

It can be seen that if Joseph was expected to translate the text from the original text or document he would have to do it based on his education and knowledge. This type of intellectual translation would have to move word for word from text to translation. This he could not do as he was not trained in ancient languages. It was **only** by the gift and power of God that he could give us translations of the Book of Mormon, Moses, Abraham, Bible and The Parchment of John. A translation done by the gift and power of God would not even require the translator to look at the text, for it would do no good other than verify the reality of the record. In such cases the text often becomes the catalyst for translated revelation. (More on that below)

There is a precedent for this style of spiritual translation. Bible scholars of all faiths accept the premise that Moses provided the first book of the Pentateuch, Genesis, thousands of years after the fact by that same "gift and power of God". From the creation, to Joseph being sold into Egypt, Moses recorded the events found in the book of Genesis by the same power of inspiration that Joseph Smith received from God to translate Moses, Abraham, the Book of Mormon, the parchment hid up by John as well as the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

The Inspired Version of the Bible

Almost sixty percent (60%) of the Doctrine and Covenants was received during the Kirtland Period. It was in Hiram and Kirtland that Joseph was commanded to continue the translation of the Bible. This translation is key to the restoration of the priesthood and temporal organization of the church. During this time, the questions that formed in Joseph's mind about the church organization and Gospel came from the work of the translation of the Bible. A loving God awaits the personal preparation of even the prophets before the heavens are opened. The Lord, awaiting Joseph's personal preparation, counseled and encouraged Joseph multiple times to continue and to finish his work on translating the Bible. Always, He waited for Joseph to ask the question before opening the heavens. In section forty-five of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explains that much of the restoration is awaiting his questions—questions that cannot be formulated until he is working on the translation of the Bible.

60 And now, behold, I say unto you, *it shall not be given unto you to know any further concerning this chapter, until the New Testament be translated, and in it all these things shall be made known;*

61 Wherefore I give unto you that ye may now translate it, *that ye may be prepared for the things to come.*

62 For verily I say unto you, *that great things await you;*

Many of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants are a direct result of the 'inspired version' of the Bible. The questions that arose in

Joseph's mind while doing the Biblical translation led the prophet to seek for answers in supplication to God, which led to some of the most important revelations in this dispensation.

The inspired version of Genesis led to a “*translation*” of the Book of Moses. The Gold Plates became the catalyst for the “*translation*” of the Book of Mormon. The inspired version of the Book of John led to the “*translation*” of the revelation of John on the Parchment. Likewise, the Egyptian Papyri served as a catalyst for the “*translation*” of the Book of Abraham and the Book of Joseph.

Speaking of translating ancient records that have ‘been hid up,’ the Lord informs Oliver Cowdery about the preparation of faith that must take place to *translate* by the gift and power of God; or the ‘manifestation of my Spirit.’

Verse eleven is speaking of records that existed and were hid up, but which they did not physically have.

When Joseph acquired the mummies and papyrus from Michael Chandler, he focused on those ancient prophets that were in Egypt: Abraham, Joseph who was sold in Egypt, and Moses. All three were prophets who no doubt kept records, as all righteous patriarchs and prophets have done. Like the Gold Plates, the papyrus becomes that catalyst which leads to the revelation of the Book of Abraham. It did not have to be the actual ancient record for this to be possible. This is the same way that Moses was able to write the book of Genesis and record the words of the patriarchs, for he also translated by the gift and power of God. Joseph Smith did not have the learning or skill to translate ancient languages, especially *Hieroglyphics*; therefore, the *translations* had to come through him by the gift and power of God.

The catalyst: the question (asked in faith) and the ability to focus the mind (with a sincere heart and real intent) are the key elements preparatory for revelation. When a translation comes by revelation, there is no need to physically *use* the "catalyst." Joseph did not need to look at the Gold Plates to translate them. That's why Emma could say that when Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon at their table—Martin Harris on one side, Joseph on the other—the plates sat wrapped in a napkin sitting on the center of the table, while Joseph peered at a seer stone (a way to focus) placed in his Hat (a way to block out the world). There are numerous accounts of Joseph translating the record this way, and the remarkable thing is that when he stopped or finished and began again the next day, or the next week or month, he did not ask to see where he left off previously or request the scribe to read the last line of the manuscript so he would know where to begin. He did not need to do that. He would begin with the next word because it was a translation by revelation, not intellectual abilities.

The fact that Joseph did not ask to be reminded of the last thing that he had translated after an extended period of time is a sure indication that the Book of Mormon was not a fictional fabrication nor intellectual translation from Joseph himself, but rather, God's translation of this

ancient record. He could not have done it in any other way. The "translation" is a revelation. Joseph claims over and over that it was accomplished by the gift and power of God. The Book of Mormon, like the Book of Abraham, is a revelatory translation, and as such, Joseph did not have to physically touch or view the plates or papyri (the physical catalysts) to complete the translation.

The papyri Joseph acquired served as the catalyst that prompted Joseph to begin to ask the questions about who was in Egypt. These questions led to the revelation that gave us the translation of the Book of Abraham and the Book of Joseph (ancient records that existed at one time). When the fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyrus were recovered from the New York Metropolitan Museum in 1967, many Latter-day proponents boasted that, 'finally, the anti-Mormons will now know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet because the papyrus was found,' in the mistaken assumption that the original Book of Abraham manuscript was found. They were wrong. Again, it was the papyri itself, not the text on the papyrus, that acted as the catalyst that led to the revelation. Without that catalyst, there would be no revelation. Therefore, the scholastic translations should not and will not be the same as the revelatory translations. It had to be revelatory, because Joseph could not have done it any other way.

The Seer Stone

When Joseph received the plates he also received the *Urim & Thummim* to help him learn how to focus his mind for the revelatory process and translation. They were essentially tools to help him learn how to focus and receive revelation. When the *Urim & Thummim* were no longer available after the loss of the 116 pages, he was able to continue the translation by using a similar translucent stone. Placing a seer stone in his hat facilitated the revelatory translation by helping him focus his mind. As Joseph became exercised in receiving revelation, the seer stone was no longer used. This is how personal prayer works too. When we pray we try to focus our minds on the catalysts of the day. The catalysts could be our flocks, our herds, or families. We may not block out the world by placing our face in a hat,

but we close our eyes, or retire to a bedroom, closet, or even a grove of trees where we can be alone and away from distractions. The prayerful individual will try to block out the world to focus on the issues (the catalysts) and problems in order for the Spirit to give us them the inspiration or revelation needed. It is the same process.

The Three Facsimiles in the Book of Abraham not only belong there, but they are in the proper order and place in the printed text. Abraham was trying to explain why and how he received the ‘blessings of the fathers’ by his using the Egyptian records and religion as “representations” (Abraham 1:12). Abraham himself explains that the facsimiles are “representations”, not the text or a translation. In Egypt, the ‘representations’ refer to the same aspects of Christ’s life as in the myth of Osiris and the religion of Egypt. Osiris the God Son is slain and sacrificed by an evil brother and then ascends into the world of the Gods and becomes a God as a resurrected being. He then becomes the God and power of exaltation, with whom all Pharaohs identified themselves in their quest for, and claim to, the Divine son-ship of deity and their eventual enthronement in the heavens as a God.

The Death of the God



The Resurrection and Ascension



The Enthronement



Joseph Smith provided this ancient record through inspiration using the papyrus that was bought from Michael Chandler as the catalyst. This revelatory record led to the instruction and ordinances that comprise the endowment in the Latter-day Temples. As discussed above, the papyri, like the plates, acted as a catalyst and became an integral part of the ‘gift and power of God,’ since they initiated the *revelatory process of the translation* of an ancient text of Abraham. Since the time of Joseph Smith there have been other texts discovered that are attributed to Abraham that verify the translated information and concepts found in the Joseph Smith Abraham.

Discovered and translated after the death of Joseph Smith, two texts are found in Volume One of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth. One being the “Testament of Abraham” (considered an Egyptian text in origin) and the other being the “Apocalypse of Abraham.” Each of these texts, unavailable to Joseph Smith, have many of the same concepts: the creation, Abraham seeking further light and knowledge from God, the blessings of the Fathers, and angels taking him away, as depicted in the Facsimile 1 explanation. The Apocalypse of Abraham also contains a discussion of the spirits before the world was created and how some were more prepared to become the leaders on earth after the creation of the earth. In 1975 Janet H. Johnson translated and published a newly discovered Greco Egyptian vignette depicting an individual on a lion couch identified in the text to be Abraham.¹¹



What all this means to latter-day saints is this: The actual age and content of the papyri that Joseph Smith acquired does not matter. Again, the papyri became the catalyst for the revelation that became the Book of Abraham. Because there existed an ancient text of

Abraham, the Book of Abraham could be translated by revelatory (not intellectual) means.

The few fragments of papyri that the church has would easily fit on the top of an ordinary desk top. Joseph recorded that the papyri he acquired from Michael Chandler "covered the floor of the parlor of the Mansion House," indicating that today the church may only have about a tenth of what was originally in the possession of Joseph Smith. The fact remains, Joseph could not translate ancient Egyptian by intellectual means; it could only be done by the Gift and Power of God and was therefore revelatory in nature, as was the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses, the Inspired Version of the Bible and the parchment hid up by John.

Many will use Facsimile #2 as a point of contention, declaring that the translation by Egyptologists do not agree with the explanation provided by Joseph Smith. According to Hugh Nibley, when Klaus Behr, an Egyptologist, looked at Facsimile # 2, he stated, as other Egyptian scholars have: "I can tell you what it says, but I cannot tell you what it means." Joseph did not call the facsimiles translations; he called them "*explanations*." In other words, Joseph is stating within the text, "I can tell you what it means—but not what it says." Translating hieroglyphs is easy work compared to revelation, while explaining the meanings of the Facsimiles and Egyptian traditions is a more difficult task. Joseph is not providing a *translation* but an *explanation*, as stated at the head of each Facsimile. Within the text, Abraham calls them "*representations*", which means they are not meant to be used as a translation; but a symbol to convey meaning. Although, when Facsimile # 2 is translated, it has much to do with the text and message of Abraham. This facsimile is an ordinance of resurrection and ascension through the heavens as a 'justified' or redeemed person that becomes an Osiris or an exalted Son of God in the temple of God. It is stated in the hieroglyphics of this facsimile that the person has become "so exalted and so glorious...a mighty God in the first Temple of God." This was the goal and blessing that Abraham sought for as described in his record.

Those that seek to discredit the church and Joseph Smith because of the Book of Abraham do not understand the revelatory process. This record of Abraham, like the Book of Mormon, becomes a testament of its own reality. Joseph Smith could not create either book of his own accord or intellectual knowledge. The prophet never claimed an ability to translate intellectually, but recognized that it was the “gift and power of God” that gave him the ability to produce this scripture. The test of a classic is internal. Inspiration is revealed in the fruit, rather than living in the intellect. Despite his lack of education, Joseph became an instrument in the hands of God to begin a process that led to a spiritual and scriptural restoration of the church and gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul talks of the men that are used by God to fulfill His will:

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: (1 Corinthians 1:26-28)

The test of truth is within the text, not in Joseph Smith and his abilities or lack thereof. For “all things are possible with God.”