

Joseph Smith's Bible Revision

The belief of Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844) was that the gospel of Jesus Christ contained in the New Testament consisted of the same essential beliefs and ordinances practiced since the beginning of humankind. The sacred texts revealed through Joseph Smith explained that if it was necessary to believe in Jesus now, then Adam and other Old Testament patriarchs would have believed like the followers of Jesus in New Testament times. The same idea goes with the practice of the ordinances of Christian baptism, confirmation, and priesthood ordination.

Joseph Smith studied the Bible in his youth

Before he became a teenager Joseph Smith was a student of the Bible. Smith was intensively interested in biblical themes. In 1832 he wrote about his search of the scriptures. Joseph recorded:

At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest with regard to the all importent concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believeing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those different denominations led me to marvel exce[e]dingly for I discovered that <they did not> of adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository this was a grief to my Soul¹

Gospel the same

The Book of Mormon, the first religious work Joseph Smith published, commented on the plan of redemption:

1 “A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr.,” 1-2, LDS archives; Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Autobiographical and Historical Writings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989), 1:5. Original spelling retained. Words in manuscripts that appear above the line are indicated by angled brackets.

therefore he [God] sent angels to converse with them, which caused men to behold of his glory. And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them, according to their faith and repentance, and their holy works²

Joseph Smith's additions to the early chapters of Genesis also illustrate the belief that the New Testament gospel was taught and practiced in Old Testament times. With corrections to Genesis, such as the following, Smith in essence made that book a Christian document.

& thus the Gospel began to be preached from the begin[n]ing being declared by Holy Angels sent forth from the presence of God & by his own voice & by the Gift of the Holy Ghost & thus all things were confirmed & the Gospel preached & a decree sent forth that it should be in the World until the end thereof & thus it was³

In 1832 Joseph Smith revised the first part of John 1:1 to read, "In the begin[n]ing was the gospel preached through the son. And the gospel was the word."⁴ This was a constant theme throughout Smith's life. Gordon Irving, a Latter-day Saint scholar, wrote the following to explain this basic belief as developed by church members:

Mormons naturally developed a view of the past which held that the gospel of Christ as preached in the New

2 1830 BOM, 257; LDS Alma 12:29-30/RLDS 9:48-50. The plan of redemption was faith, repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

3 OT 1, 10, (Nov. 30, 1830), RLDS archives. At a later date the words "unto Adam by an holy ordinance" were added after the word "confirmed" onto OT 2, 14. See LDS Moses 5:58-59, Pearl of Great Price; and *The Holy Scriptures* (Independence: Missouri: Herald Publishing House, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1991), Gen. 5:44-45 (cited hereafter as JST). Compare LDS D&C 29:42; RLDS D&C 28:12.

4 NT 2, folio 4, 105, RLDS archives, revision of John 1:1, ca. Feb. 1832.

Testament had been preached to all men since the beginning of the world and that whenever God's church had existed on earth, it had enjoyed the same gifts as the apostolic church. The order set up in Jesus' day was thus projected both backward to Adam and forward in time to the Mormons themselves and on beyond to the Millennium. This much was accepted by all Mormons, although individuals might differ somewhat as to details and implications of the idea.⁵

Book of Mormon vision

The Book of Mormon contains Christian ideas incorporated as prophetic insights into the life of Jesus such as his birth and baptism.⁶ Joseph Smith dictated the text of a reported ancient vision that proclaimed that "many plain and precious things" had been removed from the Bible. As recorded in First Nephi an angel explained:

Thou hast beheld that the Book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, it contained the plainness of the Gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God⁷

After the book is in the hands of the Gentiles the record of First Nephi stated the following:

thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for

5 Gordon I. Irving, "Mormonism and the Bible, 1832-1838," Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, Aug. 1972, 4-5; see also Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 (Summer 1973):474.

6 1830 BOM, 24-25; LDS 1 Nephi 11:13-27/RLDS 3:52-73.

7 1830 BOM, 30; LDS 1 Nephi 13:24/RLDS 3:165. The original BOM manuscript reads, "fulness of the Gospel" (LDS archives). The wording "planeness [plainness] of the Gospel" was written onto the Printer's manuscript (RLDS archives).

behold, they have taken away from the Gospel of the Lamb, many parts which are plain and most precious; and also, many Covenants of the Lord have they taken away⁸

The Book of Mormon was to help recover the gospel—"I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious." After being hidden the writings would come forth and contain "my Gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation."⁹

The Bible

As anyone knows who has tried to accurately copy a text, it is very easy to omit a line or two in the copying process. When ancient scribes copied manuscripts they often accidentally omitted words. In addition, in Codex Sinaiticus (N), there are places where a corrector questioned a text and marked it for deletion or actually deleted words. In a few cases we find that scribes added stories to gospel manuscripts in an effort to preserve a tradition. Two good examples of longer texts being added are what became Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. Since manuscripts contain various readings, the above two additions indicate that there was no central organization that tried to make sure all manuscripts read the same. It does not appear that many words of Jesus were removed from the manuscripts of the gospels.

The revision made by Joseph Smith attempts to make the wording of the KJV English clearer. The additions by Smith are a reflection of his encounter with the text in the context of revelatory messages as the latter-day gospel was being restored in 1830-33. There are only a few places where Joseph Smith's English words are the same words used in other New Testaments. The vast majority of the additions to the records of Jesus' teachings appear to be Smith's interpretation. Joseph Smith did not use a Greek New Testament to assist him in the revision. Smith's version of the

⁸ 1830 BOM, 30; LDS 1 Nephi 13:26/RLDS 3:167-168. The original BOM manuscript reads, "formation of that great & abominable church." The Printer's manuscript has, "foundation of a great & abominable Church."

⁹ 1830 BOM, 31; LDS 1 Nephi 13:35-36/RLDS 3:184, 186.

gospels was produced as a church text for those who accept the restored gospel.

As explained later in this chapter, I have compared the Greek text of the gospels with Joseph Smith's additional explanatory revision to determine if it was possible that the modifications he made represent wording that may have been lost from the four gospels. The conclusion of this study is that there are no noteworthy additions in Joseph 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 this period of Bible revision, 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. Joseph Smith's work is a revision rather than a translation, since church members knew that Joseph Smith had not studied Greek to produce his manuscript. But church members also thought that Joseph did not have to know Greek because he got his corrections via revelation.

Historical Background of Bible revision

In October 1829 Oliver Cowdery, an associate and scribe for Joseph Smith, purchased a large leather bound edition of the King James Bible at Egbert B. Grandin's Bookstore in Palmyra, New York. At the time Smith was residing in Pennsylvania.¹⁰ The Bible was published in Cooperstown, New York, by H. and E. Phinney Company in 1828. This printing included the Apocrypha. This KJV 1828 Bible (JS Bible) became the textual basis for the revision. Inscribed on the fly leaf is the following:

The Book of the Jews And the property of
Joseph Smith Junior and Oliver Cowdery

10 Joseph Smith arrived at Harmony, Pennsylvania on 4 October 1829 (Smith to Cowdery, 22 Oct. 1829, in Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:9, LDS archives). See Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:7. The JS Bible has markings (including strike through of italic words) starting at OT Genesis chapter 25 and NT John chapter 6.

Bought October the 8th 1829 at Egbert B Grandins
Book Store Palmyra Wayne County New York¹¹

It had been asserted, prior to the time of Joseph Smith, by European biblical scholars that Moses could not have been the writer of Genesis. In June 1830 Joseph Smith received a new revelation originally given to Moses, previously unknown, that refuted this theory. This revelation began, “The words of God which he <spake> unto Moses.”¹² In the revelation Smith said Moses was told:

And now Moses my Son I will speak unto you concerning this Earth upon which thou standest & thou shalt write the things which I shall speak & in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as nought & take many of them from the Book which thou shalt write behold I will raise up another like unto thee [Moses] & they shall be had again among the Children of men among even as many as shall believe . . . And now they are also spoken unto you [Joseph Smith] shew them not unto any except them that believe¹³

Joseph Smith’s job was to recover the words that were removed from the Bible. The opening portion of chapter one of Genesis as revealed “to the Elders of the Church of Christ,” circa June 1830, was rendered:

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses saying Behold I reveal unto you concerning this Heaven & this Earth write the words which I speak I am the beginning & the end the Almighty God by mine only begotten I created these things yea in the beginning I created the Heaven & the Earth upon which thou standest¹⁴

11 The JS Bible purchased by Oliver Cowdery is in the Community of Christ archives.

12 OT 1, 1; LDS Moses 1:1; RLDS D&C 22:1.

13 OT 1, 3; Compare LDS Moses 1:40-42; RLDS D&C 22:24-25.

14 OT 1, 3; LDS Moses 2:1; Gen. 1:1-3 (JST). Though there is no first person account such as “I Moses,” like the Book of Mormon, there still is an indication by Joseph Smith that Genesis had been dictated by inspiration in the words “I

A December 1830 revelation considered the Bible revision as a translation in the words—"it is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye go to the [state of] Ohio."¹⁵ As far as is known a Hebrew text was not consulted by Smith for Genesis. The Bible revision is better understood as an inspired correction, and where additions were made, as an expansion of the biblical text.

The revision by Joseph Smith proceeded as follows. He started with the OT book of Genesis (June 1830), then was interrupted at Genesis 5:32 (KJV) in December 1830 by preparations to move to Ohio. Smith briefly returned to OT and in March 1831 he began revising of the NT. He revisited the OT revision about July 1832. At Kirtland, Ohio, on February 9, 1831 Joseph Smith revealed the Laws of the Church which included this statement with regard to his revision of the scriptures:

Thou shalt ask and my scriptures shall be given as I have appointed, and for thy salvation thou shalt hold thy peace concerning them till ye have rec[eive]d. them, and then I give unto you a Commandment that ye shall teach them unto all men & they also shall be taught unto all nations kindreds, tongues & people¹⁶

Two manuscripts have the earlier reading: "for thy salvation thou shalt hold thy peace concerning them." The Book of Commandments (BC) printed the text in a different form:

Thou shalt ask and my scriptures shall be given as I have appointed; and for thy *safety it is expedient that* thou shouldst hold thy peace concerning them, until ye have received them: Then I give unto you a commandment that ye shall teach them unto all men; *for* they also shall be

God" or "I the Lord God" in the first five chapters of Genesis. Compare OT 1, 3-10; OT 2, 4-9; LDS Moses 2:1-5:40; Gen. 1:1-5:25 (JST) with Gen. 1:1-5:25 (KJV).

15 JS Revelations, 97-98; LDS and RLDS D&C 37:1 (Dec. [30] 1830).

16 JS Revelations, 109, from manuscript designated "Book of Commandments, Law and Covenants; Book B" (LDS archives). Compare with LDS D&C 42:56-58; RLDS D&C 42:15.

taught unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people.¹⁷

In the 1835 D&C a further explanation appears in the revision of this revelation:

Thou shalt ask, and my scriptures shall be given as I have appointed, and *they shall be preserved* in safety; *and* it is expedient that thou shouldst hold thy peace concerning them, *and not teach them* until ye have received them *in full*. *And* I give unto you a commandment, that *then* ye shall teach them unto all men; *for* they shall be taught unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people.¹⁸

New Testament to be revised

During March 1831 at Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith received a revelation to begin revising the New Testament. Concerning the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 24, he was instructed:

& now behold I say unto you it shall not be given unto you to know any further than this [Matthew 24] untill the New Testament be translated & in it all these things shall be made known wherefore I give unto you that ye may now translate it that ye may be prepared for the things to come¹⁹

With this as a background Joseph Smith perceived that the text he supplied would give a broader view of the teachings of Jesus. It appears that Smith himself intended his revision to be for the most part an accurate form of the original meaning of the text and perceived it as such. On March 8 Joseph Smith dictated to his scribe Sidney Rigdon the beginning of the gospel according to

17 BC 44:43-44; italics added for emphasis on words not in manuscript Book B. The reading “for thy safety it is expedient that” appears in two post-November 1831 manuscripts and was evidently based upon the November 1831 BC manuscript.

18 1835 D&C 13:15. Italics added for emphasis on wording not in BC 44:43-44.

19 JS Revelations, 123. Compare LDS D&C 45:60-61; RLDS D&C 45:11 (March [6-7], 1831).

Matthew. The heading of the manuscript read: “A Translation of the New Testament translated by the power of God.”²⁰

Like the Book of Mormon which was revealed “by the gift and power of God,” the New Testament revision was a revealed text based upon the KJV Bible. Usually when working with the New Testament a person would use a standard text. In the case of revising Matthew 5 Smith used the KJV Bible and Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith would read from the Bible purchased by Oliver Cowdery in 1829. Besides the Book of Mormon, Smith’s work on the Bible was his next largest project. A manuscript was written for most of Matthew (NT 1). The text was then recopied to form another manuscript known as NT 2. This later manuscript was completely written out by Sidney Rigdon and John Whitmer for the revision for the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Rigdon and Whitmer wrote out in full the text of NT 2 for Matthew 1:1 through John 5:47. Starting with John chapter 6 the gospel passages were revised by Joseph Smith with Sidney Rigdon recording what changes were to be made rather than having the complete text being written out. Various markings were made in the Smith Bible for verses to be corrected and to indicate at what place the corrections for NT 2 were to be placed. This was a shorter method than having a scribe spend the time recording the complete text of John. Revisions for the remaining chapters (John six through twenty-one) were recorded on four pages by using this short method as were those for the remainder of the NT.²¹

Matthew 1:1-26:71 was recorded by scribe Sidney Rigdon as Joseph Smith dictated to Rigdon the words of the text during the months March through June 1831. The work was interrupted by a trip to Independence, Missouri, in the summer of 1831. John Whitmer served as a scribe for Matthew 26:1 through Mark 9:1 in the fall of 1831. Whitmer left Ohio in November 1831 and moved to Missouri.

After returning from a trip to Independence, Missouri, former elder Ezra Booth, wrote with some sarcasm concerning the understanding of church members:

20 NT 1, 1.

21 NT 2, f. 4, 115-18.

the Bible is declared too defective to be trusted in its present form; and it is designed that it shall undergo a thorough alteration, or as they say, translation. This work is now in operation. The Gospel by St. Matthew has already received the purifying touch, and is prepared for the use of the church. It was intended to have kept this work a profound secret, and strict commandments were given for that purpose; and even the salvation of the church was said to depend upon it.²²

The February 9, 1831 revelation corroborates parts of Booth's letter concerning the church's salvation and keeping the revision a secret. Nine months later the minutes of a general conference held on October 25, 1831 at Orange, Ohio, report that Joseph Smith said, "except the church recieve [receive] the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall."²³

A revelation given on January 10, 1832 explained concerning the New Testament that, "it is expedient to translate again . . . continue the work of translation untill it be finished."²⁴ In the next month, on February 16, 1832, Joseph Smith and his scribe Sidney Rigdon were working on John chapter 5 when they received what is termed the Vision; actually a series of visionary experiences relating to the afterlife. This is the Vision of three degrees of glory. They reported being in the Spirit when "our eyes were opened, and our understandings were enlightened." Smith and Rigdon give the following background:

for as we sat doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given unto us thus: speaking of the resurrection of the dead who should hear

22 Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy, Oct. 2, 1831, *The Ohio Star* 2 (Oct. 20, 1831):3, Ravenna, Ohio.

23 Minutes copied into the "Far West Record." See Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 23. The phrase "fulness of the Scriptures" refers to Joseph Smith's Bible revision (See JS Revelations, 108; LDS D&C 42:15; 104:58; RLDS D&C 42:5; 101:10; and the revision of Luke 11:52).

24 JS Revelations, 183; LDS D&C 73:3-4; RLDS D&C 73:2.

the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they who have done good in the resurrection of the just, and they who have done evil in the resurrection of the unjust. Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given us of the Spirit; and while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understanding, and they were opened²⁵

Shortly afterwards, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon finished revising John, and by March they were revising Revelation. On March 20, 1832 a question was asked by Rigdon and Smith on whether they should “finish the translation of the New Testament” before going to Independence, Missouri or wait until they return from the trip. The response was given: “It is expedient saith the Lord that there be no delays [in going] . . . Wherefore omit the translation for the present time.”²⁶

Smith wrote a letter on July 31, 1832 to William W. Phelps in Missouri telling him that the manuscripts of the revision would:

not go from under my hand during my natural life for correction, revisal or printing and the will of [the] Lord be done therefore you need not expect them this fall, Broth[er] Frederick [G. Williams] is employed to be a scribe for me of the Lord—we have finished the translation of the New testament great and glorious things are revealed.²⁷

During December 1832 and January 1833 Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith reviewed the NT manuscript revision. To Frederick G. Williams a revelation of January 5, 1833 stated, “my servant Joseph [Smith Jr.] is called to do a great work and hath needs that he may do the work of translation for the salvation of

25 JS Revelations, 186-87. See LDS D&C 76:12, 15-19; RLDS D&C 76:3. If the words “speaking of the resurrection of the dead who should hear the voice of the Son of man” are considered a part of the revision of John, they were not added to the text of John 5:29 in NT 2, f. 4, 114. The words “and shall all be judged of the son of man” were added to the revision of John 5:29. See Appendix A under John 5:29.

26 JS Revelations, 207.

27 Smith to Phelps, July 31, 1832, LDS archives. The Bible manuscripts were kept by Joseph Smith at his home.

souls.”²⁸ The review of the NT (going over the prior corrections) was finished on February 2, 1833 as recorded in the Kirtland Council Minute Book: “This day completed the translation and the reviewing of the New testament and sealed [it] up no more to be brokin [broken] till it goes to Zion [Independence, Missouri].”²⁹ NT 2 was completed and ready for publication. No lost writings were added to the New Testament during the nearly two year span when the revision was accomplished.

Work on the Old Testament continued and a revelatory message of March 8, 1833 said, “I give unto you a commandment that you continue in this ministry and presidency and when you have finished the translation of th[e] prophets you shall from thenceforth preside over the affairs of the Church and school” of the prophets.³⁰

Apocrypha

On March 9, 1833 in answer to the question of whether to revise (translate) the Apocrypha Joseph Smith said the Lord told him that it was “mostly translated correct,” and it contained “interpolation[s] by the hands of men,” but there was no need to translate it.³¹ The text of this revelation indicated there were “interpolations” (insertions into the text) by men rather than omissions. Joseph Smith did not identify any particular Apocrypha book as having this problem. The end result was that the Apocrypha was not read and revised. If there were additions to the Apocrypha, they were neither removed nor identified but left in the KJV.

New Testament and Book of Mormon in one volume

In a letter written the following month (April 1833) Joseph Smith gave instructions that “it is not the will of the Lord to print

28 JS Revelations, 231. The correct date is January 5, rather than January 6. The year 1834 in the manuscript copy is considered incorrect and should be the year 1833.

29 Kirtland Council Minute Book, 8, LDS archives.

30 JS Revelations, 234-35; LDS D&C 90:12-13; RLDS D&C 87:5.

31 JS Revelations, 236; LDS D&C 91:1-3; RLDS D&C 88:1.

any of the new translation in the Star but when it is published it will all go to the world together in a volum[e] by itself and the new Testament and the book of Mormon will be printed togeth[er].”³² Though the *Evening and the Morning Star* had published extracts from Smith’s revision of Genesis, the *Star* published in the July issue that “at no very distant period, we shall print the book of Mormon and the Testament, and bind them in one volume.”³³

In a revelation given on May 6, 1833 it was declared, “it is my will that y[ou] should hasten to translat[e] my script[ure]s.”³⁴ When reading the Old Testament books Joseph Smith had his scribe write that seven books, viz., Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi were “correct” as recorded on OT 2.

Further communications were given to church members in Missouri: “In regard to the printing of the New Translation it cannot be done until we can attend to it ourselves, and this we will do as soon as the Lord permit[s].”³⁵

Old Testament and Bible revision finished

The church presidency, then consisting of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, wrote on July 2, 1833, “[W]e have finished the translating of the Scriptures.”³⁶ Out of 929 chapters in the Old Testament 436 chapters (46.9%) were listed as “correct.” Though Genesis had many corrections and additions, thirteen of its chapters were recorded as being correct on OT 2.

32 Smith to “Dear breth[ren] in Zion,” April 21, 1833, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:35, LDS archives.

33 “The Book of Mormon,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (July 1833):109, Independence, Missouri.

34 JS Revelations, 239; LDS D&C 93:53; RLDS D&C 90:12.

35 Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and Martin Harris to “Brethren,” June 25, 1833, LDS archives; copied into Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:48.

36 Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Frederick G. Williams to “Brethren,” July 2, 1833, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:51; OT 2, 119, has recorded “Finished on the 2d day of July 1833.”

Command to print

On August 2, 1833, the church presidency was instructed to dedicate a lot in Kirtland where a house would be built to print the translation of the scriptures.³⁷ Again the presidency wrote:

You will see by these revelations that we have to print the new translation here at Kirtland for which we will prepare as soon as possible [possible] . . . you are to print an Edition of the schriptures [scriptures] there at the same time we do here so that the two additions [editions] will be struck at the same time the one here and the other there.³⁸

The church presidency was not aware that on July 20, 1833 the *Evening and the Morning Star* press had been destroyed in Independence, Missouri. Oliver Cowdery brought this sad news to church leaders when he arrived at Kirtland on August 9.

Commandment to Publish New Translation

In an April 23, 1834 revelation Martin Harris, a member of the United Firm, was exhorted to “devote his moneys for the printing of my word as my servant Joseph [Smith, Jr.] shall direct.” Firm members were told “for this purpose have I commanded you to organize yourselves, even to print my word, the fulness of my scriptures” and the revelations given to Joseph Smith. They were instructed to obtain copyrights for the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and one for the “new translation of the scriptures.”³⁹

A letter from Joseph Smith was written on June 15, 1835 appealed for money to print the New Translation:

37 JS Revelations, 244; LDS D&C 94:10; RLDS D&C 91:3.

38 Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and Joseph Smith to “Beloved Brethren [Brethren],” Aug. 6, 1833, LDS archives.

39 JS Revelations, 256, 258; Compare LDS D&C 104:26, 58; RLDS D&C 101:4, 10. These instructions were obscured as printed in the 1835 D&C. The 1835 text has “Mahemson” [Martin Harris] to “devote his moneys for the proclaiming of my words” (1835 D&C 98:4).

We are now commencing to prepare and print the New Translation, together with all the revelations which God has been pleased to give us in these last days, and as we are in want of funds to go on with so great and glorious a work, brethren <we> want you should donate and loan us all the means or money you can that we may be enable[d] to accomplish the work as a great means towards the salvation of men.⁴⁰

Two years after Joseph Smith finished his NT revision and review of the manuscript in 1833 he commenced to study Hebrew and Greek. There is no evidence that his study of the Greek language led to changes in the NT 2. Warren Parrish recorded in Smith's journal:

At Evening, President [Oliver] Cowdery returned from New York, bringing with him a quantity of Hebrew books for the benefit of the school, he presented me with a Hebrew bible, lexicon & grammar, also a Greek Lexicon and Webster['s] English Lexicon.⁴¹

On Joseph Smith's thirtieth birthday, December 23, 1835, he was "stud[y]ing the greek Language."⁴²

At Kirtland, besides printing the periodical the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, the church published the *Northern Times*, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, *A Collection of Sacred Hymns* in 1836, and the 1837 (second edition) of the Book of Mormon.⁴³

When settled at Nauvoo, Illinois, instructions regarding

40 Smith to "Dear brethren in the Lord," June 15, 1835, LDS archives.

41 Joseph Smith Journal, 47, entry for Nov. 20, 1835, LDS archives, in Dean C. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Journal, 1832-1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 2:87. In a third person account recorded by Warren A. Cowdery part of the entry reads: "also a Greek & English lexicon." (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:144) This was probably a Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

42 Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:120.

43 Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church Volume One 1830-1847* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997 [1998]), 51-59, 66-68.

Smith's Bible revision were given on January 19, 1841 to the newly appointed second counselor in the church presidency William Law. He was told to support the poor and "publish the new translation of my holy word unto the inhabitants of the earth."⁴⁴

After Joseph Smith's death in June 1844 the marked Joseph Smith Bible and the dictated and revised manuscripts of the New Translation were retained by his widow Emma Smith in Nauvoo. The beginning of an index for the revision of Genesis was kept among church records taken to Salt Lake City by historian Willard Richards.

Bible Revision printed in 1867

In 1867, what became known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ), published in English (the only language edition) the revision by Joseph Smith. It was titled *The Holy Scriptures, Translated and Corrected by the Spirit of Revelation, by Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer*. This Bible for over one hundred and thirty-five years has been used in a variety of ways.

In both LDS and RLDS tradition this Bible has endeared itself to believers in the mission of Joseph Smith. Comparing the latest manuscript (NT 2) with a number of printings shows that the printed text does not always follow the wording of the manuscript. In this book I try to reproduce the text as close as possible to the way Joseph Smith intended to have it published at the time of his final written comments. Ten years later in September 1878 the RLDS church adopted a resolution affirming:

That this body, representing the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, does hereby authoritatively indorse [endorse] the Holy Scriptures, as revised, corrected and translated by the Spirit of revelation, by Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer, and as published by the church we represent.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ JS Revelations, 307; LDS D&C 124:89.

⁴⁵ *World Conference Resolutions 2002 Edition Community of Christ* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 2003), 16.

In October 1880 the LDS church accepted as canonical *The Pearl of Great Price* which included Joseph Smith's vision of Moses, together with the revisions and additions to Genesis 1:1-6:13 (KJV). For the New Testament, Matthew 23:39 and chapter 24 are the only textual revisions that have been canonized at present.⁴⁶ The *Pearl of Great Price* contains writings of Joseph Smith and was published posthumously as a church booklet in 1851, with subsequent revisions in 1878, 1902, 1921, and 1981.

Interpretive Additions in Gospels

In making corrections and additions there are places where Joseph Smith explains the text with the phrase “or in other words.” Philip Barlow, Associate Professor of Theological Studies at Hanover College, explains:

A third category is “interpretive additions,” often signaled by the phrase “or in other words,” which the Prophet [Joseph Smith] appended to a passage he wished to clarify. Thus, to Jesus’ counsel to turn one’s other cheek if smitten (Luke 6:29), Smith added “or, in other words, it is better to offer the other [cheek], than to revile again.” The interpretative phrase “or in other words” (often shortened to “in other words” or simply “or”) is common in Smith’s sermons as well as in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the revisions of the Bible.⁴⁷

Examples of such interpreted phrases are included in Joseph Smith’s revision of the gospels. What follows was used by Joseph to interpret or clarify a particular passage:

46 An undated broadside was published at Kirtland, Ohio, titled: “Extract from the new translation of the Bible, It being the 24th chapter of Matthew; but in order to show the connection we will commence with the last verse of the 23rd chapter, viz. [At end:] Published for the benefit of the Saints.” The broadside mostly follows a text close to NT 1. See Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography*, 60-61.

47 Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 51-52. For the Old Testament revision see Gen. 14:34, 36 (JST).

or whose place I am not able to fill (Matt. 3:11; John 1:27)
or the destruction of the wicked (Matt. 13:39, 40; 24:3, 14; Mark 13:4, 10)
or the messenger sent of heaven (Matt. 13:39)
or in other words John the Baptist and Moses (Mark 9:4)
or in other words it is better to offer the other [cheek] than to revile again (Luke 6:29)
or in other words is afraid to lay down their life for my sake (Luke 14:26)
or in other words whithersoever the saints are gathered (Luke 17:37)
or thither will the remainder be gathered together (Luke 17:37)
or in other words the Gentiles (Luke 23:31)

More than anything else the above listing shows Smith's involvement with the KJV revision process. One of the purposes in making the Bible revision was for Joseph Smith to clarify difficult English passages and make the gospel texts clearer for church members. This type of revision was similar to the revelations that he gave for church instruction.

Changes and how they relate to KJV and Greek NT Manuscripts

Matthew

Some interesting readings and omissions are included in the revision of Matthew. In Matthew 5:22 the KJV has "whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Joseph Smith's revision omits "without a cause." The wording here is the same as the Book of Mormon. Some early Greek manuscripts support the exclusion of the phrase. John Wesley, founder theologian of the Methodist faith, commentated on this passage:

Whosoever is angry with his brother—Some Copies add, Without a cause: But this is utterly foreign to the whole Scope and Tenor of our LORD's Discourse. If he had only forbidden, the being *angry without a Cause*, there was no

manner of need of that solemn Declaration, *I say unto you*; for the Scribes and Pharisees themselves said as much as this. Even they taught, Men ought not to be angry *without a Cause*. So that this *Righteousness* does not *exceed* theirs. But *Christ* teaches, That we ought not *for any cause* to be so *angry*, as to call any Man *Raca*, or *Fool*. We ought not for any Cause to be angry at the Person of the Sinner, but at his Sin only.⁴⁸

New Testament scholars consider the ending of the Lord's Prayer to be an early addition to the gospel of Matthew. The text reads, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matt. 6:13). That this was added is evident since the wording appears in various forms and is missing from the most reliable Greek manuscripts. The reading was retained by Joseph Smith in Matthew with after "and the glory, for ever" the addition of two words "and ever." Smith also rendered the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:4 like Matthew with the added words "for thine is the kingdom, and power, Amen."⁴⁹

Joseph Smith first retained the KJV wording of Matthew 13:30—"gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them."⁵⁰ During the review process a pinned note was made for the revision of Matthew 13:30: "gather ye together first the wheat into my barn, and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned."⁵¹ The review of this verse reflects the wording of the revelation given to Joseph Smith on December 6, 1832 which states: "ye shall first gather out the wheat from the among the tears [tares] and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo the tears [tares] are bound in bund[les], and the field remaineth to be burned."⁵² Two passages, Matthew 18:11 and 23:14, which are not found in early Greek manuscripts, were retained in the revision of Matthew. Joseph Smith also added to the text of Matthew 18:11.

48 John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1791), 1:29, emphasis retained; First American Edition. Brought to my attention by Ronald Huggins.

49 NT 2, f. 3, 72.

50 NT 1, 34. The same wording was copied onto NT 2, f. 1, 25.

51 NT 2, f. 1, 25, pinned note to manuscript page.

52 JS Revelations, 221; LDS D&C 86:7; RLDS D&C 84:2.

Mark

Mark 9:44 and 46 are not part of the earliest Greek manuscripts. Joseph Smith omitted the reading of verse 46 while he retained verse 44. When Mark 13 was revised, verses 9, 11-12, 33-36 were omitted. The reason for these important omissions is because Smith substituted his previous revision of Matthew chapter 24 for Mark's text. Joseph Smith either presumed that Matthew preempted the writing of Mark or just wanted to use his prior revision of Matthew for the new text of Mark. This view is confirmed in the publication of the JST manuscripts:

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.⁵⁵

Luke

Besides short phrases or sentence additions to the gospels, large blocks of text of over fifty words each also appear in various places. These long texts appear to represent material that Joseph Smith believed were in the gospels anciently. For example, he added the following text to Luke 3:13:

For it is well known unto you, Theophelus,⁵⁶ that after the manner of the Jews, and according to the custom of their law, in receiving money in the treasury, that out of the abundince [abundance] which was received was appointed unto the poor, every man his portion; and after this manner

⁵⁵ 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), 303-304.

⁵⁶ The name was spelled "Theophilus" in Luke 1:3 (KJV).

did the publicans also, wherefore John said unto them, exact no more than that which is appointed you.⁵⁷

This wording gives the impression that Joseph Smith is supplying a missing part to Luke. The wording shows that Smith is trying to present a better text rather than a commentary in this addition to Luke. The additional wording though represented to be in the text is not in Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Sinaticus (N), or papyrus fragment P4 (ca. 200), nor in any other Greek manuscript. A longer insertion in Luke 3:4 is also an addition not paralleled by Greek manuscripts.⁵⁶

John

The passage of John 7:53-8:11 about the woman taken in adultery was retained by Joseph Smith. Early Greek manuscripts do not include these verses. The reading in John 20:17 “Touch me not” was rendered “hold me not.” Current versions of the New Testament read, “Do not hold on to me.”⁵⁷

A good example of harmonization appears from the reading in John 20:12, “And seeth two angels in white.” The gospel accounts of an angel, a man, two men or two angels at the tomb was revised in an interesting way. The KJV text of John 20:12 provided an influence for the revisions of Matt. 28:2; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:2 and John 20:1.

KJV:

the angel (Matt. 28:2)
a young man (Mark 16:5)
two men (Luke 24:4)

Revision:

two angels
two angels
moved to revision of Luke
24:2 - two angels

⁵⁷ NT 2, f. 3, 52. Robert J. Matthews wrote concerning this addition: “By inference, at least, the reader is led to believe that he is expected to regard this information as a restoration of what Luke had originally written” (“A Plainer Translation” *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975], 239).

56 See Matt. 3:3 and Mark 1:2.

57 See the New Revised Standard Version and the New International Version.

| <u>KJV:</u> | <u>Revision:</u> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| John 20:1 | two angels (addition) |
| two angels (John 20:12) | two angels (remained the same) |

Readings in the Gospels

It is of interest that some revisions, from “James the less” to “James the younger” (revision of Mark 15:40), are the same as edited in Alexander Campbell’s *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ* published in 1826.⁵⁸

Campbell’s New Testament also titled his gospels “The Testimony of . . .” This shows that others made similar changes in wording like Joseph Smith did. The changes involved correcting archaic English wording and at times omitting words printed in italics. These other revisions still retain wording similar to the KJV. They do not contain the additional words that Smith included.

The four gospels have a pattern like the revision of the Old Testament, of most of the text remaining the same as the KJV. Kurt and Barbara Aland, editors of the *Greek New Testament*, reported that they compared six printed editions of the Greek text with each other. Apart from the spelling of names and “Verses in which any one of the seven editions differs by a single word are not counted,” many verses were found to be in general agreement with each other. Forty-five percent or more of the text is the same for each gospel. There is a difference of ten verses in the count of John. The following is their tabulation of verses that are variant-free:⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Other readings like Smith’s use of “imposture” in Matt. 27:64 and “empire” in Luke 2:1 use the same words as those employed in Campbell’s 1826 publication.

⁵⁹ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*. Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes.(Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 29.

| Gospels | Total Number of Verses | Variant-Free Verses Total | Percentage |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Matthew | 1071 | 642 | 59.9 |
| Mark | 678 | 306 | 45.1 |
| Luke | 1151 | 658 | 57.2 |
| John | 869 | 450 | 51.8 |

This is an average of 53.5 percent of the gospels being variant-free.

Comparing Joseph Smith's revision with the KJV shows that over thirty-nine percent of the verses in the gospels that were retained are variant-free:

| Gospels | Total Number of Verses | Verses with No Revisions | Verses Omitted | Verses with Minor Revisions | Total Percentage close to KJV |
|---------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Matthew | 1071 | 424 (39.6%) | | 479 (44.7%) | 84.3% |
| Mark | 678 | 262 (39.5%) | 8 | 312 (46%) | 85.5% |
| Luke | 1151 | 463 (40.2%) | 1 | 598 (51.9%) | 92.1% |
| John | 879 | 646 (73.4%) | | 183 (20.8%) | 94.2% |

Over forty-four percent of the revisions made to KJV verses have minor changes in upgrading the English or rearrangement of words in each verse. This comparison indicates that over eighty-four percent of the verses are identical or nearly identical to the KJV. This is the strongest evidence that the vast majority of corrections in the gospels are of little consequence.

The next chart shows the number of additions made by Joseph Smith to verses in the KJV gospels. Included are those additions of four or more words in a row (termed major additions) that are indicated in the text in bold face type.

| Gospels | Total Number of Verses | Verses with Minor Revisions | Verses Omitted | Verses with Major Additions | Total Percentage Major Additions |
|---------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Matthew | 1071 | 479 | | 168 | 15.6% |
| Mark | 678 | 312 | 8 | 96 | 14% |
| Luke | 1151 | 598 | 1 | 89 | 7.7% |
| John | 879 | 183 | | 50 | 5.6% |

While the synoptic gospels have more changes than John, it will be noticed that the number of verses affected decreased as the revision progressed. The percentage of verses in Luke and John dropped over six percent. This chart indicates the small percentage of additions to the text. The following listing includes the major additions of words to KJV verses of fifty words or more:

Over 50 words

Matt. 2:23

Matt. 3:7

Matt. 5:2

Matt. 6:24

Matt. 7:4

Matt. 9:15

Matt. 27:37

Matt. 27:44

Mark 8:38

Mark 9:45

Luke 3:13

Luke 12:9

Luke 14:33

Over 100 words

Matt. 7:8

Matt. 21:46

Mark 13:7

Mark 13:32

Luke 3:4

Luke 12:38

Luke 16:17

Luke 17:37

Over 200 words

Mark 13:37

Using a Greek-English interlinear translation of the Greek New Testament I have compared the above additions with the readings in Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Sinaticus (N), and early papyri fragments. The Greek text shows no evidence that the added wording form a part of the manuscripts of the gospels. Passages that have added wording in blocks of text give the impression that they are recovered words from the lost original. These textual additions include words ascribed to Jesus.

An important revelation to Joseph Smith on July 20, 1831 included the early teaching of the gathering of the saints (church members) to the Independence, Missouri area. Especially significant is the interpretive phrase “or in other words whithersoever the saints are gathered.” This interpretation follows Joseph Smith’s teaching of the gathering which was a concept in

the young church.⁶⁰ A portion of the revision of Luke 17:37 read (bold words are added to KJV text):

And they answered, and said unto him, Where, Lord, **shall they be taken?** And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body **is gathered; or, in other words, whithersoever the saints are gathered,** thither will the eagles be gathered together; **or, thither will the remainder be gathered together.** This he spake signifying the gathering of his saints⁶¹

The above interpretation shows Joseph Smith's concern for having the saints gather together in Jackson County as a group after his trip from the state of Missouri. Since this rendering reflects Smith's concept of a gathered church it is not surprising that it is not to be found in any Greek manuscript.

While some of the additional texts appear to be recovering what Jesus said, there are other places which give evidence of Joseph Smith's interpretive analysis such as when he used his earlier revision of Matthew 24 for the revision of Mark chapter 13.

Identity of Elias

The identify of "Elias" must have been of some concern to Joseph Smith. The proper name of Elijah is used in the Old Testament and in the Greek New Testament the name appears as Elias. They are the same person. The New Testament KJV records that John the Baptist was to go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah].⁶² Jesus explained that, for those who understood, John the Baptist was the Elijah they were waiting for.⁶³ John the Baptist was understood by Christ's disciples as the

⁶⁰ See JS Revelations, 142; LDS and RLDS 57:1. Independence, Jackson County, Missouri was the center place for the gathering and where the city of Zion (New Jerusalem) would be built.

⁶¹ NT 2, f. 3, 88-89.

⁶² Luke 1:17.

⁶³ Matt. 11:14. This verse was revised in 1831 by Joseph Smith to have Jesus say that he was Elias.

Elias (Elijah) who would "restore all things."⁶⁴

Joseph Smith dictated his revision of Matthew 17 in the spring of 1831. It tells about Jesus being transfigured on a high mountain before Peter, James, and John. While Smith had the text refer to John the Baptist, he also had the name Elias used for "another which should come and restore all things." His scribe Sidney Rigdon wrote (bold are added words to the KJV):

and his disciples asked him [Jesus] saying why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come[?] and Jesus answered and said unto them Elias truely [truly] shall first come and restore all things **as the prophets have written and again** I say unto you that Elias is come allready and they knew him not **and** have done unto him <whatsoever they> listed likewise shall also the son of man suffer of them

but I say unto you who is Elias[?] behold this is Elias who I send to prepare the way before me Then the Disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist **and also of another which should come and restore all things as they were written by the prophets**⁶⁵

In August 1831 Joseph Smith was told about the "day of transfiguration shall come when the earth shall be transfigured even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount of which account the fulness ye have not yet received."⁶⁶ When Smith revised Mark in the fall of 1831 concerning the transfiguration, Smith interpreted the Elias who appeared before the four men not as the prophet Elijah but as John the Baptist. The King James Version reads, "And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus."⁶⁷ But Smith's revision, written by Sidney Rigdon, reads, "And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses, or in other words, John the

⁶⁴ Compare Matt. 17:11-13; Mark 9:11-13.

⁶⁵ Revision of Matt. 17:11-13; NT 1, 42. See NT 2, f. 1, 32 for additional revision to this passage.

⁶⁶ JS Revelations, 156; LDS D&C 63:20-21; RLDS D&C 63:6 (Aug. [30-31], 1831).

⁶⁷ Mark 9:4; compare Matt. 17:3 and Luke 9:30.

baptist and Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.⁶⁸ The words "or in other words" help us to understand this is commentary by Smith. The mention of Moses and Elias in Matthew means Moses and Elijah, representative of the law and the prophets.⁶⁹

When Joseph Smith first revised Matthew 11 in 1831, the manuscript had Jesus saying: "and if ye will receive me I am Elias which was for to come."⁷⁰ These words were afterwards copied onto NT 2. A number of changes were made to this manuscript and this reading was revised in December 1832 or January 1833 with the words "me I am Elias" being crossed through and the passage now applying to John the Baptist.⁷¹ Robert J. Matthews who has examined the manuscript wrote:

It is evident that the Prophet [Joseph Smith] was working with an idea that he developed and then discarded. He compared and contrasted John [the Baptist] with Jesus and then decided to speak only of John. He identified Jesus as Elias and then identified John as Elias. It is, however, interesting to note that the doctrinal ideas and identifications here introduced and then discarded were reintroduced in Matthew 17:9-14 on a partial basis and then more fully in John 1.⁷²

John chapter 1 describes John the Baptist being questioned. Sidney Rigdon originally wrote in January or February 1832 the following:

and he [John the Baptist] confessed and denied [denied] not but confessed that I am not the christ and they asked <him> what then art thou Elias[?] and he saith I am not art thou that prophet[?] and he answered no ... and they asked him and said unto him why baptisest thou then if thou be not the christ nor Elias neither that prophet[?] John answered ... he it is *of whom I bear record he is that*

⁶⁸ NT 2, f. 2, 24; revision of Mark 9:3.

⁶⁹ Compare with modern translations of Mark 9:4.

⁷⁰ NT 1, 28; revision of Matt. 11:14.

⁷¹ NT 2, f. 1, 21.

⁷² Matthews, *A Plainer Translation*, 217.

*Prophet, even Elias*⁷³

This passage was further revised in December 1832 or January 1833 on a note pinned to the manuscript as follows:

And he [John the Baptist] confessed, and denied [denied] not *that he was Elias*; but confessed, *saying*; I am not the christ. And they asked him, *saying*; *How then art thou Elias?* And he sai<d>; I am not *that Elias who was to restore all things*. *And they asked him, saying*; Art thou that Prophet? And he answered; No ... And they asked him, and said unto him; why baptisest thou then, if thou be not *the christ*, nor *Elias who was to restore all things*, neither that prophet?⁷⁴

Rather than a straightforward revision of the gospels we find many layers of working on a question that seemed to be of importance to Joseph Smith at the time.

Comparison with Various Greek Manuscripts and Papyri

In studying the four gospels I have placed emphasis first on a complete text for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (N) have been used as the base text. Earlier papyri fragments have also been utilized in comparing the additions to the KJV. The reason for this is that having one or more early manuscript helps establish a text at a certain point in time. After examining Greek manuscripts ranging from ca. 175 to 375 and considering the readings in Joseph Smith's revision of the gospels, it appears that the additions to KJV text (whether short phrases, sentences, or blocks of material) include no significant readings contained in these Greek manuscripts.

Passages retained

Passages that are omitted in Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex

⁷³ NT 2, f. 4, 106, emphasis added. Compare John 1:20-21, 25-27.

⁷⁴ NT 2, f. 4, 106, emphasis of additional revision of John 1:20-21, 25.

Sinaiticus (N), and early papyri show that Joseph Smith is correcting an English text and not a Greek text: For example, two recognized textual additions to New Testament manuscripts are the passages in Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. These long passages were retained by Joseph Smith in his KJV revision. At the end of John 8:11 Smith dictated the additional wording, “and the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name.”⁷⁵ Philip W. Comfort, Professor of Greek and New Testament at Trinity Episcopal Seminary, and senior editor of Bible Reference at Tyndale House Publishers, has written concerning the pericope of the woman caught in adultery printed in the KJV:

The pericope about the adulteress woman (John 7:53-8:11) is not included in any of the earliest MSS (second-fourth century), including the two earliest, P66 and P75 . . . When this story is inserted in later MSS, it appears in different places: after John 7:52, after Luke 21:38, at the end of John; and when it does appear it is often marked off by asterisks or obeli to signal its probable spuriousness. The story is part of an oral tradition that was included in the Syriac Peshitta, circulated in the Western church, eventually finding its way into the Latin Vulgate, and from there into later Greek MSS, the like of which were used in formulating the Textus Receptus (Metzger).

The external evidence against the Johannine authorship of the periscope about the adulteress is overwhelming. The internal evidence against Johannine authorship is also impressive. . . . But there it stands—an obstacle to reading the true narrative of John’s Gospel. Even worse, its presence in the text misrepresents the testimony of the earliest MSS, especially the papyri.⁷⁶

Another such example of an addition is Mark 16:9-20. This passage was probably added to Mark during the second century.

⁷⁵ NT 2, f. 4, 116.

⁷⁶ Philip Wesley Comfort, *Early Manuscripts & Modern Translations of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 115-16. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 2nd ed., 1994), 187-89.

Codex Sinaiticus (N) and Codex Vaticanus (B), both written in the fourth century, do not contain this addition. Most New Testament scholars, after examining early manuscripts that contain Mark 16, find that the early writings of the church fathers support the view that verses 9-20 were originally not part of Mark. George Eldon Ladd, Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote concerning the ending of Mark:

The “long ending,” consisting of verses 9-20 came into the text of the AV [King James Authorized Version] because it appears in the great majority of the minuscules and in most of the later uncials, and was therefore a part of the prevailing text known in the seventeenth century. It can be traced back to a very early date, for it appears in a Syriac harmony of the Gospels made in the second century by Tatian. Its earliest appearance in the Greek sources is from the fifth century. . . . the long ending is written in a non-Markan style. These facts, together with other considerations, have led most modern scholars to the conclusion that the long ending which appears in the AV is not authentic, but was produced by a copyist at an early date to smooth up the abrupt ending at 16:8.⁷⁷

Joseph Smith’s additions to the Gospels

The results of the foregoing comparisons support the position that the textual variants added by Joseph Smith were independent of the Greek text. There is no manuscript evidence to support the additional words in the new translation of the gospels. This confirms the position that the word “translation” is not the proper term to designate what occurred during the dictation of the

⁷⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 72, 74. See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Third, enlarged ed., 1992), 226-29. For the use of Mark 16:9-20 in other Restoration scriptures see 1830 BOM, 478, 537, 547; LDS 3 Nephi 11:33-34/RLDS 9:34-35; Mormon 9:22-24/RLDS 4:86-87; and Ether 4:18/RLDS 1:115. A part of the Mark 16 was also incorporated in a revelation of September 1832 (JS Revelations, 214-15; LDS D&C 84:62-74; RLDS D&C 83:10-12). See Appendix A under Mark 16:15-18.

text by Smith based upon his textual changes. Also the early papyri fragments of the four gospels date close to the original sources. Fourth-century manuscripts contain readings similar to those of earlier texts.

Kornelis (Kees) Compier, currently European Mission Center Financial Officer, Community of Christ, in the conclusion to his study of the Gospel of Mark wrote:

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 the use of newer and better translations of the Bible.⁷⁸

Joseph Smith's "translation" for the most part does not reflect the early gospel text. Except for rearranged words in verses, omitting italic words, changing old spellings, and modernizing KJV English, the additions were a revelatory message relating to corrections of the KJV biblical text. Passages in some cases were harmonized with similar verses in one of the other gospels. The omission of verses is one of the most serious problems. The added corrections sought to give insight to the words and actions of Jesus.

Does the Joseph Smith revision restore the words and actions of Jesus? Do the corrections with the additional insights bring us closer to the historical Jesus? Or do the corrections made by Joseph Smith give us an understanding of his theological interpretations at a critical stage in the early life of the church? Questions like these are left for individuals to ponder as they read the gospels in the light that Smith left them when he completed his version of the New Testament in 1833.

⁷⁸ "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.