

“AS FAR AS IT IS TRANSLATED CORRECTLY?”

AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS 1 AND 2 OF *INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS*

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INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

Dave approached me on a warm early summer evening while I was passing out Christian information in Salt Lake City.

“Do you believe the Bible with its many problems?” he asked as we stood across from each other on the public sidewalk.

He didn’t give me a chance to answer before he continued.

“Our church has produced a document called the Articles of Faith. The eighth article states, ‘We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.’ While the Bible is part of our scripture, we are aware that it cannot be fully trusted.”



INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

Article 8 in the Pearl of Great Price:

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God
as far as it is translated correctly.”



INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

Before we could continue, I needed to distinguish the difference between the meanings of translation and transmission.

“In your mind, what does ‘translation’ mean?” I asked.

“It’s taking words from one language and putting them into another, like from Spanish into English,” he said.

“Exactly,” I responded. “If that is what is meant, I would agree that a bad translation of the Bible is possible.”

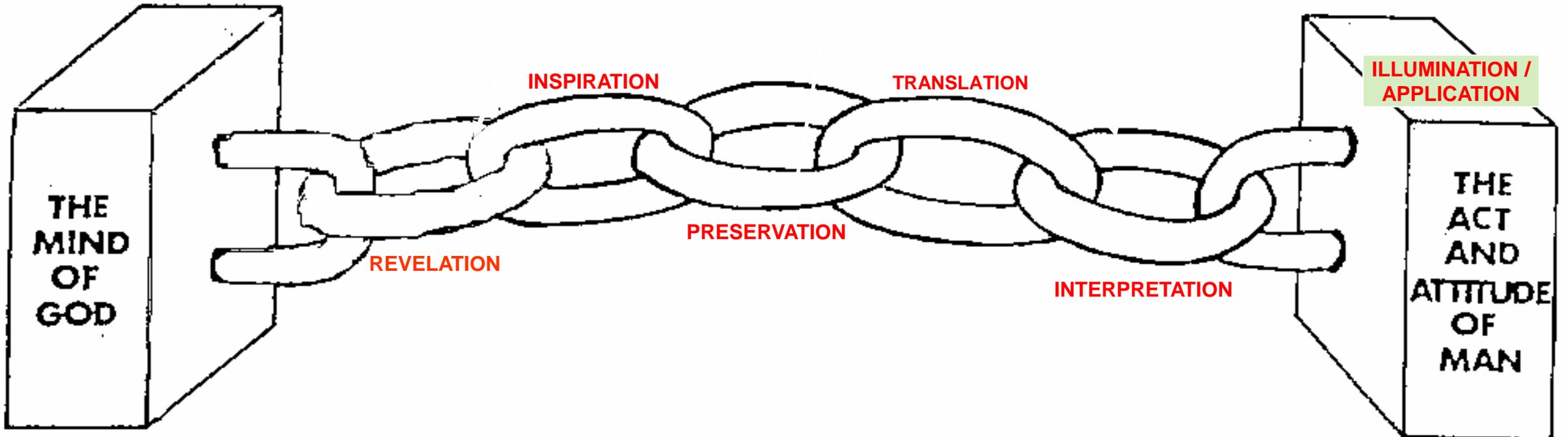


THE REAL PROBLEM

Does Article 8 describe a translation problem?

Not if “translation” means taking words from one language and moving them to another

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE



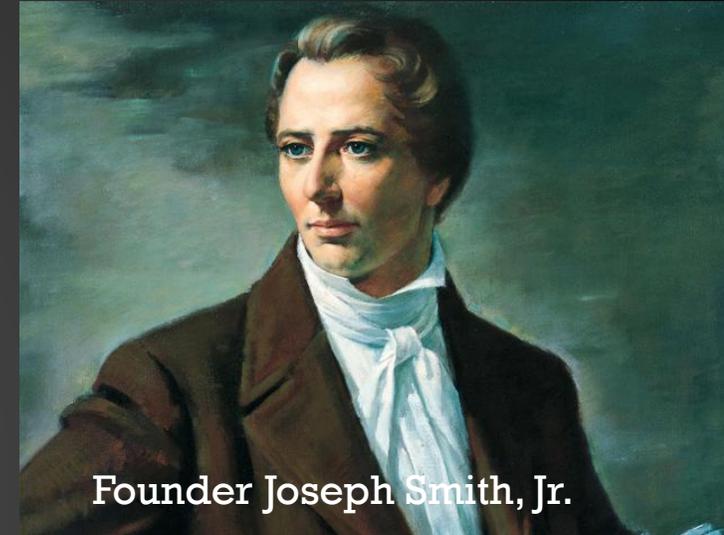
LDS CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE

“I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors”

--Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 327.

“The Bible, as it has been transmitted over the centuries, has suffered the loss of many plain and precious parts”

--Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas Monson, “Letter Reaffirms Use of King James Version of Bible,” Church News, June 20, 1992, p. 3.



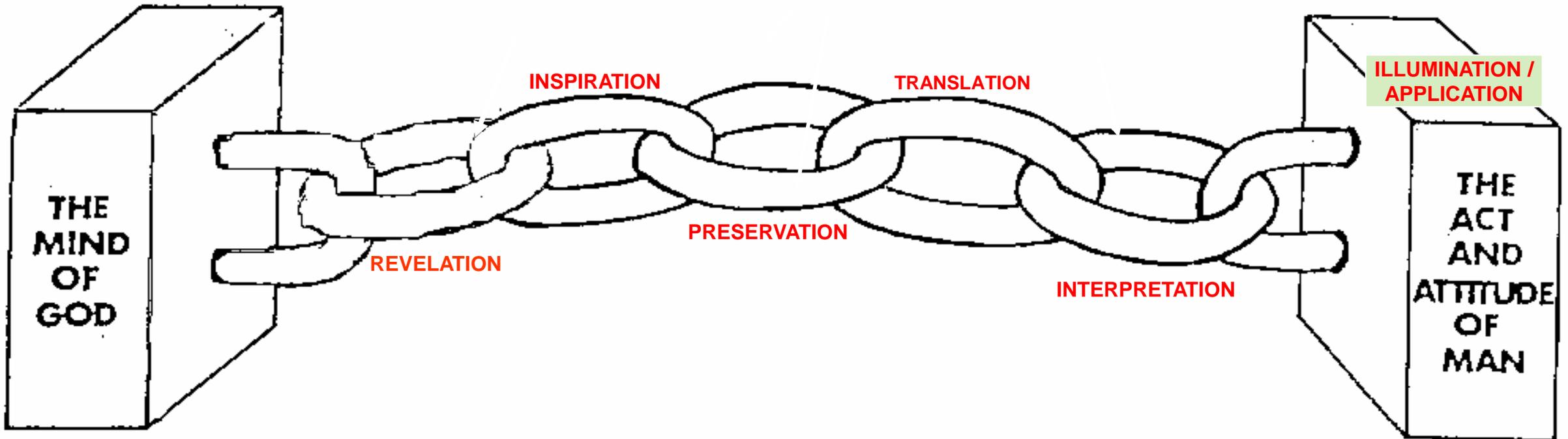
Founder Joseph Smith, Jr.



President Benson with Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

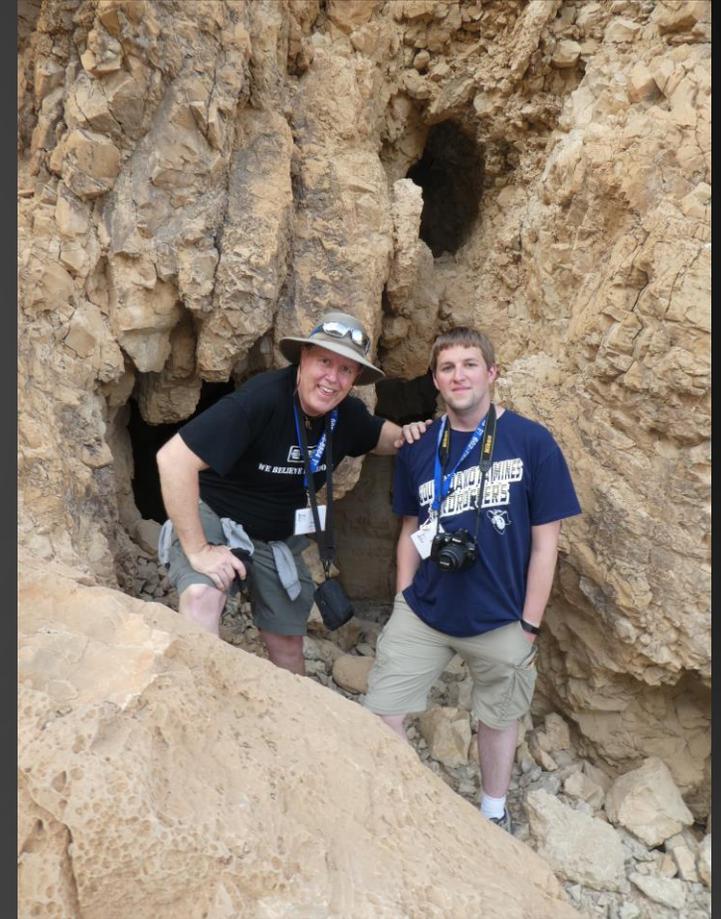
HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

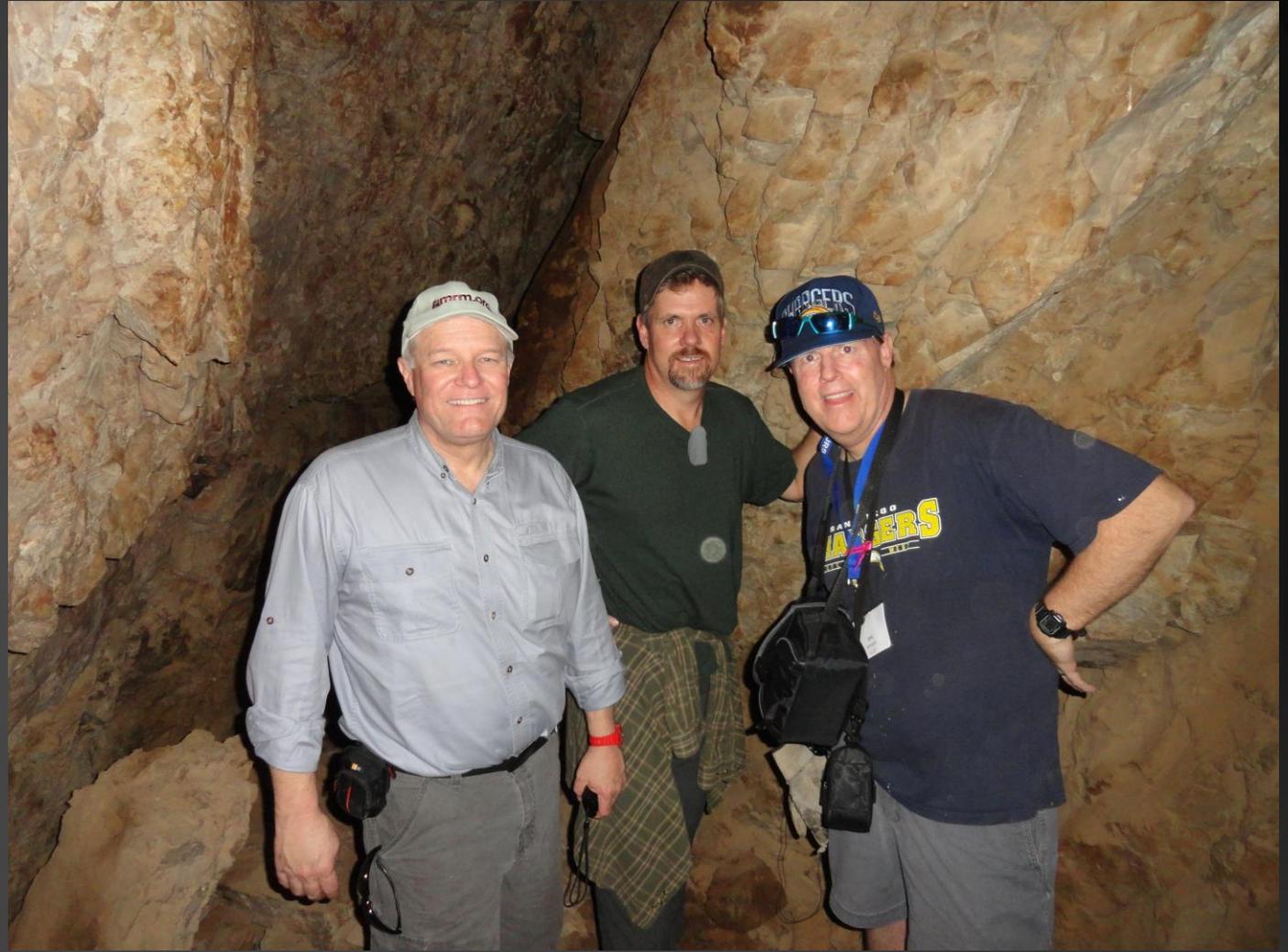
What these leaders would like us to believe is not that there is a “translation” problem (#4) but rather a “preservation” problem where the biblical text was not properly transmitted



PRESERVATION—DEAD SEA SCROLLS (OT)

- Series of 11 caves discovered between 1947-1954
- Close to 1,000 ancient scrolls were found, most in fragments
- About a quarter were OT scrolls, all but 1 OT book found (Esther)





DEAD SEA SCROLLS DO NOT TEACH MORMONISM

“After reading the Scrolls very carefully, I come to the conclusion that there is not a line in them that suggests that their writers knew the Gospel as understood by Latter-day Saints. In fact, there are a few passages that seem to prove the contrary.”



Sidney Sperry



THE GREAT SCROLL OF ISAIAH



THE GREAT SCROLL OF ISAIAH

- Dated between 125-100 B.C.
- Written on velum (animal skin) and housed in a jar in Cave 1
- Practically identical with the oldest copy of the Masoretic text (around 1000 B.C.) (a millennium in between)
- No doctrine was affected



THE REASON IS THIS:

If you were only able to find one book of the Old Testament in complete form, which would it be?

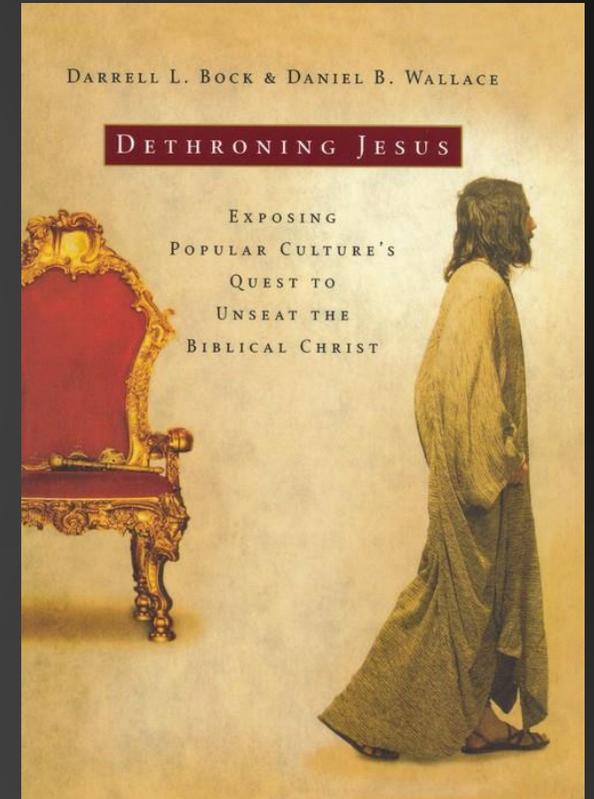
And why is it Isaiah?

POSSESSION OF MULTIPLE COPIES

- Indeed, we have no autographs (originals)
- But we do have...
- 5,600 Greek apographs (copies)
- Average size: 450 pages in length
- 24,000 manuscripts in additional languages
- 10-15 manuscripts within 100 years of the NT
- 4 dozen manuscripts within two centuries
- Of manuscripts completed before AD 400, 99 still exist, including the most impressive Codex Sinaiticus

DARRELL BOCK AND DANIEL WALLACE

“All told, the New Testament is represented by approximately one thousand times as many manuscripts as the average classical author’s writings. Even the well-known authors—such as Homer and Herodotus—simply can’t compare to the quantity of copies enjoyed by the New Testament.”



VARIANTS DO NOT NORMALLY CHANGE THE MEANING

- Critic Bart Ehrman claims 400,000 variants
- Only 138,000 total words in the 27 books!
- How? If 50 copies had 50 variants that are the same, all count
- 75% of all textual variants involve spelling mistakes
- Less than 1% are meaningful

NT SCHOLAR CRAIG BLOMBERG

“The vast majority of textual variants are wholly uninteresting except to specialists. When one hears numbers like 400,000 variants (if that number is even accurate), one must remember that they are spread across 25,000 manuscripts. A large percentage of these variants cluster around the same verses or passages. Less than 3 percent of them are significant enough to be presented in one of the two standard critical editions of the Greek New Testament. Only about a tenth of 1 percent are interesting enough to make their way into footnotes in most English translations. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that no orthodox doctrine or ethical practice of Christianity depends solely on any disputed wording.”

RELATIVELY FEW ERRORS IN THE MANUSCRIPTS



F.F. Bruce

“When we have documents like our New Testament writings copied and recopied thousands of times the scope for copyists’ errors is so enormously increased that it is surprising there are no more than there actually are. Fortunately, if the great number of MSS [manuscripts] increases the number of scribal errors, it increases proportionately the means of correcting such errors, so that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact wording is not so large as might be feared; it is in truth remarkably small.”

SET RULES ARE FOLLOWED

- Priority given to the earliest copies
- The harder the reading, the more likely it was the original
 - A temptation to smooth over the text by a copyist

INTEGRITY OF THE TRANSLATORS

- The ultimate cost was paid by John Wycliffe and William Tyndale
- Modern translators provide tools to help a person to better understand



John Wycliffe
1328-1384



William Tyndale
1494-1536



Dr. Ronald Youngblood
Translator of the NIV OT

MODERN TRANSLATORS PROVIDE TOOLS



Craig Blomberg

“Readers of almost any English language translation of the Bible except for the King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) can look at the footnotes, or marginal notes, of their Bibles and see mention of a broad cross-section of the most important and interesting of these variants. Unfortunately, many readers don’t consult these notes often enough.”

RATING OF THE TEXTUAL VARIANTS



Craig Blomberg

“The United Bible Societies’ fourth edition of the Greek New Testament contains 1,438 of the most significant textual variants in its footnotes and presents the most important manuscript evidence for each reading of the disputed text. Using the letters A through D, the committee that produced the edition also ranks its level of confidence in its decision to adopt a particular reading.”

EXAMPLE: MATTHEW 17:21 ONLY IN KJV

- Jesus heals a boy with a demon
- “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”
- United Bible Society left this verse out of the main text
- Out of 4 ratings (A through D), the omission of the verse is given a strong “B” grade.
- The verse may have been added by later copyists to fit the parallel account in Mark 9:29
- Modern translators leave out the verse—it has no impact on the meaning
- The verse is placed in a footnote—there is no attempt to hide anything

NO MAJOR DOCTRINES ARE AFFECTED

- For instance, consider the doctrine of the deity of Christ
- “It’s nonsense to say Jesus’ deity wasn’t invented until the fourth century when you’ve already got the evidence in earlier manuscripts.”



Daniel Wallace

LDS PROFESSOR LLOYD ANDERSON

“One can disagree with the textual assumptions behind some of the modern translations of the New Testament and still not be overly concerned with differences that are immaterial. For a book to undergo progressive uncovering of its manuscript history and come out with so little debatable in its text is a great tribute to its essential authenticity. First, no new manuscript discovery has produced serious differences in the essential story. This survey has disclosed the leading textual controversies, and together they would be well within one percent of the text. Stated differently, all manuscripts agree on the essential correctness of 99 percent of all the verses in the New Testament. The second great fact that such a survey demonstrates is the progress that has placed the world in possession of manuscripts very near to the time of their writing. One would have to be a student of ancient history to appreciate how much superior the New Testament is to any other book in its manuscript tradition.”

“Manuscript Discoveries of the New Testament in Perspective,” Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, Presented April 13, 1963, 57-58.

SKEPTICS LOVE THE TELEPHONE GAME

- Party game where one player whispers a sentence into the ear of a second player and so on
- Things get more skewed from player to player
- Skeptic asks, “How can you be convinced that the original message written by the biblical writers was accurately written down copy after copy after copy after copy?”
- Has the Bible’s message been garbled over time?

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TELEPHONE GAME AND NT

The Telephone Game vs. the Transmission of the New Testament Text

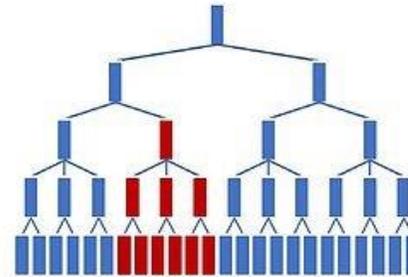


Every person in the chain passes the message on to only one person.

A **change** introduced by any one person will propagate through the entire chain.

The message is only reported by the final person in the chain.

The original message is LOST.



Manuscripts are copied multiple times, resulting in a complex web of relationships.

A **change** introduced by any one scribe will affect only a portion of the manuscript tradition.

The text is attested in over 5,000 extant Greek manuscripts, some from as early as the 2nd century.

The original message is PRESERVED.

IN ADDITION...

Telephone Game

- Oral
- Players' lack of memory plays a role
- The more garbled, the more fun the players have

Transmission of the Bible

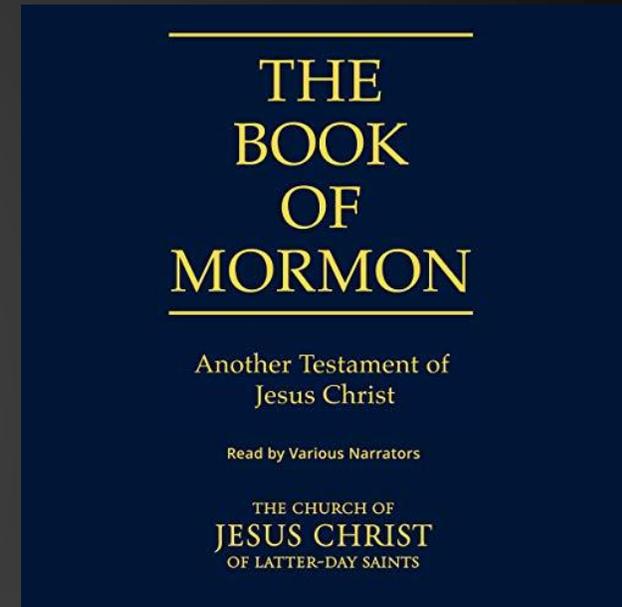
- Written
- Bible scholars have multiple written records of the text
- The scholars don't consider this a game

WOULD YOU TRADE THE COPIES FOR AN AUTOGRAPH?

- Ask yourself, Who would own any of the Bible's autographs?
- The Catholic Church would be a likely candidate
 - 4th century Codex Vaticanus is one of the 3 most important NT manuscripts)
- If so, wouldn't there be great doubt that the manuscript wasn't manipulated?
- Instead, we have thousands of copies left all over the world—a better scenario!
- To make changes, as some leaders have claimed, would mean a person would have to go all over the world and find each copy to make the exact same correction in every one of them
- This seems ludicrous

FOR THE MORMON, WHAT ABOUT...

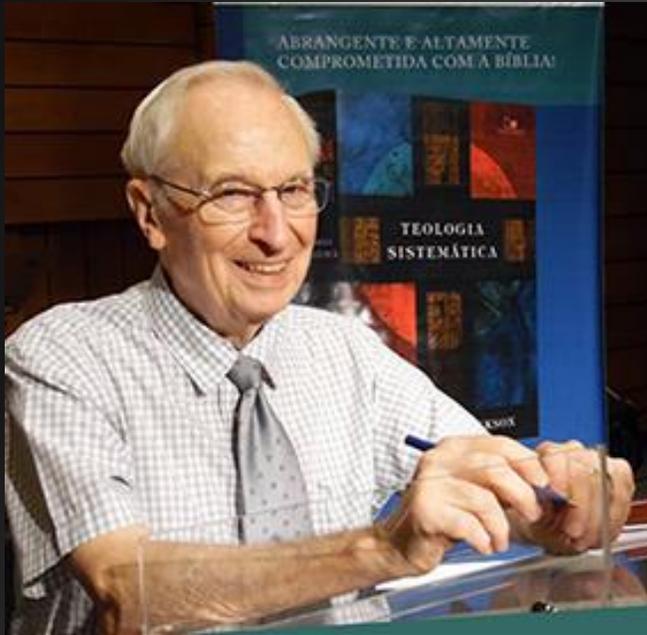
- No autographs of the Book of Mormon
- Gold plates taken back by the Angel Moroni
- Words in the BOM altered over the years—about 4,000 changes
- How could these changes have been made without the autograph?
- Should we consider the Book of Mormon “true as far as it is translated correctly”?



WHAT ABOUT “BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS”?

- You must always consider the context of a passage
- More times than not, the context will show why there is no contradiction
- In addition, there are different perspectives
- A reason why the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are very different from the Gospel of John
- Sometimes language is phenomenal rather than technical
- “Sunrise” tomorrow at 6:37 a.m.—does the sun really rise?

ROUNDING UP/DOWN OF NUMBERS



Millard Erickson

“Suppose a hypothetical case in which the Bible reported a battle in which 9,476 men were involved. What then would be a correct (or infallible) report? Would 10,000 be accurate? 9,000? 9,500? 9,480? 9,475? Or would only 9,476 be a correct report? The answer is that it depends upon the purpose of the writing. If the report is an official military document which an officer is to submit to his superior, the number must be exact. That is the only way to ascertain whether there were any deserters. If, on the other hand, the account is simply to give some idea of the size of the battle, then a round number like 10,000 is adequate, and in this setting is correct.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CONTRADICTIONS

- Mrm.org/bible-passages
- Mrm.org/bible-contradictions
- Books, including:
 - *The Bible Handbook of Difficult Verses* (Josh and Sean McDowell)
 - *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* (Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe)
 - *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch)
 - *When Cultists Ask* (Norman Geisler and Ron Rhodes)

Q&A

MORMONISM RESEARCH MINISTRY

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Consider our books as well...

