

Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds. *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004. ix, 851 pp. Photographs, notes, tables. Cloth: \$99.95; ISBN 1-59038-328-1

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Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts is a large scholarly book presenting for the first time a typographic transcription of the handwritten pages, notes, and markings of the original manuscripts of the revision of the King James Version of the Bible made by Joseph Smith in the early 1830s. The book includes two useful charts, one giving the dates when the Joseph Smith Translation was worked on and the other a page-by-page listing of the manuscripts and scribes. A number of color photographs are included to illustrate what some of the manuscript pages look like.

Joseph Smith did not have the opportunity to publish the new translation during his lifetime. It was first published in 1867 under the title *The Holy Scriptures, Translated and Corrected by the Spirit of Revelation, by Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer* by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.¹ Members of publication committee included Joseph Smith III (church president), Israel L. Rogers, and Ebenezer Robinson. This work is available only in the English language.

The subtitle "Inspired Version" is the term applied to the printing of the *Holy Scriptures* since 1936. "Inspired Version" is used throughout this book. When used in 1936, the term gave the impression that other versions could be considered less inspired. The 1979 LDS edition of the King James Bible refers to Joseph Smith's Bible revisions as the Joseph Smith Translation (JST). This King James edition is the official LDS English version. In addition to footnotes citing the JST, the 1979 edition contains a seventeen-page appendix with JST extracts to supplement the KJV text.

The book contains five essays before the actual manuscript transcription. The first essay presents a historical overview and surveys the types of changes that occur in the Bible revision. The first paragraph mentions that the restoration of the gospel "included the restoration of biblical doctrine that had been either removed, distorted, or simply misinterpreted by a world that did not enjoy the fulness of the gospel" (3). The editors maintain that the Bible revision was a translation "though it did not involve creating a new rendering from Hebrew or Greek manuscripts" (8).

In explaining the different types of changes made in the JST, beside the possible restoration of original text (category 1), the editors state: "The changes identified in categories 2 through 5 are not restorations of original text but are wording that likely had never been in the Bible, had never been written in Hebrew or Greek, and had never been cast in the ancient literary style of Bible writers." (11) They continue, "Because some JST passages were perhaps never in the Bible, we would not expect to find evidence for them in ancient manuscripts, no matter how close in date those manuscripts are to the original biblical texts." This type of reasoning may indicate that those who study the JST just need to embrace it and not worry about being able to pin down the text. But

¹ In 1872 this church was incorporated as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, its official and legal name, with a shortened name change in April 2001 to the Community of Christ.

notice the tentative nature of "perhaps." On the other hand, scholars have located and translated additional manuscripts and papyri, enabling us to identify more accurately the biblical text.

One problem with the idea that the JST contains material never written in the ancient manuscripts is that a person cannot "restore" words that were never in the text in the first place. The pattern of many of Joseph Smith's additions is consistent with the Book of Mormon's claim that many "plain and precious" teachings had been removed (LDS 1 Ne. 13:28; RLDS 3:171).

The second essay is on "The New Translation and Latter-day Saint Doctrine." It goes into the doctrinal aspect of the revision. The editors claim that the JST has been "ignored by some LDS scripture scholars and historians" and that some students "have not regarded it as a translation at all, nor even as a serious biblical document" (17). This appears to be correct as it may have a non-scriptural status shared with such manuscripts as the Egyptian Alphabet and related papers produced in 1835. Those reluctant to accord it scriptural status may see his emendations as part of Joseph Smith's theological and doctrinal development.

The third essay by Ronald E. Romig, Community of Christ Archivist, presents a concise history of the original manuscripts after Joseph Smith's death in 1844. He also discusses the 1828 marked King James Bible that was the basis for the English text of the revision.

The fourth essay describes the various scribes: Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and an unknown scribe (Scribe A). Joseph Smith wrote on four pages in the Old Testament portion of the manuscript.

The fifth and final essay tells about the transcription methods the editors used in making the printed transcription from the original manuscripts. Good introductions are provided for each manuscript.

The handwriting of the manuscripts sometimes is hard to read. To the editors' credit, this book presents a reliable transcription. One possible error could be in Luke 6:26 where a word is transcribed as "evill" (381) but is probably "well."

The student should be aware that the manuscripts of the JST contain many misspelled words. Just because a word is misspelled does not mean that it is a purposeful revision. Matthew 15:2 (KJV) has "tradition of the elders" while New Testament (NT) 2 has "tradition of the elder." In this case the KJV and NT 1 should be followed.

Even in the original dictation, verses were omitted either by accident or on purpose when reading from the Bible. Sometimes a verse would be added back in when the manuscript was compared with the KJV and the missing verses were located. The language of the KJV was updated.

Joseph Smith started his revision with Genesis, then revised Matthew through Revelation. Afterward he returned to Genesis and worked through Malachi. Over a period of three years (1830-33), Joseph revised and reviewed the manuscripts. The editors show that the initial New Testament work was completed in July 1832. Afterward Joseph Smith had additional notes and revisions made as he reviewed the manuscript pages.

This revision shows Joseph Smith's theological understanding of the Bible in the early years of his ministry. It was his next major endeavor after the Book of Mormon. While the Old Testament (OT) revision began in New York, Smith did the majority of the work while he was living in Kirtland and Hiram, Ohio. The time frame corresponds to Joseph Smith's revelations and instructions contained in the Doctrine and Covenants (LDS D&C 20, 24-93, 95-96; RLDS D&C 17, 23-90, 92-93).

There are four main manuscripts of the JST, some containing copied material. New Testament manuscript 2 contains four gatherings or folios. Two folios start with page 1. The following chart shows the division of the original manuscripts from which the transcription was taken:

<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
OT 1 (61 pages)	NT 1 (63 pages)
OT 2 (119 pages)	NT 2, folio 1 (pages 1-49)
	NT 2, folio 2 (pages 1-48)
	NT 2, folio 3 (pages 49-42)
	NT 2, folio 4 (pages 93-154)

The manuscript for NT 2, folio 4, pages 115-154 (John 6 through Revelation 22) shows that Joseph Smith and his scribe developed a quicker method than writing out the complete text. Markings were made in the Bible to indicate where passages needed to be changed. Some of the crossed-out words or markings were to be used in connection with the handwritten manuscript while other corrected verses were to be made without reference to the manuscript text. The manuscript for OT 2 was written out in full for Genesis 1:1-24:67. The remaining chapters of Genesis through Malachi also used the short method of recording changes.

Unknown to the reader since its first publication in 1867 is that Joseph Smith considered a large portion of the Old Testament as correct. Out of 929 chapters in the Old Testament over 45 percent were listed as correct after making minor revisions in the marked Bible.

The 1867 Bible included entire chapters and books as though the text was contained in the original manuscripts. For example, Joseph Smith wrote on OT 2 "Correct" for Nehemiah 11-13, Esther 1-10, and Job 3-42 but crossed out words within those chapters on his printed Bible. The 1867 edition reproduced the KJV text with no notation that the manuscript indicated the chapters were correct. In addition, markings in the printed Bible were made in Ecclesiastes as proposed changes, although the name of the book was not recorded on OT 2.

Smith considered Ruth, Lamentations, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi correct, but the reader of the 1867 Bible has no idea that this was the case. Besides chapters listed in the OT 2, other chapter numbers were simply omitted. For example, Proverbs 23-31 were not recorded on the manuscript. There is no indication that the omitted chapters should not be included in the revision. Also Ecclesiastes was not listed in OT 2, but the marked Bible contains proposed changes for the revision. This shows the incomplete nature of Old Testament revisions and problems using the 1867 and other printings of the JST. The transcription in *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible* has listed those books and chapters considered by Smith as correct

Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible includes small photographs of many KJV verses that contained crossed-out words or that were otherwise marked. The editors explain: "We have provided a photograph of each verse in Joseph Smith's Bible for which he made a change on the manuscripts" (54; also 455, 668). They list a few exceptions including Psalms 119:127 (668, 780); John 8:6 (455, 458); and Acts 24:8 (455, 474). A footnote states, "We do not even know if all the lined-out italics found in the Bible today can be attributed to Joseph Smith" (423, footnote 7). Further examination shows that the marked passages of Job 2:3 and 6:29 are included (738) but photographs of some additional cross-outs were omitted—for example, Job 13:2; 18:12; 19:25-26.

Joseph Smith worked on these chapters and they contain cross-outs but he or his scribe labeled them as "Correct" (741).

While having access to these photographs improves our understanding of how the short method was used, it is not complete. Photographs of many of the marked verses have been omitted from both the Old and New Testaments. In the Bible, sometimes italic words are crossed out and the text is then considered correct. When Joseph Smith wrote that a chapter was correct, sometimes minor hand-made corrections have been made in the KJV Bible. Stephen Knecht pointed this fact out many years ago, indicating that hundreds of marked changes in Joseph Smith's KJV Bible have not been printed.² This is a large omission in the new book.

The first two essays by LDS scholars take the perspective that Joseph Smith was justified in altering the Holy Scriptures. (Romig's essay does not address the topic.) They cite the "plain and precious" passage, thus virtually mandating additions (as "restorations") to the Bible.

Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible was continually being revised in the 1830s. Smith was always learning and projecting his views in everything he did. There seems to be a great push to elevate the JST to canonization. The editors suggest it when they write that Latter-day Saints "can embrace it as they do the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price" (11; see also 13, 25). If this were to occur, it would give the Church more of Joseph Smith and less of biblical writers. It would also create a barrier to outsiders rather than act as a bridge to a common understanding of the Bible.

The additional material that Joseph Smith inserted into the text is not in any other English version of the Bible. There are no biblical manuscripts (either Hebrew or Greek) that include Smith's additions. At present, the LDS Church's position is that the JST "restore[s] truths to the Bible text that had become lost or changed since the original words were written."³

Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible does not discuss omitted verses. For example, in Mark 13 (KJV), four verses in a row (33-36) do not appear in the JST. The reason is that Joseph Smith did not alter this chapter but used his prior revision of Matthew 24 for the text. To their credit, the editors mention that the Matthew 24 revision was used in composing Mark 13:

In the Bible, Matthew's account of Jesus' great discourse to the Twelve on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24) is much longer and more detailed than Mark's (Mark 13). Both were changed significantly in the Joseph Smith Translation.

A comparison of the Matthew and Mark accounts in the New Translation shows that when Joseph Smith and his scribe arrived at Mark 13, the Prophet decided to copy the corrected Matthew account from NT2.1 rather than to revise the existing verses in Mark. (303-4)

In a few cases, Joseph Smith used as his standard text Book of Mormon passages, not those from the Bible. For example, he added to Genesis 50 the passage about a latter-day seer and to Isaiah 29 the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The editor's introduction to OT 2 suggests that

² Stephen R. Knecht, *The Story of Joseph Smith's Bible Translation: A Documented History* (Salt Lake City: Associated Research Consultants Publication, 1977), 57a, 58, 66, 213-32.

³ "Joseph Smith Translation," in "Study Aids," *The Scriptures: CD-ROM Resource Edition* [2004]; also on the official LDS Church web site at <http://scriptures.lds.org/jst/contents>.

a retranslation of Isaiah 29 was unnecessary: "It appears, therefore, that when Joseph Smith came to that chapter in his translation of the Bible, he copied it from Nephi's record in the printed Book of Mormon rather than providing a new translation. If this was the case, then Nephi's inspired recording of the chapter and Joseph Smith's inspired translation of it into English were sufficient for the Lord's purposes and made a retranslation unnecessary" (589-90).

In the NT 1 version of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew, a portion of the wording also comes from the Book of Mormon.⁴ The inclusion of Book of Mormon passages indicates how Joseph perceived his work on the Bible.

There is a close relationship between the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and the revision. For example, the topic of the gathering of the Saints is included as an addition to Luke 17:37 (414). The Bible text was final unless further alterations were made at a later time. Also Joseph Smith's new translation appears to include his early view concerning God. For his revision of Luke 10:22, Smith dictated "that the son is the Father, and that the Father is the son" (393).

New information is included in *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible* concerning the handwriting of the scribes. Frederick G. Williams inserted words in Genesis, John, Acts, Romans, and 1 Corinthians. Sidney Rigdon wrote a short revision of Jeremiah 18:8, 10, and 14. An unknown scribe's handwriting appears on part of NT 2, folio 4, pp. 136, 139-42, 147-49.

Oliver Cowdery changed and corrected the ages of patriarchs in Genesis after the original dictation making Adam and Methuselah a thousand years old. This change does not appear in the copied OT 2 but rather in the dictated manuscript. Neither the book of Moses nor the JST contain these age changes. Notes pinned to manuscript pages are in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Frederick G. Williams. There are also changes on manuscript pages by other individuals. For example, the words "and worthy" are added above the line for Matthew 26:66 but without a footnote (309). According to an article co-authored by Kent Jackson the handwriting is that of Joseph Smith III.⁵

The manuscripts show interesting layers of reworking the text as Joseph Smith refined his perception on particular passages. The interested student of the text will need to make his or her own evaluation in studying the transcriptions. Having *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible* with its transcription of the original manuscripts is a step in the right direction in providing these writings to researchers and scholars of the Restoration movement. We should keep in mind that Joseph worked on the Bible in the earliest stage of his ministry but was unable to complete and publish the work as he planned.

Does it merit canonization? I lean toward the position of Kornelis (Kees) Compier, currently European Mission Center Financial Officer, Community of Christ, who wrote in the conclusion to his study of the Gospel of Mark: "Joseph's New Translation should be considered a historical document representing its own time. Both the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and other churches using Joseph's New Translation should consider this document as representing a certain phase of their church history and move on to and recommend

⁴ Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1969), 98; (2nd ed. rev. and enlarged, 1995), 84.

⁵ See Kent P. Jackson and Peter M. Jasinski, "The Process of Inspired Translation: Two Passages Translated Twice in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible," *BYU Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003):55.

the use of newer and better translations of the Bible."⁶

I agree that the JST should be recognized as Joseph Smith's studied ideas about the KJV during 1830-33, made independently of biblical scholarship and during an early phase of his theological development. Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century biblical scholars have provided more accessible translations of the KJV for modern readers.

This new book is an important research tool and is a good step in providing scholars and interested persons a readable, though not totally comprehensive, transcription of these important manuscripts. I would recommend this book for those who are researching this aspect of Joseph Smith's ministry.

⁶ Kornelis Compier, "Joseph Smith's 'New Translation' and its effect upon the Interpretation of the Text in the Gospel of Mark," (Thesis project, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado, 1988), 96; copy in Community of Christ Library-Archives.