacob with the words, “Brethern [*sic*] adieu.” The word “adieu” is a French word which means good bye. The problem with the use of this French word is that the French language was not developed or derived from Latin until 700 A.D. How does someone, who supposedly wrote on these golden tablets 500 years before Christ, write a French

1. One good example of this is from a discussion of the word in “The French word ‘adieu’ in the Book of Mormon,” FAIR Answers Wiki, https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Book_of_Mormon/Language/%22Adieu%22. See also, Steve Reed, “Jacob’s usage of the word ‘adieu’ in the Book of Mormon,” *oneClimbs*, June 19, 2011, <https://oneclimbs.com/2011/06/19/jacobs-usage-of-the-word-adieu-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

2. “Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon: Revision history,” Wikipedia, version from July 19, 2022 at 21:41, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anachronisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon&oldid=1099266373. The current version, last edited February 6, 2023, is at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anachronisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon.

3. See, for example, the comment by user Trevdna at 23:01, 19 July 2022, “Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon: Revision history,” https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anachronisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon&action=history&offset=20220719230137%7C1099277584.

word that was not derived till approximately 700 years after Christ?⁴

Included as a part of a 2013 volume, Paul D. Wegner at the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, mentions *adieu* in a list of alleged contradictions and anachronisms in the Book of Mormon. He complains: “the modern French word *adieu* occurs in Jacob 7:27, but it is unlikely that it is older than the ninth century AD.”⁵ That book with its criticism of the word *adieu* has been praised by religious scholars, including those at such influential religious educational sites as Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Union College, Denver Seminary, and elsewhere.

Various forms of these statements have been shared on miscellaneous websites as well, such as this declaration from Martin Cowan’s book, *Mormon Claims Answered*, shared on the website of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry and elsewhere:

In Jacob 7:27, the French word “Adieu” concludes the book of Jacob. How did a French word get into the English translation of the Reformed Egyptian language? The *B. of M.* dates Jacob between 544 and 421 B.C. The French language did not even exist until around 700 A.D.⁶

Some writers are not particularly shy in drawing bold conclusions from this single word. For example, Jon Gary Williams quickly gravitates to the “fraud” end of the spectrum:

4. Paul J. Gassman, *The Book of Mormon and Basic Christian Doctrine: A Study in Truth* (Geneva, MN: Timonhy N. Gassman, 2014), 231, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Book_of_Mormon_and_Basic_Christian_D/Go8hBwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=adieu+french+%22book+of+mormon%22&pg=PA231&printsec=frontcover.

5. Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2013), 137, https://www.google.com/books/edition/In_Defense_of_the_Bible_A_Comprehensive/U6KMDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=french+language+jacob+7:27+mormon+adieu&pg=PA137&printsec=frontcover.

6. Marvin W. Cowan, “The Book of Mormon,” in *Mormon Claims Answered* (Salt Lake City: Utah Christian Publications, 1997), <http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/mclaims4.htm#internal>. See also “Fallacies In The Book Of Mormon,” <https://www.angelfire.com/ok2/discouragement/Cults/Mormonism/Fallacies.html>. An example of a blog using a similar statement is Heinz Schmitz, “The Book of Mormon on this Day in History,” *The Bookshelf* (blog), Sept. 22, 2020, <https://thebookshelf2015.blogspot.com/2020/09/the-book-of-mormon-on-this-day-in.html>.

In Jacob 7:27, the French word *adieu* occurs. But how could a **modern** French word have found its way into those ancient plates? This is additional evidence of fraud and presents grounds for rejecting the *Book of Mormon*.⁷

The second reason for my offering a basic defense for *adieu* is that, while the explanation is possibly well known in some circles in the Church, it may still be a stumbling block to many members as well as to anyone learning about the Book of Mormon for the first time. It thus seems relevant to reiterate why the use of *adieu* is not a proof disqualifying the veracity of the Book of Mormon. I will discuss the defense of this word before examining some deeper aspects of the word choice in Jacob 7:27.

The Basic Defense for the Word *Adieu*

The fact most critics miss when claiming that *adieu* is an anachronism is that because the text of the Book of Mormon is a *translation*, the presence of *adieu* does not imply that Book of Mormon peoples spoke French, any more than the presence of English words implies they spoke English. Further, while *adieu* has been borrowed from French, it had become a proper English word long before Joseph Smith's day.

It is obvious that the Nephites did not speak French in the sixth century BCE when Jacob lived, which was a thousand years before the French language emerged from Latin and later influenced English. The fact that Joseph Smith's translation of an ancient record through the power of God employs a word that sounds French provides no evidence that the Book of Mormon is false. In sum, the ancient writer and prophet, Jacob, was not the one who used the word *adieu* — the word is simply part of Joseph Smith's translation and was intended to convey Jacob's concept, not his actual word choice.

Many who criticize the use of *adieu* are merely flagging a word that seems to them to be a foreign term. To be fair, their discomfort is somewhat understandable. The phrase "Brethren, adieu" may seem, even to faith-filled readers, to be incongruous. It may feel just as jarring as if the verse had ended with the phrase, "Brethren, aloha" (or *sayonara*, *hasta la vista*, *cheerio*, etc.).

7. Jon Gary Williams, *The Book of Mormon: A Book of Mistakes, Error, and Fraud* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 2000), 7, <https://studylib.net/doc/18593397/the-book-of-mormon--a-book-of-mistakes--error>. Emphasis in original.

It should be noted that the anglicized French word *adieu*, while seldom used by anglophones today, was in common usage in frontier America. It had become an accepted English word at least as early as the time of William Shakespeare, and even earlier, at the time of Geoffrey Chaucer (see below). It was certainly in common use by the time of Joseph Smith.

It has been estimated that some 45% of English vocabulary originates from the French language. The following fictional story illustrates how French words have crept into the English language:

Acting as our own *chauffeur*, I picked up my *chic, brunette fiancée* from her *cul-de-sac* to take her to a *matinée ballet*. Rather than giving a *critique* of the *performance*, which seemed as *pensive* as a *déjà-vu mirage* on a long, hot *avenue*, the *audience* called for the *ingénue* to provide an *encore* of her *risqué dance* from her *répertoire*. Then, in the *derrière* of the *théâtre*, behind the *grande façade*, we went to a fancy *café* where, as a *célébration soirée*, my *parents* were hosting a *réunion* for us. In this *milieu*, the guests chose *hors d'oeuvres* from the *menu* and then gave us, the *belle* and *beau*, gifts of *pot-pourri*.⁸

Given that the English language contains so many French-origin words, it should come as no surprise that many words utilized in the Book of Mormon also have French origins and French cognates. A helpful reviewer of an earlier draft of this article asked for a list of such words in the Book of Mormon, but such a list would be at least in the thousands and likely in the tens of thousands. Perhaps showing five French or Old French-origin words in just the very first verse of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:1, will make the point:

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly *parents*, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many *afflictions* in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly *favored* of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the

8. For more on this topic, see Joanna Gonzalez, “French Words in English: 35 Words You Thought Were English... But Are Actually French,” *FluentU: French Language and Culture Blog*, November 26, 2022, <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/french/french-words-phrases-used-in-english/>.

mysteries of God, therefore I make a *record* of my proceedings
in my days.⁹

Because of the vagaries of the English language, some French-origin words “stick” and some do not. *Adieu* is one that was used more in Joseph Smith’s time and less in our own. For comparative purposes, we tracked the use of three valedictions,¹⁰ *adieu*, *farewell*, and *goodbye* using Google’s Ngram Viewer,¹¹ an online search engine that graphs usage based on “a corpus of books ... over selected years.”¹²

As can be seen in Figure 1, the valediction *adieu* has a roller-coaster history. The modern replacement of *adieu* with *goodbye* is plainly visible.¹³ An apparently high-frequency usage period for *adieu* occurred during the time of William Shakespeare, who used *adieu* 96 times in his 38 plays (more on this below). Another high frequency period occurred in the 80-year period from approximately 1820 to the late 1800s, which includes the publication date for the Book of Mormon and other events of the Restoration. Joseph Smith certainly could have known this common word. This assertion will be further supported later in this paper.

9. Most dictionaries provide the etymology of words. These examples all come from *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <https://www.etymonline.com>.

10. A *valediction* (as opposed to a *salutation*) means a departure wish or blessing.

11. I am indebted to Jeff Lindsay for pointing me to this valuable research tool.

12. Google Books Ngram Viewer, <https://books.google.com/ngrams/info>. Ngram is subject to limited data for pre-nineteenth-century works and is not a reliable guide as to the real frequency of use of the word. This can be seen in the rapid fluctuations on the left side of the graph, which are due to there being less literary data for that early time period. However, it does provide an approximation of usage.

13. How or why the replacement happened is not fully known, but it is interesting to note that the change corresponds with the spread of the telephone. See “1870s–1940s: Telephone,” *Imagining the Internet: A History and Forecast*, <https://www.elon.edu/u/imagining/time-capsule/150-years/back-1870-1940/#:~:text=By%201900%20there%20were2020nearly,its%20purchase%20of%20Western%20Union>.

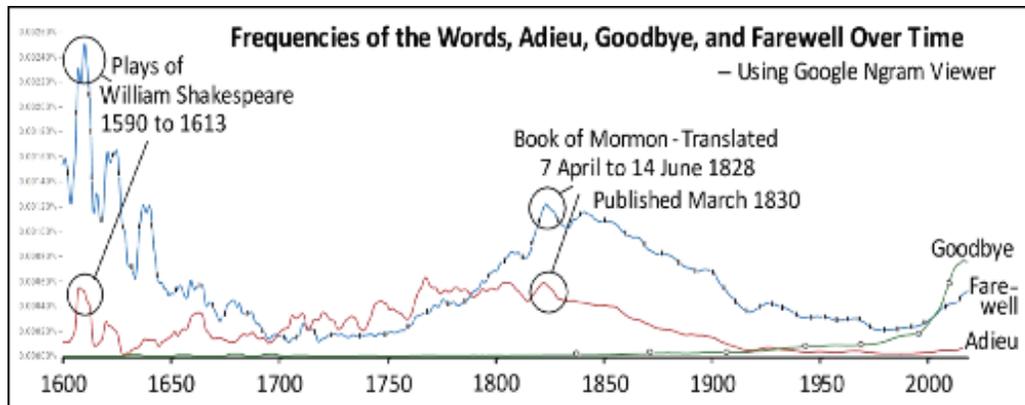


Figure 1. Google Ngram chart comparing frequency of use of “adieu,” “goodbye,” and “farewell” from 1600 to the present.

A second source for evaluating the use of language at the time of Joseph Smith is Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*, published on April 14, 1828, just as Joseph Smith was translating and publishing the Book of Mormon. Webster’s dictionary confirms that *adieu* was an entirely acceptable English word of the time. Webster’s first and primary definition was, “Farewell; an expression of kind wishes at the parting of friends.”¹⁴ And, indeed, to modern readers, especially upon a surface reading of the Book of Mormon “Brethren, adieu” appears to be just that: a temporary farewell to his family — “kind wishes at the parting of friends.” However, the following should demonstrate that the word usage actually goes much deeper than that.

The Deeper Meaning of *Adieu*

If all that *adieu* meant was a farewell valediction at a temporary parting, it would be equivalent to the Spanish *adios*, which is almost universally used as a goodbye valediction. Both *adieu* and *adios* mean “à” (*to* or *until*) and *Dieu* or *Dios* (meaning *God*). That’s where the similarity ends. The Spanish *adios* has a flavor of “until we meet again” and that could be next month, next week, tomorrow, or, even, later today. Among modern Spanish speakers, *adios* has all but lost its connection with God. For most French speakers, *adieu* has a decidedly different flavor. It carries the connotation, “I will not see you again on Earth; I will see you only after death when we both stand before God at the judgment bar.” This is an important nuance. A popular French-to-French dictionary expresses this subtlety. It offers as its first and primary definition:

14. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the American Language* (1828), s.v. “adieu,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/adieu>.

Formule dont on se sert en prenant congé de qqn *qu'on ne doit pas revoir* de quelque temps (opposé à *au revoir*) ou même *qu'on ne doit plus revoir*.¹⁵

Translated, this says:

An expression that one would use when taking leave from someone who one *does not expect to see again* for some time (as opposed to *goodbye*) or even *that one will never see again*. [emphasis added, my translation]

The French language provides other words and terms to express a *temporary* farewell, all of them implying a reunion in the very near future. Most often, they would say *au revoir*, meaning until we “re-see” you or, more simply, see you again. *Au revoir* is the phrase that comes up in Google Translate when one calls up the French equivalent of *goodbye*.¹⁶ They might also say “*à la prochaine*” meaning “until the next time.” They often say “*à demain*,” meaning “until tomorrow.” They equally might say “*à bientôt*” meaning “until well-early” (*bien-tôt*) or, in other words, “see you soon.” Younger French speakers often say “*salut!*,” meaning “I salute you.”¹⁷ French speakers would not say “*adieu*.” That could be taken as implying “we’ll never see you again alive” or even “well, that takes care of you!” Never, in almost three years in France, did I hear anyone say *adieu* to me or anyone else. I was quickly corrected, as I first learned the language, when I once said *adieu* to someone who I would see the following week.

The same French dictionary offers a second but closely related definition of *adieu*. It is a goodbye to a *situation* or an *object* rather than a goodbye to a person. It carries the same nuance of, if not finality, at least a significantly extended period of time. This second and related meaning is “en parlant d’une *chose perdue*,” meaning, “when speaking of a *thing* that is lost” (emphasis added). Examples given in the dictionary are:

“*Adieu, la belle vie!*,” meaning “Goodbye to the good life!”

“*Vous pouvez dire Adieu, à votre tranquillité!*,” or “You can say *goodbye* to your peace and tranquility!”¹⁸

15. *Le Robert Micro Poche: Dictionnaire d'apprentissage de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1988), s.v. “*adieu*.”

16. Google Translate, s.v. “*goodbye*,” <https://translate.google.com/?sl=auto&tl=fr&text=goodbye&op=translate>.

17. This word can be used as both a salutation or a valediction, much like the word *aloha*.

18. *Le Robert Micro Poche*, s.v. “*adieu*.”

Again, this second definition speaks to a finality that the word *adios* does not have. I will return to this second definition shortly.

Shakespeare's extensive use of the word *adieu* reflects the same, deeper finality that both definitions (*adieu* to a person and *adieu* to a thing) imply. Shakespeare used *adieu* in the majority of his 38 plays and often, though not always, to imply an extended separation or the finality of death. Here are just four examples of when Shakespeare used *adieu* with the deeper meaning.

- In "Twelfth Night," Viola expresses finality when she says, "And so adieu, good madam: never more will I my master's tears to you deplore."
- When the Prince of Morocco in "The Merchant of Venice" definitively loses his love, Portia, who will marry another, he bids her "adieu."
- When Thisbe stabs herself in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," she cries out, "Thus Thisbe ends: adieu, adieu, adieu."
- In "Hamlet," when the ghost of Hamlet's father departs for the very last time, he similarly cries, "Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me."¹⁹

There are similarly a great many examples of the use of *adieu* in early to modern literature. Perhaps three from the 1300s to modern day will suffice:

1. As early as the late 1300s, in "A Farewell to Love," Chaucer implied this finality of the word when he wrote, "Of love as for thi final ende: Adieu, for y mot fro the wende."²⁰
2. At the same time as the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, in a short story entitled "Adieu," Honoré de Balzac has Genevieve crying, "Adieu, adieu! all is over, adieu!" as she raises her arm to heaven "uttering a long-drawn moan with every sign of the utmost terror."²¹

19. I am indebted to Jeff Lindsay for suggesting examples of Shakespeare's use of "adieu."

20. "A Farewell to Love (and Venus' Greeting to Chaucer)," Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website, <https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/farewell-love-and-venus-greeting-chaucer>. The approximate meaning of this quote is that Love is a final end, therefore, "Adieu (to love), for you must go on." The goddess of love (Venus) is telling Chaucer that Love is not the solution; he must seek Wisdom.

21. Honoré de Balzac, *Adieu*, trans. Katharine Prescott Wormeley (n.p.: DigiCat, 2022), chap. 3, <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Adieu/sYmCEAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PT40&printsec=frontcover>.

3. In a modern novel attempting to evoke an earlier period, *Adieu, Miss Gracie, Adieu!*, a dying man says:

Well, Miss Gracie, I feel for sure now that I have only a few moments remaining with you, as I can feel my own life slipping away from this earth and expected that the ancestors will soon come to take me to the other world with them. ... But for now, it is my turn, and I bid you goodbye. ... Adieu, Miss Gracie, Adieu!²²

Many other citations of the use of *adieu* could be cited, but suffice it to say that the word was used in both French and English with both the meaning of *farewell* and the meaning of “until God.”

Returning to Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary, Webster offers his own *second* meaning for this French-origin word. His second definition also carries this deeper nuance of finality. He writes that the word was also used as a “commendation *to the care of God*; as an *everlasting adieu*” (emphasis added).²³

With this nuance of earthly finality, *adieu* becomes not merely an acceptable word choice for Joseph Smith, but represents an ideal word choice. This deeper understanding of *adieu* adds considerably to an appreciation of the placement of this word in Jacob 7:27, as will be shown later.

Tight vs. Loose Translation

A question that has existed from the time the Book of Mormon was originally translated concerns how closely the wording Joseph Smith dictated to his scribes was controlled.²⁴ It is generally understood that Joseph Smith did not “translate” in the sense of reading from another language and then rendering its meaning into English.²⁵ A very young and hard-working farm boy did not have the time or the education to do that. In any case, nobody, including Joseph himself, could read the

22. Nita Clarke, *Adieu, Miss Gracie, Adieu!* (Frederick, MD: America Star Books, 2009), 224.

23. Webster, *American Dictionary of the American Language*, s.v. “adieu.”

24. I acknowledge and thank my son, Braden Ellis, for encouraging me to add the question of how tight or loose the translation was to my discussion of *adieu*.

25. Stanford Carmack wrote that Joseph Smith “was a translator in the sense of being the human involved in transferring or re-transmitting a concrete form of expression (mostly English words) received from the Lord.” Stanford Carmack, “Joseph Smith Read the Words,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 41–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/joseph-smith-read-the-words/>.

language on the plates, whether that was modified biblical Hebrew, reformed Egyptian, a native dialect, or some blended evolution of the three. The meaning was given to him by direct revelation. But how tightly controlled was the vocabulary that Joseph was given?²⁶

For many years, the prevailing perspective was that the wording Joseph dictated to his scribes was only loosely controlled and that Joseph often used his own rural idioms and current vocabulary in describing the abstract concepts that he saw in his visions. This was the view of such scholars as B.H. Roberts, John A. Widtsoe, Sidney B. Sperry, Daniel H. Ludlow, and Robert L. Millett. Evidence for this long-standing perspective was based in large part on perceived grammatical errors and other apparent mistakes in the Original Manuscript. For example, based on a study of omissions and problematic variants in the Isaiah passages, Stan Spencer concludes that these “may be among the ‘mistakes of men’ referred to in the title page of the Book of Mormon. Their existence supports the Book of Mormon’s own portrayal of Joseph Smith as an unlearned reader of a revealed text.”²⁷

A more recent perspective is emerging primarily from the *Book of Mormon Critical Text Project* led by Royal Skousen and a number of scholars working with him using the original manuscript and the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon. For example, Stanford Carmack, who worked on the project with Royal Skousen, has demonstrated that what appears to be poor grammar is actually the presence of archaic phrases and grammatical forms that were in use in early modern period

26. A related question concerns the methodologies used in the translation process — whether he primarily used the Urim and Thummim spectacles that he found with the plates or primarily used a seer stone in the bottom of a hat. That question has intensified recently with the publication of several writers including, but not limited to, Don Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019); Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011); Spencer Kraus, “An Unfortunate Approach to Joseph Smith’s Translation of Ancient Scripture,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 52 (2022): 1–64, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/an-unfortunate-approach-to-joseph-smiths-translation-of-ancient-scripture/>; and the work of Royal Skousen, Stanford Carmack, and Stan Spencer. This question of the exact methodology of the translation is not relevant to our discussion of his use of the word *adieu*.

27. Stan Spencer, “Missing Words: King James Bible Italics, the Translation of the Book of Mormon and “Joseph Smith as an Unlearned Reader,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 38 (2020): 106, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/missing-words-king-james-bible-italics-the-translation-of-the-book-of-mormon-and-joseph-smith-as-an-unlearned-reader/>.

(defined as the “final quarter of the 15th century ... to the end of the 17th century”²⁸) but were not generally in use in frontier America. In his view, that made it unlikely that they came from Joseph or that they were necessarily mistakes at all. Based on his research, he concludes that “a broad early modern view of most of its [the Book of Mormon’s] English usage accounts nicely for this bad grammar.”²⁹ Based on the *Critical Text Project* he leads, Royal Skousen concludes that “Joseph Smith received an English-language text word for word, which he read off to his scribe. ... [T]he original English-language text itself was very precisely constructed.”³⁰ He repeated that conclusion in the second edition of his influential work, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, where he writes that there is “strong evidence that [Joseph Smith] dictated the text word for word and that he controlled for the spelling of the strange Book of Mormon names.”³¹ The tightness of the translation was also demonstrated by Emma Smith’s account that Joseph once looked up from the process, “pale as a sheet, and said, ‘Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?’ When I answered ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.’”³² In the words of Jeff Lindsay:

In my opinion, analysis of the dictated language suggests it was not Joseph’s words nor in his Yankee dialect. Further, the tight textual relationships within diverse portions of the Book of Mormon and its extreme intertextuality with the Bible also suggest some form of tight control in verbiage rather than Joseph constantly looking for his own words to express impressions. ... If Joseph was indeed seeing text and not just getting impressions, this helps explain the rapid

28. Stanford Carmack, “Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-archaic Text?,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 188, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/is-the-book-of-mormon-a-pseudo-archaic-text/>.

29. See Stanford Carmack, “Bad Grammar in the Book of Mormon Found in Early English Bibles,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36 (2020), 1–28, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/bad-grammar-in-the-book-of-mormon-found-in-early-english-bibles/>. See also Carmack, “Joseph Smith Read the Words.”

30. Royal Skousen, “Some Textual Changes for a Scholarly Study of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2012): 99–117, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss4/8/>.

31. Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022), xxxi.

32. Edmund C. Briggs, “A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,” *Journal of History* (January 1916): 454.

pace of dictation, the distance between his language and the language of the dictated text, and the tendency for highly precise allusions and citations within the Book of Mormon and relative to the Bible, and the ability of many intricate wordplays and Hebraisms such as chiasmus to survive the translation.³³

If the entire translation was tightly controlled, as now appears likely, why is it even relevant whether the word, *adieu*, was a term that was used in Joseph Smith's time period when it is no longer used in our own (which I have demonstrated)? If this term was given by the Lord to represent Hebrew usage, why is there, as Loren Spendlove has pointed out, "no recorded use of לאלהים (*l'elohim* or, *to God*) or ליהוה (*le'YHWH* or, *to Jehovah*) as a valediction in the biblical text?"³⁴ Why would the Lord have directly provided that particular word *adieu* (or, *to God*)?

Don Bradley, a scholar who worked on the *Critical Text Project*, points out one possible response to this question:

There is ample evidence that Joseph Smith's translation process did involve a visionary component ... [but] the experience of sight does not occur in the eyes, but like the experience of seeing something in memory, in the mind. ... The experience of sight involves the mind's active construction of images, rather than merely their passive reception.³⁵

This construction can only be built on the canvas of the recipient's past linguistic, visual, and conceptual frameworks. The Lord typically reveals his mysteries in a context that humans can understand and at the speed that they can assimilate. As G. Bruce Schaalje put it, "After all, whatever else the translation process involved (divine inspiration, angels, plates, interpreters, stones, hats, scribes), it involved Joseph Smith's mind."³⁶

33. Jeff Lindsay, "It Depends on What the Meaning of 'It' Is: Reconsidering the 'Burning in the Bosom' and 'Studying It Out' in Doctrine & Covenants 9," *Arise From the Dust: A Blog of Latter-day Saint Exploration* (blog), December 12, 2018, <https://www.arisefromthedust.com/it-depends-on-what-meaning-of-it-is/>.

34. Loren Spendlove, private communication, July 22, 2022.

35. Bradley, *Lost 116 Pages*, 41.

36. G. Bruce Schaalje, "A Bayesian Cease-Fire in the Late War on the Book of Mormon," *The Interpreter Foundation* (blog), November 6, 2013, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/blog-a-bayesian-cease-fire-in-the-late-war-on-the-book-of-mormon/>.

Bradley goes on to quote Elder B.H. Roberts as saying that “since the translation is thought out in the mind of the seer, it must be thought out in such thought-signs as are at his command, expressed in such speech-forms as he is the master of.”³⁷ As taught in the D&C 1:24, “Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language.”³⁸ This is not inconsistent with the prevailing view that there was tight control over the translation. Joseph Smith may have been given the word *adieu* not because it was Jacob’s word, but because it was in Joseph Smith’s repertoire and he would have understood it. Perhaps even more importantly, it was in the repertoire of those who would read the new book and become a part of the fragile, new religious movement that the Book of Mormon was instrumental in launching. The word was familiar to Joseph and his associates, even if it is not familiar to many people today. It may have been given because it fit so well into Joseph’s (and others’) level of spelling, grammar, or vocabulary — as a word with which he and his readers were comfortable. It is entirely reasonable that Joseph was given words using his idioms and language and in a sense that reflected his world view and understanding.

Even given Stanford Carmack’s assertion that the Book of Mormon is primarily an archaic text using early modern language³⁹ and includes phrases and vocabulary that reflect other time-periods and situations, it is significant to note that it appears that nothing was given to Joseph that he and his contemporaries (and we) could not understand.⁴⁰ They may not have even noticed anything originating outside their “normal” use,

37. Bradley, *Lost 116 Pages*, 42.

38. An example of this is Abraham 3:15–23, where the great prophet receives a magnificent analogy of a celestial hierarchy of spirits compared to a cosmic hierarchy of planets. That revelation was given in a form and structure that could be understood by Pharaoh and the people of Egypt at Abraham’s time (3:15). The hierarchical principle continues to inspire and edify today, even though it doesn’t fit a modern understanding of astronomy and astrophysics. Had Abraham and Joseph Smith been shown black holes, dark matter, string theory, and quantum mechanics and tried to “declare these things,” they would not have been understood and almost definitely would have been rejected out of hand.

39. Carmack, “Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-archaic Text?,” 232.

40. This is also the view in “Book of Mormon Evidence: Archaic Vocabulary,” (Evidence Central, August 3, 2022, <https://evidencecentral.org/recency/evidence/archaic-vocabulary>) in their comment, “[T]he book’s vocabulary often feels old or archaic, without being incomprehensible to modern audiences.”

any more than most readers do today.⁴¹ Stanford Carmack himself notes that “Joseph Smith did receive and read a revealed Early Modern English text. Understandably, he may not have been fully aware of it.”⁴² This idea — that Joseph Smith may not have been aware of some of the archaic expressions, literary parallelistic forms, and nuances of vocabulary — is a point to which I will return later in this paper.

In this paper the word *adieu* is the key issue. I will attempt to demonstrate the presence of two, distinct *levels* of separation with the word *adieu* — one a temporary departure and the other a deeper separation by death. The most frequent valediction in the text, however, is not *adieu*. It is another word in the Book of Mormon: *farewell* or *fare-thee-well*. According to Etymonline.com, *farewell* comes from Old English *faran* “to journey, set forth” and *wel* “abundantly, very, very much.”⁴³ Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary similarly defines *farewell* as “a compound of fare, in the imperative, and well. Go well; originally applied to a person departing.”⁴⁴

In those definitions, there is no indication of any particular time frame for the goodbye separation or whether the separation is brought on by death or not. However, the Book of Mormon seems to use *farewell* in both situations — for brief separations and for terminal separations. I will discuss that next.

Levels of Departure or Valediction

Since the Book of Mormon was written by multiple authors, one might expect usage to vary, and it does. In places, *farewell* has the flavor of Noah Webster’s 1828 definition of *adieu* as a casual departure: “an expression of kind wishes at the parting of friends.” Since there is no hint of a separation by death, I will call this a valediction at “the first-level.” In other places, The Book of Mormon uses *farewell* to imply a more permanent, final, and death-related departure, meaning a separation until a reunion before the pleasing bar of God (or the judgment seat).

41. One example, of many, for an archaic expression that was not used in Joseph Smith’s time and is not even found in the Bible but occurred in the printer’s manuscript for Mosiah 3:19 is “but if,” meaning “unless.” Other archaic expressions terms and phrases include “cross,” meaning “contradict.” Other examples can be found in Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Archaic Vocabulary.”

42. Carmack, “Joseph Smith Read the Words,” 64.

43. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “farewell,” last updated October 16, 2014, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/farewell>.

44. Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “farewell,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/farewell>.

I will call this a “second-level” valediction. In most of the times it is used, it is left to the reader to recognize which of the two levels is intended. Fortunately, that can usually be determined from context, as demonstrated in Table 1, which identifies the ten occurrences of either *adieu* or *farewell* in the Book of Mormon. Four occurrences suggest a temporary separation (level one) while six others carry this nuance of finality (level two). It is the *context* that reveals whether the parting is temporary or carries the “until God” finality.

Table 1. Temporary first-level or final second-level valedictions.

Reference	Context of the Scripture	Level 1	Level 2
2 Nephi 33:13	Nephi, addressing his beloved brethren as a voice crying from the dust: “ <i>Farewell</i> until the great day”		✓
2 Nephi 33:14	Nephi, addressing rejectors who will be condemned at the last day: “an <i>Everlasting Farewell</i> ”		✓
Jacob 6:13	Jacob, addressing the listeners of his sermon: “ <i>Farewell</i> , until the pleasing bar of God”		✓
Jacob 7:27 (focus of paper)	Jacob, addressing 1) the reader of the Small Plates: “ <i>Farewell</i> ” and 2) to his brethren: “ <i>Adieu</i> ”	✓	✓
Alma 37:47	Alma, addressing his son, Helaman, whom he will shortly accompany on a mission to the people: “ <i>Farewell</i> ”	✓	
Alma 38:15	Alma, addressing his son, Shiblon, whom he will shortly accompany on a mission to the people: “ <i>Farewell</i> ”	✓	
Ether 12:38	Moroni’s colophon to Gentiles and “brethren whom I love:” “ <i>Farewell</i> ... until the judgment seat of Christ”		✓
Moroni 8:30	Mormon, writing to Moroni, “Until I shall write unto you or shall meet you again:” “ <i>Farewell</i> , my son”	✓	
Moroni 10:34	Moroni, to all — “I soon go to rest in the paradise of God” until I “meet you before the pleasing bar of ... Jehovah:” “ <i>Farewell</i> ”		✓

The first two occurrences of the valediction, *farewell*, are in 2 Nephi 33:13–14. Here, *farewell* designates two types of separation, but in this case both types occur *within level two*. In 2 Nephi 33:13, Nephi is dying and speaks “as the voice of one crying from the dust.” That clearly identifies the entire verse as a level-two valediction. To fellow believers and “beloved brethren,” he says a single “farewell until that great day shall come.” This is conceptually similar to the deeper nuance of *adieu*

in that it is a goodbye to those he will see again, but only after death. To those who “will not partake of the goodness of God” (2 Nephi 33:14), however, he bids “an *everlasting* farewell” because he will *not* see them again. His testimony, he warns, “shall condemn [them] at the last day.” There are two expressions of valediction, but this time the two *both* carry the “until God” nuance, so both valedictions occur within level two.

The next occurrence in the table is that of Jacob as he concluded his last major sermon and expected to not see them again until “I shall meet you before the pleasing bar of God” (Jacob 6:13). This suggests another *adieu*-like, level-two valediction. The third entry is Jacob 7:27, which is the focus of this paper and will be explored more deeply later on.

The next two occurrences of *farewell* occur at the beginning of the 18th year of the reign of the judges (Alma 35:12). Alma begins addressing his three sons, giving them what Alma 35:16 refers to as “commandments.” These occurrences require a more detailed examination. Alma 36 is Alma’s testimony in the form of what John Welch and Greg Welch have called “one of the finest examples of chiasmic composition anywhere in world literature.”⁴⁵ Alma 37 consists of his passing on the responsibility of the sacred records to Helaman with an admonition to keep the plates and Nephite artifacts safe. It concludes with a further testimony of the power of the plates to bring people to Christ. Perhaps somewhat curiously, he ended these two powerful chapters by giving Helaman the charge, “Go unto this people and declare the word, and be sober. My son, farewell” (Alma 37:47). The curiosity is not the admonition to be sober — that is easily explained.⁴⁶ The curiosity is, rather, why he would say *farewell* at the end of a sermon. The typical conclusion to a sermon is the Hebrew-origin word, *amen* (אמן, *’āmēn*). That word is used 37 times in the Book of Mormon, and in all of those places, as well as in other sacred scripture, it is used primarily as an affirmation or confirmatory response to a prayer or a sermon. Brant Gardner calls this a “testificatory amen” and notes that it generally triggers a chapter

45. See John W. Welch and Greg Welch, “Chiasmus in Alma 36,” in *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching*, ed. John W. Welch and Greg Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/chiasmus-alma-36-0>.

46. Joseph Cannon defines *sober* as not so much the absence of alcohol but as a disposition or tone. He writes, “A sober person shows no trace of haste or impatience and is free from harshness and violence and is of a moderate disposition, not readily excited or carried away.” Joseph A. Cannon, “The Gospel in Words: The gospel in words: ‘Sober,’” *Deseret News*, July 30, 2009, <https://www.deseret.com/2009/7/30/20376381/the-gospel-in-words-the-gospel-in-words-sober>.

break.⁴⁷ Although the extended chiasmic account of Alma’s re-conversion in Alma 36 was addressed to his oldest son, the masterpiece is most certainly a testimony/sermon and logically had to have been composed in written form. Alma 37 also has a sermon feel to it — one would expect an *amen* somewhere. Even though a closing *amen* can sometimes have a secondary farewell undertone, *amen* was meant primarily as a seal to a prior sermon or sermon-like expression. Why, then, did Alma close his sermon to Helaman by saying, “My son, *farewell*”?

The same question can be posed regarding Alma’s much briefer sermonette to his second son, Shiblon. He very briefly re-testified of his conversion story and offered him some personal admonitions. In Alma 38:1, he told Shiblon, “I say unto you, even as I said unto Helaman....” Although Alma 35:18 specifically asserts that Alma gave “everyone his charge, separately,” it may be that Shiblon also heard/read the life-changing chiasm of Alma 36 and the instructions of Alma 37. He was not to become the next record-keeper, so the “commandments” to Shiblon could be much shorter, and they were. Like that of Helaman, Alma’s sermonette to Shiblon also did not end in the traditional *amen* but in the same valediction given to Helaman, that of “My son, *farewell*.” It may be that Alma was saying *farewell* to these two sons because he then told both to “go” (Alma 37:47, 38:15).

This raises the next question, which is whether the *farewell* in these two cases invokes a temporary level-one separation or an *adieu*-like second-level separation by death until the bar of God. There is no mention of death and, indeed, Alma not only sent his two sons on a mission to preach to the people, he appears to have gone with them. Alma 43:1 tells us that “the sons of Alma did go forth ... and Alma, also, himself ... also went forth.” Did he go to a different area than the sons? It doesn’t sound like it according to the heading of the 1981 edition of Alma 43, which declares that “Alma and his sons preach the word.” If he is with his sons, that would indicate no particular departure at all, or at best an extremely brief, and definitely first-level separation. In fact, a more permanent separation by death does occur, but not until a year or so later. At some point in the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 45:2), Alma left Zarahemla.

47. Brant A. Gardner, “Labor diligently to write: The ancient making of a modern Scripture — Chapters 4 & 5,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 35 (2020): 47–106, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-2/>. Gardner did not discuss the possible use of “amen” as a valediction.

And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of. ... [A]nd the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. ... [W]e suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial. (Alma 45:18-19)

A reviewer of this article suggested that, since Alma died or was taken up, his instructions or sermons to his sons may have anticipated a separation by death (an *adieu*-like, second-level separation). That doesn't seem likely. His third son, Corianton, was young ("thou art in thy youth," Alma 39:10), so Alma was not an old man. He also accompanied them on a mission and preached to the people, so that suggests, at least to me, that the farewell was a first-level, not a second-level, valediction.

Regarding this third son, Corianton, we see a unique situation in many ways. The 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon spends 91 verses in 4 chapters in which Alma discusses Corianton's sexual sins, pointing out his failures as a missionary, and answering a question he had about the resurrection. At the end of this long sermon, he closes with *amen* and not *farewell* as he said to his two older sons. Perhaps that difference can be explained in that the other two were ready to go while Corianton needed both a further affirmation of the truths his father was teaching him, which were then punctuated by *amen*, and some time to demonstrate his repentance before his *farewell* to go on the mission. That is, of course, supposition.

Returning to Table 1, the next occurrence of *farewell* comes from Moroni's marvelous colophon on faith and charity, which was inspired by his work with the records in Ether. At the end of the colophon, he writes, "And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Ether 12:38). That is clearly an *adieu*-like, second-level valediction.

The next entry comes from Moroni's father, Mormon, who wrote him an epistle denouncing infant baptism, a practice that Mormon sees as denying the atonement of Christ. Moroni is now "wander[ing] withersoever I can for the safety of mine own life" (Moroni 1:3). Mormon ended that epistle by writing, "Farewell, my son, until I shall write unto you, or shall meet you again" (Moroni 8:30). Given Mormon's expectation to "meet you again," it logically appears that the *farewell* in this instance was a temporary *goodbye* at the first level of departure.

Granted, Mormon may in fact have been killed and may not have seen Moroni after all, but it was his *expectation* that he would see Moroni again that marks this as another first-level valediction.

The final farewell in the Book of Mormon “seals up” the entire body of scripture as we know it. In the last verse of the book, he addresses us, the readers, by writing,

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen. (Moroni 10:34)

That occurrence of *farewell* is as close to the French nuance of *adieu* as we can get. If that is not a second-level valediction, nothing is. He is saying *farewell* while acknowledging the separation, by death, that is the deeper meaning of *adieu*.

Parallelistic Structures in Jacob 7:27

Many scholars have noted that parts of the book of Jacob are parallelistic in nature.⁴⁸ That does not necessarily mean chiasmic, for there are multiple forms of parallelist structures. In one of the most recent analyses of the book of Jacob, Loren Spendlove posits several small chiasms and other parallel structures.⁴⁹ This is consistent with the parallelistic structures that Donald Parry, Noel Reynolds, and others have seen in the small plates.⁵⁰ Jacob 7:27 also seems parallelistic. The first phrase, “And I, Jacob, saw that I must *soon go down to my grave*” seems strongly reflected in the last phrase, “Brethren, *adieu*” — especially with the second-level meaning of *adieu* in mind. Both strongly imply a parting by death. The two parallel statements complement each other and, because of this, appear to strongly validate the appropriateness of *adieu*.

48. See, for example, Donald W. Parry, “Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon,” *Maxwell Institute Publications* 61 (2007): 131–48, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=mi>; and Noel B. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Small Plates: A Rhetorical Analysis,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 99–122, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/nephis-small-plates-a-rhetorical-analysis/>.

49. Loren Spendlove, “Rethinking the Encounter Between Jacob and Sherem,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 54 (2022), 65–96, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/rethinking-the-encounter-between-jacob-and-sherem/>.

50. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Small Plates,” and Parry, “Poetic Parallelisms.”

Is the rest of the verse parallelistic, possibly even chiasmic? Caution is appropriate, as several scholars have recently pointed out.⁵¹ Well-intentioned scholars sometimes imagine Hebrew parallelisms where they do not exist. It may be possible to see the entire verse as an ABC–CBA mini-chiasm, although that is not essential for this discussion of the appropriateness of the term *adieu*. In that scenario, “down to grave” (step A) and “adieu” (step A') would be the anchors of an inclusio.⁵² The B steps would be instructing his son to “take the plates” (B) and instructing his brethren to “read (take) my words” (B'). The C steps would be instructing Enos to continue to obey Nephi’s commandment to restrict the Small Plates to only those things he “considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people” (Jacob 1:2). The C' step would be the result of that restriction in C, which would mean that the “writing has been small.” This chiasm is problematic, possibly even unlikely.

If verse 27 of Jacob 7 is not chiasmic, it at least appears to be parallelistic. The verse as a whole repeats three times: 1) the concepts of “down to the grave”; 2) a valediction that could be a terminal, i.e., second-level, valediction (“to the reader I bid farewell”); and 3) “Brethren, adieu” — especially considering the deeper meaning of separation “until God.” Interestingly, another author has even posited a tiny chiasm based only on the last three lines of the verse. Angela Crowell asserts that with “the synonyms ‘farewell’ and ‘adieu’ we have the repetition of the same idea.”⁵³ The B steps are the repeat of the word *brethren* and the C turning point being “read my words.” Her proposed chiasm may have been based on *adieu* being a simple first-level valediction reflecting *farewell* as if these are two simple first-level goodbyes. Even if Crowell did not intend

51. For example, Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “Truth or Cherry Picking: A Statistical Approach to Chiasmic Intentionality,” in *Chiasmus: The State of the Art*, ed. John Welch and Donald Parry (Provo, UT: BYU Studies and Book of Mormon Central, 2020), 311–17. See, also, Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2004): 103–30.

52. An *inclusio* is a wording repetition “at the opening and closing of [an] account [that] constitutes a framing device” and a terminological bracketing of a rhetorical unit. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016), 181–95, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/nephis-good-inclusio/>.

53. Angela Crowell, “The Learning of the Jews,” *Zarahemla Record* 41 (February 1989): 2, <https://nebula.wsimg.com/8e1f6a540915e80fbfefd5e21fff9a24?AccessKeyId=AA525AED21BB7CA23BE6>.

it, *farewell* could be considered a second-level valediction, like *adieu*. However, even though she calls this “a skillful chiastic arrangement,” it is even less likely than the entire verse being chiastic. Not only are such tiny chiasms particularly suspect, but she immediately invalidates the proposed chiasm by claiming that *adieu* is based on “the Hebrew verb *barak* mean[ing] ‘kneel’ or ‘blessing.’”⁵⁴ If *barak* (or *baruk*, Hebrew: בָּרַךְ)⁵⁵ means kneeling or blessing, that would mean that they are not synonymous separations at all, but rather a valediction and a blessing, which constitute two events: saying goodbye and presumably kneeling to give a blessing.

Whether Jacob 7:27 contains a chiasm of one verse, a chiasm of one sentence (less likely), or some other form of parallelism is not essential for this study. The critical question is that of intentionality — did Jacob *intend* to create some form of parallelism to poetically form a mental image emphasizing the concept of a final separation by death? The specific mirroring of the *first* phrase in the verse, “go down to the grave,” and the last line, which bids his brethren a final *adieu* with its deeper nuance of a final separation, seems essential and intentional.⁵⁶ When Jacob says he “must *soon* go down to my grave,” he is implying that he is not merely giving up the leadership and the prophetic mantle, after which he may live another 5 to 10 years — in a sense “retiring.” Individuals in the ancient world seldom retired as we think of that term; they remained in office or in the work unless completely incapacitated or until they died. In this case, Jacob appears to be dying imminently. He doesn’t appear to be blessing anyone; blessings in scripture are usually described and highlighted, often in detail. He is telling us that he will “soon” depart, and he will not see his family and his brethren in this life. He will only see them again after the grave and before the judgment bar of Christ. In other words, he is writing at level two: until God (*à Dieu*). Many readers of the Book of Mormon, not understanding the deeper meaning of *adieu*, will likely not recognize and appreciate the intentional parallelistic nature of verse 27. Knowing that deeper meaning, one can

54. Ibid.

55. *Strong’s Concordance* H1288, s.v. “*barak*”, *Bible Hub*, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1288.htm>.

56. It is interesting that the book of Jacob both begins (chapter 1) and ends (chapter 7) with “commandments” about what to write upon the small plates, which might suggest that the entire book may be parallelistic. This is an idea that, as mentioned earlier, goes far beyond the goals of this short paper.

see that *adieu* is not an awkward mistake but eloquently mirrors the phrase “down to the grave.”

Was Joseph Smith Aware of the Deeper Meaning of *Adieu*?

So far in this paper, we have discussed three uses of *adieu*, none of which are used to any great degree today. There is evidence that Joseph Smith, the Smith family, and their contemporaries used *adieu* in all three situations.⁵⁷ The three uses are:

1. As a simple goodbye valediction.
2. In the deeper French nuance of separation by death.
3. As applied to a final or near-final separation from conditions, events, or inanimate objects.

Each of these potential uses will be considered in the following three sections.

***Adieu* as a Goodbye Valediction**

Evidence that the Smith family used *adieu* at the first level as defined in 1828 by Noah Webster comes from the official Church website. The site provides an article entitled, “Why are the words *adieu*, *bible*, and *baptize* in the Book of Mormon?” In that article, Edward J. Brandt reports that:

The earliest known document relating to Church history is a recently discovered letter written in 1829 by the Prophet’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, to her sister-in-law Mary Smith Pierce. . . . In the letter, she enthusiastically shares news of her son’s work in translating an ancient record and tells something of the nature of its contents. Then, after telling of the happenings of the family, she concludes with “I must now bid the[e] farewell then *adieu* Lucy Smith.” This suggests the possible common use in the Smith family of the word *adieu*.⁵⁸

57. I am indebted to, and greatly appreciate, an anonymous reviewer for pointing me to *The Joseph Smith Papers* (<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org>) and examples there that provided this evidence of the three uses.

58. Edward J. Brandt, “Why are the words *adieu*, *bible*, and *baptize* in the Book of Mormon? These words weren’t known in Book of Mormon times,” *Ensign* (October 1985), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/10/i-have-a-question/why-are-the-words-adieu-bible-and-baptize-in-the-book-of-mormon>.

Few if any French speakers would end a letter the way Lucy Mack Smith ended this one unless Lucy knew she would never again see or correspond with Mary in this life, and that seems highly unlikely. She would surely correspond with her sister-in-law again and likely visit her as well. Thus, she could end the letter with a *goodbye, yours truly, talk to you soon, much love*, or any number of other endings, but not “until we meet again after death at the pleasing bar of God,” as the deeper meaning of *adieu* implies. An implication that there was an imminent and final separation by death did not and should not have occurred to her. Brandt’s conclusion that the word was possibly in “common use in the Smith family” appears to be correct.

Another example comes from a letter written to Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith in which John Greene closes with the following valediction: “I must bid you adieu for the present, but I will write you again & I wish you to write to me.”⁵⁹ This is clearly a first-level closure since he anticipates future correspondence back and forth.

Emma Smith, the prophet’s wife, also used *adieu* in a letter to Joseph. She wrote, “I could hardly pacify Julia and Joseph when they found ou[t] you was not coming home soon ... so adieu my Dear — Joseph.”⁶⁰ Because she obviously expected to see him again, this marks *adieu* as a first-level and temporary goodbye.

Adieu With the French Nuance of Separation by Death

There is evidence that Joseph Smith and his contemporaries recognized that *adieu* can also imply a final separation from other people through death. In bidding her family a final and second-level goodbye, Lucy Mack Smith wrote a poem about her impending death. In part of that poem, she wrote:

Go, to my father’s children tell
That lives no more on earth thy wife. ...
My friends, I bid you all adieu;
The Lord hath called, and I must go.⁶¹

59. “Letter from John P. Greene, 30 June 1839,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 76, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-john-p-greene-30-june-1839/2>.

60. “Letter from Emma Smith, 3 May 1837,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 36, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-emma-smith-3-may-1837/2>.

61. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 19, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/26>.

Lucy Mack Smith was clearly anticipating a second-level separation through death. She called this poem a “mournful recital” calling for “momentary sympathy.”

The next example of a second-level *adieu* comes from the Martyrdom Account written by John Taylor. He anticipated, at the very least, an extended separation from his family by fleeing to another country — Canada. The intent was to avoid his murder by a mob as well as avoid the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and other Church leaders:

I calculated to go to upper Canada, for the time being and should need a companion; I said to <Br.> Wheelock; “Can you go with me ten or fifteen hundred miles? ... I told him “he had better see his family who lived over the river.” ... [After making all the preparations I could, previous to leaving Nauvoo, & having bid adieu to my family, I went to a house adjoining the river.⁶²

John Taylor was clearly trying to avoid a separation by death. His instruction to Brother Wheelock anticipated the long separation from their families and possibly even death. As it turned out, John Taylor and other Church leadership did not go to Canada after all. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum ended up, as John Taylor apparently feared, martyred in Carthage, Illinois. John Taylor was only spared from death by the providential intervention of his pocket watch.

The last example of *adieu* with its strong concern of an imminent separation by death comes from a letter dictated by Joseph Smith to Oliver Granger concerning Church debt at the time. In fact, Granger did pass away three months later.

I have since heard that you have had a relapse, and that you were very sick again, this I was sorry to hear— However I hope you will yet recover and that we shall see you at this place before long. ... This I must beg leave to urge upon you to do, for delays are dangerous, your health is precarious and if any thing should occur — so that you were to bid adieu to mortality it would be impossible for me ever to get the run of the business and I should be again involved in difficulties

62. “John Taylor, Martyrdom Account,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 27, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-taylor-martyrdom-account/27>.

from which it would be impossible for me to extrecate [*sic*] myself.⁶³

***Adieu* Applied to Conditions, Events, or Objects**

There are also several examples of both *farewell* and *adieu* that point to the secondary definition of *adieu*, although in these cases, the words refer not to a separation from people but an end to desirable conditions, as given in the second definition in the French dictionary quoted earlier.⁶⁴ This first example comes from Joseph Smith, himself.

[M]ust we be expelled from the institutions of our country; the rights of citizenship, and the graves of our friends and brethren, and the government lock the gate of humanity, and shut the door of redress against us? — If so, farewell freedom; adieu to personal safety⁶⁵

The implication is that, if the government had indeed adopted such unjust policies, freedom and safety would be permanently lost.

Another example comes from a proclamation over the signatures of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith that was published in the *Times and Seasons* on 15 January 1841. It was meant to encourage Saints outside the United States to immigrate to Nauvoo and asking them to say a permanent *adieu* to their “pleasant places” and share in the persecution and tribulation that eventually resulted in the martyrdom of the prophet and the brutal winter exodus to the West.

Therefore let those who can, freely ... bid adieu to their homes and pleasant places of abode, and unite with us in the great work of the last days, and share in the tribulation, that they may ultimately share in the glory and triumph.⁶⁶

63. “Letter to Oliver Granger, 4 May 1841,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 2, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-granger-4may-1841/2>.

64. *Le Robert Micro Poche*, s.v. “adieu.”

65. “History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844],” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 1788, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/160>.

66. “Proclamation, 15 January 1841,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 277, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/proclamation-15-january-1841/5>.

Joseph Smith and Rhetorical Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon

Although it appears that Joseph Smith did understand the finality nuance of the word *adieu*, which he was given in Jacob 7:27, the question of whether Joseph Smith was aware of all and every subtlety of the book he was instrumental in bringing to publication is a valid one. For example, it doesn't seem likely that he was aware of chiasmus and other parallelistic forms contained in the Book of Mormon. Simple logic suggests that, if Joseph Smith had been aware of chiasmus in the book, he surely would have told somebody about it. It would not have taken 137 years for John Welch to discover it in 1967. Book of Mormon Central (now called Scripture Central) poses this rhetorical question:

Is it really likely that any forger would spend the time to research this complex literary form, perfect his or her mastery of it, use it in dozens of instances in his fabricated scripture, and then never once mention its presence or lead anyone to its discovery? Such a scenario seems highly unlikely. ... On the other hand, their presence is easily accounted for if the Book of Mormon was truly written by ancient prophets who inherited the Hebrew literary tradition from their ancestors.⁶⁷

Further, the FAIR website quotes the predominant expert on chiasms, John Welch, as saying, "I would qualify or clarify my position simply to assert a very low probability that Joseph Smith knew anything about chiasmus in 1829."⁶⁸

Conclusions

In stark opposition to what detractors of the Book of Mormon have claimed and still claim, the use of *adieu* does not prove fraud. It is, instead, another tangible witness of the Restoration. It is my opinion that, rather than being embarrassed by *adieu* in the Book of Mormon and implicitly apologizing for it, we as Church members can celebrate and appreciate its appearance in the text. *Adieu* does not reflect Joseph Smith's foolishness; it reflects his faithfulness. *Adieu* does not

67. Book of Mormon Central, "How Much Could Joseph Smith Have Known About Chiasmus in 1829?" July 3, 2017, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowwhy/how-much-could-joseph-smith-have-known-about-chiasmus-in-1829>.

68. "Question: Was Knowledge of Chiasmus Available in Joseph Smith's Era?," FAIR (website), https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Question:_Was_knowledge_of_chiasmus_available_in_Joseph_Smith%27s_era%3F.

show anachronistic carelessness; it shows inspired revelation. *Adieu* is not evidence that the Book of Mormon is false; rather, it could be considered as further evidence that it is true.

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