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A REJOINDER TO JONATHAN NEVILLE’S “RESPONSE TO RECENT REVIEWS”

Spencer Kraus

Abstract: *Jonathan Neville has offered a response to my two recent reviews of his works; however, in his response, Neville offers a poor defense regarding what he wrote and misrepresents my reviews of his works. As such, I present the following rejoinder in response to Neville’s concerns.*

Jonathan Neville has offered some thoughts regarding my two recent reviews, and I am happy to discuss and defend what I wrote. In Neville’s response, he claims that I offered “caricatures” of his arguments that are “inaccurate” and that I “omitted” context in my reviews.¹ I do not believe this is an accurate assessment, and Neville misrepresents what I wrote and ignores citations that he himself included in his books to which I responded. Ultimately, his response fails to defend his works.

After offering a brief overview of his Demonstration Hypothesis (which I will discuss shortly), Neville states the important context to be aware of is the competing claims regarding the origin of the Book of Mormon. This is true, and it is context with which many believers in the Restoration are intimately familiar. Neville cites Eber D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* as proof for his view of competing origins, but misunderstands and misappropriates Howe’s arguments to apparently make this an issue regarding how the Book of Mormon was translated. This is not the issue for Howe, however. The issue for him—and the entire basis of his book—is not *how* the Book of Mormon was translated, but whether it was translated at all.

1. Jonathan Neville, “A Man that Can Translate and Infinite Goodness: A Response to Recent Reviews,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 172.

Howe believed that Joseph Smith was a fraud and the Book of Mormon was false. Latter-day Saints claim otherwise. Howe, in his work, relates two different options for the translation of the Book of Mormon, but as I discuss in my review of Neville's work, he attacks any and all forms of translation and revelation in modern times. It is disheartening to see a response defending one's work avoid dealing with the points raised in my reviews regarding Howe's work, and does not bode well for the rest of Neville's response.²

In fact, Howe was not the first to claim that a hat was used in the translation process, with this detail found as early as 1829.³ Another important witness to the translation of the Book of Mormon came in 1830 from Josiah Stowell, a faithful friend of the prophet Joseph who staunchly defended the young prophet and never lost his faith in Joseph's prophetic gifts. In 1830, as Joseph was (again) on trial for allegedly being a "disorderly person," Stowell testified of the translation of the Book of Mormon in defense of Joseph, stating that: "as aforesaid, the prisoner [Joseph] said he translated the book of Mormon, prisoner *put a certain stone into his hat, put his face into the crown*, then drew the brim of the hat around his head to prevent Light—he could then see as prisoner said, and translate the same, the Bible, got from the hill in Palmyra."⁴ Should Joseph had desired to clarify how the Book of Mormon was translated had this been a factually incorrect statement, that would have been the perfect opportunity to do so.

Neville does not take these early witnesses of the translation into consideration when determining that Joseph and Oliver decided to refute the seer-stone method only in 1834 (without even mentioning the seer

2. For my discussion on Howe and *Mormonism Unveiled*, see Spencer Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach to Joseph Smith's Translation of Ancient Scripture," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 52 (2022): 25–28, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/an-unfortunate-approach-to-joseph-smiths-translation-of-ancient-scripture/>.

3. See "Golden Bible," *Palmyra Freeman*, August 11, 1829, [2]; Christian Goodwillie, "Shaker Richard McNemar: The Earliest Book of Mormon Reviewer," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 143 also relates an 1831 account involving the hat. This 1831 account also claims to have been written based on reports by Oliver Cowdery.

4. "Trial Report, 28 August 1832 [State of New York v. JS–C]," p. [2], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/trial-report-28-august-1832-state-of-new-york-v-js-c/1>, emphasis added. Significantly, earlier in his remarks, Josiah Stowell mentioned seeing a corner of the plates as they were passed to him through the window.

stone as they did so). Through his focus on and misuse of *Mormonism Unveiled*, it could lead a reader to erroneously believe that Howe was the first to assert this method of translation.

Neville next responds by claiming that “the fulcrum of the translation issue is the direct conflict” between Joseph and Oliver’s statements when faced with other witnesses to the translation.⁵ Similarly, at the outset of his response, Neville reiterates his Demonstration Hypothesis, claiming that it offers “a faithful alternative reconciliation ... between ... what Joseph and Oliver claimed ... and ... what others claimed — that Joseph produced the Book of Mormon by dictating words that appeared on a stone he placed in a hat.”⁶ This is coy rhetoric, used in an attempt to paint the debate between those who believe Joseph versus those who disbelieve the prophet. As has been shown in my review and as will be shown again, this is a false dichotomy upon which to base the debate.

As evidence for his claim, Neville cites three instances of Joseph claiming that he translated the Book of Mormon with the Urim and Thummim that Joseph had obtained with the plates (after possibly implying that I had purposefully left them out of the discussion), and then claims that “Joseph specified that the sole instrument he used to translate came with the plates.”⁷ Except, upon examination, it becomes obvious that this is a misreading of Joseph’s statements. He does not say that no seer stone was used or that only one instrument was used — Neville reads his own presuppositions into Joseph’s statements, as he has done in his books and as I have discussed at length in my two reviews.

Neville closes this portion of his response by claiming there are three explanations that Latter-day Saints can make regarding the origins of the Book of Mormon. He further asserts that “any of these explanations can be accepted by faithful Latter-day Saints.”⁸ These explanations are as follows:

1. Joseph Smith translated the ancient engravings into English, using “translate” in the ordinary sense of the word of converting the meaning of a manuscript written in one language into another language.
2. Joseph Smith (and/or confederates) composed the text and Joseph read it surreptitiously, recited it from memory, or performed it based on prompts or cues.

5. See Neville, “A Response to Recent Reviews,” 175.

6. *Ibid.*, 172.

7. *Ibid.*, 176.

8. *Ibid.*

3. Joseph Smith dictated words that supernaturally appeared on a seer stone he placed in a hat.⁹

Neville's first and third explanations are simply a false dichotomy, as Neville demonstrates: "explanation 1 was the 'faithful' explanation, while explanations 2 and 3 were the critical or unbelieving explanations. Lately, explanation 3 has been embraced by many believers (including Kraus) as a faithful explanation that replaces explanation 1."¹⁰ This is an inaccurate claim, as the two are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to believe that Joseph translated ancient engravings into English (explanation 1), and it is possible to simultaneously believe that Joseph did so as he read words that appeared on a divine instrument (explanation 3). Neville's definition of *translation* appears to be a scholarly endeavor, which I have responded to at length in my review of *A Man That Can Translate*.¹¹ By offering a false dichotomy between "ordinary" translation (by divine means, per explanation 1) and dictating the translation with the aid of a seer stone (per explanation 3), however, Neville inadvertently avoids responding to my reviews of his work.

Neville then mischaracterizes explanation 3 by asserting that it was historically a view of critics or unbelievers, only recently gaining acceptance by some believers, when in fact it is a form of miraculous translation compatible with the faithful belief that Joseph translated the plates through the power of God. This leads to another point of discussion raised in my reviews, which Neville also should have offered a response to in order to defend his work. I discuss two citations from Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer that state that Joseph read words off of his translation instruments. David Whitmer even describes that it was *Joseph* who related that information to him. From these citations, it would appear that Oliver, David, and likely Joseph himself saw no conflict between Neville's first and third explanations, because none

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. See Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 11–15.

truly exists.¹² (Neville cited these statements in his book, which makes his false dichotomy all the more unconvincing.)¹³

This is further contrasted with Neville's premise of believing Joseph and Oliver versus those who claimed "that Joseph produced the Book of Mormon by dictating words that appeared on a stone he placed in a hat" — especially because Oliver *and probably Joseph* (indeed, there is little reason to doubt David Whitmer on this subject) both claimed that exact method of translation.¹⁴

This was all detailed in my review, and because Neville leaves this unrebutted in his response, it is entirely improper for him to attempt to frame the debate in this manner.¹⁵ It is also worth keeping in mind that the term *Urim and Thummim* could be used to refer to multiple instruments — as early Latter-day Saints understood.¹⁶

While Neville claims his ideas are "neo-orthodox" in his abstract, his framing of orthodoxy would challenge the faithfulness of multiple Church leaders in the Book of Mormon translation.¹⁷ Russell M. Nelson, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, D. Todd Christofferson, and Quentin L. Cook have all discussed Joseph's use of the seer stone in the hat, as discussed in my review.¹⁸ The Church's Gospel Topics essay further demonstrates that it is an entirely faithful and orthodox view that Joseph did read words off of a divine instrument placed in his hat.¹⁹

12. Ibid., 13. The relevant sources from Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer are Oliver Cowdery, quoted in Abram W. Benton, "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* 2 (9 April 1831): 120; David Whitmer, in "Questions asked of David Whitmer," 1885, Zenos Gurley Collection, Church History Library; David Whitmer, quoted in E. C. Briggs, "Letter to the Editor," *Saints' Herald* 31 (21 June 1884): 396–97.

13. See Jonathan Neville, *A Man That Can Translate: Joseph Smith and the Nephite Interpreters* (Salt Lake City: Digital Legends Press, 2020), 267–68, 273, 301.

14. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 172.

15. See Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 11–15.

16. See *ibid.*, 3–6. I also discuss Orson Pratt's use of the term *Urim and Thummim* to refer to multiple instruments in Spencer Kraus, "Orson Pratt and the Urim and Thummim of Joseph(s)," *Latter-day Light and Truth* (blog), 16 July 2022, <https://latterdaylightandtruth.blogspot.com/2022/07/orson-pratt-and-urim-and-thummim-of.html>. Orson Pratt's comments may hint that he likewise viewed Joseph's seer stone as a Urim and Thummim.

17. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 171.

18. Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 9–10.

19. See "Book of Mormon Translation," *Gospel Topics Essays*, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/book-of-mormon-translation>.

Neville's second explanation is also troublesome. It is difficult to see how surreptitiously reciting a text that Joseph or his confederates composed could be accepted by faithful members as anything but deception or fraud. However, Neville appears to adhere to a portion of this claim regarding the Isaiah portions of 2 Nephi.

Responding to this particular concern, I would challenge the assumption that it is acceptable for faithful Latter-day Saints. Elder Kim B. Clark recently discussed Book of Mormon historicity in no uncertain terms, which would rule out this explanation permanently:

The Book of Mormon is what it claims to be, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His restored Gospel means that we believe exactly what Joseph said it was. If you reverence it as a sacred text, but don't believe in its historicity, you essentially deny its origin ... as Joseph said. And so I think it is absolutely essential [for a] robust faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His restored Gospel.²⁰

Indeed, as Joseph Smith likewise stated on no uncertain terms, "Take away the book of Mormon, and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none."²¹ Stephen Smoot has similarly offered persuasive arguments for the necessity of a historical Book of Mormon, which is entirely incompatible with Neville's second proposed explanation.²²

Next, Neville discusses the "caricature" I provide of his ideas, quoting the outset of my review of *Infinite Goodness*. Relating the conclusions reached in my previous review of *A Man That Can Translate*, I state that Neville argues

20. Elder Kim B. Clark, "Seeking the Lord Jesus Christ," presented at the 2020 FAIR Conference. The quote in question comes from the question-and-answer segment, and a recording with this segment is available online at fairlatterdaysaints.org and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Il1QJf-5Vr8>. The quoted remarks begin at 22:45 and end at 23:45 responding to the question, "How important is a literal belief in the historicity of the Book of Mormon as opposed to reverencing it as an allegorical text?"

21. "Minutes and Discourse, 21 April 1834," p. 44, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed August 24, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourse-21-april-1834/2>.

22. See Stephen O. Smoot, "Et Incarnatus Est: The Imperative for Book of Mormon Historicity," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 30 (2018): 125–62, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/et-incarnatus-est-the-imperative-for-book-of-mormon-historicity/>.

that (1) Joseph Smith memorized and recited Isaiah from memory rather than translate it from the Book of Mormon record; (2) Joseph Smith tricked his close friends and family, making them believe that he was translating the aforementioned sections of the Book of Mormon; (3) many witnesses to the Book of Mormon are not to be believed; and (4) we should instead rely on sources hostile to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to properly understand Joseph's translation effort.²³

As Neville discusses each of the four points in depth, I will respond to him accordingly.

First, Neville argues at length that Joseph memorized portions of Isaiah to recite in his "demonstration" to the Whitmers (this appears to involve Neville's explanation 2) and continues to do so in his response. He falsely asserts that the argument provided in my review "is a semantic mess because he argues that Joseph read words off a seer stone instead of translating the Book of Mormon record."²⁴ Rather than respond to my claims — including an analysis of the Masoretic text compared with the Book of Mormon — Neville avoids discussion by claiming it to be a "semantic mess," without explanation.²⁵

He then claims I "forgot to quote" a passage of his book relating to his Demonstration Hypothesis, although no real mistake was made on my part and signifies mind-reading on the part of Neville.²⁶ Neville's argument that "it is impossible to determine what portion of the Book of Mormon was being dictated"²⁷ when the seer stone was used is inconsequential, and did not merit an in-depth response — of course it is impossible to date with exact precision any part of the Book of Mormon translation and what tool was used. However, Emma Smith and Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery relate observing Joseph using the seer stone for extended periods of time — day after day and hours at a

23. Spencer Kraus, "Jonathan Edwards's Unique Role in an Imagined Church History," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 52 (2022): 65–66, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/jonathan-edwardss-unique-role-in-an-imagined-church-history/>.

24. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 177.

25. For my response to the claim that Joseph memorized and recited Isaiah from memory, see Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 19–24. This includes an analysis of multiple textual variants in the Book of Mormon with the Masoretic text.

26. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 177.

27. *Ibid.*

time.²⁸ Neville should offer a defense of why these timeframes provided by Emma and Elizabeth should be discounted in favor of his proposed Demonstration Hypothesis involving Joseph’s recitation of Isaiah, but he fails to do so.

Neville defends his claim that Joseph cited Isaiah by citing an article by Stan Spencer that claims that many Isaiah variants do not offer substantial differences to the meaning of Isaiah’s message.²⁹ Indeed, Spencer’s analysis is true, but it is in no way indicative that Joseph memorized Isaiah. Neville further asserts that he believes Joseph memorized Isaiah, but does not deal with my review wherein I compare many of his proposed “memorization errors” to the Masoretic text in light of modern scholarship. I conclude that many of the Isaiah variants in the Book of Mormon that Neville believes were memorization errors are supported by ancient sources and would therefore be better understood as a translation of an ancient text. Neville would have done well to respond to my arguments rather than avoid them.

Regarding the Isaiah variants in the Book of Mormon, there must be a logical point where coincidence for memorization errors matching ancient texts is too fantastical a claim when weighed with the evidence. Unfortunately, Neville continues to ignore the decades of scholarship on this issue in favor of a single statement from Stan Spencer that he can use in a context Spencer did not intend.

An odd remark in Neville’s response is his declaration that “whatever Joseph was doing with the seer stone, it was — by his own declarations — not translating the plates.”³⁰ No citation is offered, and I know of no declaration by Joseph that he never used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon. Neville relies exclusively on his own speculation.

Neville also states that he “never wrote nor implied that Joseph tricked anyone.”³¹ This is an issue of semantics — Neville never explicitly writes in his books that Joseph lied to anyone, nor does he use the word “tricked.” He does, however, imply that Joseph did trick and lie to his

28. See “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saint’s Herald* 26 (1 October 1879): 289; Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, quoted in William W. McLellin, “My Dear Friends,” manuscript, February 1870, Community of Christ Library and Archives.

29. See Stan Spencer, “Missing Words: King James Bible Italics, the Translation of the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith as an Unlearned Reader,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 38 (2020): 45–106, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/missing-words-king-james-bible-italics-the-translation-of-the-book-of-mormon-and-joseph-smith-as-an-unlearned-reader/>.

30. Neville, “A Response to Recent Reviews,” 178.

31. *Ibid.*

close friends regarding the translation of the Book of Mormon. This was not only done to the Whitmers, but to neighbors such as Jacob Ingersoll, who Neville claims is a trustworthy source when he states that Joseph informed him there were no actual gold plates.³²

Regarding Ingersoll's claims that Joseph lied to a toll collector, Neville claims this "demonstrates Joseph's willingness to let others make inferences without correcting them."³³ Joseph comes out on top in this instance, without having had to pay for half of his journey — hardly honest behavior. (This is contrasted with Joseph ensuring that his debts were paid before leaving for Harmony later in life.) Neville next claims that "it seems plausible that Joseph would seek to deter [efforts to steal the plates] *by spreading the word that he didn't really have plates*. A confidant such as Ingersoll would be an effective method to spread such a rumor."³⁴

Neville would do well to recall that you do not have to say something explicitly to discuss any certain principle; how one says something is just as important, if not more so — he does not have to *say* Joseph lied or tricked others about having the plates, he just has to say it *seems* like Joseph said that. The word "lie" and "trick" were not specifically used, but for all intents and purposes, that is exactly what Neville describes Joseph as doing. "Pious fraud," as critics often call Joseph's actions, is still fraud, and there is little that distinguishes Joseph lying about having plates and lying about *not* having plates, since both were allegedly performed to further his prophetic career.

Neville further insinuates that such trickery (although he fails to call it such) occurred in relation to the witnesses. He claims that Martin Harris's account of swapping the seer stone with one found by the stream offers proof for his Demonstration Hypothesis:

The way Martin tells the story comes across as Joseph playing along with Martin's test. He sits, silently (as Martin infers he is unable to read anything on the stone). Then he looks up and asks Martin what the problem was.³⁵

Later, Martin may have "realized Joseph was merely playing along with him," but still shares his experience anyway.³⁶ "Playing along with"

32. See Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 15–19, 26–28.

33. Neville, *A Man That Can Translate*, 84.

34. *Ibid.*, 85, emphasis added.

35. *Ibid.*, 182.

36. *Ibid.*, 183.

Martin's need for evidence through a "demonstration" is no evidence at all, and would be more harmful to faith than helpful once Martin learned the truth. While Neville relates instances of the Prophet's sense of humor as proof for his alleged tendency "to let others make inferences," the examples he cites are wholly at odds with his certain desire to assuage Martin's insecurities.³⁷ Joseph "playing along" with Martin versus Joseph "tricking" Martin becomes merely an issue of semantics.

In like measure, the same could be said for all of the witnesses who Neville claims were left to "infer" that they were witnessing a translation.³⁸ While it might be possible for Neville or his readers to claim that the Whitmers understood this as a demonstration, such does not accord with the historical record or Neville's insistence that they simply inferred Joseph was translating when they witnessed this proposed event. The above points are clearly laid out in my review.

As a final note regarding this important point, there is a large discrepancy between Neville's proposed method for the translation of the Book of Mormon and Joseph's alleged demonstration of such. Neville fails to consider why Joseph must have felt obligated to use a stone in a hat when a pair of spectacles borrowed from a neighbor would have sufficed. If Joseph wanted to appease their curiosity regarding the translation method, a device that resembles the Nephite interpreters would have been a much more understandable approach. By "demonstrating" the translation in a method completely at odds with what he had actually done (and one which he would allegedly try to refute later in life), Joseph is performing a dishonest action to get his friends to stop bothering him. Whether intentionally or not, Neville has painted Joseph in a negative light.

Third, Neville does not respond to any of my in-depth analyses regarding his claims about the various witnesses to the translation where I claim that Neville argues they should not be believed. He states that these witnesses merely inferred that a translation was occurring, but his

37. See Neville, *A Man That Can Translate*, 83. The two examples Neville cites are Joseph's humorous response in the *Elder's Journal* that money digging "was never a very profitable job to him" and Joseph's remarks to Joseph Knight Sr. the day he received the plates. See "Elders' Journal, July 1838," p. 43, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-july-1838/11>; "Joseph Knight Sr., Reminiscence, Circa 1835–1847," reprinted in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 4:15.

38. See Neville, *A Man That Can Translate*, 81.

historical analysis is fundamentally flawed. As he has not responded to any of my arguments, I would simply refer the reader to my review.³⁹

Fourth, Neville claims that "it's difficult to know what to make of this allegation" that we ought to believe sources critical of Joseph per Neville's analysis.⁴⁰ A lengthy portion of my review, however, deals with that exclusively — Neville defends affidavits in *Mormonism Unveiled*, defends his use of Mormonism Research Ministry, and attacks multiple sources published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴¹ (Indeed, it is ironic that he should again claim in his review that I parrot *Mormonism Unveiled* regarding the translation, when I clearly lay out my arguments against using *Mormonism Unveiled* apologetically as he does in his books.)⁴² Neville should be under the onus, in a defense of his work, to offer some explanation why he had done so, but none is offered.

Regarding my review of *Infinite Goodness*, Neville states that my conclusions are flawed because I did not "not consult [Neville's] database of over 1,000 nonbiblical terms and phrases used by Edwards" nor did I cite his "separate biblical intertextual database."⁴³ Neither of these were available at the time I wrote my reviews, although upon review it is easily determined that his databases suffer from many of the same problems that his appendices in *Infinite Goodness* do. A single word — sometimes just a different conjugation of a verb or alternative spelling — or phrase is poor "proof" for intertextuality.⁴⁴

Neville also claims that my "review invokes sources not known to be readily available to Joseph Smith," thus weakening my conclusions.⁴⁵ However, as I point out in my review, the use of these sources is done to demonstrate that the words and phrases that Neville sees as influenced by Edwards do not originate with Edwards and reflected a wider religious tradition.⁴⁶ These words and phrases were in the common vernacular, and it does not require any theological treatise to have been consulted on Joseph's part. That Neville appears to believe I would argue that Joseph

39. See Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 31–44.

40. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 179.

41. See Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 25–31.

42. See Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 174–75.

43. *Ibid.*, 180–81.

44. See Kraus, "Jonathan Edwards's Unique Role," 79–87. His appendices are discussed especially on p. 79.

45. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 181.

46. I conclude my review by stating that "Even [Neville's] best suggestions are weak — they consist of phrases common in the religious literature and discourses of three centuries." Kraus, "Jonathan Edwards's Unique Role," 88.

was familiar with each of the sources I cite (such as Martin Luther) underscores how little he understood my arguments.

Finally, in Neville's response, he argues that believing that Joseph used a seer stone links the Book of Mormon to "mystical origins"⁴⁷ that can lead to false claims regarding its nature. This is a false dichotomy yet again — the Urim and Thummim provide the same "mystical origins" that a seer stone would provide. What Neville fails to consider is how *his* definition of translation differs from mainstream Latter-day Saint thought since 1830.

In *A Man That Can Translate*, Neville argues that

Joseph translated the engravings on the plates in the ordinary sense of the word The translation was inspired both because of the aid of the interpreters and because, although Joseph had to study it out in his mind (D&C 9:8), the Spirit confirmed the translation he came up with as he dictated it to his scribe. Viewed in this way, the idea that Joseph actually translated the Nephite records into English seems obvious.⁴⁸

Neville does not offer an explanation as to how, should Joseph have been performing a scholarly translation, the Urim and Thummim would truly be used. An inference many readers might make is that the interpreters became incidental to the translation process, which is further strengthened by his claims that Joseph could have "ended previous [translating] sessions at the bottom of a particular plate" in an effort to explain how Joseph could reportedly begin translating from where he left off, as witnesses such as Emma Smith testified.⁴⁹ A scholarly translation of the plates removes the mystical origins from the Book of Mormon, ultimately providing a disservice to the book of scripture.⁵⁰ By making the Book of Mormon a scholarly feat rather than a divine translation as described by Joseph, Neville's historical analysis falters in multiple points.

My two reviews offer many other claims that Neville does not mention. Many of these are critical to his theses, and as such a defense of them is warranted on Neville's part. Examples include:

47. Neville, "A Response to Recent Reviews," 182.

48. Neville, *A Man That Can Translate*, 193–94.

49. *Ibid.*, 241.

50. See Kraus, "An Unfortunate Approach," 11–15.

- His presentism when discussing the word “peruse” in Lucy Mack Smith’s history⁵¹
- Why Joseph should be understood as having great literary capacities when his own testimony and the testimonies of his family suggest otherwise⁵²
- My rebuttal to Neville’s claim that Jonathan Edwards was an Elias figure to Joseph⁵³
- My critique of the proposed theological influences that Jonathan Edwards had on Joseph Smith, such as the doctrine of plural marriage (of which Joseph’s revelations and Edwards’s sermons are deeply at odds with one another)⁵⁴
- My critique of the various errors in Neville’s proposed intertextuality with Edwards, all of which are considerably weak⁵⁵
- My response to Neville regarding chiasmus in the Book of Mormon being another influence of Jonathan Edwards on Joseph Smith⁵⁶
- My response to Neville’s weak conclusions regarding additional outside influences on the Book of Mormon, including *The Late War* merely because (when comparing it to the Book of Mormon), “In both cases, we have a Title Page, a Copyright Page, and a Preface.”⁵⁷
- Neville’s misuse of Alma 37’s reference to a seer stone in regard to both modern scholarship and historical sources⁵⁸
- My response to Neville’s conflation of the seer stone with Skousen and Carmack’s theories regarding Early Modern English in the Book of Mormon⁵⁹
- My critique of Neville’s definition of “translation” and how it differs from Joseph’s definition⁶⁰

51. See Kraus, “Jonathan Edwards’s Unique Role,” 66–71.

52. See *ibid.*, 66–71.

53. See *ibid.*, 71–73.

54. See *ibid.*, 73–79. The claim regarding plural marriage is rebutted on pp. 76–77.

55. See *ibid.*, 79–87.

56. See *ibid.*, 86.

57. Neville, *Infinite Goodness*, 190. See also 191–93. I respond to this in Kraus, “Jonathan Edwards’s Unique Role,” 87–88.

58. See Kraus, “An Unfortunate Approach,” 7–9.

59. See *ibid.*, 10–11.

60. See *ibid.*, 11–15.

- My critique of Neville’s use of David Whitmer to argue for a large “demonstration,” when David’s statement Neville cites from does not support such a reading (this includes Neville’s erroneous belief that David described the seer stone in this purported demonstration, when the record states that the “spectacles” were used)⁶¹
- In addition to my analysis of Isaiah variants that better reflect ancient manuscript evidence rather than memorization errors, Neville has made multiple transcription errors regarding Isaiah in the Book of Mormon that deserve acknowledgment⁶²

Ultimately, Neville’s response to my two reviews is weak. He does not deal directly with the substance of my arguments, instead doubling down on his claims provided in his two books. This is troublesome behavior for one who claims to be open-minded and willing to discuss anything he has overlooked or mistaken.⁶³ As I discussed in the conclusion to my review of *A Man That Can Translate*, “History ... is written through the careful analysis of documents in their context and against a wide array of evidence.”⁶⁴ This includes determining the method in which Joseph translated the plates, especially in light of Joseph’s few references to the method throughout his life. Neville is under no imperative to accept any of my conclusions, of course — but he has not adequately dealt with my arguments in his response nor has he adequately dealt with the historical evidence regarding Joseph’s translation of ancient scripture.

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61. See *ibid.*, 16–19.

62. See *ibid.*, 19–25 for the full discussion regarding Nephi’s use of an ancient version of Isaiah in 2 Nephi. For Neville’s transcription errors specifically, see *ibid.*, 22–23. Only a handful of scriptures Neville cites were used in my response to highlight significant errors in his transcription and analysis, as due to length constraints my review could not deal with all of his errors.

63. See Neville, *A Man That Can Translate*, 21.

64. Kraus, “An Unfortunate Approach,” 44.