wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee. . . . Wherefore when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee? . . . the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him:

This study examines the assertions of two investigators who have discussed the nature of the translation of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s role in it: Brant Gardner and Orson Scott Card. Their writings on the subject have declared that Smith’s own language frequently made its way into the wording of the Book of Mormon. However, a comparison of the earliest text with the textual record tells us that this is an incorrect view of the translation. The linguistic fingerprint of the Book of Mormon, in hundreds of different ways, is Early Modern English. Smith himself — out of a presumed idiosyncratic, quasi-biblical style — would not have translated and could not have translated the text into the form of the earliest text. Had his own language often found its way into the wording of the earliest text, its form would be very different from what we encounter. It is still appropriate to call Joseph Smith the translator of the Book of Mormon, but he wasn’t a translator in the usual sense of the term. He 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. The above language of 2 Nephi 27 indicates such a state of affairs as well. And so I have undertaken to critique some of the observations that have been made with respect to Book of Mormon translation, and to lay out an entirely different view of the text, which has been argued for by Royal Skousen for quite a while now.

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