

Hard Questions in Church History

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Apocrypha & Part 2 “New Translation” or Joseph Smith Translation (JST)

Questions to Consider

1. Was the New Translation or JST finished?
2. Why was the JST not published earlier?
3. Was publishing the JST not a priority to Joseph or God?
4. What exactly is the Apocrypha?

Timeline 1830-1981

1830		
	June-October	God directs Joseph to begin a new translation of the Bible with Oliver as scribe (until Oliver leaves on his mission to “the Lamanites”). Genesis 1:1 to 4:18 became Moses 2:1–5:43 (overlaps with the same time that Joseph received D&C 24-32)
	Oct 21-Dec 30	John Whitmer, Emma Smith, and Sidney Rigdon scribe from Gen 4:18–5:32 (Moses 7:2–8:30)
	Dec 30	D&C 37:1 “It is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio”
1831		
	Feb-Mar 7	Joseph translates Genesis 6-24:41, adds his inspiration with Sidney Rigdon writing out every word
	March 7, 18	D&C 45:60 Lord instructs Joseph to stop translating the OT and to begin translating the NT; Sidney Rigdon scribes most of the NT. It takes eleven months to go from Matt 1 to John 5:29
1832		
	Feb 16	Joseph Smith translates through John 5:29 and receives D&C 76 with scribe Sidney Rigdon
	July	New system to record “New Translation”—the scribe only records the changes to the Bible
	July 20	Fredrick G. Williams begins as scribe for the JST—part of NT and most of the OT
	August	Publishes excerpts about Enoch in the Ohio church newspaper, Evening and the Morning Star
1833		
	Feb 2	Joseph completes working through the entire New Testament
	Mar 9	D&C 91 is revealed, saying that translating the Old Testament Apocrypha was not needed.
	April	Publish more excerpts from Enoch in the Ohio newspaper: Evening and the Morning Star
	July 2	Joseph completes Bible translation through Malachi. Joseph writes to the saints in Missouri, “We this day finished the translating of the Scriptures for which we returned gratitude to our heavenly father” (JosephSmithPapers.org). Sidney Rigdon proofreads for publication
1835		
		Publishes portions of the Joseph Smith Translation in the second Lectures on Faith

Review: JST Part 1

In June 1830, two months after the organization of the church, God called the Prophet Joseph Smith to make a “new translation” of the Bible (D&C 124:89). We discussed the names and other details of

Joseph’s biblical translation in conjunction with “Come Follow Me,” D&C 37 (JST part 1). As far as the process was concerned, Robert J. Matthews, one of the early scholars of Joseph’s “New Translation,” summarized:

When the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Bible, he was not limited to what was found on the working page in front of him . . . The text seems to have been a “starting point,” but the spirit of revelation was always an additional source of information. In the case of the Bible translation, the manuscript source was the King James Version. This suggested certain ideas, but the Spirit apparently suggested many enlargements, backgrounds, and additional concepts not found on the page. Thus, the term “translation” . . . differs somewhat from that normally used when one thinks of translating languages. To a prophet, a revelation is a more vital and dependable source than a written text.¹

In short, the Prophet Joseph Smith “did not need original manuscripts. He was able to bypass them to go to the original source—the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that enlightened the original biblical writers.”²

Over the three years of work, Joseph made changes to 3,410 verses in the Bible—approximately 1,300 to the Old Testament (OT) and 2,100 to the New Testament (NT). Though more verses were changed in the NT, the majority of the doctrinal contributions came from Genesis. Joseph added or deleted words to fifty-four of the sixty-six books in the Bible. He felt twelve books were complete, including: Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, and Malachi. (Song of Solomon was not translated because Joseph felt it was “not inspired writing”).³

Joseph’s scribes’ filled every inch of 446 pages of 8” x 13” paper with their quills. Joseph was passionate about the work. He felt that “many important points, touching the salvation of man, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled.”⁴ In March 1834, Joseph described the need for the New Translation in the Evening and Morning Star newspaper: “From what we can draw from the scriptures relative to the teachings of heaven we are induced to think, that much instruction has been given to man since the beginning which we have not” (josephsmithpaper.org, “Letter to the Church, circa March 1834, 143).

Eleven Examples of Changes in the New Testament

Matthew 2:2

KJV: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”

JST: “Where is the child that is born, the Messiah of the Jews?”

Matthew 3:24-25 added

JST: “Jesus grew up with his *brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come. And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him. And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh.” [*This may refer to his half siblings: “his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas” Matt 13: 55.]

Matthew 4:1-2

KJV: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.”

JST: “Then Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be with God. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and had communed with God, he was afterwards an hungered, and was left to be tempted of the devil.”

Matthew 13:23

KJV: “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it.”

JST: “But he who received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth and endureth.”

Matthew 13:30

KJV: “Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them but gather the wheat into my barn.”

JST: “Gather ye together first the wheat into my barn; and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned.”

Matthew 18:11

KJV: “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”

JST: “For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost, and to call sinners to repentance; but these little ones have no need of repentance, and I will save them.”

Matthew 21:33

KJV: “Hear another parable: There was a certain householder”

JST: “And again, hear another parable; for unto you that believe not, I speak in parables; that your unrighteousness may be rewarded unto you”

Mark 7:24

KJV: “entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.”

JST: “entered into an house, and would that no man should come unto him. But he could not deny them; for he had compassion upon all men.”

Luke 2:46

KJV: “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.”

JST: “sitting in the midst of the doctors, and they were hearing him, and asking him questions.”

Luke 23:34

KJV: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

JST: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Meaning the soldiers who crucified him).”

John 4:2

KJV: “Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.”

JST: “Though he himself baptized not so many as his disciples; For he suffered them for an example, preferring one another.”

JST Changes to the Bible

<u>Extensive Changes</u>	<u>Minor Changes</u>	<u>No Changes</u>
Genesis	Mark	Ruth
Exodus	John	Ezra
Psalms	Acts	Esther
Isaiah	2 Corinthians	Ecclesiastes
Matthew	Ephesians	Lamentations
Luke	Philippians	Obadiah
Romans	Colossians	Micah
1 Corinthians	1&2 Thessalonians	Habakkuk
Galatians	1&2 Timothy	Zephaniah
Hebrews	Titus	Haggai
James	1 Peter	Malachi
2 Peter	1 John	Philemon
Revelation	Jude	2 John
		3 John

The Doctrine and Covenants References to the “New Translation” (JST)

The Lord revealed fifty-six percent—or seventy-seven sections—of the Doctrine and Covenant during the time of Joseph’s work translating the Bible. The Lord spoke of the Bible translation in fifteen sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord’s revelations reference the JST in the following verses:

1. **D&C 9:2** To Oliver: “Other records have I, that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate”
2. **D&C 35:20** To Sidney: “Thou shalt write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom” (Dec 7, 1830)
3. **D&C 37:1** “It is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio” (Dec 30, 1831)
4. **D&C 41:7** “My servant Joseph Smith, Jun., should have a house built, in which to live and translate” (Feb 4, 1831)
5. **D&C 42:56-58** “[Once] ... ye have received them in full. . . . ye shall teach them unto all men; for they shall be taught unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people” (Feb 9, 1831)
6. **D&C 45:60-62** “It shall not be given unto you to know any further concerning this chapter, until the New Testament be translated” (The section describes signs of destruction before Jesus’ Second Coming and His Millennial Reign)
7. **D&C 73:3** “It is expedient to translate again” (Jan 10, 1832)
8. **D&C 76:15-18** The Vision from translating John 5:29 (Feb 16, 1832)
9. **D&C 77:1-15** Answers to Questions from the Book of Revelation (Mar 1832)
10. **D&C 86:1-11** Interpretation of the parable of the wheat and tares (Dec 6, 1832)
11. **D&C 91:3** “Is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated” (Mar 9, 1833)
12. **D&C 93:53** “It is my will that you should hasten to translate my scriptures” (May 6, 1833)

13. **D&C 94:10** “For the work of the printing of the translation of my scriptures” (Aug 2, 1833)
14. **D&C 104:58** “I have commanded you to organize yourselves, even to print my words, the fulness of my scriptures, the revelations which I have given unto you” (April 23, 1834)
15. **D&C 124:89** “Publish the new translation of my holy word unto the inhabitants of the earth” (Jan 19, 1841)

D&C 91: 1-3

“...Concerning the Apocrypha—There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly; There are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men. Verily, I say unto you, that it is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated.”

What is the Apocrypha?

In 1611, the original King James translators included fifteen more books known as “the Apocrypha,” meaning, “hidden.” These books did not fit the requirements to be included in the scriptural canon but they were seen as helpful. Their texts come from the intertestamental period but claim to come from time of the exiles of both the northern and the southern tribes from the 8th to the 1st Century BC. The Hebrew Bible has several more apocryphal books, but the Roman Catholics have maintained fifteen extra books as “deuterocanonical” (or forming a secondary canon) for the past nearly 2,000 years.

Martin Luther defined the Apocrypha as “books which are not regarded as equal to the holy Scriptures, and yet are profitable and good to read.”⁵ Most Protestants do not hold them as scripture. In 1816, a group of Christians in the United States who wanted to promote scripture reading organized themselves as the American Bible Society. They excluded the books of the Apocrypha from their Bibles, although, when Joseph Smith was working on his “new Translation” from 1830 to 1833, his copy of the KJV did contain the fifteen books known as the Apocrypha. By 1880, after 274 years of publishing the Apocrypha, the KJV ceased including them. Similarly, most modern English translations exclude them from the canon. Those who claim they were not inspired by God point to portions like Tobit 6:5-8, which references magic. Some claim that it was not the Catholic church who removed them, rather printers seeking to cut costs.

The presence of the Apocrypha is a good reminder that many other books were considered for the scriptural canon for both the Christians and Jews. All of a sudden, the practice implemented during Restoration of adding scripture to the canon does not seem as odd. The Hebrew canon was not closed until after the Christian canon in the 4th Century AD.

List of Catholic and Early KJV Apocrypha

1. **1 Esdras**—Claims to be the 5th Century BC, yet probably is the 1st Century BC—Greek version of Ezra; parallels Ezra, parts of Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Esdras (or Ezra) was a scribe and priest living in Judea after the Jewish Babylonian exile during the reign of two Persian Kings.
2. **2 Esdras**—5th Century BC—though most date it 65 BC–AD 120, as the text is filled with signs of devastation during the Last Days that are similar to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 68–70.

3. **Tobit**—3rd Century BC—A romance and legend from the Jewish dispersion in Egypt with the guide angel Raphael.
4. **Judith**—2nd Century BC—A story written in the Hellenistic period, but perhaps based on earlier sources or folklore, of a beautiful Jewish widow who trusts God and kills the enemy king, temporarily saving Jerusalem and her people. The text is written as two chiasms.
5. **Letter of Jeremiah**—6th Century BC—A single-chapter epistle written by the prophet Jeremiah to the Jews in the Babylonian exile.
6. **Additions to Esther**—100 BC—Adds spiritual dimension to Esther; includes last-days warfare between Satan and the Messiah.
7. **Wisdom of Solomon**—65 BC—Filled with prophecy and a powerful and spiritual essence of God, it is a collection of wisdom literature that includes opposite pairs: “For all men have one entrance into life, and the like going out.”
8. **Wisdom of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus of Jesus Ben Sira**—180–170 BC—A Jewish man’s ethical proverbial teachings, with a misogynistic view of women.
9. **Baruch**—1st Century AD—The personal scribe of Jeremiah wrote his meditations on Israel’s theology during the Jewish exile.
10. **Prayer of Azariah**—4th Century BC—Song of lamentation similar to Psalm 148.
11. **Susanna**—1st Century BC—Thought to be a prefix to the Book of Daniel to magnify his powers and judgment. It’s a story of a beautiful Jewish woman who is abused by two lecherous voyeurs, and defended by Daniel. This is the first known legal case in which a defense attorney cross-examined two prosecuting witnesses independently and caught them committing perjury.
12. **Bel and the Dragon**—100 BC—Daniel’s wisdom in exposing the falsehood of Babylon’s dragon-god, purporting to be the 14th chapter of Daniel.
13. **Prayer of Manasseh**—2nd to 1st Centuries. BC—connects to the story of Manasseh’s Babylonian captivity (2 Chr 33). He was a wicked king of Judah from the 6th Century BC
14. **1 Maccabees**—175 to 135 BC—The best historical source on the period of the Jewish Maccabean Rebellion against religious persecution under Antiochus IV, the Greek Seleucid overlord of Judea.
15. **2 Maccabees**—161 BC—A condensed retelling of the Maccabean Revolt with a theological emphasis and possible fictionalized editing with miraculous details that became part of the Jewish holiday of Chanukah.

Some of the Apocrypha Found in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Today, we have another group of ancient literature that dates to the same time as most of the Apocrypha. When the Bedouin shepherd found the first scrolls near the Dead Sea in 1946, it paved the way for the discovery of 930 scrolls that date to the intertestamental period (spanning 200 BC to AD 68). Twenty-five percent of the Dead Sea Scrolls— or 230 scrolls—are Old Testament texts. The Dead Sea Scroll collection contains every book in the Old Testament except Esther. Fifty years of work went into the piecing together this fragile jigsaw puzzle of fragments and its translation, which was published in 2002. Fragments of only two books from the KJV Apocrypha were found: 1. Wisdom of Sirach, and 2. Tobit in Hebrew.

Wisdom of Sirach

Sirach was written by the Jewish scribe named Jesus Ben Sira (c. 220–174 BC). His book was well known in the late Second Temple period, including the time of the New Testament. His book was also known as *The Book of the All-Virtuous Wisdom of Joshua Ben Sira*. It became part of the deuterocanonical books in the Roman Catholic church under the name “Ecclesiasticus,” which is Latin for “church book.” He worked in Jerusalem as a scribe and, supposedly, also opened a school in Alexandria. The purpose of his book was to demonstrate how meaningless life is without living in fear of God and keeping His commandments. Ben Sira sees life as a gift from God. His book was accepted as part of the Jewish Septuagint or Greek Bible for a time; later it was rejected as apocryphal.

Ben Sira also had much to say about family life. In his mind, women were the source of evil and needed controlling: “Allow . . . no boldness of speech in an evil wife. If she does not go as you direct, separate her from yourself.”⁶ I wonder if he had an unhappy marriage, as he often spoke of an “evil” or “wicked” wife. For example, “An evil wife is an ox yoke which chafes; taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion . . . Any wound, but not a wound of the heart! Any wickedness, but not the wickedness of a wife!”⁷ Elsewhere, he concludes, “I would rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than dwell with an evil wife.”⁸ Ben Sira blamed an “evil wife” for causing “a dejected mind, a gloomy face and a wounded heart.”⁹ He felt beating children was wisdom. “Stripes and correction are at all times wisdom.”¹⁰ He elaborated by giving several suggestions to wise or “loving fathers” to “not spare the rod,” and “break him in and beat him sound while he is still a child.”¹¹ He continued:

He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end . . . A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid: play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn, and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee.¹²

Like the biblical wisdom books of Proverbs and Job, Sirach exhorts moral and practical rules arranged by each subject (i.e. generosity, hypocrisy, etc.).

Background for 1 and 2 Maccabees

Perhaps the most historically accurate book among the Apocrypha is 1 Maccabees. Both 1 and 2 Maccabees tell the story of the Greek-Seleucid King Antiochus IV conquering Judea, followed by the rebellion led by the Aaronic priest, Matthias and his five sons. After the death of Alexander the Great, his Kingdom was divided into four and Judaism was allowed to flourish in Jerusalem during the 3rd Century BC. This changed during the 2nd Century BC when the Seleucid Empires attempted to Hellenize Judea.¹³

Greek-Seleucid Takeover

In 198 BC the new Seleucid overlord King Antiochus IV sought to destroy the Jewish religion and replace it with Greek culture for economic integration. He ordered a gymnasium to be built outside the Jerusalem temple. The gymnasium enforced the Hellenistic idea of masculinity, which required men to enter naked—this was highly offensive to Jews. But when the Seleucids took over the priesthood, their attempts to Hellenize the area expanded.

Many pious Jewish people tried to remain steadfast to their beliefs, but were outnumbered. The new state required that every man must go the gymnasium at least once, if he could afford it. This attempt to make government a greater authority than religion worked for some Jews who submitted to the Greek overlords.

King Antiochus erected altars to Greek gods throughout the nation. He outlawed Judaic religious practices including circumcision and Sabbath. He defiled the Jewish temple by erecting an idol on the altar. The final straw for the Jews was Antiochus' sacrifice—of swine—to Zeus on the temple altar. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus recorded:

Now Antiochus was not satisfied either with his unexpected taking the city (Jerusalem), or with its pillage, or with the great slaughter he had made there; but being overcome with his violent passions, and remembering what he had suffered during the siege, he compelled the Jews to dissolve the laws of their country, and to keep their infants uncircumcised, and to sacrifice swine's flesh upon the altar; against which they all opposed themselves, and the most approved among them were put to death.¹⁴

Jewish Rebellion

In 167 BC, a Jewish priest named Mattathias stood up against his overlords when they asked him to sacrifice to a Greek god. Mattathias killed a traitorous fellow Jew and tore down the Greek idol. The revolt began as he shouted: “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and who stands by the covenant follow me!” (1 Maccabees 2:27).

Mattathias and his five sons (John, Simon, Judah, Eleazer, and Jonathan) rallied followers and began their guerrilla warfare against Antiochus' Hellenization.

Historians differ as to whether the war was really against the Seleucid Empire or the Hellenized Jews. I think both were at play. Mattathias and his sons' revolt became known as the “Maccabee Revolt” (named after his third son, Judah's nickname, “little hammer” as his main weapon of war).

Antiochus underestimated the Jewish rebellion. Historical counts claim somewhere between 20,000 and 60,000 Seleucid soldiers failed to stop the rebellion. In the end, Mattathias and all five of his sons died for the cause, and the pious Jews won. The Jewish leadership continued in the hands of the Hasmonean dynasty through the Maccabean family. They forced the remaining Jews to submit to living the Mosaic Law. Mattathias' grandson, John Hyrcanus, became the ruler of the temple as the one High Priest of Israel. Their family remained leaders until Herod became their Roman overlord in 40-37 BC.

Other Such Books beyond the Apocrypha

As seen above, the official list of books traditionally included in the Old Testament Apocrypha was a closed set of literature. Technically speaking, these were the books referred to in Section 91. Few other books from the biblical period were generally known in the early 19th Century. Beginning around the time of Joseph Smith, however, additional Jewish works began to be discovered in old libraries and monasteries and by archaeologists. For example, in 1844, a full fourth-century manuscript of the Old

and New Testaments was found at St. Catherine’s Monastery on the Sinai Peninsula. It included, as if with equal weight and authority, books from the Old Testament Apocrypha, namely 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 1 & 4 Maccabees, Wisdom, and Sirach. Two early Christian texts not included in today’s New Testament are an epistle by a writer claiming to be the Apostle Barnabas, and “The Shepherd,” written by the early second-century Roman pastor or bishop named Hermas. Obviously, for these Christians, texts beyond the usual list of “canonical” books were of spiritual interest and, apparently, were given full authoritative weight.

In the later 19th Century and on into the 20th Century, numerous other books were found. Some of these are called the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. They include books attributed to Adam, Enoch, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the Twelve Patriarchs of the House of Israel, Moses, David, Solomon, Elijah, Job, Isaiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Ezra, Zosimus, and many others.¹⁵ Additionally, a set of forty-five Coptic (Egyptian Christian) books was discovered in Egypt; the set is now known as the Nag Hammadi Library. Latter-day Saints have found these extra-canonical works very interesting, as many contain certain words, ideas, and doctrines that resonate with materials in the Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Mormon. Hugh Nibley, for example, has written extensively on the Enoch literature¹⁶ and also on early works such as The Apocalypse of Abraham, 2 Baruch, The Ascension of Isaiah, Joseph and Asenath, The Testament of Abraham, and the Book of Jubilees.¹⁷ The works of many others could be mentioned. See, for example, materials posted by Pearl of Great Price Central, at <https://www.pearlofgreatpricecentral.org/>

The Pseudepigrapha texts were either completely unknown or not yet translated into English in 1833, Section 91 probably did not have them in mind in instructing Joseph that it was not necessary to translate them as a part of his prophetic project to produce the inspired Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Still, those interested in reading such books can be encouraged by the Lord’s allowance that they may contain valuable information, provided one reads them with the Holy Ghost so as to separate fact from fantasy and to distinguish truly useful wisdom from tendentious and self-serving spinning of literary yarns.

¹ Robert J. Matthews, “What Is the Book of Moses?” in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 2: The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert Millet, Kent Jackson (SLC, UT: Randall, 1985), 37.

² Ibid.

³ *JosephSmithPapers.org*

⁴ Dean Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Vol. 1, Autobiographical and Historical Writings* (SLC, UT: Deseret, 1989), 1:372.

⁵ Edward F. Hills, *King James Version Defended*, 98

⁶ Ben Sira, *Ecclesiasticus*, 25:25-26.

⁷ Ibid., 26:7, 25:13. These verses are preceded by “There is grief of heart and sorrow when a wife is envious of a rival, and a tongue-lashing makes it known to all” (27:5-6).

⁸ Ibid., 25:16. “The wickedness of a wife changes her appearance, and darkens her face like that of a bear. Her husband takes his meals among the neighbors, and he cannot help sighing bitterly. Any iniquity is insignificant compared to a wife’s iniquity; may a sinner’s lot befall her! A sandy ascent for the feet of the aged—such is a garrulous wife for a quiet husband.”

⁹ Ibid., 25:23a.

¹⁰ Ibid., 22:6.

¹¹ Ibid., 30:1, 2, 12; “He who disciplines his son will find profit in him.”

¹² Ibid., 30:1, 8-12.

¹³ Adapted from the *World History Encyclopedia* (www.ancient.eu/disambiguation/judaism/).

¹⁴ Josephus, *The War of the Jews*, 1.1; 2.

¹⁵ See, for example, James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

¹⁶ See *Enoch the Prophet*, in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 2 (1986).

¹⁷ See *One Eternal Round*, in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 19 (2010).