

The Translation Test: An Evidentiary Review of Joseph Smith's Prophetic Claims

A critical summary examining six testable claims of translation.

A PROPHET'S MANDATE: THE DIVINE REQUIREMENT OF TRANSLATION

“Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.” 

— Doctrine & Covenants 107:92

This scripture establishes translation as a foundational gift and a core tenet of prophetic authority. It provides a direct, testable benchmark for Joseph Smith's claims.

THE CASE FILE: SIX TESTABLE EXHIBITS



1. **Exhibit A:** The Book of Mormon Characters ('Reformed Egyptian')



2. **Exhibit B:** The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST)



3. **Exhibit C:** The Pure Adamic Language



4. **Exhibit D:** The Book of Abraham Papyri



5. **Exhibit E:** The Kinderhook Plates



6. **Exhibit F:** The Lost Writings of John

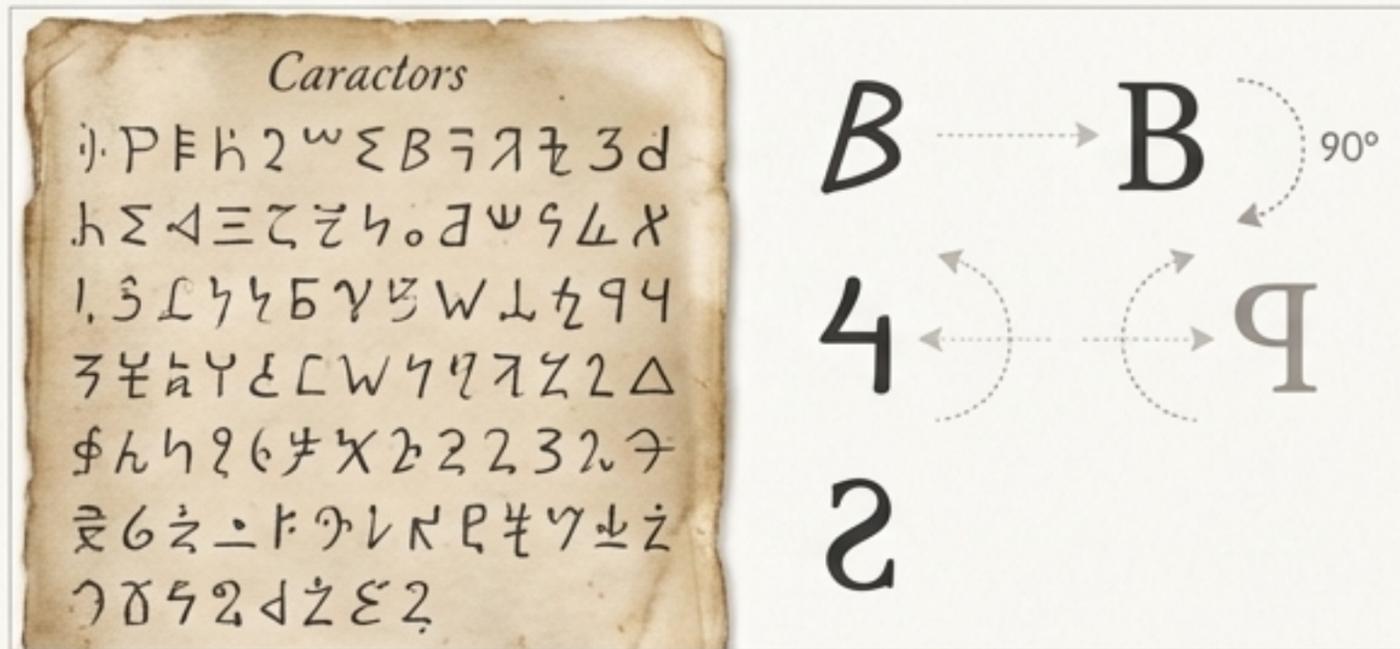
Each of these projects provides tangible source material that can be analyzed against modern scholarship, allowing for a clear 'pass/fail' assessment of Joseph Smith's ability as a divine translator.

EXHIBIT A: THE BOOK OF MORMON CHARACTERS

The Claim

Joseph Smith claimed to copy characters from the gold plates, representing an ancient language called “Reformed Egyptian.”

The Evidence



Linguistic analysis reveals the characters are not a known ancient language. Instead, they are crude modifications of the 19th-century English alphabet and numerals. Egyptologists confirm “Reformed Egyptian” does not exist as a language. The Church itself now uses newly created, more authentic-looking characters in its videos, avoiding Smith’s originals.

The Verdict



The characters are a 19th-century invention, not a translation of an ancient text.

EXHIBIT B: THE JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The Claim

A divinely inspired “translation” to restore “plain and precious truths” to the King James Version. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie called it “a thousand times over the best Bible now existing on Earth.”

The Evidence

Joseph Smith Translation (Genesis 50:33)

A divinely inspired “translation” to restore “plain and precious truths” to the King James 1:33.

³³ Fmrs of he hrs aloud impacslly, to a estorcet head from reach of Itan athlia with eeratsre in conmitinous, sas hours were seatnown, a branch of the house of Joseph, in the course, a branch of the house of Joseph, which were one would came from the pressence, all the landmium meet, from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel, in and thence is the shepherd, the stone of the sevoynut's Israel.

Adam Clarke's Commentary (on Genesis 49:22)

The Jusvso Common to Adam Clarke's Bible commentary, a popular Methodist text from the 1820s.

⁴⁹ The onoheers of his stom, the coursts, and when the nsth in is haveries of conim:: or vere irmesiant, sas hours were seatnown, a branch of the house of Joseph, in the course to, a branch of the house of Joseph, which is one would came from the pressence, all the landmium meet, from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. In and thence on the shepherd, the stone of the saunics's Israel.

The parallels are too numerous and explicit to be coincidental, covering wording, history, and theological nuances. This indicates direct reliance on a contemporary source, not divine revelation.

The Verdict



This was an academic revision and plagiarism, not a prophetic translation.

EXHIBIT C: THE PURE ADAMIC LANGUAGE

The Claim

Joseph Smith claimed the ability to reveal the language spoken by Adam and Eve.

The Evidence

The translated words are simple, almost comical, modifications of English.

English Term	"Adamic" Translation
God	Ahman
Son of God	Son Ahman
Angels	Anglo-man

Beyond the linguistic implausibility, Adam and Eve are not historical figures, making the concept of an 'Adamic language' a non-starter. Further, the temple chant 'Pay Lay Ale' derives from this, with 'pale ale' being a common term for a type of beer since 1703.

The Verdict



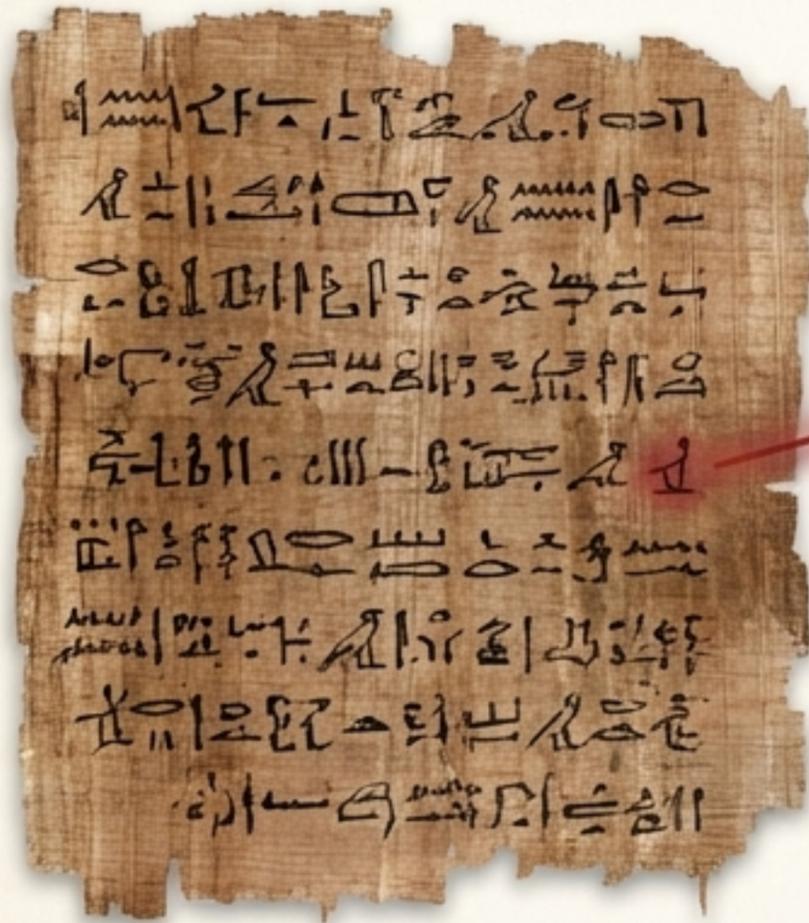
A transparent invention using crude modifications of 19th-century English.

EXHIBIT D: THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM — THE SMOKING GUN

The Claim

“A translation of some ancient records... purporting to be the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus.” (*Pearl of Great Price* introduction)

The Evidence



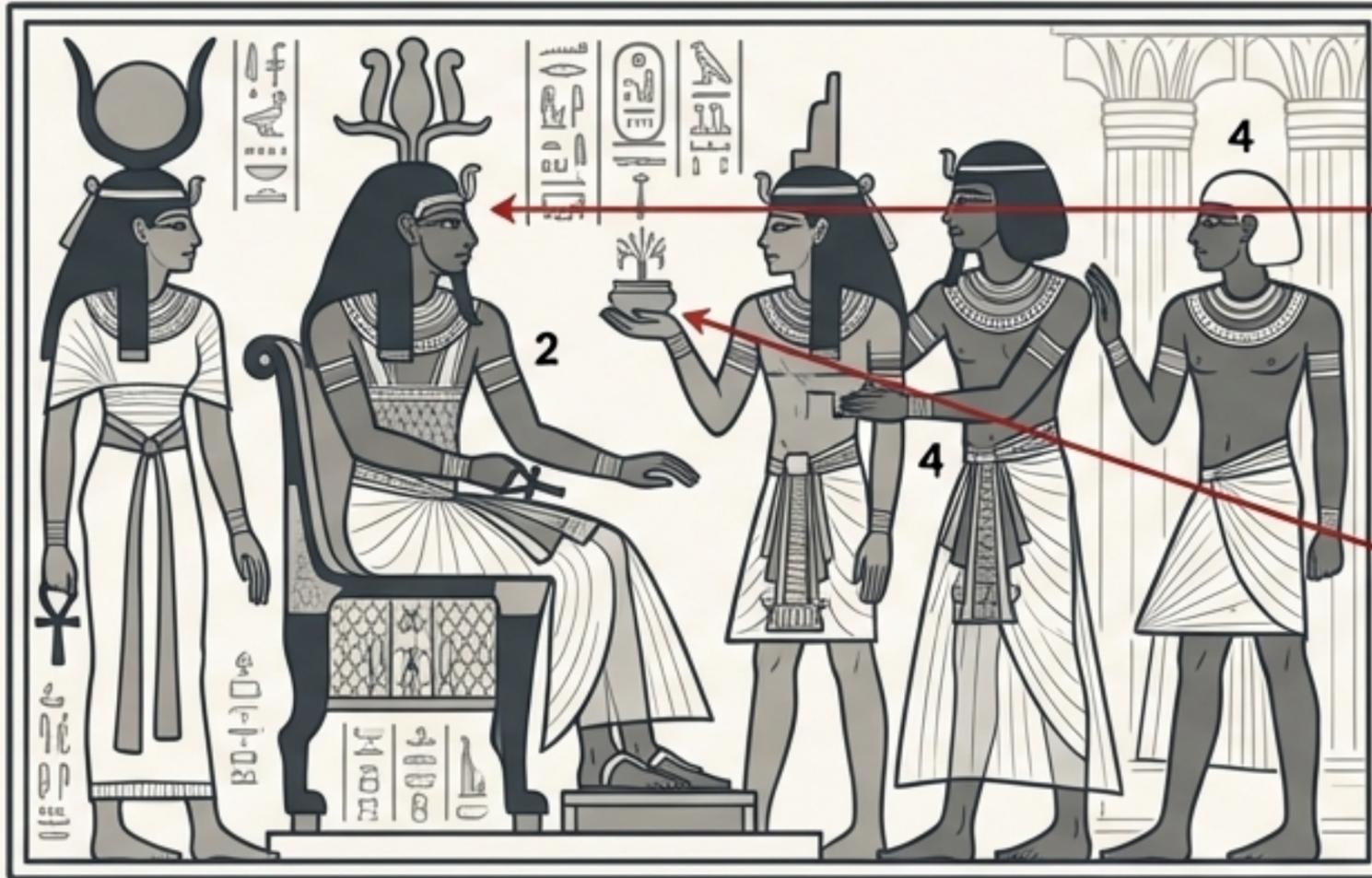
<i>Kirtland Egyptian Papers.</i>	
⌌	Book of Abraham
⌌	blown in the
⌌	Egyptian papyrus
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⌌	the Book of
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⌌	come to write
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⌌	from with the
⌌	name of the colost
⌌	Book of Abraham.

We have the source papyri. They are common Egyptian funerary texts (the Book of Breathings and the Book of the Dead) from circa 3rd Century BCE – 1st Century CE, nearly 2,000 years after Abraham would have lived.

The Church’s own Gospel Topics Essay on the subject concedes: “None of the characters on the papyrus fragments mentioned Abraham’s name or any of the events recorded in the book of Abraham.”

EXHIBIT D: THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM — THE VERDICT

The Evidence (Continued)



Joseph Smith's Translation: "King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head."

Actual Translation: "Isis the great, the God's mother." (A female deity).

Joseph Smith's Translation: "Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt... as written above the hand."

Actual Translation: "Maat, mistress of the gods." (Another female deity).

The Verdict

FAIL

This is the most conclusive failure. We have the source material, the translation notes, and the published result. All three prove the "translation" is a complete fabrication.

EXHIBIT E: THE KINDERHOOK PLATES

The Claim

Joseph Smith provided a partial translation of six brass plates supposedly unearthed from an ancient mound in Kinderhook, Illinois in 1843.



The Evidence

The plates were a deliberate hoax, created by locals using acid-etching to test Joseph Smith. His scribe, William Clayton, recorded Smith's translation in his journal: "[They] contain the history of the person with whom they were found and he was a descendant of Ham through the lines of Pharaoh." In **1980, scientific testing confirmed the plates were a 19th-century fabrication.**



The Verdict

A correct translation cannot be produced from a fraudulent document. The prophet failed to detect a simple hoax.

EXHIBIT F: THE LOST WRITINGS OF JOHN

The Claim

Doctrine & Covenants Section 93 is presented as a restoration of lost writings from John, author of the Gospel of John.

The Evidence

The theology of D&C 93 is fundamentally at odds with the theology of the Gospel of John.

Gospel of John Christology	D&C 93 Christology
Jesus was fully divine from the beginning (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”)	Jesus grew into divinity (“...he received not of the fulness at the first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness.”)

Biblical scholar Dr. David Bokovoy notes this reflects a christology “completely antithetical” to what the author of John would have written.

The Verdict



The “restored” text misrepresents the theology of its claimed author, revealing it as a 19th-century composition.

THE FINAL SCORECARD: A PATTERN OF FAILURE

Book of Mormon
Characters:

FAIL

Joseph Smith Translation:
Translation:

FAIL

Adamic Language:

FAIL

Book of Abraham:

FAIL

Kinderhook Plates:

FAIL

Writings of John:

FAIL

FINAL RESULT: 0 FOR 6

In every testable instance where source material exists, Joseph Smith's claim as a divine translator fails. These are not isolated errors; they are a consistent pattern.

THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTION

If if a prophet's foundational claims are demonstrably false in every single testable case, what does that imply about their untestable claims?