

The Book of Mormon's Translation Paradox

Early witnesses described a "tight," word-for-word dictation, but textual issues lead apologists to propose a "loose," concept-based translation. This creates a fundamental paradox where evidence for one model invalidates the other.

God dictated exact words to Joseph Smith via a seer stone.

The stone would not provide new words until the scribe wrote the current ones perfectly.



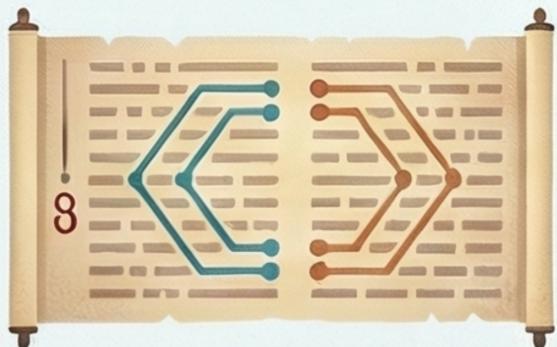
All Early Witnesses Described This Method

Emma Smith, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris gave consistent accounts of this strict process.



Required to Explain Unique Terms & Hebraisms

Complex, unique names (Curaloms, Kumoms) and literary structures (chiasmus) are cited as evidence of divine origin.



Model 1: "Tight" Translation (Word-for-Word)

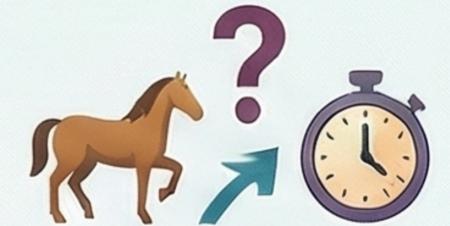
The Central Paradox: The Two Models are Mutually Exclusive

Justifying errors with a "loose" translation undermines the claim that unique words came from a "tight" translation.

Model 2: "Loose" Translation (Concept-Based)

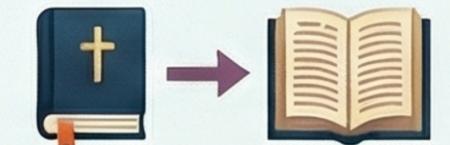
Joseph received concepts and expressed them in his own words.

This model makes Joseph a co-author, using his own 19th-century worldview and language.



Needed to Excuse Anachronisms

Items like horses, steel, and chariots (absent in ancient America) are explained as Joseph using familiar terms.



Needed to Explain Biblical Errors

The text copies 17th-century translation errors from the King James Bible, which requires human input.



A Single Verse Requires Both Models Simultaneously

Ether 2:23 lists anachronistic animals ("horses," "elephants") alongside unique ones ("Cureloms," "Kumoms") in one sentence.



Needed to Justify Doctrinal Changes

The text was later altered (e.g., "Mother of God" became "Mother of the Son of God") to fit Joseph's evolving theology.