A Tight Narrative

Ironclad Obedience

The most consistent narrative to the gospel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the belief in something between a tight translation (Joseph saw specific words written out in English and read them off to the scribe — the accuracy of the resulting text depending on the carefulness of Joseph and his scribe.) and an iron clad translation. (The Lord does not allow for any dictation to scribe errors) This should be uncontroversial. I list my reasons below.

"not of men nor of man, but of me"

Was the Book of Mormon translated by Joseph Smith's own understanding?

> "Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding."

> D&C 1[1]

There is no evidence that this applies to the Book of Mormon as the text explicitly says "these commandments"[2]. The unknown neologisms from the Book of Mormon like Curelom and Cumom show that Joseph Smith did not translate the text according to his understanding.

"not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men"

The title page is said to be the final leaf of the Book of Mormon. Moroni [3] spends the page describing the abridgements recorded and notes near the end:

> "And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men"

This phrase should be seen as applying to the things written by the hand of Moroni, or possibly writers of the Books of Mormon generally. There would be no indication that at the end of his writing, Moroni would say that future translations of his work would be potentially wrong. If there are faults, this would have come from the men that wrote it. If the translation was done through the will, gift, and power of God, men could not frustrate it.

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[1]Doctrine and Covenants 1

[2]Book of Commandments, 1833 Also, it is important to know that at the time, the Doctrine and Covenants were called the Book of Commandments

[3]probably

A Tight Testimony:

Like Unto a Dish

Witness testimony of the translation of the Book of Mormon is generally unified in their agreement of something between a tight and iron-clad translation. If all of these witness testimonies are incorrect, this may imply that critics should be able to dismiss claims about the translation process in general.

The Hat and Testimony [4]

- **According to Emma Smith**: "When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made a mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling" This quote has been taught by the Church and the prophet.[5] [6]

- **According to Martin Harris**: By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, "Written," and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used. [7]

- **According to Joseph Knight**: Now the way he translated was he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkned his Eyes then he would take a sentance and it would apper in Brite Roman Letters then he would tell the writer and he would write it then that would go away the next sentance would Come and so on But if it was not spelt rite it would not go away till it was rite so we see it was marvelous. [8] [9]

- **According to David Whitmer**: "Joseph Smith put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was

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[4] See here for more

[5] Come Follow Me, Doctrine and Covenants 6–9

[6] A Treasured Testament, Russell Nelson

[7] Francis W. Kirkham, "The Manner of Translating the Book of Mormon," Improvement Era 42. 10 (October 1939) quoting Deseret Evening News, September 5, 1870, which reports in part an address delivered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

[8] Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History

[9] Joseph Smith Papers, The Book of Mormon and the Growth of Printing in America

translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man." This quote has been repeated by the Church, and prophets of the Church, multiple times. [10] [11] [12] [13]

- **Another quote by Whitmer is**: "the words would appear, and if he failed to spell the word right, it would stay till it was spelled right, then pass away; another come, and so on" [14]

- **Another quote by Whitmer is**: Sometimes Joseph could not pronounce the words correctly, having had but little education; and if by any means a mistake was made in the copy, the luminous writing would remain until it was corrected. It sometimes took Oliver several trials to get the right letters to spell correctly some of the more difficult words, but when he had written them correctly, the characters and the interpretation would disappear and the interpretation would disappear, and be replaced by other characters and their interpretation. [15]

Proposed textual analysis from the original manuscript

- Elder Nash explains that "Joseph, a poor speller, corrected the spelling of the name Coriantumr (see Helaman 1:15) by his primary scribe, Oliver Cowdery. The first time Joseph dictated the name to Oliver, Oliver wrote Coriantummer. This was reasonable because no English words end in "mr." However, Joseph—who was a weak enough speller to accept the spelling the Lord gave to him—corrected the spelling during the translation." [16]

- Ash, a Deseret News author and apologist explains work from "Dr. Royal Skousen, the foremost expert on the original Book of Mormon manuscript." He explains that the "original grammar of the 1830 Book of Mormon… provides some evidence for 'tight control.'" [17] Dr. Skousen states himself, "As I have studied the original text and the evidence of how it was transmitted, it's become very clear to me that this text was revealed to Joseph Smith word for word and that he could actually see the spelled-out English words." [18]

- According to Book of Mormon Central: [19]

  President Russell M. Nelson once observed, "The Book of Mormon is rich with Hebraisms—traditions, symbolisms, idioms, and literary forms." In fact, the Book of Mormon has virtually all the same features that have convinced scholars that the Apocalypse of Abraham is a translation of an ancient Semitic text. As such,

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[10] A Treasured Testament, Russell Nelson
[11] "By the Gift and Power of God", Richard Lloyd Anderson
[12] The Translation of the Book of Mormon, A Marvel and a Wonder
[13] Church Newsroom, Priesthood Restoration Site Dedication Transcript
[14] BYU Studies, Translating Book of Mormon Evidence, Original Manuscript, see footnote 10
[15] BYU Studies, Translating Book of Mormon Evidence, Original Manuscript, see footnote 11
[16] Joseph Smith, Strength out of Weakness
[17] Deseret, The tight control theory in the Book of Mormon
[18] FairLDS: Restoring the original text of the Book of Mormon
[19] Book of Mormon Central, How Does the Book of Mormon Compare to Other Ancient Texts?

these features reasonably support the Book of Mormon's claims to be an authentic, ancient text translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith from an ancient Near Eastern language.

If Joseph Smith were only rendering the text based off of his own understanding as some apologists have stated, one would have to conclude that any notion of Hebraisms found within the Book of Mormon is from Joseph's own understanding- not an easy position to defend.