

My Search for Truth

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"Our religion is simply the truth. It is all said in this one expression—it embraces all truth, wherever found, in all the works of God and man that are visible or invisible to mortal eye"

- Discourses of Brigham Young, pg. 2 -

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Why I No Longer Believe



This essay was written in Fall 2012, during my investigation into my faith. Read about how I began to doubt in my post [How I Lost my Faith by Defending it](#).

I am composing this document in order to be able to clearly explain why I no longer believe that, as the Lord stated in Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) 1:29-30 (my emphasis added):

D&C 1:29-30

And after having received the record of the Nephites, yea, even my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., might have power to translate through the mercy of God, by the power of God, the Book of Mormon. And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually.

I want something to be very clear: there is no other reason for my losing the faith in the LDS church other than an earnest and honest search for truth. There is no sin or desire to sin; there has been no offense or embarrassment from a brother or sister – only the need to be honest with myself and accept truth wherever it leads me. I want the church to be true. It has generally been a positive force in my life. I still attend at times and enjoy the association with the good people of my ward. I am still very open to the possibility that I am wrong, and I would appreciate discussing this with anyone who reads through this document.

In Search of Truth

I have always appreciated that LDS members are taught to value intelligence and truth. As D&C 93 describes, the Glory of God is light and truth:

D&C 93:36,24

The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

Brigham Young expounded that:

Our religion is simply the truth. It is all said in this one expression—it embraces all truth, wherever found, in all the works of God and man that are visible or invisible to mortal eye (Discourses of Brigham Young, p2).

It is our duty and calling, as ministers of the same salvation and Gospel, to gather every item of truth and reject every error. Whether a truth be found with professed infidels, or with the Universalists, or the Church of Rome, or the Methodists, the Church of England, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Quakers, the Shakers, or any other of the various and numerous different sects and parties, all of whom have more or less truth, it is the business of the Elders of this Church (Jesus, their Elder Brother, being at their head) to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, ... to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever it may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people and bring it to Zion (Discourses of Brigham Young, p248).

The God we worship in the church is the God of all truth, whatever the source. We are taught that we must eventually know all things in order to become like him. I feel that as church members we must seek out truth and hold on to it, because it is the way we get to know God.

There are two approaches when you are presented with new or conflicting evidence - either discard/ignore it or evaluate it for its merits. For me, I trusted that upon evaluating potential issues with the church, the church would be vindicated because "our religion is simply the truth." However, I also recognized that if the LDS church was not true, I would want to know. In my view, truth outweighs belief, habit and convention. I value truth above the familiar and comfortable. In this document I will be explaining the issues that trouble me. While it is not my intention to persuade anyone either way, reading through my issues may prompt some of doubts. If your answer is that you are not interested in hearing things contrary to what you believe, then you may not want to proceed.

The LDS church membership is about 0.2% of the world's population. Effectively, we are proclaiming that 99.8% of the world places their faith in false religion. We work to help them recognize their false faith, and join the LDS church. Shouldn't we also be willing to turn the spotlight on our own religion to make sure it holds up to reasonable scrutiny?

Should We Avoid Doubts and Questions?



There is a real fear among the some faithful that questioning the veracity of the church or the Book of Mormon is a sure way to lose your soul to the devil. I think this mindset is at odds with the more central, key teaching of the LDS church, which is even taught as the driver behind the foundation of the church. Joseph received his first vision after being struck by the promise of James:

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

The Book of Mormon similarly teaches:

Moroni 10:4-5

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

When Oliver Cowdery wanted to be able to translate, the Lord through Joseph Smith, Jr said:

D&C 9:8

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

In our church, we believe in personal revelation. We believe that we can and should question anything and everything, and God will give us the wisdom we lack. We clearly teach that in order to receive that answer, we must first do the legwork – we “must study it out in [our] mind” and then bring our conclusion to God for confirmation. I see no problem, in fact I think it should be expected for us to do the same with any doubt or question we have, especially concerning God and his church.

Interestingly, throughout time church leaders have proclaimed that because the LDS church is the true church of God, that the church should withstand any investigation or examination into the truth claims. Here some of the supporting quotes (my emphasis added):

“The nature of the message in the Book of Mormon is such that, if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it, if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it. Therefore, every soul in all the world is equally interested in ascertaining its truth or falsity. In a matter of such infinite importance, no person should rest satisfied with the conjectures or opinions of others. He should use every exertion himself to become acquainted with the nature of the message; he should

carefully examine the evidences of which it is offered to the world; he should, with all patience and perseverance, seek to acquire a certain knowledge whether it be of God or not. If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such. The evidence and arguments upon which the imposture was detected should be clearly and logically stated, that those who have been sincerely, yet unfortunately, deceived may perceive the nature of the deception, and be reclaimed, and that those who continue to publish the delusion may be exposed and silenced.” Orson Pratt; 1850, Introduction to Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

“If faith will not bear to be investigated; if its preachers and professors are afraid to have it examined, their foundation must be very weak.” – George A. Smith; 1871, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 14, pg. 216

“Mormonism must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a Prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground. If Joseph was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead people, then he should be exposed, his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false...” (Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), vol. 1 pp 188-189)

“If we have the truth, it cannot be harmed by investigation. If we have not the truth, it ought to be harmed.” – Apostle J. Reuben Clark, D. Michael Quinn, J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1983, p. 24.

“Well, we have nothing to hide. Our history is an open book. They may find what they are looking for, but the fact is the history of the church is clear and open and leads to faith and strength and virtues.” – Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley, Dec. 25, 2005 interview with The Associated Press

“Well, it’s either true or false. If it’s false, we’re engaged in a great fraud. If it’s true, it’s the most important thing in the world. Now, that’s the whole picture. It is either right or wrong, true or false, fraudulent or true. And that’s exactly where we stand, with a conviction in our hearts that it is true: that Joseph went into the Grove; that he saw the Father and the Son; that he talked with them; that Moroni came; that the Book of Mormon was translated from the plates; that the priesthood was restored by those who held it anciently. That’s our claim. That’s where we stand, and that’s where we fall, if we fall. But we don’t. We just stand secure in that faith.” – Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley, Interview “The Mormons”; PBS Documentary, April 2007

“This book [The Book of Mormon] is entitled to the most thorough and impartial examination. Not only does the Book of Mormon merit such consideration, its claims even demand the same.” – Apostle James E. Talmage, Articles of Faith, pg. 273

So does a “most thorough and impartial examination” mean we should read the Book of Mormon and see if it makes us feel good? That is anything but thorough or impartial. Still, if we do read it and pray and feel good about the book, does that mean that it is from God?

Nature of Spiritual Confirmation



I would first also address hopefully briefly why I don't just rely on a spiritual inspiration as the confirmation of the trueness of Book of Mormon or any other church teaching, as most members do. As I stated earlier, we believe that the Holy Ghost will confirm the truth of it to us by a burning in the bosom or a feeling of comfort and peace. Here are some real descriptions of individuals describing these feelings:

"The first time the missionaries gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon, it was like a jolt of electricity went through my body. From that moment, I knew that the Book of Mormon was the word of God. However, it was through study, prayer, and a confirmation from the Holy Ghost that I knew for certain this was true."

"But what can I say? How can I describe an experience so profound and so beautiful? Shall I say that it was the most blessed experience of my life? Shall I say that [God] touched my heart and gave me a feeling of peace I had not known before? Shall I describe the tears that flowed freely from my eyes, affirming my [...] faith, as I [...] beg[ged] [God's] blessings for myself and for those I love?"

"As I read these books [...], I felt a burning in my heart that I should come and investigate. My wife and I at that time had two children, and we made a decision that we should pray and fast for the four days that I would be gone [...] I am reading now the writings [...] regarding prophecy and private revelation. You find a beautiful bond between a proper caution regarding a reported message, and also openness to the Holy Spirit, and to prophecy and miraculous intervention."

"Without understanding much [...], he was attracted to temples. There he often felt a strong feeling of peace flowing through his body."

"While on my journey, I was asking God what the truth was. I mean I was angry and I truly wanted to know. After a few weeks, I stumbled onto a website that talked about the very things I was curious about. It answered my questions in a way that I had not heard of before. I read everything on the web site and I even tried the experiment of asking God [...]. After about 6 weeks, I felt a burning in my chest and a sensation that was unlike anything I had ever felt."

Only the first one was an **LDS** member. The rest were a **Muslim**, a **Catholic**, a **Hindu**, and a **New Age** each speaking about their spiritual confirmation of their own religion. The peace or burning and conviction of the truth that each of these people felt was real. All of these members of different religions are all feeling spiritual promptings that they are in the right religion. How could they all be right, when all of these religions teach very different doctrines?

As I believe the LDS approach goes, all churches have some truth, so they will all feel the Spirit in some way. But is that really what's going on here?

This is the situation of the religious world:

- There are thousands of religions, Christian and non-Christian, all with conflicting doctrines.
- Each one of them has many members in it who claim to know that their church is the right one.
- They “know” they are right based on spiritual promptings during prayer or meditation.

LDS members claim to have access to a special and unique experience that other people in other religions don’t experience. But that is just not true. The LDS church isn’t special in its use of spiritual promptings as “proof” of the truth. That’s the method everyone uses in every religion.

Let me give a poor but hopefully sufficient example. An old friend who had struggled with drugs invites you to his house to share to wonderful news that he has overcome the addiction with the help of his LDS bishop. Your friend explains after rereading the teachings and examples of Alma and Enos, in the Book of Mormon, he felt hope for the first time. He prayed and fasted, met regularly with his bishop, and he was given the strength he lacked on his own. As your friend speaks and then the bishop shares his testimony of repentance and forgiveness, you feel joy and a warmth all over. What do these feelings mean? Well, we would say it is confirmation of the truth of our friend’s testimony and of the Book of Mormon and church that helped him change

Now, what if instead of the LDS bishop, it was the Catholic priest? You friend read from the bible and found help at the Catholic church. The priest delivers a beautiful message at this gathering about change and mercy. You feel joy and a nice warm feeling as he speaks. What does this mean? If you ask the priest, what would he say? It isn’t hard to imagine the answer being something to the effect that he is a messenger of God delivering the truth, and you should join him at mass on Sunday.

Being LDS, you might rationalize that the Catholic priest has some truth and the change was good, and so the message reached you through the Holy Ghost, but it didn’t mean anything else other than that the message was good.

Now, what if instead of the LDS or Catholic church, your friend found help through the local Hindu temple, the local Hindu pujari was sharing the message, and you feel the same burning in your bosom. Does it mean that the Hindus have the truth? Or does it just mean that the message was an uplifting and inspiring message which touched you deeply?

Last example. I love the Lion King movie, as many people do. Every time I watch it, I have intense feelings when Simba speaks to his father in the stars. I felt that it was the Holy Ghost. Why did I feel that way? Did it mean that the Lion King movie actually happened? Did it mean that our ancestors are really the stars we see? Or just a wonderfully touching message?

I give these examples to show:

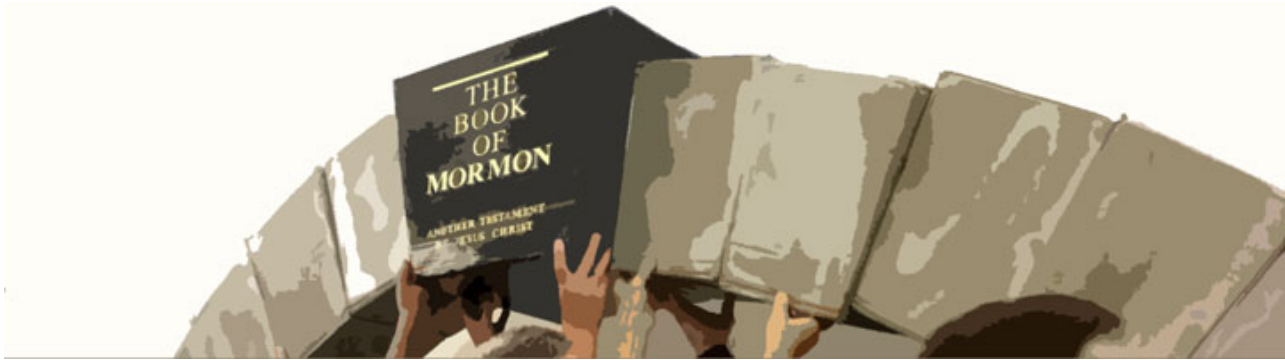
1. There are very possible and real situations outside of church/prayer where you could feel these special feelings,
2. and what we take those feelings to mean is personal – it depends greatly on our past experiences and our perspective in that moment.

What does it mean if we feel the burning in the bosom upon reading the Bible, or the Book of Mormon, or the Quran, or the Buddhist Kangyur, or the Sikh Guru Granth Sahib? I propose that it means that what we read is a beautiful, uplifting message. I love many of the teachings of the Book of Mormon and find it to be a wonderfully inspiring book. The issue is that the LDS church holds up the Book of Mormon as proof that Joseph Smith, Jr saw what he said he saw, received what he said he received, and did what he said he did.

As Joseph Smith, Jr and many other prophets and apostles have similarly said, “... the Book of Mormon [is] the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion...” I hung my faith on this, just as we are taught to do – if the Book of Mormon is an actual historical book as it

purports, then Joseph Smith, Jr was the chosen prophet of our dispensation to restore the true gospel of Christ and with it the legitimate church of Christ. If not, then under the best possible light, he was an inspiring leader who either purposely with good intentions or unintentionally convinced others to believe in beautiful but untrue doctrines. Unfortunately, that would also mean he was a fraud, as President Hinckley stated in the earlier quote. If that be the case, and the Book of Mormon is not the truly historical book as claimed, the keystone is gone and the LDS religion is should not continue to be held up by unfounded faith and hope alone.

The Book of Mormon: Keystone



I will be presenting and explaining what issues have most troubled me as I investigated the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Interestingly enough, most of the issues that follow may not be new to anyone who reads this, as they were not for me, either. The difference is that before, I never gave any real credibility to the claims because, well, I rationalized that we know by the Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true, so doubters must be wrong, and, honestly, how much can really be known about what there was and wasn't in the Americas prior to Columbus?

The answer to that question is: very little can be known, but much can be determined to be highly, highly probable. Thanks to science, smart people who are not trying to prove or disprove any Book of Mormon claims have done the work to determine with a high level of confidence many important things about the pre-Columbian Americas. Unfortunately for the Book of Mormon, very little information about pre-Columbian America (especially Mesoamerica, which is the currently claimed location of the events in the Book of Mormon) was known in Joseph Smith, Jr's time. Based on my assessment, he did not score a passing mark compared to the information that is now available. It is intriguing to consider the testament the Book of Mormon could have been, had it aligned with all the Mesoamerican discoveries that were unknown yet forthcoming at Joseph Smith, Jr's time.

I think a common misconception among members of the church is that the ideas presented in the Book of Mormon were very novel for their time. The thought is that no one could have invented up such a complex story, so it must be inspired. The reality is not as favorable. In the period just prior to the discovery and translation of the Book of Mormon, one of the theories floating around in American culture was that the Indians were descendants of Hebrews, in fact part of the lost 10 tribes of Israel. There was a book written by a pastor named Ethan Smith, published in 1823, called *View of the Hebrews* which presented this hypothesis. There is no proof that Joseph Smith, Jr had access to this book, but it is highly likely that Oliver Cowdery did. Oliver Cowdery's mother and half-sisters were members of Ethan Smith's congregation which would mean Oliver had likely at least heard the general story of Ethan's book, if he didn't have an actual copy. Many have even proposed that *View of the Hebrews* was a source for the Book of Mormon due to this potential access and the parallels found in the two books. In the 1920's, General Authority B.H. Roberts studied the similarities between the books at the request of the First Presidency. In his response he outlined 18 points of similarity, including:

- extensive quotation from the prophecies of Isaiah in the Old Testament;
- the Israelite origin of the American Indian;
- the future gathering of Israel and restoration of the Ten Lost Tribes;
- the peopling of the New World from the Old via a long journey northward which encountered "seas" of "many waters;"
- a religious motive for the migration;
- the division of the migrants into civilized and uncivilized groups with long wars between them and the eventual destruction of the civilized by the uncivilized;

- the assumption that all native peoples were descended from Israelites and their languages from Hebrew;
- the burial of a “lost book” with “yellow leaves;”
- the description of extensive military fortifications with military observatories or “watch towers” overlooking them;
- a change from monarchy to republican forms of government; and
- the preaching of the gospel in ancient America.

According to BYU professor Marvin S. Hill, Roberts “maintained that the Book of Mormon’s claims that the Indians were derived solely from three migrations of Hebrews to the new world over a span of three thousand years was entirely untenable.” And Roberts concluded that the “evidence I sorrowfully submit” pointed to Joseph Smith as the Book’s creator.

I have no incredible insight into the real source of the Book of Mormon. It may have been adapted from *View of the Hebrews*, translated from golden plates, or just created in Joseph’s head based on all the ideas floating around at the time – I don’t know. I have included this information to contest the argument that the Book of Mormon is true because there is no way Joseph could have written the book. I argue that the ideas of the Book of Mormon were not new, and in fact were likely familiar to and accepted by many people at that time. If you are interested in hearing of other incredibly curious insights into other potential sources for the Book of Mormon, please let me know – I’d love to discuss them.

Book of Mormon Issue 1: Animals



The Book of Mormon is very clear that there were particular animals among the Nephites and Lamanites. Thanks to paleontologists and other researchers, we now know which animals actually did live in the Americas during the Book of Mormon period of history.

Here are good summary verses from the Book of Mormon:

1 Nephi 18:25

And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper.

Ether 9:18-19

And also all manner of cattle, of oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man.
And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.

To get right to the point – cows, oxen, asses, horses, domesticated goats (as opposed to wild goats as mentioned), swine, and elephants were not present in any part of the Americas during any time even close to around the the Book of Mormon history (2500 BC to 400 AD, roughly). And this isn't just a guess, it is well understood which animals were and were not present during that time.

Apologetics (which are defenders of the faith, not apologizers) respond that the cows, oxen, asses, horses, goats, swine, and elephants were not really cows, oxen, asses, horses, goats, swine, or elephants. Instead, Joseph Smith, Jr used those more familiar words to refer to whatever other animal was actually around in the Book of Mormon time, such as bison, deer, tapirs (see picture), or llamas.



I just am unable to accept this answer. First, there is no evidence of domestication of bison, deer, or tapirs – there is only evidence of the llama being domesticated in pre-Columbian America. The Book of Mormon verses above and others clearly demonstrate that the animals were completely

domesticated.

Secondly, and I think maybe more importantly, based on how we understand the translation process, Joseph Smith would basically read the words that would appear in front of him. He started with the Urim and Thummim, then he switched and translated most of the Book of Mormon by reading the words off the peep stone he found in his youth, while putting his head and peep stone inside a hat. See Martin Harris's and David Whitmer's descriptions of it [here](#). If he was being shown the words to say, would he be shown the word "horse" for something that wasn't horse? Why would other times unknown names appear, like the "cureloms" and "cumoms", or "ziff" (an unknown metal) and "senine" (a measurement)? If it wasn't referring to a known animal, shouldn't he have read some other word like "cureloms" when he read "horse" or "cow" or "swine"?

Let's dig into a few of these some more.

Horse and Chariot

From [wikipedia](#):

Horses are mentioned fourteen times in the Book of Mormon, and are portrayed as an integral part of the cultures described. There is no evidence that horses existed on the American continent during the 2500–3000 year history of the Book of Mormon (2500 BC–400 AD). Horses evolved in North America, but are believed to have become extinct on the American continent at the end of the Pleistocene. Horses did not reappear in the Americas until the Spaniards brought them from Europe. They were brought to the Caribbean by Christopher Columbus in 1493, and to the American continent by Cortés in 1519.

Here are the verses in the Book of Mormon:

1 Nephi 18:25

And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper.

Enos 1:21

And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses.

Alma 18:9

And they said unto him: Behold, he is feeding thy horses. Now the king had commanded his servants, previous to the time of the watering of their flocks, that they should prepare his horses and chariots, and conduct him forth to the land of Nephi; for there had been a great feast appointed at the land of Nephi, by the father of Lamoni, who was king over all the land.

Alma 18:10

Now when king Lamoni heard that Ammon was preparing his horses and his chariots he was more astonished, because of the faithfulness of Ammon, saying: Surely there has not been any servant among all my servants that has been so faithful as this man; for even he doth remember all my commandments to execute them.

Alma 18:12

And it came to pass that when Ammon had made ready the horses and the chariots for the king and his servants, he went in unto the king, and he saw that the countenance of the king was changed; therefore he was about to return out of his presence.

Alma 20:6

Now when Lamoni had heard this he caused that his servants should make ready his horses and his chariots.

3 Nephi 3:22

And it came to pass in the seventeenth year, in the latter end of the year, the proclamation of Lachoneus had gone forth throughout all the face of the land, and they had taken their horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and all their flocks, and their herds, and their grain, and all their substance, and did march forth by thousands and by tens of thousands, until they had all gone forth to the place which had been appointed that they should gather themselves together, to defend themselves against their enemies.

3 Nephi 4:4

Therefore, there was no chance for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food, save it were to come up in open battle against the Nephites; and the Nephites being in one body, and having so great a number, and having reserved for themselves provisions, and horses and cattle, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years, in the which time they did hope to destroy the robbers from off the face of the land; and thus the eighteenth year did pass away.

3 Nephi 6:1

And now it came to pass that the people of the Nephites did all return to their own lands in the twenty and sixth year, every man, with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle, and all things whatsoever did belong unto them.

3 Nephi 21:14

Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;

Ether 9:19

And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.

As children, we were all taught in American History classes about the profound impact that horses had on the Indians once they were introduced to the New World by the Europeans. I have a hard time believing that all the history books, scientists, Indian records, etc. are all wrong about something that would have been so important to the Native Americans.

The chariots are a huge problem as well. As stated in [wikipedia](#):

The Book of Mormon mentions the use of chariots as a mode of transportation five times. There is no archaeological evidence to support the use of wheeled vehicles in Mesoamerica.

Many parts of ancient Mesoamerica were not suitable for wheeled transport. Clark Wissler, the Curator of Ethnography at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, noted: "we see that the prevailing mode of land transport in the New World was by human carrier. The wheel was unknown in pre-Columbian times."



A comparison of the South American Inca civilization to Mesoamerican civilizations shows the same lack of wheeled vehicles. Although the Incas used a vast network of paved roads, these roads are so rough, steep and narrow that they appear to be unsuitable for wheeled use. Bridges that the Inca people built, and even continue to use and maintain today in some remote areas, are straw-rope bridges so narrow (about 2–3 feet wide) that no wheeled vehicle can fit (see image and technology at Inca rope bridges). Inca roads were used mainly by chaski message runners and llama caravans.

The picture shown here is also from wikipedia. It is a typical Inca road, as described in the prior paragraph. The use of the chariot behind a horse as a mode of transportation between cities is clear in the Book of Mormon verses. This is just not possible. There was no horse, there was no wheel, and there was no suitable road.

Cattle and Cows

Here are the relevant verses:

1 Nephi 18:25

And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper.

Enos 1:21

And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses.

Mosiah 13:18

But the seventh day, the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;

3 Nephi 3:22

And it came to pass in the seventeenth year, in the latter end of the year, the proclamation of Lachoneus had gone forth throughout all the face of the land, and they had taken their horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and all their flocks, and their herds, and their grain, and all their substance, and did march forth by thousands and by tens of thousands, until they had all gone forth to the place which had been appointed that they should gather themselves together, to defend themselves against their enemies.

3 Nephi 4:4

Therefore, there was no chance for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food, save it were to come up in open battle against the Nephites; and the Nephites being in one body, and having so great a number, and having reserved for themselves provisions, and horses and cattle, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years, in the which time they did hope to destroy the robbers from off the face of the land; and thus the eighteenth year did pass away.

3 Nephi 6:1

And now it came to pass that the people of the Nephites did all return to their own lands in the twenty and sixth year, every man, with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle, and all things whatsoever did belong unto them.

Ether 9:18

And also all manner of cattle, of oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man.

Here is the [wikipedia](#) information:

There are six references to cattle made in the Book of Mormon, including verbiage suggesting they were domesticated. There has been no evidence recovered that Old World cattle (members of the genus *Bos*) inhabited the New World prior to European contact in the sixteenth century AD.

Apologists argue that the term “cattle” may be more generic that suggesting members of the genus *Bos*, and may have referred to bison, mountain goats, llamas, or other American species. According to the Book of Mormon, varieties of “cattle” (including goats and sheep) could be found in ancient America. Without these the Nephites could not have kept the Law of Moses, as directed.

Latter Day Saint apologists note that the word “cattle” may refer to the ancestor of the American bison, *Bison antiquus* (of the subfamily Bovinae). *Bison antiquus*, sometimes called the ancient bison, was the most common large herbivore of the North American continent for over ten thousand years, and is a direct ancestor of the living American bison.

However, no species of bison is known to have been domesticated as the “cattle” in the Book of Mormon are suggested to have been. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that the only large mammal to be domesticated in the Americas was the llama; no species of goats, deer, sheep, or other “cattle” were domesticated before the arrival of the Europeans to the continent. Apologists counter that the wording in the Book of Mormon does not require the “cattle” to have been domesticated in the strictest sense.

There isn't much else to say here. There had to be domesticated cows, sheep, and goats as claimed in the Book of Mormon in order to keep the Law of Moses, as claimed in the text. There were none in

pre-Columbian America.

Elephants and Swine

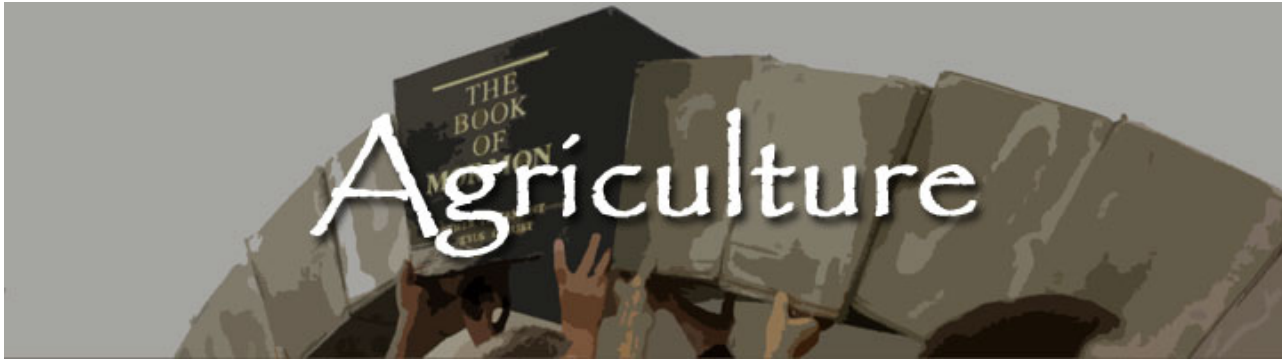
From wikipedia:

Elephants are mentioned twice in a single verse in the Book of Ether. Mastodons and mammoths lived in the New World during the Pleistocene; however, as with the prehistoric horse, the fossil record indicates that they became extinct along with most of the megafauna towards the end of the last ice age. The source of this extinction is speculated to be the result of human predation, a significant climate change, or a combination of both factors. It is known that a small population of mammoths survived on St. Paul Island, Alaska up until 8,000 B.P., but even this date is thousands of years before the Jaredite record in the Book of Mormon begins.

Swine are referred to twice in the Book of Mormon, and the narrative of the Book of Mormon suggests that the swine were domesticated by the Jaredites. There have not been any remains, references, artwork, tools, or any other evidence suggesting that swine were ever present in the pre-entrada New World.

Similar to the prior sections, these animals were not here in Book of Mormon times, and furthermore there is no evidence of domestication of any even vaguely similar animals.

Book of Mormon Issue 2: Agriculture



Zeniff records some of the Book of Mormon seeds:

Mosiah 9:9

And we began to till the ground, yea, even with all manner of seeds, with seeds of corn, and of wheat, and of barley, and with neas, and with sheum, and with seeds of all manner of fruits; and we did begin to multiply and prosper in the land.

From wikipedia:

Grains are mentioned twenty-eight times in the Book of Mormon, including barley and wheat. The introduction of domesticated modern barley and wheat to the New World was made by Europeans sometime after 1492, many centuries after the time in which the Book of Mormon is set.

Taken from a Book of Mormon critic's [viewpoint](#):

When Joseph Smith concocted the Book of Mormon, he just assumed that the ancient Amerindians had the same kind of agriculture as that which he knew in upstate New York. Consequently, he had his ancient characters growing wheat, barley, corn, and flax, and planting vineyards for wine, and being able to understand the symbolism of the olive and trees. Now, of course, Smith was right about the corn – that is, maize. But is there anyone of Smith's day who had not heard of "Indian corn," or did not know that corn had come from the Indians? What Smith did not know, however, was that corn was but one of three staple crops raised by the Indians of Central America – the region in which the discovery of ruined civilizations had triggered enormous amounts of speculation in the time of Smith's youth. The other two major crops were squash and beans. These were supplemented by such things as avocados, amaranth, etc. You can search all you want in the Book of Mormon, but you won't find any mention, apart from corn, of the crops actually raised in ancient America. Incidentally, we have numerous cases where these crops have been preserved in archaeological sites and are easily identifiable.

What does archaeology tell us of the presence or absence of the crops Smith claimed were the staples of ancient America? No remains of wheat or domesticated barley have ever been found. In fact, the one possible pre-Columbian specimen of barley discovered at a site in Arizona is of a species different from the species of domesticated barley allegedly brought from the Near East. And what of flax? No dice, again. Fortunately for lovers of truth, the Mormon apologists cannot simply say we haven't been looking in the right place, or that the remains of these plants have all perished with the passage of time. The reason for our good fortune is the fact that these domestic plants are all flowering plants. As such, they produce pollen – in great abundance. If the so-called Mormon civilizations had been growing these crops for even a few decades – let alone

the thousands of years allegedly chronicled by the Book of Mormon – every soil coring taken in Central America should show traces of wheat, barley, and flax pollen. Pollen is one of the most indestructible natural objects known.

An example of the type of research that shows Book of Mormon agriculture to be nineteenth century phantasy is David J. Rue's 1987 paper in *Nature* titled "Early Agriculture and Early Postclassic [Maya Occupation in Western Honduras](#)." By studying soil corings from Lake Yojoa and Petapida Swamp, both in western Honduras, Rue was able to reconstruct the agricultural history of the area from a time 4770 years before the present up to modern times. He could tell from pollen when the region was forested, when the forest was cut and burned for agriculture, what crops were grown and for how long. Although he found clear records of pollen from corn (maize) and amaranth – two Amerindian staples – he makes no mention of wheat, barley, or flax pollen. Perhaps the Mormon Church would like to pay him to go through his cores again, looking more carefully for the mythical motes that should be in them if the Book of Mormon be true!

There was no wheat or barley, and we have no idea what neas or sheum are. Again, if wheat or barley was not wheat or barley, then Joseph Smith, Jr would have used some other name like neas or sheum.

Book of Mormon Issue 3: Technology



We already discussed the chariots which I think is a huge problem. Several additional technology advances are completely out of place. I'll go through these more briefly than the previous sections, but I am happy to discuss any of these in depth if you have any questions.

Silk

The Book of Mormon mentions the use of silk six times. Silk is a material that is created from the cocoon of the Asian moth "Bombyx mori", and was unknown to the pre-Columbian Americas.

Compass

The Book of Mormon also states that a "compass" or "Liahona" was used by Nephi around 600 BC. The compass is widely recognized to have been invented in China around 1100 AD, and remains of a compass have never been found in America. In the Book of Alma when Alma, speaking to his son Helaman, explains "the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director – or our fathers called it Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass" (Alma 37:38). Alma tells his son that "it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ ... to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass ... to the promised land" (Alma 37:44).

Joseph Smith, Jr would have been familiar with the use of the word "compass" in his King James Bible in the books of Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Proverbs, and Acts. So adding it to the Book of Mormon seemed reasonable, except that the Bible uses "compass" in a completely different way. All uses in the Bible are referring to something round or something which moved in a curved fashion. This definition is consistent with one of the meanings of "compass" as found in any dictionary.

The Book of Mormon references "compass" to refer to, as Alma 37:38 states, a "director". The important part of each reference to the Liahona is the fact that it directs. Here are the other references to this, with my emphasis added:

1 Nephi 16:10

And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.

1 Nephi 16:30

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did go forth up into the top of the mountain, according to the directions which were given upon the ball.

It makes sense that the name of the device, "Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass,"

comes from the fact that it is a “director” which had “two spindles; and the one pointed the way.” Therefore this use predates the invention of a directing compass by more than 1500 years.

Submarines and Windows

The Book of Mormon describes that the Jaredite people built submersible boats, and they were familiar with the concept of “windows” near the time of the Biblical Tower of Babel (around 2000 BC), and that they specifically avoided crafting windows for lighting in their covered seagoing vessels, because the windows would be “dashed in pieces” during the ocean voyage. Transparent window panes are a more recent invention—dating to the 11th century AD in Germany.

I’d like to dig in a little deeper about the story:

First, for a water voyage prior to the ocean crossing itself, the Lord had instructed Jared and his brother to build boats in which, according to the account, their families and friends “did cross many waters,” (2:6) carrying with them “seeds of every kind,” flocks (“male and female, of every kind”), “fowls of the air”, “swarms of bees,” and “fish of the waters.” (2:1-3) According to the account, this boat trip was accomplished successfully.

Next, four years later, the Lord again ordered the men to build similar boats “after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built” (2:16), this time for an ocean crossing of nearly one year’s duration. These boats, similar to the ones built four years earlier, are described as “small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water” (2:16), with structural integrity such that they were “exceedingly tight,” top and bottom, entirely leak proof and air-tight (“tight like unto a dish”) (2:17) because they were going to be “many times buried in the depths of the sea” (6:6) by “mountain waves” (2:24) during many violent storms. To be both (a) light (“like a fowl upon the water”), and (b) able to carry flocks and herds with food supplies for a year, the construction would obviously have to be carefully planned and organized because of the known challenges of combining lightness with strength even today.

Following the Lord’s specifications, the workmen built each boat with just one tight-fitting door, and no window or other opening. Construction of all eight boats was completed, per the Lord’s personal instructions (“I have made the barges according as thou [the Lord] hast directed me.” 2:18).

Next, the Brother of Jared looked at the finished boats and wondered, Whoa! How will we breathe in these things? Specifically, quoting him: “... I have made the barges as thou hast directed me. And behold, O Lord, we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them; therefore we shall perish.” (2:19) It was only then, that is, that he noticed that the boats were air-tight. He also noticed they were totally dark inside: “O Lord, in them there is no light; whither shall we steer?” (2:19)

As we are all likely aware, in Ether 2:20 the Lord answers that “Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood,” and for light they have two glowing rocks in each ship (6:2).

So, the group had already built ships in the same way four years earlier and successfully crossed waters without worrying about light or air. For some reason with this longer trip, these issues finally come up.

Regarding that air, I want to propose a few real issues with the plausibility:

- If you were taking your family on a car trip in a car that for some reason was completely airtight, would you tell them, “Wait until you notice you’re suffering for lack of air, then open the window.” Isn’t it the case that people who need air often don’t notice it until too late,

because oxygen shortage has caused them to pass out? Don't we read that people who suffocate often don't know it's happening? Pilots at altitude undergoing oxygen deprivation experience the same hazard. Their awareness drops below the level needed to know they lack "air."

- How would air enter and exit the same single hole supplying the entire barge/boat? With one air hole (which was small enough to not weaken the structure of the barge) open only a fraction of the time, how did any of the air circulate throughout the ship? Air does not readily enter a closed space.
- They had seeds of every kind, flocks of every kind, fowls of the air, swarms of bees, and fish of the waters, all inside the boats with them, for one year, without any open air circulation. Based on some rough calculations, one goat eats roughly 2-3 pounds of food a day, times 365 days is over 1,000 pounds of food per mammal. Plus they would need huge amounts of fresh water for each person and animal since they couldn't drink ocean water. All this food, water, and animals were inside barges without fresh air, being "tossed upon the waves" (6:5) and "buried in the depths of the sea" (6:6) in a ship designed specifically to be able to rotate upside down at will.

I could go on in looking at this trip with even a little common sense. As you do this, it becomes harder to argue that it is anything more than a completely fictitious story. As B.H. Roberts stated in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, page 251, "... there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book [of Mormon] relates as history that points quite clearly to an underdeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency."

Last point about the Jaredites. The story starts with Jared and his family leaving the Tower of Babel (Ether 1). In the book of Ether, the Tower of Babel is a real event. Without it being a real event, nothing really makes sense. The problem is that the story of the Tower of Babel in the book of Genesis (11:1-9) is a typical "etiological" myth. This is a story invented to explain why something is so, much like children's stories called "How the leopard got his spots," "Why the sea is salty," "Why the sky is blue," etc. There are a number of other etiological tales in the Bible, such as the tales to explain why a snake has no legs (Gen. 3), or why we see a rainbow after a storm (Gen.9:13-16). There never was a Tower of Babel, but it had to exist for the story of the Jaredites to make any sense. So, which is it? Was the Tower of Babel a real event, or is the book of Ether a completely fabricated story? I have to lean toward the fabrication, in agreement with B.H. Roberts.

Uses of metal

Here are some of the verses in the Book of Mormon that reference metals:

2 Nephi 5:15

And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance.

Jarom 1:8

And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceedingly rich in gold, and in silver, and in precious things, and in fine workmanship of wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground, and weapons of war—yea, the sharp pointed arrow, and the quiver, and the dart, and the javelin, and all preparations for war.

Mosiah 8:10

And behold, also, they have brought breastplates, which are large, and they are of brass and of copper, and are perfectly sound.

Mosiah 11:8

And it came to pass that king Noah built many elegant and spacious buildings; and he ornamented them with fine work of wood, and of all manner of precious things, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of brass, and of ziff, and of copper;

Mosiah 11:10

And he also caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work within the walls of the temple, of fine wood, and of copper, and of brass.

Ether 7:9

Wherefore, he came to the hill Ephraim, and he did molten out of the hill, and made swords out of steel for those whom he had drawn away with him; and after he had armed them with swords he returned to the city Nehor, and gave battle unto his brother Corihor, by which means he obtained the kingdom and restored it unto his father Kib.

Ether 10:23

And they did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals; and they did dig it out of the earth; wherefore, they did cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of copper. And they did work all manner of fine work.

Some studies have shown that metallurgy did exist in a primitive state in Mesoamerica during the Preclassic/Formative and Classic periods (which corresponds to the time period in the Book of Mormon). These metals include brass, iron ore, copper, silver, and gold. However, the metals were never used to make swords or armor.

Between 2004 and 2007, a Purdue University archaeologist, Kevin J. Vaughn, discovered a 2000-year-old iron ore mine near Nazca, Peru, however there is no evidence of smelting, and the ore (hematite) was apparently used to make pigments. There are other numerous excavations that included iron ore. He noted:

“Even though ancient Andean people smelted some metals, such as copper, they never smelted iron like they did in the Old World...Metals were used for a variety of tools in the Old World, such as weapons, while in the Americas, metals were used as prestige goods for the wealthy elite.”

This is another really big deal. There is no evidence of steel (hardened iron) production in North, Central, or South America. Making steel is a big process, which would leave big evidence, mostly in the form of large ovens that can reach the very high temperatures needed to purify and then harden the iron, and the waste products of steelmaking. Neither of these evidences would just disappear over time. They would be easily excavated, and the purpose would be easily understood. Yet, no evidence of steelmaking in pre-Columbian Americas has ever been uncovered.

The word “dross” (meaning a by-product of this high-temperature smelting needed to make steel) appears twice in the Book of Alma. According to [Brent Lee Metcalfe](#):

“The importance of metallurgy suggested by these frequent references to the metals themselves is confirmed by Nephite use of metaphors about metallurgical processes. For example, the word ‘dross’ is employed metaphorically. Dross is the waste product of smelting, the impurities which rise to the surface above the heavier molten metal. When cool, dross is a newly formed rock consisting of oxides, silicas, and other components of the ore in which the metallic mineral occurred. Dross has the usual qualities of a hard rock in that it resists erosion and deterioration unless subject to mechanical and/or chemical breakdown. The context for the word ‘dross’ in two passages in the Book of Mormon record suggests that the speaker and audience understood the metallurgical process the metaphor implies (cf. Ps. 119:119; Prov. 25:4; 26:23; Isa. 1:22, 25; Ezek. 22:18-19). ‘Therefore they were not permitted to enter into their synagogues to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness,’ the text explains. ‘Therefore they were poor; yea, they were esteemed by their brethren as dross; therefore they were poor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart’ (Alma 32:3). Later it is explained, ‘[T]herefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth) and is trodden under foot of men’ (34:29). Such apt metaphors suggest that metallurgical processes were an important and generally understood feature of Nephite life.”

Additionally, the Book of Mormon details a system of metal weights and measures used by the societies described therein for commerce. However, the overall use of metal in ancient America seems to have been extremely limited. A more common exchange medium in Mesoamerica were cacao beans.

Really, though, even if no evidence of the actual making of the steel or other metals were found, the bigger mystery for me is how no actual swords, breastplates, “all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground”, and other “weapons of war” that were supposedly made in abundance for at least a thousand years have been found. There are battles in the Book of Mormon where millions died. A battle of that magnitude would have left piles and piles of swords and breastplates, all other types of artifacts. Again, nothing supporting any of this has been found.

Book of Mormon Issue 4: Language

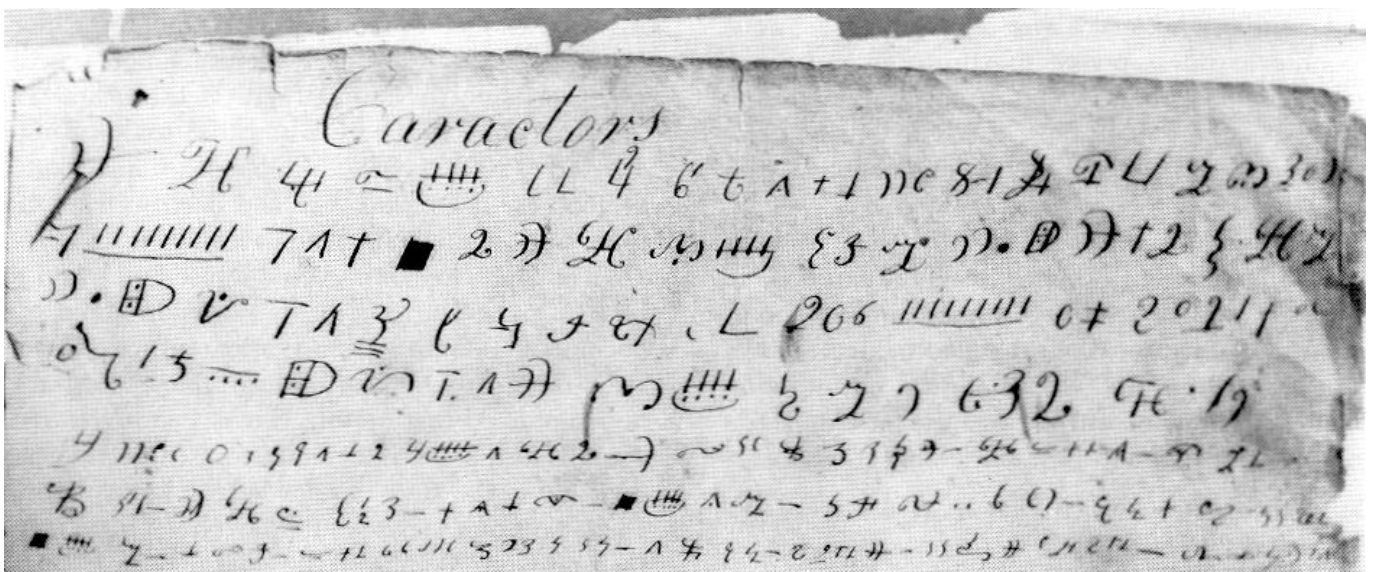


The text of the Book of Mormon indicates that the peoples within the narrative took great care to preserve their language from evolving or fracturing into different dialects. They wrote in Reformed Egyptian to supposedly “save space” and spoke and read Hebrew. In 1st Nephi, Nephi is commanded to get the brass plates from Jerusalem to preserve “unto our children the language of our fathers” (1 Nephi 3:19). Later in the text, the Nephite nation encounters a second group of Hebrew migrants and finds that their “language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them”. As a result, Mosiah (the Nephite leader) found it necessary that they should be taught in his (Hebrew) language (Omni 1:17-18). For the duration of the Book of Mormon narrative, there is no indication that the principle narrative groups ever deviated from their language of origin (spoken or written) for 1000 years. To the contrary, the current body of evidence indicates that there were many different spoken and written languages utilized among the various peoples of Ancient America that have no resemblance to Hebrew or Egyptian texts or languages.

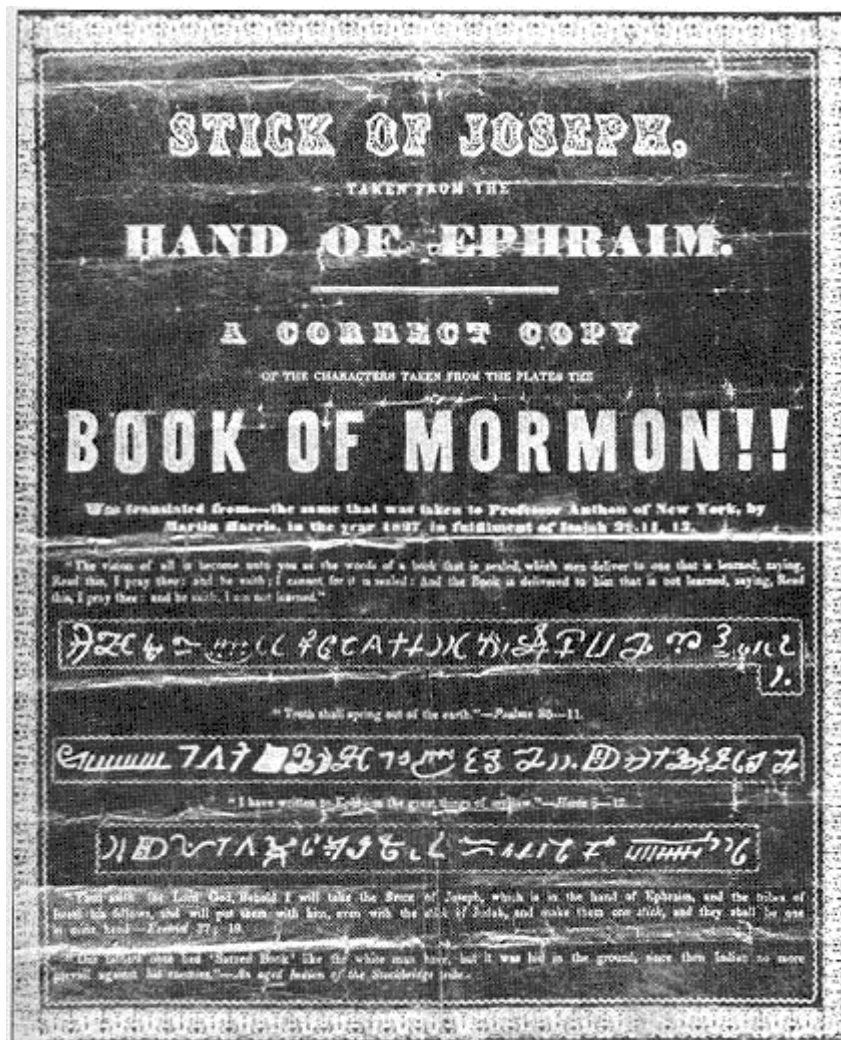
Due to the physical absence of the gold plates, there is no body of Ancient American evidence with which to compare Joseph Smith’s claim that Ancient Americans wrote Reformed Egyptian. Except – the famous ‘Anthon Transcript’ which was taken to Professor Charles Anthon for a certificate of authenticity may still exist.

Anthon Transcript

See <http://mormonthink.com/book-of-mormon-problems.htm#anthon> for an in depth analysis of the whole ‘Anthon Transcript’ experience. What I found interesting is that the Community of Christ has what is purported to be part of the document brought to Professor Anthon:

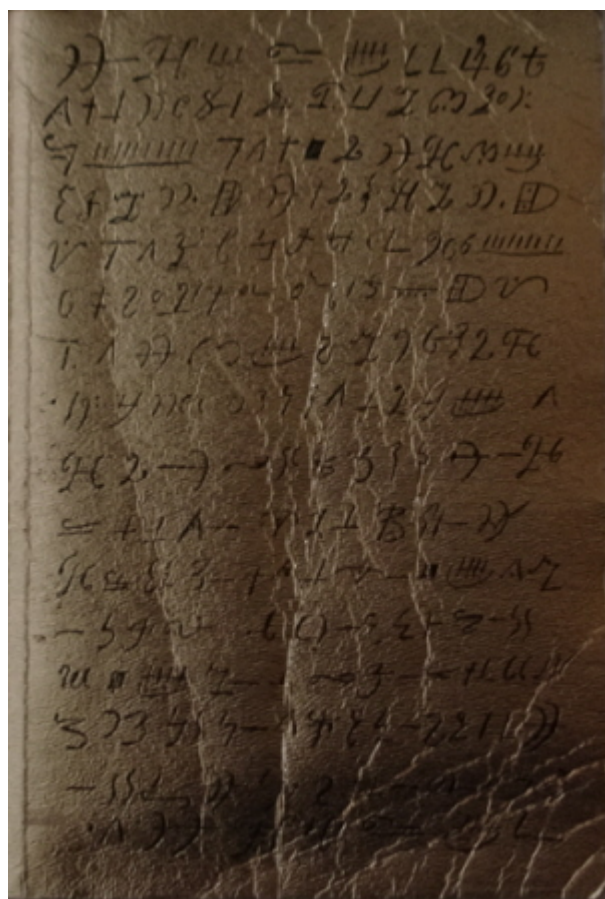


What gives this paper more credibility is that twice in late 1844, portions of these symbols were again published as characters that Joseph Smith, Jr had copied from the gold plates. Characters appeared in the December 21 issue of the Mormon newspaper The Prophet. Also, in 1844 the Latter-day Saints published a broadside (see below) with the title “Stick of Joseph” which contained supposed characters copied from the plates. The characters are basically the same as those from the Anthon transcript.

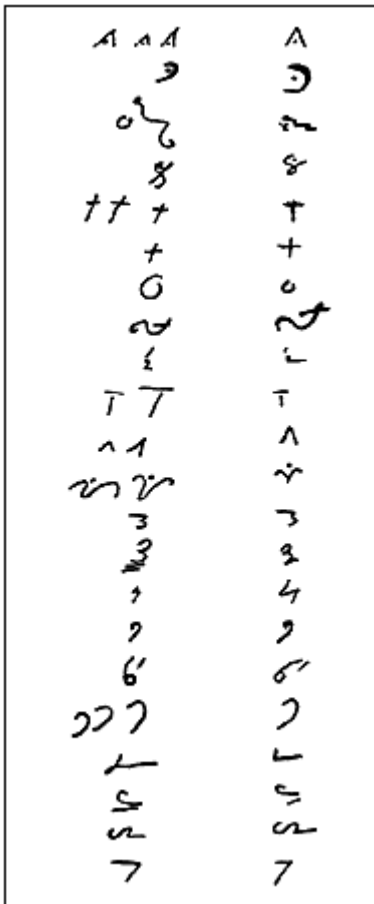


Broadside used in the early days of the Church to publicize the Book of Mormon reproduces the characters Joseph Smith copied from the plates. The broadside was printed in gold letters on black paper. (Church Archives)

And again in 1980, The LDS church printed an edition of the Book of Mormon that featured the same characters from the Anthon Transcript on the front and back covers of a Book of Mormon made with gold covers to simulate what the gold plates may have looked like. The photo below is of one of these 1980 editions.



Based on these uses, I conclude that the LDS church trusts that these are the characters from the Anthon Transcript or at least characters that Joseph Smith, Jr copied from the plates for some other reason. So, what do the characters say? Nothing. Several scholars, LDS and not LDS, have tried to make any sense of the lines, with no real luck. What I gather as being one of the more accepted conclusions among non-LDS scholars is that the paper was written by someone who had a book containing various alphabets from which to copy or adapt. [Here](#) is one analysis comparing many of the marks to a Latin shorthand called Tironian notes. The photo below shows the comparison with the Anthon characters on the left and the shorthand on the right:



It is difficult to believe that the characters are reformed Egyptian after this perspective is presented.

Greek and Other Language Issues

For a very detailed analysis of many of the language issues in the Book of Mormon, please see <http://packham.n4m.org/linguist.htm>. I'll summarize a few of what I think are the biggest problems here, but go there for more detail if any of this is interesting.

Joseph Smith, Jr. stated that "There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of the Lord, translated the Book of Mormon." (Times and Seasons, Vol.4, No.13, May 15, 1843, p.194). However there are several places that have no meaning without Greek or Latin being found on the plates.

"Christ the Messiah"

The Hebrew word which gives us the term "messiah" is 'mashiach,' meaning literally "[the] anointed [one]." It is used in the Hebrew Old Testament 47 times in reference to all anointed persons such as priests and kings. It is only relatively late in Hebrew literature that it came to have the additional special meaning of the yet-to-come anointed king of the house of David who was expected to appear and free the Jews from foreign domination and establish God's kingdom forever on earth.

Usually in the New Testament, which was written in Greek, the Hebrew word 'mashiach' is translated into Greek with the Greek word which means "anointed": 'christos', and that Greek word is usually not translated into English, but only transliterated (anglicized), as "Christ," with a capital letter.

In the Greek of the New Testament, of course, he was referred to as "Jesus the Anointed One" ('Iesous ho christos'), which in Hebrew or Aramaic would be something like "Ieshua ha mashiach."

Now, when we look at the Book of Mormon (supposedly translated from Hebrew written in Reformed

Egyptian), we find that the term “Messiah” occurs about 25 times. The term “Christ” occurs about 317 times.

Joseph Smith, Jr insisted that there was no Greek on the plates. So how could sometimes “the Anointed One” be translated as “Messiah” while other times it is translated as “Christ”?

Especially troubling are verses like:

2 Nephi 25:19

For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So first, I’m comfortable stating that no scholar believes that Jesus’s name was “Jesus Christ”, being the son of “Joseph Christ” and “Mary Christ”. Additionally, this would mean that the angel of God spoke to the hebrews in Greek at times, instead of their own language. That doesn’t work.

“Synagogue”

Alma 16:13

And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews.

Scholars of Jewish religious history are almost unanimous in the view that the synagogue, which we think of as so typical of Jewish religious life, did not exist before the destruction of the temple and the Babylonian Captivity, which was definitively after Lehi and the family left. So how could any Nephite know about “synagogues ... after the manner of the Jews”? It may or may not be surprising at this point that the word “synagogue” is also Greek (from ‘syn-’ “together” and ‘ag-’ “bring, lead”).

“Bible” and more Greek words

Our English word “Bible” is an anglicization of the Greek word ‘biblia’, which means “books,” and is simply the plural of the Greek word ‘biblion’ meaning “book.” The chapter of 2 Nephi 29 is odd for many reasons in itself, but the Greek words written by a Hebrew speaking, Reformed Egyptian writing people adds additional difficulty.

The following names from the Book of Mormon are also Greek in origin:

Antipas, Antipus, Archeantus, Ezias, Jonas, Judea, Alpha and Omega, Timothy, Zenos, Angola

The Book of Mormon mentions a harlot named Isabel (Alma 39:3). “Isabel” is a name that only came into use in France and Italy during the late Middle Ages. Except, the Nephites invented it first, by over 1,000 years.

Book of Mormon Issue 5: Hebrew DNA



I will go into this in more depth at some time, but until just recently (2006), the introduction page in the Book of Mormon said all of the people chronicled in the book “were destroyed, except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” The new introduction reads much the same, but says the Lamanites “are among the ancestors of the American Indians.”

This change does not agree with the Book of Mormon or what has been taught by most Church leaders since Joseph Smith, Jr. The Church leaders have affirmed until very recently that the American Indians are the direct descendants of Lehi and Mulek and their families – who were all of the House of Israel (Jews). No other groups of people are discussed as being encountered in the Book of Mormon other than the Jaredites, who all died in a massive battle. I think the wording change in the Book of Mormon title page is in direct response to the developing body of DNA and other evidence that show the American Indians are not Israelites.

“The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians; having been found through the ministration of an holy angel, and translated into our own language by the gift and power of God, after having been hid up in the earth for the last fourteen hundred years, containing the word of God which was delivered unto them. By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph who was sold into Egypt.” – Joseph Smith, Jr, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p 17

“It has been said by many of the learned and wise men, or historians, that the Indians or aborigines of this continent, are of the scattered tribes of Israel. It has been conjectured by many others, that the aborigines of this continent are not of the tribes of Israel, but the ten tribes have been led away into some unknown regions of the north. Let this be as it may, the prophecy I have just quoted ‘will fetch them,’ in the last days, and place them in the land which their fathers possessed.” – Joseph Smith, Jr, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p 85

“The Nephites suffered extinction about 400 A.D., but the Lamanites lived on in their degraded course, and are today extant upon the land as the American Indians.” – Apostle James Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 23rd ed., p. 49

“Not only in the Book of Mormon are the descendants of Lehi called Jews, but also in the Doctrine and Covenants. In section 19, this is found: ‘Which is my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites [Native Americans] are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and, look not for a Messiah to come who has already come.’” – Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, v. 3, p. 264

“Lamanites share a royal heritage. I should like to address my remarks to you, our kinsmen of the isles of the sea and the Americas. Millions of you have blood relatively unmixed with gentile nations.” – Prophet Spencer W. Kimball, The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 596

So, what does the DNA evidence say? DNA evidence indicates American Americans descended from Asia, not Israel as the church teaches. Asian migrants have populated this continent for over 50,000 years. The thousands of DNA samples from every known tribe of Native Americans indicate an Asiatic rather than Semitic origin and give greater support to the theory of a prehistoric Asiatic migration across the Bearing Strait. Here are a few quotes about the DNA evidence.

“So far, DNA research has lent no support to the traditional Mormon beliefs about the origins of Native Americans. Instead, genetic data have confirmed that migrations from Asia are the primary source of American Indian origins... While DNA shows that ultimately all human populations are closely related, to date no intimate genetic link has been found between ancient Israelites and indigenous Americans, much less within the time frame suggested in the Book of Mormon.” – Thomas Murphy, Mormon anthropologist, *American Apocrypha*, 2002, p. 47-48

“I don’t think there is one iota of evidence that suggests a lost tribe from Israel made it all the way to the New World. It is a great story, slain by ugly fact.” – Michael Crawford, anthropologist at University of Kansas.

Book of Mormon Issue 6+: Everything else



Quoted Isaiah Scriptures

Scholars divide the book of Isaiah into three parts. There is very little disagreement about this fact. Here are the three parts and when they were written:

- Chapters 1 to 39 (First Isaiah, Proto-Isaiah or Original Isaiah): the work of the original prophet Isaiah, who worked in Jerusalem between 740 and 687 BCE.
- Chapters 40 to 55 (Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah): by an anonymous author who lived in Babylon near the end of the Babylonian captivity.
- Chapters 56 to 66 (Third Isaiah or Trito-Isaiah): the work of anonymous disciples committed to continuing Isaiah's work in the years immediately after the return from Babylon.

This presents a massive problem for the Book of Mormon. Nephi is supposedly copying Isaiah 48-52 into 1 Nephi 21-22 and 2 Nephi 7-8,17. Those chapters of Isaiah were written after Israel was carried away into Babylon, which was after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. Nephi could not have had those chapters on his brass plates, yet there they are in the Book of Mormon. What alternative explanation is there for this, other than the Book of Mormon being a 19th century creation?

There was Death Prior to the Fall of Adam (4000 BC)

The Book of Mormon teaches that, prior to the fall of Adam, there was no death anywhere on the planet. Church leaders have taught that organic evolution is not a law of nature, but a faulty teaching of man, and the earth is not millions of years old – only around 6000. The evidence against both of these claims is mountainous. This is an important issue, however I will not be going into the depth it may deserve. Please ask me if you have questions about this.

2 Nephi 2:22

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

Alma 12:23

And now behold, I say unto you that if it had been possible for Adam to have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death, and the word would have been void, making God a liar, for he said: If thou eat thou shalt surely die.

D&C 77:6

Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with

seven seals?

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

No Supportive Archaeological Evidence has been Found

The Book of Mormon gives so many details about cities, waters, a temple, and other landmarks. Several LDS members have taken those details and tried to locate the actual landmarks. It makes sense that with a detailed guide such as the Book of Mormon, locating these places should not be overly complicated, and it would be a testament to the truthfulness of the book. Unfortunately for the Church, to date no solid supportive evidence has been found.

Thomas Stuart Ferguson was a dedicated believer in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon at the time he founded the New World Archaeology Foundation. He really believed that archaeology would prove the Book of Mormon. Read his whole story [here](#). He petitioned President David O. McKay to give him a grant to be able to travel to Mesoamerica and look for evidence that the Book of Mormon is true. McKay granted him \$250,000 of tithing funds to do his research.

In a letter dated April 23, 1952, Mr. Ferguson said the “the archaeological data now available is entirely inadequate” for testing the Book of Mormon. He predicted, however, that the “next ten years of excavations in Mexico and Guatemala should enable us to make the archaeological tests.” For a number of years he was very excited about the progress of the work and seemed certain that the Book of Mormon would be vindicated soon. In his book, *One Fold And One Shepherd*, p. 263, he stated: “The important thing now is to continue the digging at an accelerated pace in order to find more inscriptions dating to Book-of-Mormon times. Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions... referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon.” In 1962 Mr. Ferguson said that “Powerful evidences sustaining the book are accumulating.”

Although many important archaeological discoveries were made, the evidence he had desired to find to support the Book of Mormon did not turn up. In response to a letter Hal Hougey wrote in 1972 which reminded him that he had predicted in 1961 that Book of Mormon cities would be found within 10 years, Mr. Ferguson sadly wrote: “Ten years have passed... I sincerely anticipated that Book-of-Mormon cities would be positively identified within 10 years—and time has proved me wrong in my anticipation.”

He never found anything, and additionally, the discovery of the Book of Abraham’s papyri and the subsequent actual translating of it destroyed his testimony. Below, I’ll go into that some. In 1975, Ferguson wrote about the additional archaeological work that had been done, “With all of these great efforts, it cannot be established factually that anyone, from Joseph Smith to the present day, has put his finger on a single point of terrain that was a Book-of-Mormon geographical place. And the hemisphere has been pretty well checked out by competent people. Thousands of sites have been excavated.” Ferguson pointed out in his paper that the text of the Book of Mormon makes it very clear that certain items should be found in archaeological excavations and that these items are not present in the sites proposed. He noted, for instance, that “Thousands of archaeological holes in the area proposed have given us not a fragment of evidence of the presence of the plants mentioned in the Book of Mormon...” (p. 7) On page 29 he concluded by saying: “I’m afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is no Book-of-Mormon geography.”

Non-LDS Scholars

“Archeologists and other scholars have long probed the hemisphere’s past and the society does not know of anything found so far that has substantiated the Book of Mormon.” Statement by the

National Geographic Society

"It can be stated definitely that there is no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book of Mormon. There is no correspondence whatever between archeological sites and cultures as revealed by scientific investigations and as recorded in the Book of Mormon, hence the book cannot be regarded as having any historical value from the standpoint of the aboriginal peoples of the New World." F.H.H. Roberts, Jr, Smithsonian Institution, 1951

"There is an inherent improbability in specific items that are mentioned in the Book of Mormon as having been brought to the New World by...Nephites. Among these are the horse, the chariot, wheat, barley, and [true] metallurgy. The picture of this hemisphere...presented in the book has little to do with the early Indian cultures as we know them." [Michael Coe, archeologist at Yale University](#).

The Smithsonian Letter

The Smithsonian Institution is one of the most (if not the most) prestigious research institute on archaeological research in the world. They have historically received letters from Mormons asking for evidence that the Book of Mormon stories are true. [Here](#) is the response they give:

Prepared by
THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

STATEMENT REGARDING THE BOOK OF MORMON

1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book.
2. The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia. Archaeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the present Indians came into the New World—probably over a land bridge known to have existed in the Bering Strait region during the last Ice Age—in a continuing series of small migrations beginning from about 25,000 to 30,000 years ago.
3. Present evidence indicates that the first people to reach this continent from the East were the Norsemen, who briefly visited the northeastern part of North America around 1000 A.D. and then settled in Greenland. There is no evidence to show that they reached Mexico or Central America.
4. None of the principal Old World domesticated food plants or animals (except the dog) occurred in the New World in pre- Columbian times. This is one of the main lines of evidence supporting the scientific premise that contacts with Old World civilizations, if they occurred, were of very little significance for the development of American Indian civilizations. American Indians had no wheat, barley, oats, millet, rice, cattle, pigs, chickens, horses, donkeys, or camels before 1492. (Camels and horses were in the Americas, along with the bison, mammoth, and mastodon, but all these animals became extinct around 10,000 B.C. at the time the early big game hunters traveled across the Americas.)
5. Iron, steel, glass, and silk were not used in the New World before 1492 (except for occasional use of unsmelted meteoric iron). Native copper was worked in various locations in pre- Columbian times, but true metallurgy was limited to southern Mexico and the Andean region, where its occurrence in late prehistoric times involved gold, silver, copper, and their alloys, but not iron.
6. There is a possibility that the spread of cultural traits across the Pacific to Mesoamerica and the northwestern coast of South America began several hundred years before the Christian era.

However, any such inter-hemispheric contacts appear to have been the results of accidental voyages originating in eastern and southern Asia. It is by no means certain that even such contacts occurred with the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, or other peoples of Western Asia and the Near East.

7. No reputable Egyptologist or other specialist on Old World archeology, and no expert on New World prehistory, has discovered or confirmed any relationship between archeological remains in Mexico and archeological remains in Egypt.

8. Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune stones which have been found in Greenland.

9. There are copies of the Book of Mormon in the library of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

Book of Abraham



The majority of members don't know where the [Book of Abraham](#) (found in the Pearl of Great Price) comes from. Here is a brief history from [Wikipedia](#):

Several papyri and eleven mummies were discovered in Thebes by Antonio Lebolo between 1818 and 1822. Sometime between 1822 and his death on February 19, 1830, Lebolo arranged to have them sold. The mummies were shipped to New York, where they were purchased by Michael Chandler in 1833. Over the next two years Chandler toured the eastern United States, displaying and selling some of the mummies.

In July 1835, Chandler brought the remaining four mummies and associated papyri to Kirtland, Ohio, the then home of the Latter-Day Saints. Although the Rosetta Stone had been discovered in 1799, the ability to read Egyptian wasn't well developed until the 1850s. Chandler asked Joseph Smith to look at the scrolls and give some insight into what was written on them, due to Smith's notoriety and claim to have translated the golden plates of the Book of Mormon. After examining the scrolls, Smith, Joseph Coe and Simeon Andrews purchased the four mummies and at least five papyrus documents for \$2,400.

After Joseph died and Brigham Young went west with a large portion of the Saints, Emma Smith didn't like Brigham so she chose to stay behind, and with her remained the papyri Joseph had said he translated to produce the Book of Abraham. She eventually sold them along with a certificate of authenticity to a museum in Chicago.

In 1871 was the Great Chicago Fire and the papyri were thought to have been burnt and gone. However, in 1966, the papyri surfaced in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. They had luckily survived the fire mostly in tact. They were given to the Church as a gift from the museum.

The question on everyone's minds at this point was "Does Joseph Smith's translation match?" After Egyptologists translated the papyri, the answer was unanimous: no. The papyri were standard Egyptian funerary texts dating to around 100 BC, some 2000 years after Abraham had already died. Abraham isn't mentioned once in any of the papyri. Many Egyptologists have looked at the papyri, and [their translations](#) are scholarly.

This is quite a heated topic among Mormon apologists, which I have spent a lot of time studying. They come up with lots of excuses why the papyri don't talk about Abraham. I find all of their reasoning very weak.

Let's take a closer look at parts of the papyri and how they don't coincide at all with Joseph's interpretation of them. Much of this analysis was compiled from other sources.

Book of Abraham: Facsimile 1



This is Facsimile 1, located at the front of the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Joseph Smith described this scene as “The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice,” meaning, the man with the knife is a priest of Elkenah and the man on the altar is Abraham.



But is that really what's going on here?

Let's look at the original. Here is a photograph:



There are a couple things a casual observer would probably notice. First, there are some sections missing (which I will discuss later). Second, there are hieroglyphics on the papyrus that weren't included in Joseph Smith's publication.

Let's take a look at what the hieroglyphics say.

The following translation is based on Dr. Robert K. Ritner's (University of Chicago) translation published in the *Journal of Near East Studies*, September 2003, pp. 161-180. Missing sections are indicated with [brackets].



(I/1) ["Osiris, the god's father], prophet of Amon-Re, King of the Gods, prophet of Min who slaughters his enemies, prophet of Khonsu, the [one who exercises] authority in Thebes, (I/2) [. . .] . . . Hor, the justified, son of the similarly titled overseer of secrets and purifier of the god, Osorwer, the justified, born by the [housewife and sistrum-player of] (I/3) [Amon]-Re, Taikhibit, the justified! May your ba-spirit live among them, and may you be buried on the west [of Thebes]." (I/4) ["O Anubis(?), 51 . . .] justification(?). (I/5) [May you give to him] a good and splendid burial on the west of Thebes as on the mountains of Ma[nu](?)." (Emphasis added.)

As I highlighted above, there's a very important piece of information described in the Egyptian

writing.



This isn't the attempted sacrifice of Abraham, but rather the embalming of a man named Hor. Facsimile 1 has absolutely nothing to do with Abraham. One might ask, if this is merely an embalming of an already dead man, why is the priest holding a knife?

I now would like to discuss a point I addressed earlier: the missing sections.

Before the missing papyri were found, Egyptologists were always very confused about certain aspects of Facsimile 1.

1. Problem 1: Human sacrifice was never practiced in Ancient Egypt, so it seemed very odd that an Egyptian vignette would feature such a display. The knife seemed completely out of place.
2. Problem 2: The man with the man's head (the "priest") should almost certainly have a jackal head, since it was always Anubis, the Egyptian God of the Dead, who did the embalming.
3. Problem 3: The bird up and to the right was almost certainly the soul of Osiris, which is the God of the Afterlife to Egyptians. He always has a human head and not a bird head.

Here are some examples of Egyptian art that show the scene the proper way:



Here are a couple more that show the soul of Osiris (the bird with the human head) as well:





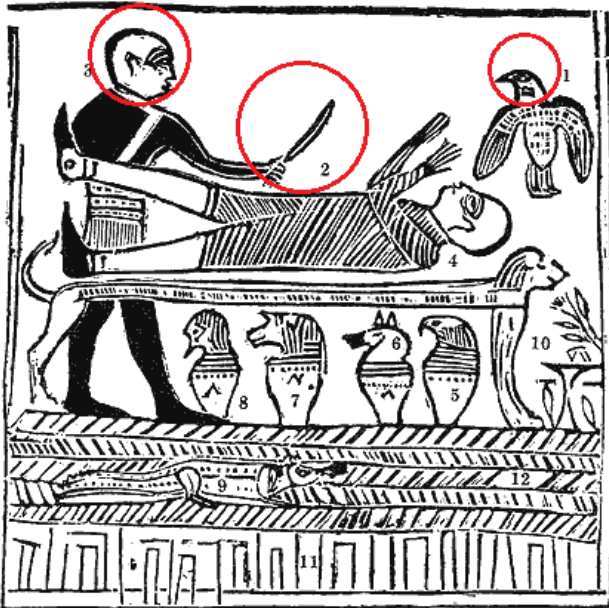
This last one is particularly interesting. Look at the stripe on Anubis, and Joseph Smith's "priest":



Also notice that Anubis always has a black body. So does Joseph Smith's priest all the way down to his feet except his head. The priest's head looks very similar to the head of the man on the altar (which wasn't missing on the original papyrus):



The left are the areas that Egyptologists questioned before the papyri were discovered; the right is the papyrus as it was found with the missing areas circled. It all makes sense now:



Of course someone who knows nothing about Egyptian history would assume that a man's body should have a man's head and a bird's body should have a bird's head. That only makes sense, which is why Joseph Smith filled them in that way. But it's simply completely wrong.

Questions:

1. If Joseph Smith could read hieroglyphics, why would he avoid reading the hieroglyphics that were clearly to the left and right of what he included as Facsimile 1? He would have quickly learned that this was scene depicting the embalming of Hor, not the sacrifice of Abraham.
2. If Joseph Smith was a prophet (and just didn't notice the hieroglyphics, let's say), why didn't

God tell him that this was an embalming ceremony, and that the man should have a jackal head, and shouldn't hold a knife, and the bird should have a human head?

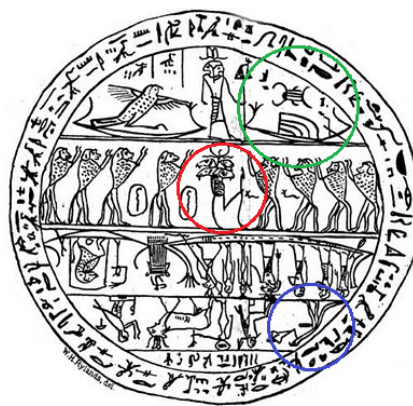
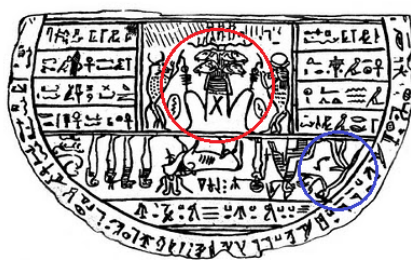
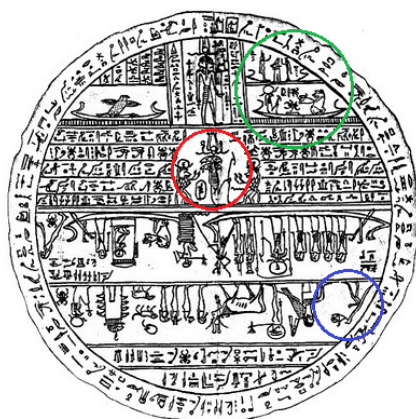
Book of Abraham: Facsimile 2

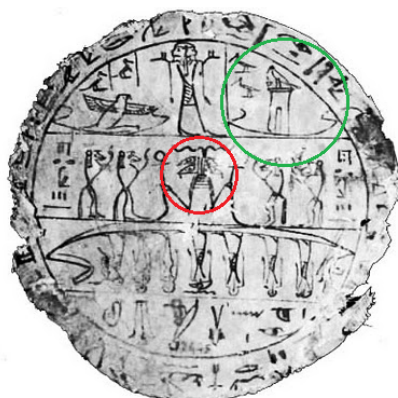
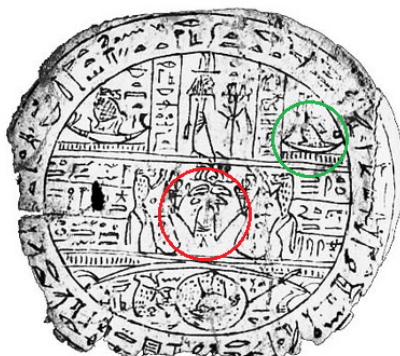
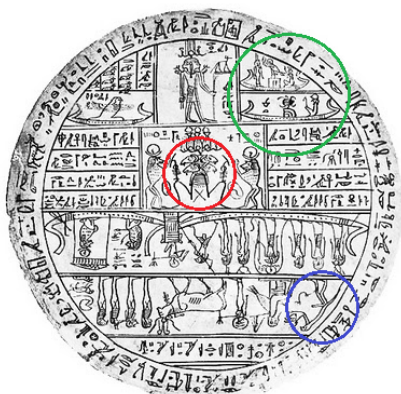
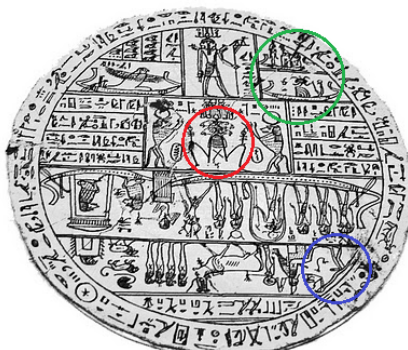
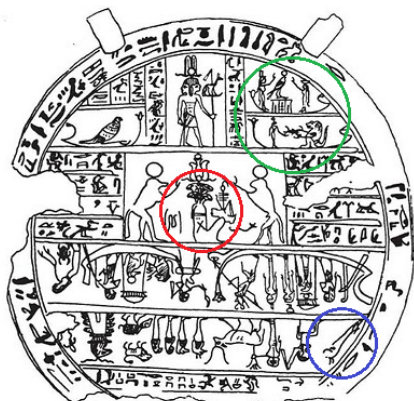
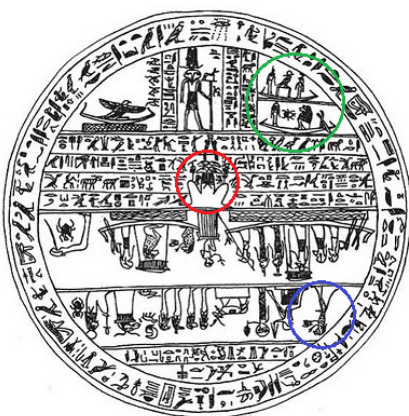


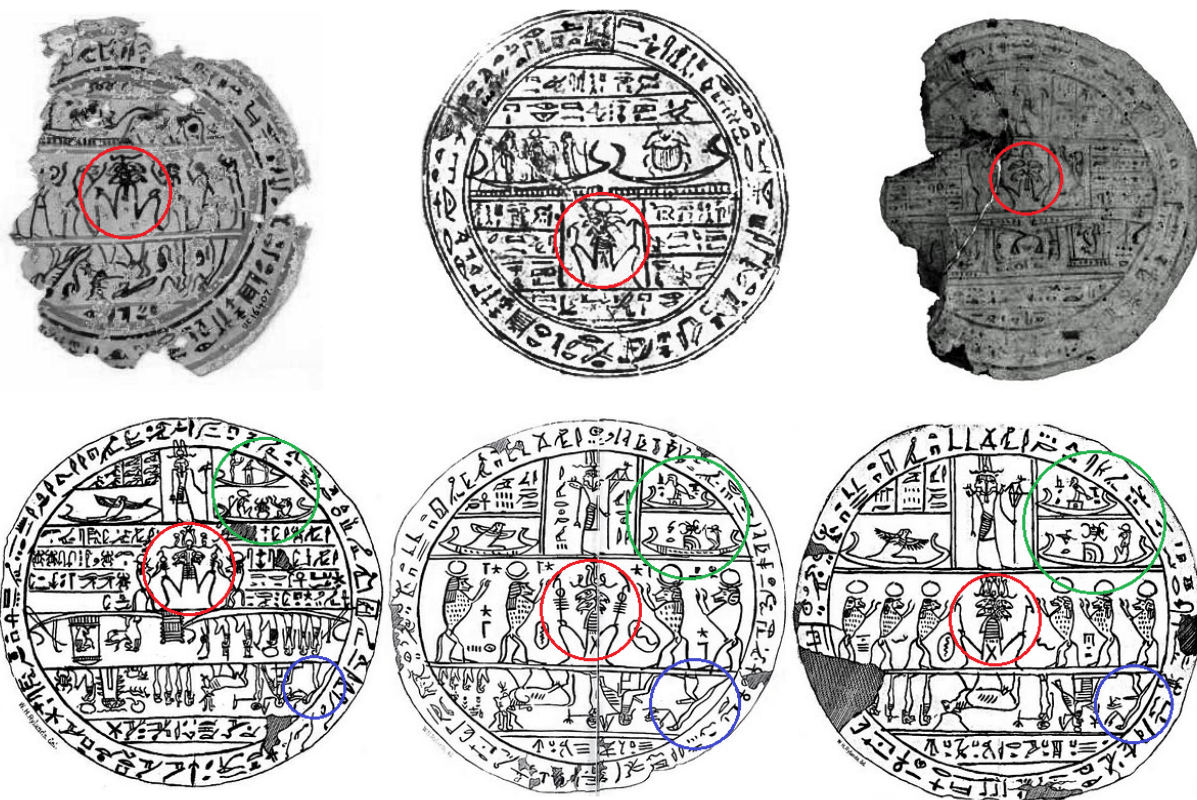
Facsimile 2 is actually a representation of a “hypocephalus”. Egyptians would put these under the head of mummies, like a pillow.



Here are lots of real hypocephali as they are in abundance:

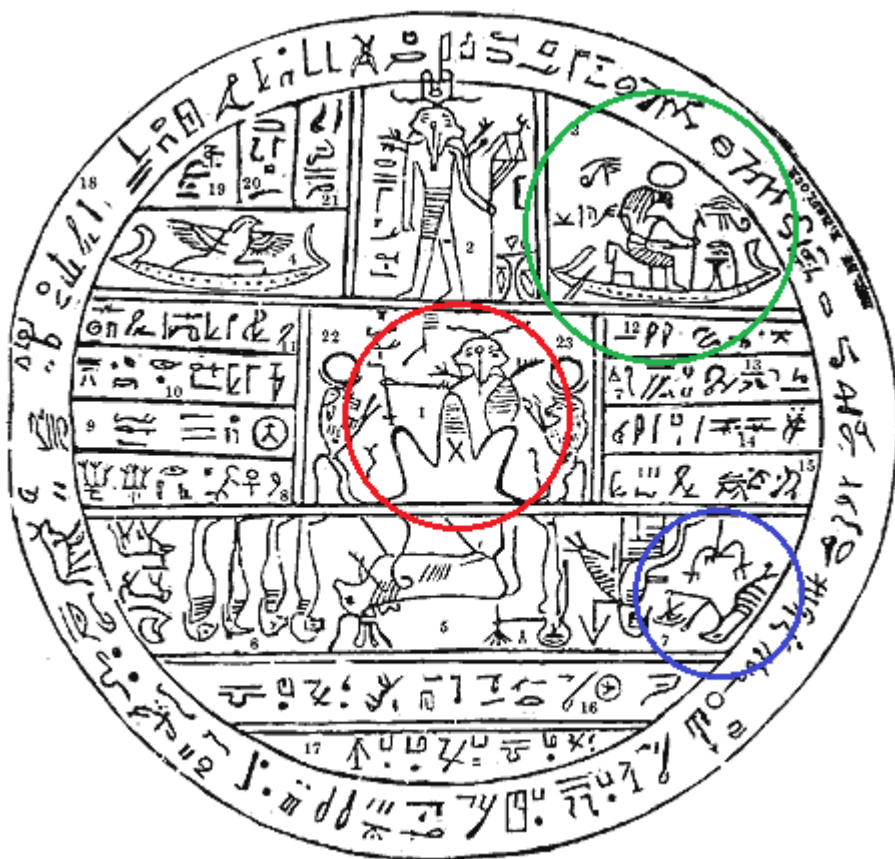






You'll notice that I've circled certain sections. Go back and study what's inside the red circle first. Four ram heads, right? Now go back and study what's in the green circle. Two boats with a beetle in the bottom one. Now the blue circle. A lizard holding something.

Let's look at Facsimile 2 again, with the same areas circled.



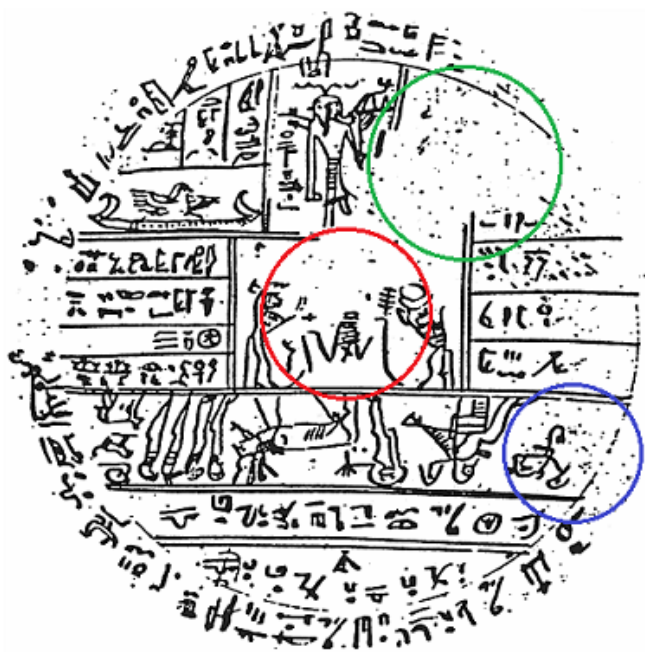
1. Red circle: No ram heads, now there's a strange figure standing there instead.
2. Green circle: Just one boat, and in the boat is nothing we've seen before in any hypocephali. There's no beetle.
3. Blue circle: The lizard now has what looks like a bird body. There's also a strange stick figure below him with his hands in the air.

While Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Abraham, he kept a collection of documents in what is now known as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. In it, he included a rough copy of what would later become Facsimile 2:

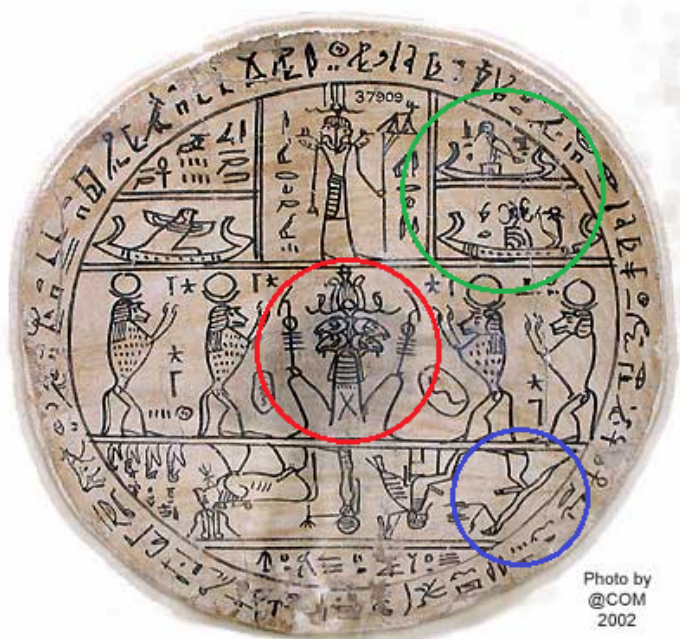


Obvious to the reader are the missing sections. Although we don't have the original hypocephalus Joseph Smith used to create Facsimile 2, this drawing leads us to believe that it was copied into the Kirtland Egyptian Papers and that the original hypocephalus had sections that were missing or hard to read.

Remember the parts in Facsimile 2 that were different than real hypocephali? Let's compare those sections with the early representation in the Kirtland Egyptian Papers:



As in Facsimile 1, the strange sections match the missing sections from the original. Let's focus on just one hypocephalus along side Facsimile 2:

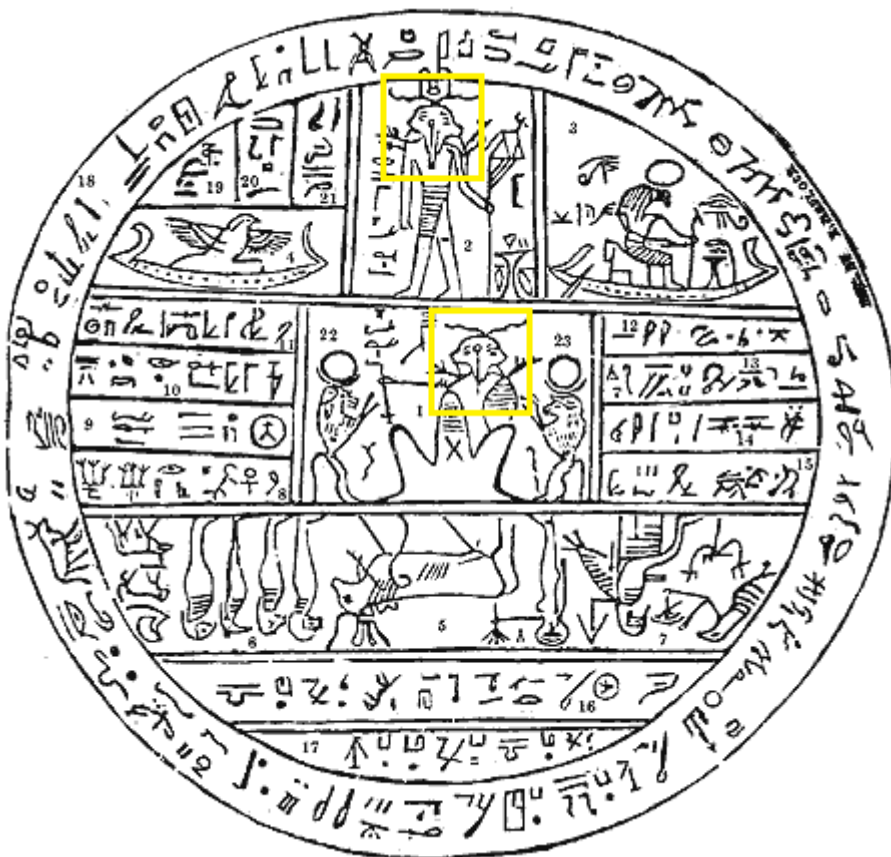


The only section that seems that he got slightly right is the one within the green circle. He has the boat correct, but nothing inside the boat (or that there should be two). Remember, the drawing of Facsimile 2 in the Kirtland Egyptian Papers in digital format only shows black and white, not faint lines that may have existed on the actual hypocephalus Joseph Smith had. We can speculate that there was a faint outline of a boat.

As far as where he got the actual drawing inside the boat, it is found elsewhere in the papyri discovered in 1966. It appears that Joseph filled in that part from this other section:



And he got the head in the red circle from the section just above it:



Questions:

1. If Joseph Smith was a prophet, why wasn't he able to properly reproduce the missing sections?
2. If he was being inspired by God to reproduce the missing sections, why did he copy from other

sections to fill in the missing parts?

Book of Abraham: Facsimile 3

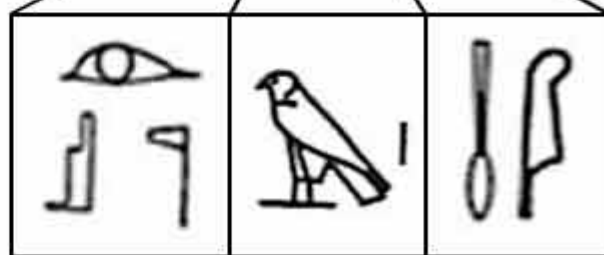
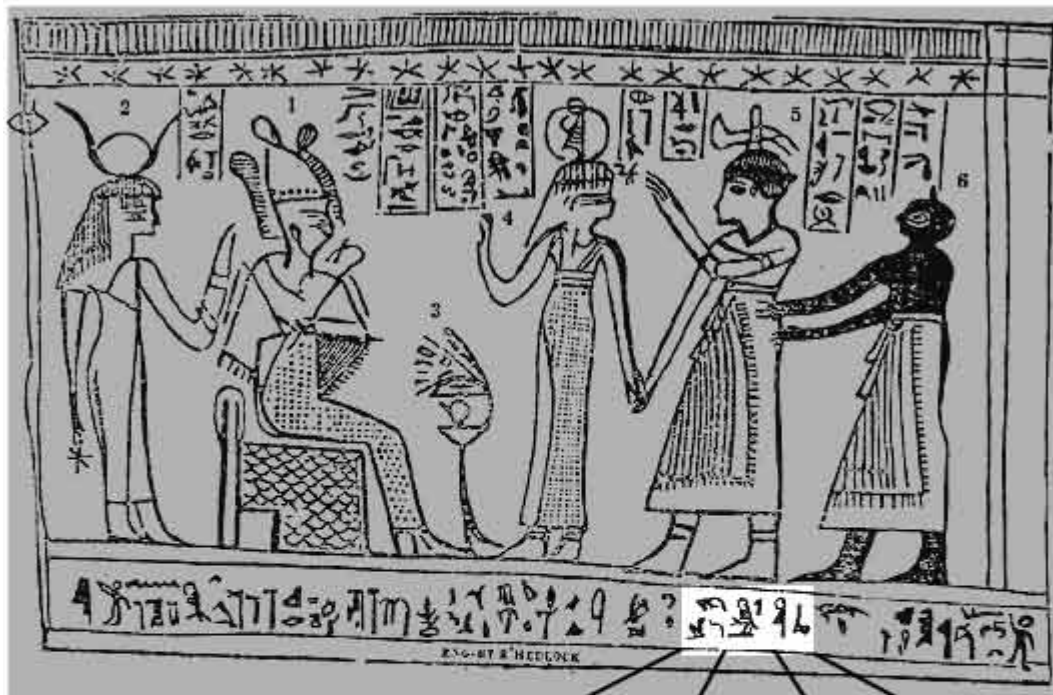


Facsimile 3 is described by Joseph Smith as

“Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh’s throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.”



Once again, this is not about Abraham at all, but is about Hor. And we don’t need the original to show this, since Joseph Smith included the hieroglyphics right in the Facsimile this time.



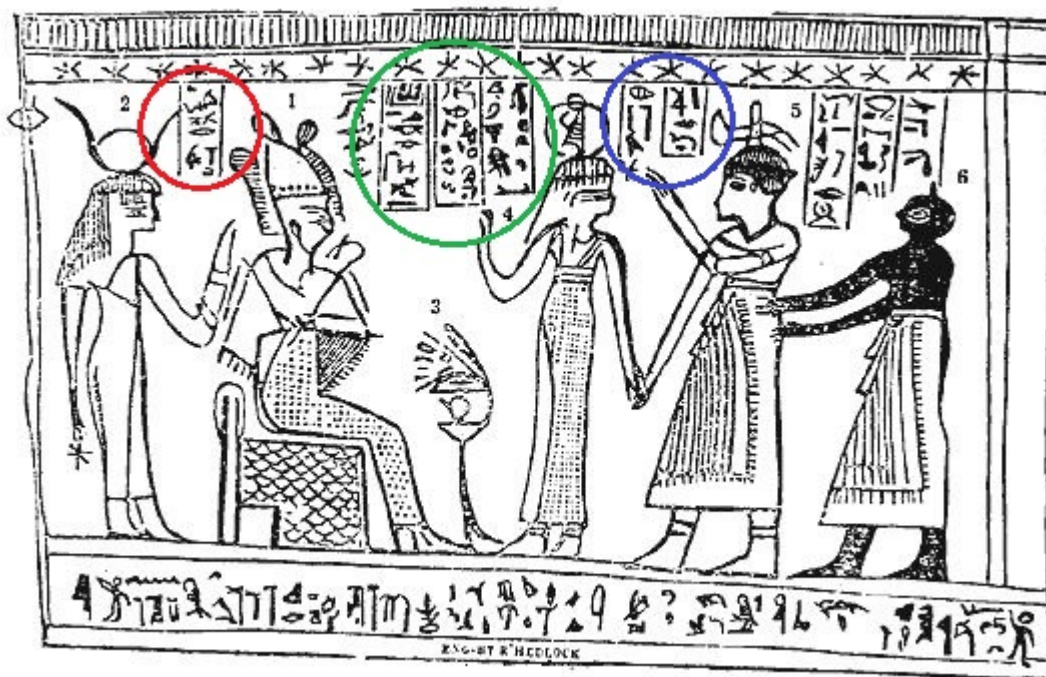
Osiris

Hôr

Justified

And that's not all, there are plenty of other hieroglyphics in this one. What's more is that Joseph specifies what the hieroglyphics mean. This is a rare occurrence that Joseph Smith published something where he provided both the source and the translation.

Below I have circled the sections that Joseph Smith attempted to translate, with the translated parts color-coordinated in the "Explanation" section (which is included in the Book of Abraham). Make sure and match the colored words below with the circle of the same color in Facsimile 3:



Joseph's Explanation (from the PoGP):

1. Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.
2. King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head. [look in the red circle above]
3. Signifies Abraham in Egypt as given also in Figure 10 of Facsimile No. 1.
4. Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as written above the hand. [look in the green circle above]
5. Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand. [look in the blue circle above]
6. Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.

Let's look at what Egyptologists all confirm as the translation compared to Joseph Smith's translations and interpretations:

	Joseph Smith's Explanation in the Pearl of Great Price	Explanation by Egyptologists (quotes are from Robert K. Ritner)
General Comment	Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court.	"Invocation (text at bottom line below the illustration): O gods of the necropolis, gods of the caverns, gods of the south, north, west, and east grant salvation to the Osiris Hor, the justified, born by Taikhibit."
Fig. 1	Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.	"Label for Osiris (text to the right of figure 1 of facsimile 3): Recitation by Osiris, Foremost of the Westerners, Lord of Abydos(?), the great god forever and ever(?)."
Fig. 2	King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head.	"Label for Isis (text to the right of figure 2 of facsimile 3): Isis the great, the god's mother."
Fig. 3	Signifies Abraham in Egypt as given also in Figure 10 of Facsimile No. 1.	"Altar, with the offering of the deceased, surrounded with lotus flowers, signifying the offering of the defunct." -Theodule Deveria
Fig. 4	Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as written above the hand.	"Label for Maat (text to the left of figure 4 of facsimile 3): Maat, mistress of the gods."
Fig. 5	Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand.	"Label for Hor the deceased (text in front of figure 5 of facsimile 3): The Osiris Hor, justified forever."
Fig. 6	Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.	"Label for Anubis (text in front of figure 6 of facsimile 3): Recitation by Anubis, who makes protection(?), foremost of the embalming booth,..."

I can understand having names differ, but the translations are not remotely similar in content or

meaning. He thought Isis (a woman) was King Pharoah, Maat (another woman) was the Prince of Pharaoh, and Anubis was a slave (being black).

Let's focus on Anubis, since it was previously established that he should have a jackal head. Keep in mind that we definitely know that this should be Anubis since it says it right above his head "Label for Anubis". Why it doesn't exactly look like Anubis we can only speculate since we don't have the original.

In Joseph Smith's day, as you know, they didn't have copying machines. What we have for Facsimile 3 is a trace of what the actual papyrus had. Judging the problems with sections being missing or hard to read for Facsimile 1 and 2, we can speculate that the source for Facsimile 3 was similarly difficult to make out. Besides the fact that they are both black, the most interesting clue we can draw from this poor representation of Anubis is the spike on the his head in Joseph Smith's attempt to draw him. This is most likely a remnant of Anubis' pointy ears.



Like I pointed out in the first two facsimiles, the first is a common embalming scene depicting Anubis, and the second is a hypocephalus. What about this one? It is simply a depiction of the judgment hall scene in the Egyptian afterlife doctrine. [Here](#) is just one example from the book of the dead of Hunefer, 19th dynasty:



Let's compare those left two figures with the ones in Facsimile 3:



A match! And who are they? Just as the hieroglyphics indicate just above them in both depictions: these are Isis and Osiris, not King Pharaoh and Abraham.

Questions:

1. If Joseph Smith was a prophet, why wasn't he able to accurately translate the hieroglyphics?
2. Even if he couldn't read the hieroglyphics, why didn't the Spirit tell him who the characters in this scene were?
3. If he was being inspired to fill in the missing sections, why didn't he accurately portray Anubis?

The actual text of the Book of Abraham

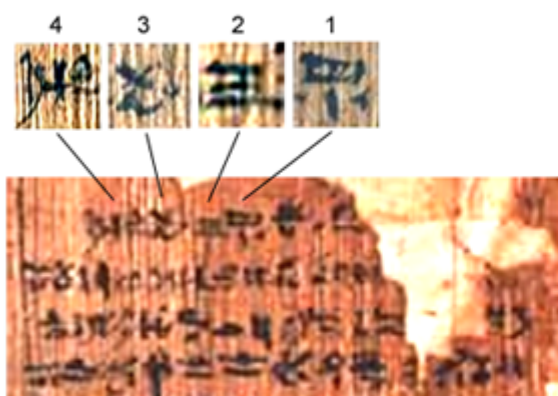
Since Joseph's interpretations of the facsimiles are demonstrably incorrect, it would make sense that the actual text in the Book of Abraham **would be made up** as well. I would like to demonstrate that in this section.

As Joseph was "translating" the papyri, he documented the translation as a glossary in what is now known as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers as I mentioned earlier (which I will call "KEP" from now on). If there's any question if it was Joseph who was in charge of these papers (even if he wasn't the scribe), he even kept track in **his own journal** that he was making this glossary:

"The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients." (History of the Church 2:238)

The KEP are owned by the LDS Church and kept secretly in their vault, but **a microfilm copy** of them was leaked to the Tanner Lighthouse Ministries. You will soon see why the Church did not want anyone to see these papers.

Here, for example, is page 3 from the KEP:



Papyrus XI


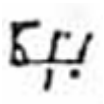








Translation Manuscript, Page 3
Abraham 1:11-19

You'll notice that he is looking at the papyrus and taking the characters from the top left of the characters just to the left of what we now know as Facsimile 1, copying them into the KEP, and indicating his proposed translation. The words in his translation on this page, for example, match up with Abraham 1:11-19.

You'll also notice that his translations are whole paragraphs for single characters. This was a common assumption of Joseph's day that each hieroglyphic stood for many words in English. The [Rosetta Stone](#) wasn't translated into English until 1858. Now we know that each hieroglyphic usually stands for just a single word in English.

Joseph's translations are wrong. Here is an example below of his faulty translations from the page above:

Symbol Number	From Papyrus	From KEP	Actual Translation	Joseph's Attempted Translation in the KEP / Book of Abraham
1			"pool"	"manner of the Egyptians. And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record." (KEP page 3, paragraph 1 / Abraham 1:11-12)
2			"water"	"It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of the figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics." (KEP page 3, paragraph 2 / Abraham 1:13-14)
3			"great"	"And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;" (KEP page 3, paragraph 3 / Abraham 1:15)
4			"Khonsu" (Egyptian moon god)	"And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all the kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of; And this because they have turned their hearts away from me, to worship the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; therefore I have come down to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life. Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. And it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God." (KEP page 3, paragraph 4 / Abraham 1:16-19)

Final thoughts

There are a lot more details involved here that I didn't touch on simply to avoid making this essay any longer than it needs to be.

Facsimiles similar to 1, 2, and 3 are standard burial documents, not about Abraham. The text of the papyrus is not about Abraham either. The papers and facsimiles have been translated by egyptologists, and we know they are not what Joseph claimed. I believe this calls into question his ability to translate anything correctly, such as the Book of Mormon.

Other translations by Joseph Smith, Jr



I had previously been able to convince myself that the reason we don't have the gold plates is because Joseph Smith, Jr would have been hunted to an even earlier death if he had kept them. Still, I, and I think every member, has a secret wish that the Lord would decide it was time to return the gold plates to the Church now that the threat is gone. But I convince myself that it unfortunately wouldn't really ever happen – since it would, of course, eliminate the need for faith which is essential to salvation.

So, we don't have the gold plates as evidence of Joseph Smith, Jr's heavenly calling and gifts, but we do have the source material of another translation of his. If Joseph's translation of the other sources are legitimate, then we should have much more confidence that he really did translate the Book of Mormon. The clearest example of this is the Book of Abraham. There are two other examples where Joseph Smith was presented with what appeared to be ancient texts, and he claimed to know the source and contents of the document through revelation. Nothing ended up in our Standard Works so they are less known than the Book of Abraham. They are the [Kinderhook plates](#) and the [Greek Psalter](#). I won't go into the details of those texts here, but please follow the links if you would like to learn about them.

Conclusion to Why I No Longer Believe



I've focused mostly on the Book of Mormon, since I accept that it is the keystone of the religion, just as Joseph Smith, Jr stated. The Book of Abraham and his other translations are close behind. Some of the other topics that have affected my testimony:

- Polygamous marriages of Joseph Smith, use of coercion, several already married
- Council of the Fifty ordained as the governing body over the Earth, with Joseph as King
- Destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor press, which was the reason Joseph was in jail
- Questionable restoration of the priesthood, not mentioned until five years after
- Temple ordinance source and changes, including death penalties and oath of vengeance
- Lack of continued revelation and lack of continuing “fruits of the spirit”
- Treatment of blacks
- Treatment of women
- Treatment of homosexuals

There is a surprising amount of credible information available on these topics that show a different history than many of us were taught. Please ask me about any of these or other topics if you are interested.

I'm not really sure where I am headed from here. I recognize that regardless of the truthfulness of the events in the Book of Mormon, there are beautiful and uplifting teachings that we should all take to heart. I no longer take that fact as proof of authenticity, since every other religious and many secular books also contain many beautiful and uplifting messages that can enrich our lives.

Socrates is attributed as saying, “The more I learn, the more I learn how little I know.” I find that applies here. I am no longer as certain about anything as I once was. At first, this was a scary place to be. For my whole life, I had such confidence that I knew the answers to all of life's important questions. I knew where I came from, why I was here, and what I needed to do to be where I wanted to be for all eternity.

As I worked through this new reality, I came to terms with not being so sure about those questions. I feel that I am now in even in a better place than I was when I had no doubt. It has opened my mind to seeing my neighbors and co-workers not just as members or non-members, but as fellow humans all stumbling through this world, just trying to do our best. I have concluded that all I really know is that we each have a chance in this short life to be good, honest people who help others, thereby leaving the world a little better than when we entered. I plan to keep my mind open to all truth, whatever the source may be.

I would appreciate hearing any comments you may have had as you read this. You can either email me or use the “Comments” button in the top right of this web page.