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How the Book of Mormon Was Translated: How God Uses Human Agencies to Give His Word to Mankind

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Abstract: The authors know of no record from the prophet himself on exactly how he translated the Book of Mormon. They suggest that Joseph Smith's mind was quickened by the Urim and Thummim and that after getting the idea of the message, he wrote it in his own words. Thus the grammatical errors are his own.

HOW THE BOOK OF MORMON WAS TRANSLATED.

HOW GOD USES HUMAN AGENCIES TO GIVE HIS WORD TO MANKIND.

QUESTION: "Did Joseph Smith the Prophet, in translating the Book of Mormon, use his own language in translating the book into the English language, or did he use what appeared to him in the Urim and Thummim as the interpretation of the Nephite characters, and would it pass away before it was correctly written?"

Answer: We are of the opinion that the Manual for 1905-1906, prepared as a guide to the Young Men's Mutual Improvement association in the study of the Book of Mormon, will give a sufficient answer. But there is some conflict of opinion in consequence of statements purporting to have been made by David Whitmer and Martin Harris concerning the manner in which the Prophet Joseph obtained the interpretation of the characters inscribed upon the metallic plates, which were in "reformed Egyptian" hieroglyphics. The idea conveyed by those statements was that when the Prophet Joseph looked into the Urim and Thummim he saw the characters that were on the plates, and underneath them their meaning in the English language, and that when reading them to the scribe who wrote for him, the line would not disappear and another take its place unless it was copied correctly.

The history of the Prophet Joseph Smith, prepared from his diary, does not afford that information, nor do we know of anything authentic as coming from him which gives a description or explanation of the manner of translation of the Nephite record. One thing, however, is very clear to us, and that is, that whether in prophecy or preaching or translating, the man inspired of God is not simply a talking machine, but one who is divinely impressed and enlightened, and whose understanding is quickened and enlarged, but who still possesses all his faculties and the free agency which God has given to all mankind.

If all that was necessary for the Seer was to look into the instrument given to him as an aid in the work of translation, there would have been no real necessity for his possession of the plates, which he had to guard with such care. And if every word in English was supplied to him in the way supposed, it is not likely that any errors either in grammar or composition would be seen. We have not the slightest doubt that with the aid of those stones and the gift and power of God, Joseph was able to read the characters on the plates, and understand their full signification, and that he expressed that in the ordinary language to which he was accustomed and according to his knowledge in the use of it, just as a person who translates anything from an ancient or modern language, the understanding of which he obtains by the ordinary means, and who would give it in English, according to the usual phraseology to which he was accustomed.

The prophets of old who spoke and wrote "as moved upon by the Holy Ghost," though inspired by the same spirit, expressed that which was given to them in their own way and with those distinctive peculiarities which they each possessed. They were not acted upon against their own will or as automatons. As Paul has it, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Any

one who has enjoyed the spirit of revelation, either in prophecy, in testimony, in preaching, in interpretation of tongues, or in other spiritual gifts, knows what it is to receive light and truth by the power of God which He speaks forth in his own language and in his own manner and style. He who has not been thus inspired, may not be able to understand how the meaning of the characters on the plates was made clear to the translator so that he could express it in his own language.

But the important fact in this important matter is that Joseph Smith really received those ancient records, containing much of the history of this continent and an account of the dealings of God with the early inhabitants thereof; that he translated them into the English language; and that according to the testimony of the three witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, the voice of the Lord declared that they were translated "by the gift and power of God," and therefore they were translated correctly. As to the exact *modus operandi*, there is nothing on record that we know of as coming from the Prophet himself.

The great truth remains that we have the Book of Mormon, written in simple language and that such imperfections as may be found in it are, as it declares itself, "the mistakes of men," and that these are simply errors of language, of such small importance that the meaning is not obscured, but whoever reads may also understand. It gives a plain and succinct account of the manner in which this continent was peopled in early times, shows the origin of the present tribes of so-called Indians, unfolds the purposes of the Almighty concerning this hemisphere, expounds the principles of the everlasting Gospel, by obedience to which mankind may be saved, and testifies that Jesus of Nazareth was in very deed the Son of the Eternal God and the Redeemer of the world. These great truths are invaluable, and the question concerning the exact manner of the translation of the Book is comparatively of little moment.—*Deseret News*.

The Deadliness of Tea.—Dr. J. A. Rigby, one of Preston's leading medical practitioners states, according to the *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, of March 10, 1906:

"I venture to say that the abuse of tea causes far more disease, far more pain and suffering, aye, and even far more material loss than the abuse of alcohol. The papers are full of inquiries as to the physical degeneracy of the English race. What factor is more undeniable than that the greatest difference in the dieting of the average Englishman, say, in the last hundred years, is the enormous increase in the consumption of tea? To enumerate the diseases caused by the abuse of tea is like writing a quack advertisement. It produces anæmia, constipation, chronic gastritis, flatulent dyspepsia, emaciation. It lays the foundation of gastric ulcer, and is the cause of irritability of the nerves and a whole host of nervous disorders. The difference is that if a man or woman drinks excessively of beer, its effects are more gross and perceptible, while in the case of tea, the effects, though equally or even more deadly, are more insidious, not as apparent, and not always, in fact very seldom put down to their true cause."