

Conclusion

Joseph Smith had a keen interest in studying the four gospels in his youth. Contemplating his mission in life he wanted to be a minister, an apostle of Jesus and a prophet to mankind. When Smith prepared the new text of the Book of Mormon he incorporated gospel ideas and texts from the gospel writings in the reported ministry of Jesus Christ in America.

Soon after the Book of Mormon was published, and the church established, Smith commenced his next major project of revising the Bible. His English revision was based upon the standard text of the day the King James Version. Through inspiration Smith considered that he could recover wording that had been removed on purpose. Joseph Smith used the KJV text and his knowledge of the gospels to make a new version that could be used by the church he organized.

The manuscripts show how the words were added and that at times verses could be rearranged to present a better story than the KJV. It was a revelatory message to the church like his revelations. Smith saw a need to add his special insight when modifying the texts. The additions to the gospels included using his Book of Mormon. When Smith omitted verses such as Mark 13:9, 11-12, 33-36 he did it for a reason which was to incorporate the changed text of Matthew 24.

Joseph Smith believed that he was recovering what had been taken away from the gospels. The text was based upon an 1828 KJV Bible and had no relationship to a Greek manuscript. What we have is solid evidence that his revision is a Bible version that he claimed was produced under the direction of God. He made a version that would fill in the missing parts that he perceived was taken out of the four gospels. Though Smith's revelations constantly refer to his Bible work as a "translation" it was a revision of the text.

There are no noteworthy additions in Smith's inspired translation that find support in Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, or any pre-fourth century papyri fragments of the gospels. Since Joseph Smith did not have knowledge of Greek during the period when he revised the Bible, we should not expect his revision to contain readings in early Greek manuscripts. Nor

should we think that his revision of the gospels is any kind of restoration of what was in the Greek New Testament.

Like the Book of Mormon the Bible revision is not a traditional or normal translation. If translation equates to revelation then it would be understandable that the words dictated by Smith to his scribes were his own and could be modified if they needed to be. Like his inspired revelations Smith did modify the wording that he previously provided.

Joseph Smith by changing the text gives the impression that the printed KJV contained an altered text. That is, until he supplied the revealed words. Thus the work on the KJV Bible becomes an important mirror into the way Smith looks at scripture and his role as the church's prophetic leader.

Though the manuscripts and printed version of the four gospels have appeared only in the English language it gives a clear insight into the way Joseph Smith looked at the story of Jesus in the early 1830s. Since that time additional copies of the gospels have been discovered that could shed light upon the revision made by Joseph Smith. The work on the New Testament has given us a better text in the process. We can use the Greek text or a modern translation to read about the historical Jesus.

With new emphasis on the writings of Smith this book has shown that like other versions of the time this "new translation" was intended for believers in the mission of Joseph Smith. The words that he added to the text constitute the special character to the Bible he produced. Biblical scholars take issue with the additions Smith made but understand that he was presenting words to members of his faith independent of ancient manuscripts.

It is my position that Joseph Smith changed the four gospels in the same way he earlier composed the Book of Mormon. Thanks to biblical scholarship the text of the four gospels has been produced based upon sound principles of textual criticism.