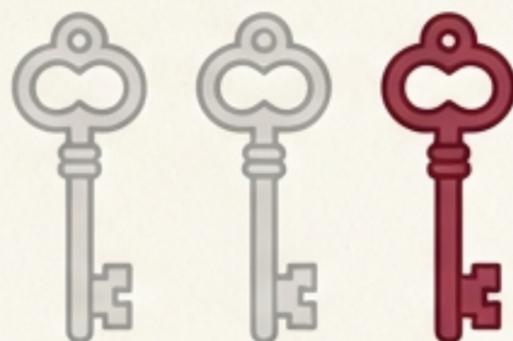




CASE FILE 116: WHAT THE LOST MANUSCRIPT REVEALS ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON'S ORIGIN

In 1828, a foundational crisis struck Joseph Smith's translation project: 116 pages of his manuscript vanished. The official explanation involved a divine plan to thwart conspirators. But the handling of this crisis created a cascade of inconsistencies. This presentation examines the evidence surrounding this event. We will analyze the clues left behind—in the divine revelations, in the textual patterns, and in the story's own internal logic—to reconstruct what truly happened. This isn't just a story about lost pages; it's a window into the creation of the Book of Mormon itself.

THE INCIDENT: A VANISHED MANUSCRIPT AND AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT



APRIL
1828

JUNE
1828

THE SCRIBE & THE SKEPTIC:

Martin Harris, the primary financier, is pressured by his skeptical wife, Lucy, for proof of the golden plates.

THE THREE REQUESTS:

After refusing twice, Joseph Smith claims a revelation on the third request allow allows Martin to take the 116-page manuscript home.

THE LOSS:

Lucy Harris secures the manuscript, which is then never seen again.

Martin returns to Joseph, who exclaims, "Oh, my God! All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned."

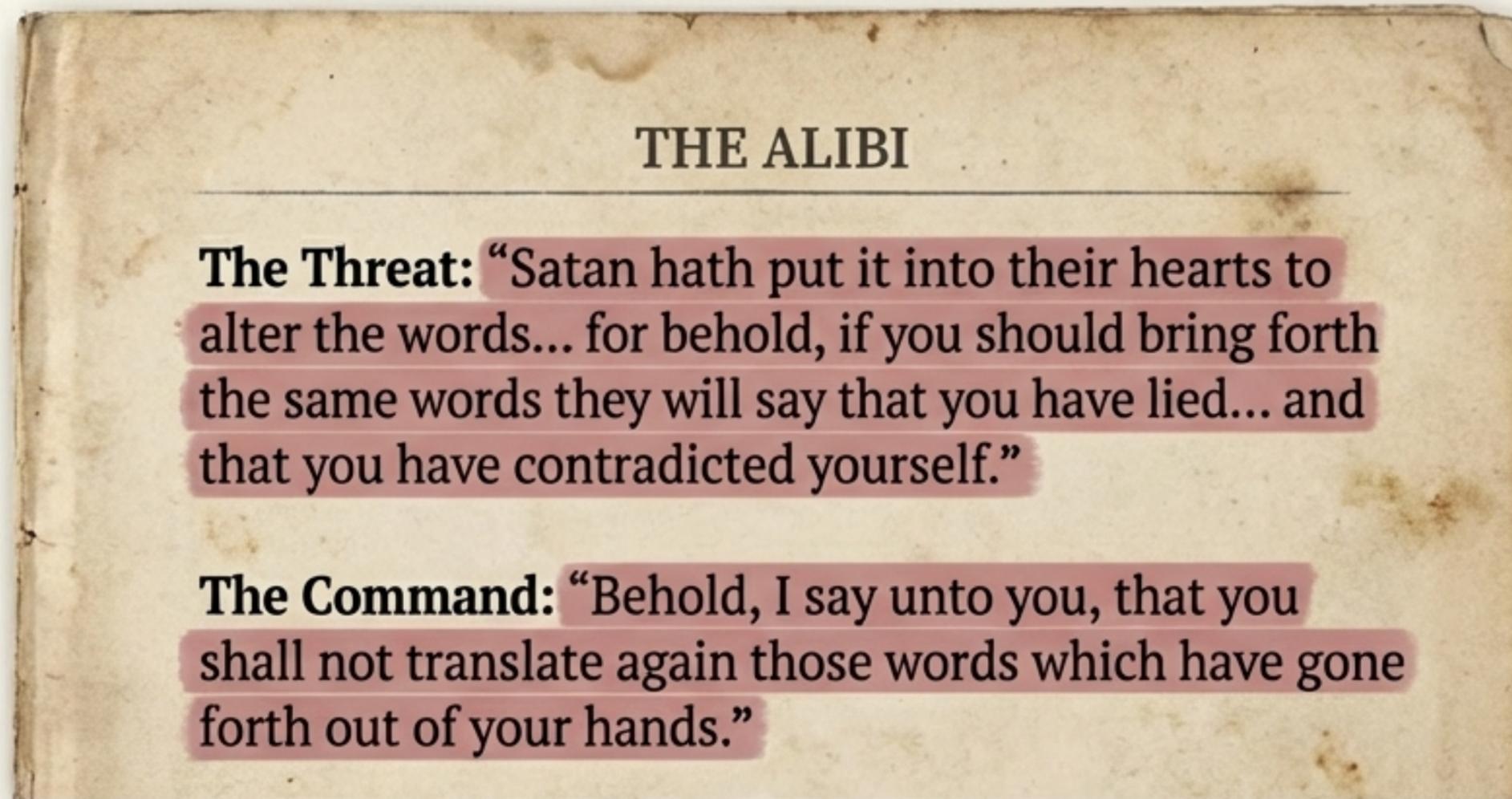
LOST EVIDENCE

THE CENTRAL DILEMMA: If Joseph was simply translating an ancient record, he could just re-translate it. His reaction suggests he knew he couldn't reproduce the text. This is the core of our investigation.



EXHIBIT A: THE OFFICIAL ALIBI (D&C 10)

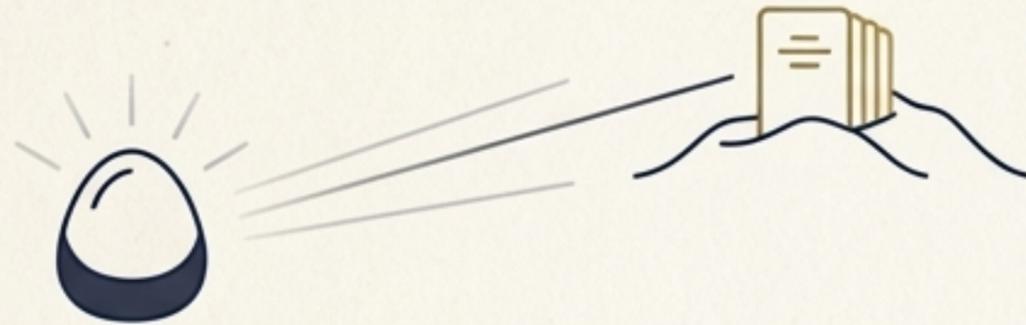
After the loss, all work stops. Months later (April/May 1829), Joseph produces a revelation, now Doctrine & Covenants 10, to explain why he cannot re-translate the pages.



The Investigation's Premise: The revelation claims that re-translating would be a trap. An identical reproduction would be altered by conspirators to discredit Joseph. We will now test this claim against the evidence.

EXHIBIT B: THE SEER STONE THAT SUDDENLY WENT BLIND

CLAIMED POWER



Joseph Smith claimed the stone could locate lost objects. He told his wife Emma he could see the gold plates were safe from treasure diggers miles away.

God was powerful enough to physically remove the plates and spectacles from Joseph's possession after the loss.

ACTUAL PERFORMANCE

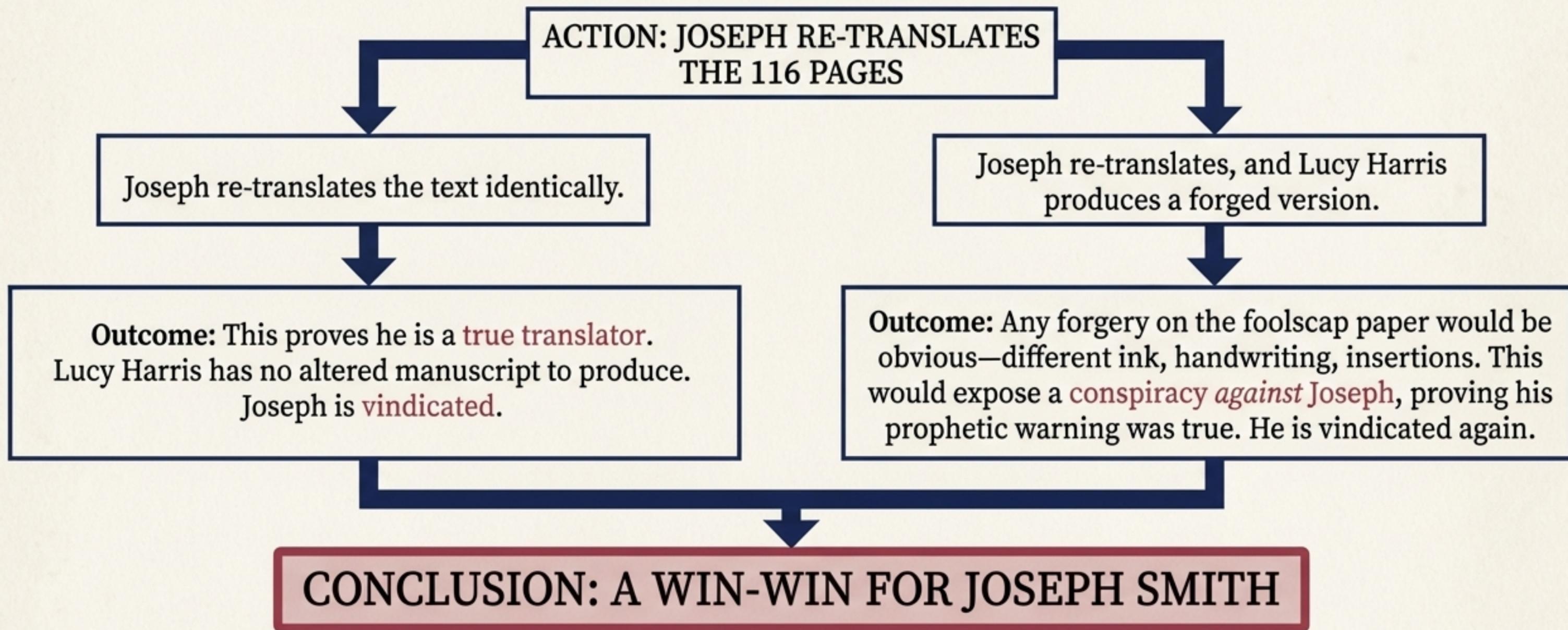


When a tangible, 116-page manuscript goes missing, the seer stone is suddenly powerless.

- It cannot tell Joseph if the manuscript was destroyed or preserved.
- It cannot reveal its location.
- God, who could physically move plates, apparently cannot locate or retrieve a stack of paper.

Investigative Conclusion: The seer stone's power worked only on objects that could not be independently verified. When faced with a real-world, testable challenge, the supernatural abilities of both the prophet and his God vanished.

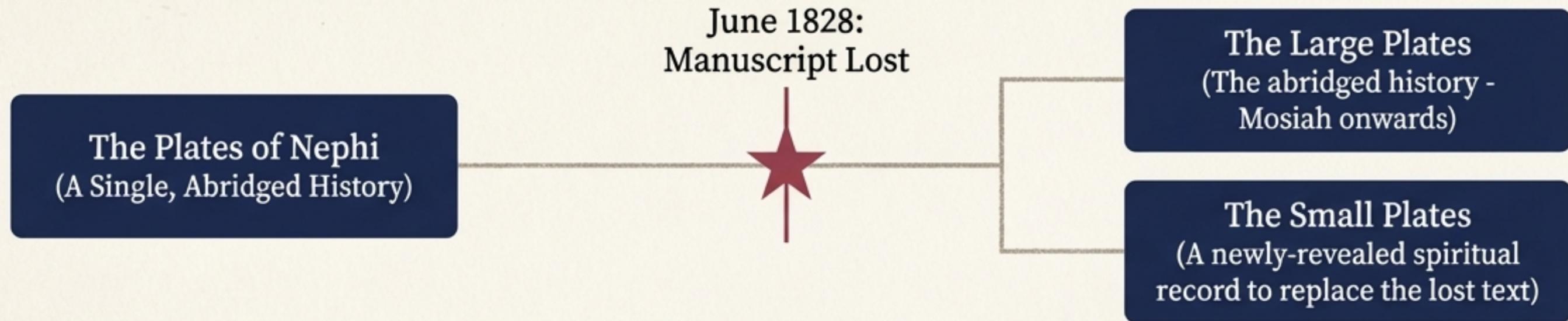
CROSS-EXAMINING THE ALIBI: WHY THE “TRAP” WAS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY



Investigative Conclusion: The refusal to re-translate was not to avoid a trap, but to avoid the impossible task of perfectly recreating 116 pages of improvised dictation.

EXHIBIT C: THE APPEARANCE OF A 'PLAN B'

With re-translation off the table, a new solution was required. This came in the form of a second, previously unmentioned set of records: The Small Plates of Nephi.



- **The New Narrative:** God had foreseen the loss 2,400 years earlier and commanded Nephi to create a second, parallel record focusing on “spiritual things.” This would conveniently replace the lost text.
- **Suspicious Timing:** The concept of two parallel plate sets (Large vs. Small) is completely absent from the Book of Mormon text that was dictated *before* the replacement section (Mosiah to Moroni). It is introduced and heavily explained only in the replacement text itself (1 Nephi to Words of Mormon).

Investigative Question: Was this a 2,400-year-old divine contingency plan, or a brilliant authorial solution invented after the fact to solve an immediate crisis?

ANALYZING THE COVER-UP: AN EVOLVING STORY

A close reading of the revelation in D&C 10 shows that even when Joseph decided to replace the text, the idea of the “Small Plates” had not yet been fully formed.

EVIDENCE 1

D&C 10's ORIGINAL PLAN



The revelation commands Joseph to translate from “the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi,” described as a “more particular account” than the lost abridgment. This implies a **larger, more detailed** source, not a smaller one.

THE PIVOT

THE FINAL PRODUCT



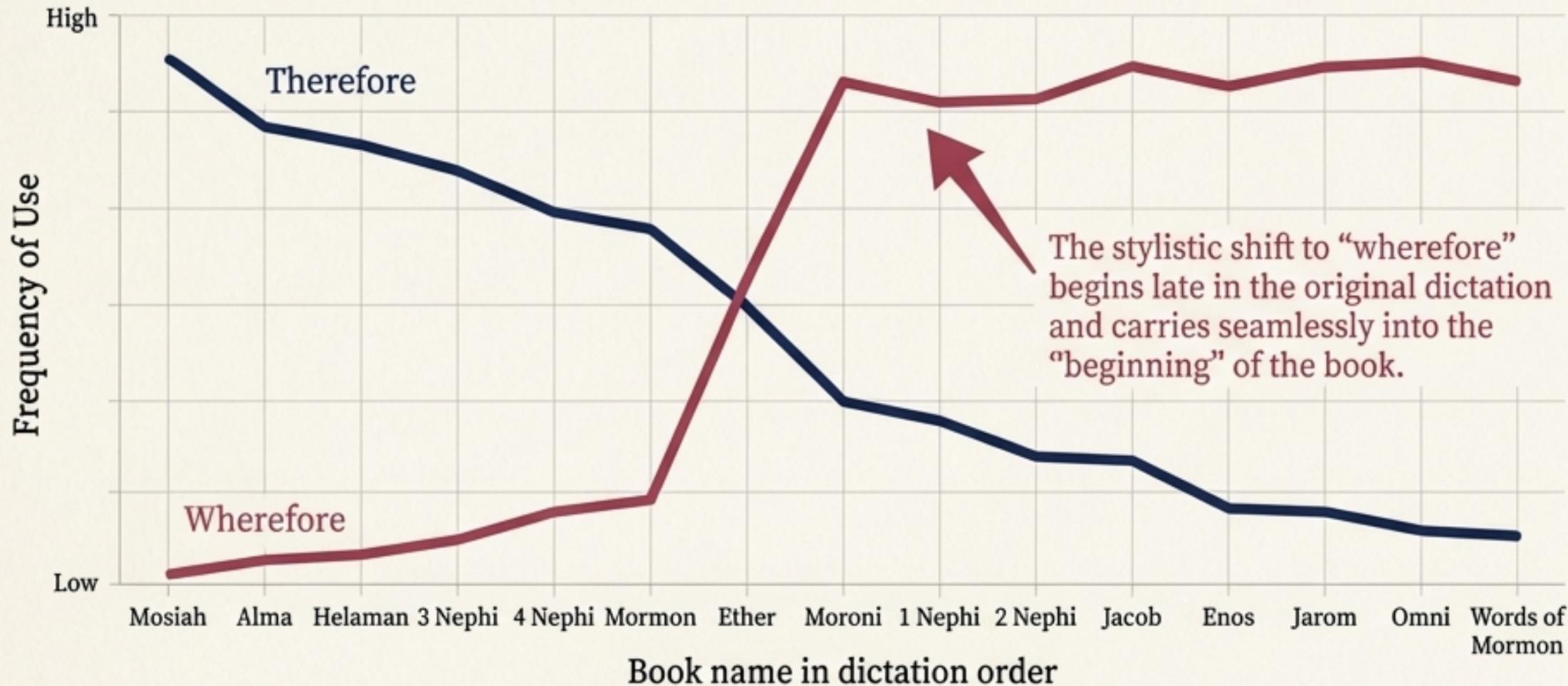
By the time Joseph dictated the replacement text, this plan had changed. He introduces the “Small Plates,” which are repeatedly described as **smaller** and **less interested in history** than the Large Plates.

Investigative Conclusion: Joseph initially planned to use the **larger** source plates to replace the text but pivoted to the **smaller** plates. This change allowed him to “breeze through hundreds of years of history” with **intentional vagueness**—a crucial strategy, as we will see next.

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CASE FILE - EXHIBIT D
NotebookLM

EXHIBIT D: THE AUTHOR'S FINGERPRINTS - CLUE #1: A TELLTALE SHIFT IN LANGUAGE

Linguistic analysis of the text reveals an authorial tic that confirms the dictation order and points to a single author. Researcher Brent Metcalfe tracked the usage of two words: “therefore” and “wherefore.”



- **The Pattern:** Joseph Smith begins by favoring “therefore.” Around the book of Ether, he begins to heavily favor “wherefore.”
- **The Connection:** This new preference for “wherefore” continues seamlessly from the end of the original dictation (Moroni) into the beginning of the replacement text (1 Nephi).

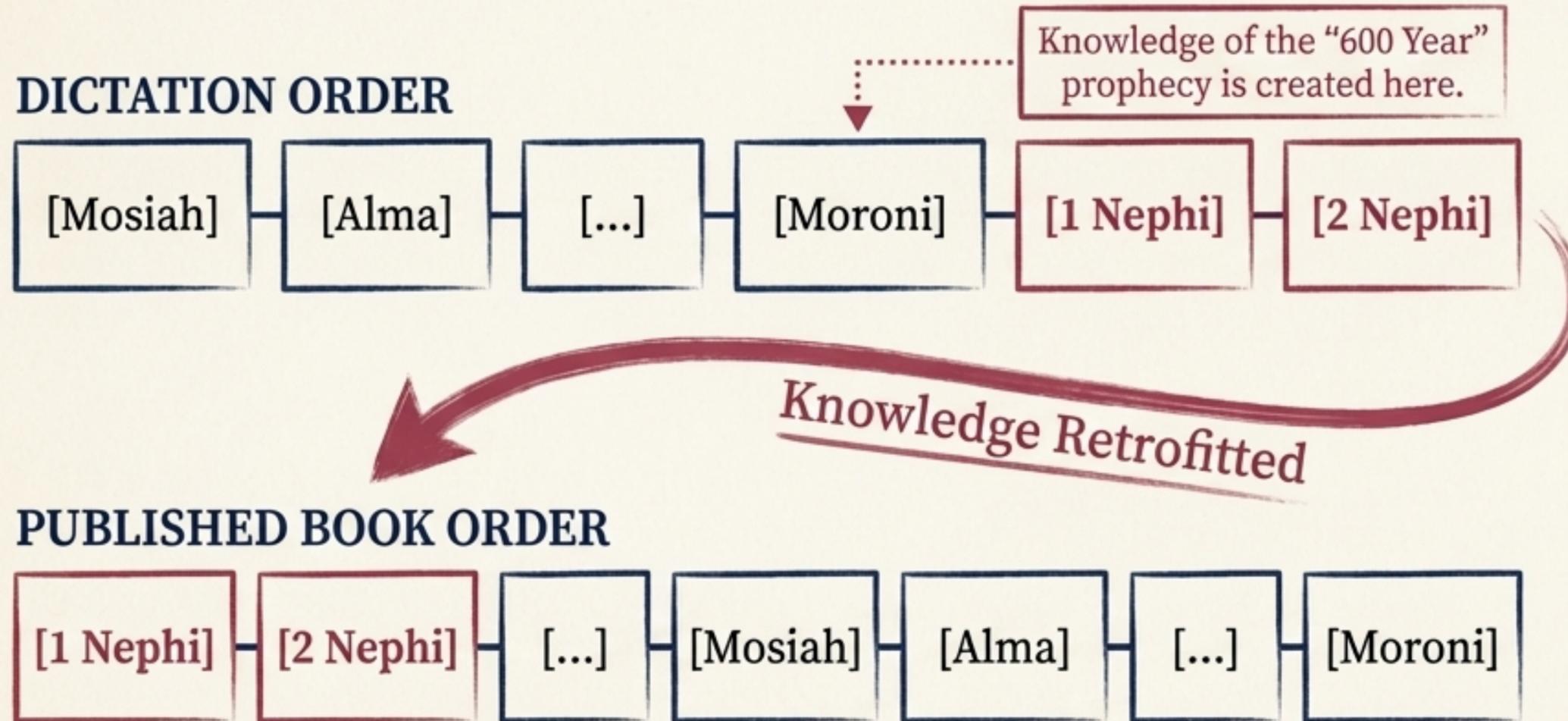
Investigative Conclusion: This linguistic fingerprint proves two things:

1. The replacement text (1 Nephi, etc.) was written after the main body of the book.
2. The same author, with the same evolving writing style, wrote both sections. This contradicts the idea that the two sections came from two distinct ancient records.



CLUE #2: PROPHECIES OUT OF ORDER

Knowing the dictation order reveals glaring anachronisms. The prophets in the replacement text (written last) have knowledge that the prophets in the middle of the book (written first) lack.



The 600-Year Prophecy:

- In **1 Nephi (written last)**: Nephi states clearly that the Messiah will come “in 600 years from the time my father left Jerusalem.” (1 Nephi 19:8)
- In **Mosiah & Alma (written first)**: Later prophets are vague. King Benjamin says the time is “not far distant.” Alma admits, “the time cometh we know not how soon.”

Investigative Conclusion: The prophets in the middle of the Book of Mormon are unaware of this specific, crucial prophecy because it hadn't been written yet. Joseph, having finished the story, inserted the specific date into the replacement text, creating a contradiction.



CLUE #3: RETROFITTING A GRAND FINALE

BOOK OF ALMA (DICTATED EARLY)



Will Christ visit America?

BOOK OF NEPHI (DICTATED LATE)



Christ's visit is a known promise.

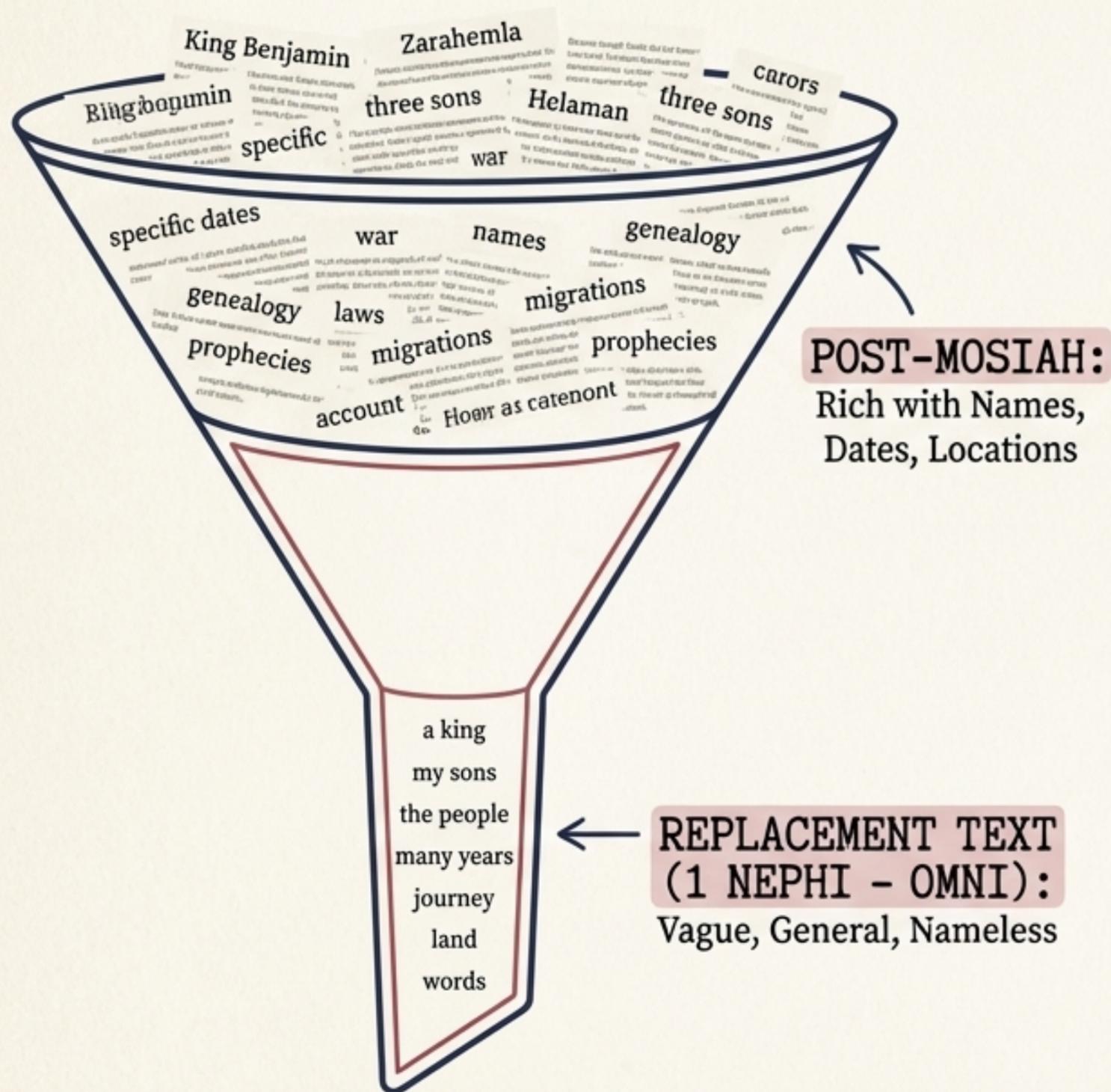
The pattern extends to one of the book's central events: Christ's appearance in the Americas.

- **An Evolving Idea:** In the texts dictated early (e.g., Alma), the idea of a post-resurrection visit from Christ to the Nephites is absent. When it is finally introduced in Alma 16:20, the people react with “great joy and gladness,” acknowledging the “newness of the idea.”
- **A Back-Dated Promise:** In the replacement text (dictated last), Nephi describes this future visit in detail as a well-established promise.

Investigative Conclusion: Jesus's visit to the Americas appears to be a late addition to the narrative, conceived by Joseph during the dictation process. He then “back-dated” the prophecy into the replacement text, making it seem as if it were known from the beginning.

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CLUE #4: THE “BLACK HOLE” OF INFORMATION



Because Joseph Smith did not know if Lucy Harris still possessed the 116 pages, he had to write the replacement text with extreme caution. This created a “black hole” of information—a period of history that is conspicuously vague and lacking in detail.

The Strategy: Intentional Vagueness

- * He could not include specific names, locations, or events that he couldn't remember perfectly.
- * Any specific detail he got wrong could be used by Lucy Harris to expose him as a fraud.
- * This forced him to fill the first 140+ pages of the Book of Mormon with broad sermons and a nameless, generic history.

The following slides will show specific examples of this stark contrast in detail.

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INSIDE THE BLACK HOLE: THE CASE OF THE MISSING NAMES

REPLACEMENT TEXT (VAGUE)

- Over a 238-year period, only **four** new names are introduced.
- Kings are left unnamed: "...he anointed **a man** to be a king..." and "...the people of Nephi under the reign of **the second king**..."
- Family members are described generically: "...**my sons** and **my daughters**, who are the sons and the daughters of **my second son**." (2 Nephi 4)

IMMEDIATELY AFTER REPLACEMENT TEXT (SPECIFIC)

- The text immediately provides specific names.
- "King Benjamin had three sons; and he called their names **Mosiah**, and **Helorum**, and **Helaman**." (Mosiah 1:2)

Investigative Conclusion: The stark difference in specificity is not accidental. Joseph Smith only provided names when he was confident he was past the material covered in the lost manuscript and could no longer be contradicted.

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CASE FILE - EXHIBIT H

EXHIBIT E: CROSS-EXAMINING THE DEFENSE

REBUTTED

DEFENSE #1:

The prophets in the middle of the book forgot the 600-year prophecy because they had a “voluminous library” of records to manage.

REBUTTAL:

This is not a mundane detail. The specific timing of the Messiah’s arrival would be the single most important prophecy in their possession. It is inconceivable that it would be “lost in the shuffle.”

DEFENSE #2:

The vague language about Christ’s coming in Alma could refer to his atonement or ministry, not his birth.

REBUTTAL:

This requires redefining the plain language of the text. Alma 13:25 explicitly states, “we know not how soon,” which directly contradicts the very specific knowledge found in 1 Nephi.

INVESTIGATIVE CONCLUSION:

Apologetic explanations rely on special pleading and ask us to believe that prophets would forget their most vital prophecies. The more straightforward explanation is that the contradictions are artifacts of the book’s composition by a 19th-century author.

THE CLOSING ARGUMENT: A VERDICT FROM THE EVIDENCE



When viewed in isolation, each piece of evidence might be explainable. When assembled, they point to one conclusion. The crisis of the 116 pages reveals a human author, not a divine translator.

- **Motive:** Joseph Smith's panicked reaction ("All is lost!") and his fear of being unable to reproduce the text show he was the author.
- **Means:** The seer stone's convenient failure, the evolving "plan" for replacement text, and the constant need to explain away inconsistencies show an author improvising in response to a crisis.
- **Opportunity:** The textual fingerprints—the linguistic shifts, the prophetic anachronisms, and the "black hole" of vagueness—are indelible marks of a 19th-century author writing a story sequentially and retrofitting details as he went.

The official narrative of a divine plan does not fit the facts. The evidence points overwhelmingly to an author solving a problem of his own making.

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THE 116 PAGES: NOT A SETBACK, BUT A KEY



The loss of the 116 pages is often presented as a minor hiccup in the miraculous story of the Restoration. The evidence suggests the opposite.

It was the one moment the author lost control of his environment. In his scramble to recover, he was forced to show his process.

The 116 pages incident is not the story of a prophet being tested. It is the story of an author leaving behind the accidental blueprint of his creation. It is the key that unlocks how the Book of Mormon was truly made.

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