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The Mission of Moroni

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Abstract: Several years ago I ran across a statement from a witness to the translation of the Book of Mormon. Some searching of the Internet led me to several more. (This was several years before Opening The Heavens came out with their excellent collection of witnesses statements.) As I studied and compared them, I realized that none of the current ideas about how the translation was done agreed with what the witnesses said. I also realized that what they saw was so unusual and unexplainable that the memory of that experience would remain clear for their life, and thus could be relied upon.

Using the statements of the witnesses, along with a knowledge of how God works with his servants as seen by the Church organization, I realized what the translation process had to be, including supervision of the process from beyond the veil. This paper discusses what the witnesses said, and how the parts of the process that they could not see had to proceed. Joseph Smith had no input to the translation process, as recent studies have verified, particularly the finding that the translation into English used Early Modern English, circa 1470 AD, with impeccable use of the language at that time. Moroni evidently was given the assignment to oversee getting the translation in a form where necessary parts of the translation were correct, and other errors such as spelling and grammar could be corrected by knowledgeable people.

This paper discusses the statements of the witnesses, and the process of translation they were witnessing.

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The Mission of Moroni

By Carl T. Cox

... I will drink of the fruit of the vine . . . with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fullness of my everlasting gospel, to who I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim; D&C 27:5

Moroni has a special place in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was intimately involved in the major production of the restoration, the Book of Mormon. I think we can safely assume that his assignment was to oversee the writing of that volume into English, and to ensure that it was published for the world to see. Let us follow his preparation and execution of this duty.

Ancient beginnings

Moroni was the son of Mormon, who was the last leader/general of the Nephites, and watched their total defeat. Mormon also abridged the Book of Mormon and compiled the plates in accordance with the commandments of God. He foresaw the end of his people, and turned the abridged plates over to his son, Moroni. (Mormon 6:6) Moroni was obedient to the commandments of his father, and wrote about writing the record on the plates, including comments about the language they used. (Mormon 9:31-32) He made sure we knew he was following the commands of God in his care of the sacred record. (Ether 4:5)

After the Nephites were destroyed, Moroni continued to wander, avoiding the Lamanites, and writing some more in the Book of Mormon. He finally hid the plates according to sacred directions, and we hear no more from him until Joseph Smith talked to God.

Moroni and Joseph

On September 21, 1823, Moroni visited Joseph Smith after Joseph had retired to bed. Moroni informed Joseph that a book was deposited nearby. He described the plates and the interpreters, then quoted appropriate scripture from the Bible. Some of the quotes were different from the way they were recorded in the King James Version of the Bible. Joseph's account of these visits can be found in JS-H, in the Pearl of Great Price.

Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recorded her recollection of Joseph's life in a book, *History of Joseph Smith*, and much information of this period of Joseph's life is taken from her book.

In the 4 years between seeing the plates in 1823, and obtaining them in 1827, Joseph was taught by Moroni, and he grew older and got married. Moroni evidently gave Joseph more information than Joseph recorded. His mother related, p82:

“From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same.”

P86 “During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them.”

September 22, 1824. Joseph expected to get the plates, but after removing them from the box he set them down to examine the stone box better. When he looked for the plates again, they were gone, and Moroni took that occasion to teach him more about exact obedience to the commandments he was given. He ensured that they were back in the box, but was not allowed to get them at this time.

Winter 1827, shortly after Joseph and Emma were married:

Lucy p100-101 “[Joseph] did not get home till the night was far spent. On coming in he threw himself into a chair, apparently much exhausted. My husband did not observe his appearance and immediately exclaimed, “Joseph, why are you so late? Has anything happened to you? We have been much distressed about you these three hours.” As Joseph made no answer he continued his interrogations, . . .

Presently [Joseph] smiled and said in a calm tone, “I have taken the severest chastisement that I have ever had in my life.” . . .

“ . . . it was the angel of the Lord. As I passed by the hill of Cumorah, where the plates are, the angel met me and said that I had not been engaged enough in

the work of the Lord; that the time had come for the record to be brought forth; and that I must be up and doing and set myself about the things which God had commanded me to do. But, father, give yourself no uneasiness concerning the reprimand which I have received, for I now know the course that I am to pursue, so all will be well.”

It was also made known to him at this interview that he should make another effort to obtain the plates, on the twenty-second of the following September, but this he did not mention to us at that time.’

Joseph gets the plates

Finally on September 22, 1827, he was given the plates. He also obtained the Nephite interpreters, later called the Urim & Thummim after the biblical objects. However, those who have studied the biblical Urim and Thummim indicate that there was really no similarity between the two. He carried the interpreters with him, as his mother says, p107:

“Joseph kept the Urim and Thummim constantly about his person, by use of which he could in a moment tell whether the plates were in any danger.”

Joseph was enabled to keep the plates secure, and the interpreters were very valuable in this regard.

Lucy 110 “When Joseph first got the plates, the angel of the Lord stood by and said:

‘Now you have got the Record into your own hands, and you are but a man, therefore you will have to be watchful and faithful to your trust, or you will be overpowered by wicked men; for they will lay every plan and scheme that is possible to get it away from you, and if you do not take heed continually, they will succeed. While it was in my hands, I could keep it, and no man had power to take it away! But now I give it up to you. Beware, and look well to your ways, and you shall have power to retain it, until the time for it to be translated.’

That of which I spoke, which Joseph termed a key, was indeed, nothing more nor less than the Urim and Thummim, and it was by this that the angel showed him many things which he saw in vision; by which also he could ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the record, and on account of which he always kept the Urim and Thummim about his person.”

Lucy 107 “[Joseph] looked in the Urim and Thummim and saw that the Record was as yet safe;”

Translation of the Book of Mormon

Joseph moved to Harmony, Pennsylvania, and Martin Harris was scribe for him from April to June, 1828. After Martin lost the 116 pages of the translation, the angel had Joseph give up the Urim and Thummim to him, but promised their return on September 22, conditioned upon Joseph’s faithfulness. That was done, and Emma became the scribe for Joseph most of the time until Oliver Cowdery came to be the scribe.

Joseph and Oliver moved to the Whitmer residence Late May, 1829 (David Whitmer stated that it was late May or early June that Joseph came to David’s house.)

Lucy history p147 Joseph and Oliver were in Pennsylvania:

“Near this time, as Joseph was translating by means of the Urim and Thummim, he received instead of the words of the Book, a commandment to write a letter to a man by the name of David Whitmer, who lived in Waterloo, requesting him to come immediately with his team, and convey himself and Oliver to his own residence, as an evil-designing people were seeking to take away his (Joseph’s) life”

David W had to harrow his wheat then spread plaster. He harrowed two days work in one, then found that 3 men had spread the plaster for him, so he recognized divine handiwork, and went immediately in response to Joseph’s letter.

David Whitmer helped to move Joseph & Oliver to the Whitmer home

(Told by David Whitmer)

The incidents of seeming superhuman aid given to David Whitmer as related by himself are as follows: The request of Oliver and the Prophet to come and remove them from Harmony, where they were threatened with mob violence, to the home of his father, found David in the midst of his spring work. He had some twenty acres of land to plow and concluded to do that and then go. "I got up one morning to go to work as usual," he says, "and on going to the field, found that between five and seven acres of my land had been plowed under during the night. I don't know who did it; but it was done just as I would have

done it myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow. This enabled me to start sooner."

Nor was this the only assistance of like character given to him. While harrowing in a field of wheat before starting on his journey he found to his surprise that he had accomplished more in a few hours than was usual to do in two or three days. The day following this circumstance he went out to spread plaster over a field, according to the custom of the farmers in that locality, when, to his surprise, he found the work had been done, and well done. David Whitmer's sister, who lived near the field, told him that three strangers had appeared in the field the day before and spread the plaster (lime) with remarkable skill. She at the time presumed that they were men whom David had hired to do the work.

Joseph was enabled to follow the journey of David Whitmer all the way from Fayette to Harmony by revelation. In preparing for the journey to Fayette,

"Joseph . . . inquired of the Lord to know in what manner he should carry the plates. The answer was, that he should commit them into the hands of an angel, for safety, and after arriving at Mr. Whitmers the angel would meet him in the garden and deliver them up again into his hands." Lucy, p149-50

Moroni took the plates to Cumorah

"When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver," David says again, "all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old fashioned, wooden spring seat, and Joseph behind us, when traveling along in a clear, open place, a very pleasant, nice looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, 'Good morning; it is very warm;' at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, 'No, I am going to Cumorah.' This name was somewhat new to me, and I did not know what 'Cumorah' meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked round inquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again. * * * It was the messenger who had the plates, who had taken them from Joseph just prior to our starting from Harmony."

B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930], 1: 127.)

A similar version of the story is found in Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, p 30, from Edward Stevenson Journal, December 23, 1877.

Mary Whitmer shown the plates

David Whitmer says that soon after the installment of Joseph, his wife, and Oliver Cowdery in the Whitmer household, he saw something which led him to believe that the plates were concealed in his father's barn, and frankly asked the Prophet if it were so. Joseph replied that it was. "Some time after this," David adds: "My mother was going to milk the cows, when she was met out near the yard by the same old man [meaning the one who had saluted his party on the way from Harmony; at least, David Whitmer judged him to be the same, doubtless from his mother's description of him], who said to her: 'You have been very faithful and diligent in your labors, but you are tired because of the increase of your toil; it is proper, therefore, that you should receive a witness, that your faith may be strengthened.' Thereupon he showed her the plates. My father and mother had a large family of their own, the addition to it, therefore, of Joseph, his wife Emma, and Oliver, very greatly increased the toil and anxiety of my mother. And although she had never complained she had sometimes felt that her labor was too much, or, at least, she was perhaps beginning to feel so. This circumstance, however, completely removed all such feelings, and nerved her up for her increased responsibilities."

Orson Pratt & Joseph F Smith to John Taylor, *Deseret News*, Nov 16, 1878, (cited in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, Deseret Book, 1981)

(Also found in Edward Stevenson, Journal, Dec 23, 1877)

B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930], 1: 127.)

This same experience with Mother Whitmer and the plates is a part of my family history. Elvira Pamela Mills Cox heard the story before she was married. Christian Whitmer, one of the Book of Mormon witnesses and the eldest son of Peter Whitmer, had married Anna Schott in 1825. They must have lived in close proximity to Peter Whitmer while the Book of Mormon was being translated. When Christian died in Clay County, Missouri in 1835, Anna was left a widow. Sylvanus Hulet married the widowed Anna, and also had care of his orphaned niece, Elvira Mills. The experience of Mother Whitmer

would have been known by family members, and Elvira was an interested teenager at that time. This is the way the story appears in our family history:

Grandma stopped telling a story of Mother Whitmer till 1900, when B. H. Roberts printed it in his History of the Church. Then she said, "I'm so glad I can tell it again."

David Whitmer had invited Joseph and Oliver to live in his father's home while translating the Book of Mormon. When Oliver's hand and Joseph's eyes grew tired they went to the woods for a rest. There they often skated rocks on a pond.

Mother Whitmer, with five grown sons and a husband to care for, besides visitors, often grew tired. She thought they might just as well carry her a bucket of water or chop a bit of wood as to skate rocks on a pond. She was about to order them out of her home.

One morning, just at daybreak, she came out of her cow stable with two buckets of milk in her hands, when a short, heavy-set, gray-haired man carrying a package met her and said,

"My name is Moroni. You have become pretty tired with all the extra work you have to do. The Lord has given me permission to show you this record:" turning the golden leaves one by one!

As found in Cox Bulletin II, 1958, Elvira Pamela Mills, written by Orville Cox Day.

The 3 witnesses were shown the gold plates by an angel, and a few days later

where the family were in the habit of offering up their secret devotions to God. They went to this place, because it had been revealed to Joseph that the plates would be carried thither by one of the ancient Nephites. Here it was, that those eight witnesses, whose names are recorded in the Book of Mormon, looked upon them and handled them." Lucy, p154

"After these witnesses returned to the house, the angel again made his appearance to Joseph, at which time Joseph delivered up the plates into the angel's hands." Lucy p155

Moroni was involved in safeguarding the plates, in instructing Joseph about them and apparently also telling him about the ancient inhabitants of this country. He also showed them to the three witnesses, and to Mother Whitmer,

and was seen by David Whitmer and others while Moroni was taking the plates to Cumorah as related above. But the main project for Moroni was getting the plates translated and printed. Let us examine the process of translation very carefully.

Translation process

The translation of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith has very important consequences for Latter-day Saints. There has been much controversy, and a lot of careful scholarship devoted to this subject. The amount of information available to shed light on the process is very limited. There are several witnesses, some of whom were scribes, others who watched the process, and some who got their information from those who witnessed the process. In addition, part of the original manuscript is available, the rest being destroyed by water while it reposed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House. Any proposed details of the translation process should take into account this evidence. This paper presents a methodology that agrees with all the evidence.

Finding the statements of the various witnesses to the translation took some searching of the Internet, and the appendix lists the accounts of translating the plates that are pertinent. Since then, some departments of Brigham Young University have produced a book, *Opening the Heavens, Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844*, BYU Press, 2005, and all of the statements are included in that volume. At the end of the paper are listed the desired statements with the source of each as given in the above mentioned book.

Emma Smith and David Whitmer gave quite detailed accounts of the translation process, and Martin Harris and several others also gave good statements. Unfortunately, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery declined to make any detailed account of the process, limiting their explanation to “the gift and power of God”

The witnesses quoted are:

Emma Hale Smith, wife of the prophet Joseph Smith

Isaac Hale, the father of Emma

Michael Morse, Emma Smith's brother-in-law

David Whitmer, son of Peter Whitmer, and one of the 3 witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He played an important part in the church until 1838, when he was excommunicated. He gave the most extensive testimony of the translation. He was instrumental in bringing Joseph and Emma from her father's place to Peter Whitmer's home, about June 1, 1829. The translation had begun about April 1, 1829, and was completed about June 30, 1829, so

about one third of the translation time was in the Whitmer home. David did not do any of the translation, but accounts of the setting indicate that the family was in the same area as the translation so they were first hand witnesses.

Martin Harris. He acted as scribe for the first 116 pages that he borrowed and lost. He was one of the 3 witnesses, and provided the money for printing the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Knight, an intimate friend of Joseph, who provided paper and supplies to enable the translation to go forth. He may not have personally witnessed the translation, but was well acquainted with those who did.

Oliver Cowdery was the principle scribe, and he also did some translating. His statement is in the words of one who interviewed him, but there is no indication of any errors.

The following table summarizes the important points of each statement.

Statements of witnesses	Emma	DW	MH	JK	OC
Urim & Thummim/Stone	S	S	S	UT	UT
Stone in hat	X	X	X	X	
Egyptian characters shown		X			
English characters shown		X	X	X	X
Read back		X			
Spelling corrected	X	X	X	X	X
JS unable to see scribe	X				X
Resume without read back	X				
Bible not present			X		
Not acquainted with Bible	X				

Isaac Hale and his son-in-law Michael Morse both spoke of the stone in the hat.

According to the evidence, Joseph Smith read from the seer stone or the Urim and Thummim a group of words, not a phrase or sentence. Royal Skousen, from examination of the original copy of the translation, concluded that 20 to 30 words were dictated at once. These words were written without punctuation, which was added by the printer. If there was a misspelled word, Joseph would make the correction without looking at the scribe's writing. This ability so impressed the witnesses that nearly every one of them talked about it. Joseph Knight remarked that "it was marvelous", which sentiment seems to be part of each witness's testimony. Most of the witnesses also talked of Joseph reading in English characters, and some mentioned Egyptian

characters (or characters from the plates) showing up above the English letters.

In Oliver Cowdery's description of the translation, he commented that Joseph could not see what he was writing to catch misspellings, and even if he could, Joseph's spelling was too poor to recognize errors. Emma concurred, both in Joseph's inability to see her writing and in his lack of learning. All but Oliver Cowdery described Joseph putting his head in his hat to exclude the light so that he could read the faint writing, so obviously he would have been unable to see anything the scribes were writing.

Joseph Knight and Oliver Cowdery both mentioned the Urim and Thummim rather than the seerstone. Both accounts were made after 1833, which is significant as I found out. W W Phelps suggested in 1833 that the 'Nephite Interpreters' could be the Urim and Thummim. Evidently the different name was accepted by most all church leaders. One evidence: The Book of Commandments of 1833, Chapter IX:1 reads, Now, behold I say unto you, that because you delivered up so many writings, which you had power to translate, [*] into the hands of ...

The D&C 1835 edition adds at the [*] the phrase 'by the means of the Urim and Thummim'. This is also according to our current D&C.

Joseph Smith commented that he was not going to describe the process of translation, and after 1833 in numerous quotes he just stated that the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God by the Urim and Thummim. Oliver Cowdery evidently agreed with that decision, so his Winter Quarters statement reflected that choice. Joseph Knight evidently wrote his statement after 1833, but he added that the Urim and Thummim was placed in the hat, just like the rest of the witnesses described the process with the seer stone. This information explains why the Urim and Thummim was mentioned by Oliver Cowdery, when Martin Harris plainly testified that the translation was done with the seer stone, and he was the first scribe.

Some witnesses testified of the translation many years after it was done, and fading memory is always a concern, but one interviewer specifically mentioned the bright recollection of Oliver of the process. The impression the translation process made on the scribes has already been mentioned, which would be indelibly recorded on their memory. The correction of spelling seemed to be particularly noteworthy, and nearly all the participants described that process.

Doubtful scribes

The scribes entertained doubts, as would be expected. The accounts reflect the points that seemed important confirmations to the scribes.

Emma recalled the spelling corrections, and you can almost hear the wonder in her statement. She noted that after a break of any length in the writing, Joseph resumed translation without any read back or hesitation, and we know from the original manuscript that breaks were not at sentence divisions. Ink flow, handwriting style, pattern of corrections - Royal Skousen used this type of evidence in making his determinations. Most people dictating need some read back of the written document to establish their place.

She recalled one incident that must have impressed her, when the translation mentioned the wall around Jerusalem. Joseph was not aware that Jerusalem had a wall, and was very much agitated until he was reassured that was correct. In addition to her assurance, a bible was obtained and the presence of walls was verified. This incident also shows that no bible was present during the translation, and that Joseph had a limited acquaintance with the bible at this time. Joseph and Emma obtained their personal copy of the bible at Grandin's printing establishment while the Book of Mormon was being printed.

Martin Harris described the breaks he and Joseph took between writing session. He found a stone that looked like the seer stone on one of these breaks, and switched stones when they came back to resume translating. After a time of puzzled silence, Joseph complained that it was as "dark as Egypt." Martin's face betrayed him, and Joseph asked him why he had done it. Martin said, to stop the mouths of fools, who had told him that the prophet had learned those sentences and was merely repeating them.

Oliver wondered how Joseph could correct the spelling, and "he did not rest satisfied until he himself obtained the gift to translate also. ... The Lord bestowed on Oliver the gift by which he was enabled to translate; and thus he learned how it was that Joseph could correct him even to the spelling of words". D&C 9:1 indicates that Oliver had translated, but then went back to write for Joseph.

The translation process evidently changed as it went along. One witness mentioned that the scribe read back what had been written, another said "done", and others talked like there was no confirmation from the scribe at all. It could be that after Joseph and the scribe realized that the spelling was being

corrected without their intervention, they decided that they could concentrate on dictating and writing. Most of the witnesses indicated that when the scribe had the dictation written correctly the next group of words would appear.

Writing out the translation

Question: how did Joseph know the words the scribe wrote were misspelled? Joseph had his head in the hat to exclude enough light that he could read the faint writing in the Urim & Thummim or the seer stone. There is no possibility that he could watch how they spelled the words, and he was no great speller at that time so he would probably have made many more errors than the scribes had he watched them. So how did he know? The words in the stone did not change until the scribes had finished, so some external means of monitoring the scribe's writing had to exist.

One could just state that 'the gift and power of God' did it, but as a curious scientist I would like more details. The easiest explanation is that someone was watching. Neither Joseph nor the scribes mentioned any other presence in the room, but I think all of us have heard of times when others were present that we did not see. The servant of Elisha was allowed to see the hosts of the spirit world arrayed to protect them. Then, who would be watching? Moroni was given the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim; (D&C 27:5), and he knew the English language as he was able to converse with Joseph and quote scripture. Someone else could just as well been given the assignment from his Bishop in the spirit world (the job was important enough that the assignment probably came through one of the original apostles), but I will call him 'Moroni' in quotes to indicate that it is not a positive identification.

An interesting incident that happened during the translation process was recorded by Oliver B. Huntington in 1897, recording a statement from Sarah (Sally) Heller Conrad:

I conversed with one old lady 88 years old who lived with David Whitmer when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were translating the Book of Mormon in the upper room of the house, and she, only a girl, saw them come down from translating room several times when they looked so exceedingly white and strange that she inquired of Mrs. Whitmer the cause of their unusual appearance, but Mr. Whitmer was unwilling to tell the hired girl, the true cause as it was a sacred holy event connected with a holy sacred work which was opposed and persecuted by nearly every one who heard of it. The girl felt so strangely at seeing so strange and unusual appearance, she finally told Mrs. Whitmer that she would not stay with her until she knew the cause of the

strange looks of these men. Sister Whitmer then told her what the men were doing in the room above and that the power of God was so great in the room that they could hardly endure it; at times angels were in the room in their glory which nearly consumed them.

Joseph McConkie, in the 2001 Education week, commented that the people involved with the original Book of Mormon would be interested in watching the translation to ensure it was correct.

The translation process, then, would proceed with Joseph dictating and the scribes writing. The Urim and Thummim or the seer stone Joseph was reading from would probably be described today in terms of a computer display. When they made a spelling error, 'Moroni' may have had means of enhancing the misspelled word in the text Joseph was reading so that Joseph would spell it out. When it was correct, to 'Moroni's' satisfaction, he would advance the display to the next frame (like the weather men do on TV, and 150 years ahead of his time). 'Moroni' had the job of getting the Book of Mormon translated as quickly as possible. We know that the names in the Book of Mormon were corrected the first time they appeared, but after that the spelling seemed to be left to the scribes best effort. 'Moroni' rightly assumed that the printer would spell them correctly in the printed copy. Other spelling errors were obvious, or not important enough to take the additional time to correct during the translation. Thus 'Moroni' would have been the arbitrator of the translation.

Translation into English

That brings up the next question: who actually translated the plates? As before, 'the gift and power of God' needs more details if possible. We see the planning of God reflected in the scriptures, and have an idea that he plans at least 6000 years ahead, so he would have assigned the translation to someone (Moroni?) in plenty of time to get it done. The scriptures quoted in the Book of Mormon were based upon the familiar King James Version of the Bible (KJV), the same source of the quotations that Moroni used in talking to Joseph. So we know that Moroni was familiar with English, the KJV, and the message of the plates. I would think he would make an excellent translator. If that is the case, all the anomalies that Royal Skousen and other experts have found in the Book of Mormon would be attributed to 'Moroni' who oversaw the translation, the dictation to Joseph, and the copying by the scribes.

There is no evidence that Joseph did any thinking or editing of the words he dictated. In fact the opposite is true. The scribes wrote, and wrote, and wrote,

and Joseph concentrated on dictating. Only after he saw errors on the written manuscript would he have realized that he could, nay must, make changes to the text in the original manuscript. Before that reality hit him, I believe that he would not dare change one word.

'Moroni' would have used the gold plates as the basis for his translation. And he would have used the Isaiah as written on the gold plates as the basis for the Isaiah passages. He would have been instructed to use the KJV as the form of the scripture, and had to make corrections to that translation as needed. When reading from the gold plates, the italicized words that are found in the KJV would stand out as their meaning is included in the Hebrew/reformed Egyptian words that have no direct equivalent in English. This probably was troubling to 'Moroni'. As a native speaker of the Hebrew-like language, he probably had a better understanding of the implied thoughts than the translators of the KJV. Thus he felt it necessary to make numerous changes to the implied/italicized words. He may have even settled for an awkward English usage, perhaps not being as acquainted with English as a native English speaker would have been. Note also that the chapter divisions in the original manuscript are at different places than the KJV. This indicates that the original for the translation of the Isaiah passages was different than the KJV, and that the translation was made to fit the KJV English as closely as possible.

Royal Skousen, after further research into the original manuscript, has identified words that had meanings in the 1600s that had changed by the time of Joseph Smith. One example from Royal Skousen's paper:

To counsel, meaning 'to counsel with'

In the original text of the Book of Mormon we have two cases where the verb counsel is used without the expected preposition with: "counsel the Lord in all thy doings" (Alma 37:37) and "take it upon you to counsel your elder brothers in your undertakings" (Alma 39:10). In the first case, Alma is speaking to Helaman; in the second, to Corianton, the wayward missionary son. In no way is Alma advocating that Helaman counsel the Lord or that Corianton counsel his two righteous brothers. The editors for the 1920 LDS edition recognized that the preposition with was necessary in those two passages so that readers would not misinterpret the language; thus in both cases counsel was emended to counsel with. One could assume that somehow the preposition with was accidentally lost during the early transmission of these two passages. Yet the OED, under definition 4, lists the now obsolete meaning 'to ask counsel of; to consult' for the verb counsel. Citations date from 1382 to 1547, the last one

coming from John Hooper: "Moses . . . counselled the Lord and thereupon advised his subjects what was to be done." Clearly, Moses is counseling with the Lord, not giving counsel to the Lord.

FARMS Insights Volume 25 Issue 5
The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon, by Royal Skousen
Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 2005. P. N/A

Bro Skousen concludes:

These new findings argue that Joseph Smith was not the author of the English-language translation of the Book of Mormon. Not only was the text revealed to him word for word, but the words themselves sometimes had meanings that he and his scribes would not have known, which occasionally led to misinterpretation. The Book of Mormon is not a 19th-century text, nor is it Joseph Smith's. The English-language text was revealed through him, but it was not precisely in his language or ours.

<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/display.php?table=insights&id=436>

In chapter 5 of Ether in the Book of Mormon, Moroni gives instructions to the translator. In verse one, Moroni begins:

And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I *have told you* the things which I have sealed up: . . .

(emphasis added)

This could indicate that the final translation of this chapter of the Book of Mormon by Moroni was not finished until shortly before it was given to Joseph Smith.

I feel it is logical to assume that the assignment 'Moroni' was given was to translate the plates into English, ensure that the biblical quotes were doctrinally correct, and expedite the copying of the plates as much as possible without impairing the final product, realizing that the proofreaders and typesetters would catch spelling and punctuation errors. Certainly the conclusion of Royal Skousen agrees with the conjectures of this article.

References, as given in *Opening the Heavens, Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844*, BYU Press, 2005

Emma Smith (Bidamon): Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma”, *Saints' Herald* 26 (October 1 1879): 289-90.

Isaac Hale: Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: 1834) 264-65

Michael Morse: W. W. Blair, Letter to the editor, *Saints' Herald* 26 (June 15, 1879):191

David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Richmond, MO.: By the author, 1887): 6, 10-11, 12, 30, 32, 55-56.

Martin Harris: Andrew Jenson, ed., “The Three Witnesses,” *Historical Record* 6 (May 1887) 216-17

Joseph Knight: Dean C. Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (1976): 33-36

Oliver Cowdery: Samuel W. Richards Statement, May 21, 1907, holograph, 2-3, Church Archives.

Oliver B. Huntington, “*History of the Life of Oliver B. Huntington*,” typescript, 49-50, Perry Special Collections. For Conrad’s granddaughter’s recollection, see Pearl Bunnell Newell, interview by Carma deJong Anderson, Orem, Utah, January 1970, copy of transcript in Perry Special Collections.

See also:

http://www.nickiedee.com/lee/86davidbunnellandsarahconrad/index_files/salliehellerconrad.html

http://www.nickiedee.com/lee/86davidbunnellandsarahconrad/index_files/sarahhelenconradpwff.html

Royal Skousen (Ph.D. in linguistics, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana) is the researcher for the Book of Mormon Critical Text project at BYU.

Appendix

Joseph Knight

Joseph Knight (autograph [between 1833 and 1847]):
(Dean Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History,"
BYU Studies, Vol. 17, No. 1 Autumn 1976, p.35)

(Excerpts from a longer document, of things pertaining to the translation of the Book of Mormon.)

The next Spring Came Martin Harris Down to pennsylvania to write for him and he wrote 116 pages of the first part of the Book of Mormon. And about this time Martin wanted to go home a Bout some Buisness and he wanted to take the writings with him But Joseph put him of[f]. But he urged him By fair promises that he would be Careful and he would Return it again. But he Being free with it some person go[t] hold of it and Cept [kept] it so that he never Could obtain it again. There fore Joseph Lost his privilige for a while. But after Repenting he again received the privelage of translating again, as in Book of Covenants page 163.

Now he Could not translate But little Being poor and nobody to write for him But his wife and she Could not do much and take Care of her house and he Being poor and no means to live But work. His wifes father and familey ware all against him and would not j[e]lp him.

In the morning I gave the old man a half a Dollar and Joseph a little money to Buoy paper to translate, I having But little with me. ...

In the spring of 1829 Oliver Cowdry a young man from Palmry went to see old Mr. Smith about the Book that Joseph had found. And he told him about it and advised him to go Down to Pensylvania and see for him self and to write for Joseph. He went Down and Received a Revelation Concerning the work and he was Convinced of the truth of the work and he agreed to write for him till it was Done. ...

But I had ingaged to go to Catskill again the next Day and I went again and I Bought a Barral of Mackrel and some lined paper for writing.

Then the Lord gave him Power to Translate himself. Then ware the Larned men Confounded, for he, By the means he found with the plates, he Could translate those Caricters Better than the Larned.

Now the way he translated was he put the Urim and Thummim into his hat and Darkned his Eyes than he would take a sentance and it would apper in Brite Roman Letters. Then he would tell the writer and he would write it. Then

that would go away the next sentence would Come and so on. But if it was not Spelt rite it would not go away till it was rite, so we see it was marvelous. Thus was the hol [whole] translated.

Emma

(citing Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,"
Journal of History [January 1916]: 454)

John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "The translation of the Book of Mormon:
Basic Historical Information"
(Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986),
[Stephen D. Ricks, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, p.239]
LDS Collectors Library, CD ROM Folio Infobases

In 1856, Emma recalled this incident:

When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made a mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling, although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time. . . . When he stopped for any purpose at any time he would, when he commenced again, begin where he left off without any hesitation, and one time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, "Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?" When I answered, "Yes," he replied, "Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived." He had such a limited knowledge of history at the time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.

Emma Smith to Joseph Smith III

From *The Saints Herald* vol. 26, pp. 289, 290
as reported in *History of the Reorganized Church*, vol. 3, pp. 354-358
Herald Publishing House, 1906

Q. Who were scribes for Father when translating the Book of Mormon?

A. Myself, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and my brother , Reuben Hale.

...

Q. What of the truth of Mormonism?

A. I know Mormonism to be the truth; and believe the church to have been

established by divine direction. I have complete faith in it. In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.

Q. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read or dictated to you?

A. He had neither manuscript or book to read from.

Q. Could he not have had, and you not know it?

A. If he had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me.

Q. Are you sure that he had the plates at the time you were writing for him?

A. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen tablecloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.

Q. Where did Father and Oliver Cowdery write?

A. Oliver Cowdery and your father wrote in the room where I was at work.

Q. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book?

A. Joseph Smith could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, it is marvelous to me, 'a marvel and a wonder,' as much so as to any one else.

Q. I should suppose that you would have uncovered the plates and examined them?

A. I did not attempt to handle the plates, other than I have told you, nor uncover them to look at them. I was satisfied that it was the work of God, and therefore did not feel it to be necessary to do so.

Q. Major Bidamon here suggested: Did Mr. Smith forbid your examining the plates?

A. I do not think he did. I knew that he had them, and was not specially curious about them. I moved them from place to place on the table, as it was necessary in doing my work.

Q. Mother, what is your belief about the authenticity or origin of the Book of Mormon?

A. My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity - I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to

him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.

...

These questions, and the answers she had given to them, were read to my mother by me, the day before my leaving Nauvoo for home, and were affirmed by her. Major Bidamon stated that he had frequently conversed with her on the subject of the translation of the Book of Mormon, and her present answers were substantially what she had always stated in regard to it.

Joseph Smith

Isaac Hale

Source unknown

Isaac Hale's summary of the process suggests his incredulity: "The manner in which he [Joseph] pretended to read and interpret, was the same manner as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!"

William Smith

From *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Book of Mormon*
by Stephen D. Ricks

J. W. Peterson and W. S. Pender interviewed Joseph's brother William in 1891 and reported:

Among other things we inquired minutely about the Urim and Thummim and the breastplate. We asked him what was meant by the expression "two rims of a bow," which held the former. He said a double silver bow was twisted into the shape of the figure eight, and the two stones were placed literally between the two rims of a bow. At one end was attached a rod which was connected with the outer edge of the right shoulder of the breast-plate. By pressing the head a little forward, the rod held the Urim and Thummim before the eyes much like a pair of spectacles. A pocket was prepared in the breastplate on the left side, immediately over the heart. When not in use the Urim and Thummim was placed in this pocket, the rod being of just the right length to allow it to be so deposited. This instrument could, however, be detached from

the breastplate and his brother said Joseph often wore it detached when away from home, but always used it in connection with the breastplate when receiving official communications, and usually so when translating as it permitted him to have both hands free to hold the plates.

J. W. Peterson in *The Rod of Iron* 1/3, February 1924, 6-7.

WILLIAM SMITH ON MORMONISM

This book contains a true account of the

ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

LAMONI, IOWA

Printed at Herald Steam Book and Job Office. 1883

(Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, Vol.2, p.418)

In consequence of his vision, and his having the golden plates and refusing to show them, a great persecution arose against the whole family, and he was compelled to remove into Pennsylvania with the plates, where he translated them by means of the Urim and Thummim, (which he obtained with the plates), and the power of God. The manner in which this was done was by looking into the Urim and Thummim, which was placed in a hat to exclude the light, (the plates lying near by covered up), and reading off the translation, which appeared in the stone by the power of God. He was engaged in this business (end of page 11) as he had opportunity for about two years and a half. In the winter of 1829 and thirty, the Book of Mormon, which is the translation of part of the plates he obtained, was published. He then showed the plates to my father and my brothers Hyrum and Samuel, who were witnesses to the truth of the book which was translated from them. I was permitted to lift them as they laid in a pillow-case; but not to see them, as it was contrary to the commands he had received. They weighed about sixty pounds according to the best of my judgment. We were all very much scoffed at and persecuted during all this time, while Joseph was receiving his visions and translating the plates.

Father Whitmer

(Matthew Roper, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, p.162)

(Father Whitmer, who was present very frequently during the writing of this manuscript affirms that Joseph Smith had no book or manuscript, before him from which he could have read as is asserted by some that he did, he (Whitmer) having every opportunity to know.)

David Whitmer

I

[A Bible! A Bible! Have We Got a Bible?
John Gee, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, p.99-101]
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David Whitmer testified that “Smith was ignorant of the Bible[;] that when translating he first came to where Jerusalem was spoken of as a ‘Walled City’ he stopped until they got a Bible & showed him where the fact was recorded.”

II

David Whitmer (Eri B. Mullin interview, 1874):
Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews, a Restoration Witness*
(Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991)

... the words appear, and if he failed to spell the word right, it would stay till it was spelled right, then pass away; another come, and so on.

III

[B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, Vol.1, p.256]
Journal of Book of Mormon Studies: *Translation of the Book of Mormon:
Interpreting the Evidence*, p.202
LDS Collectors Library, CD ROM Folio Infobases

In his *Address to All Believers in Christ*, David Whitmer wrote:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.

The "Seer Stone" referred to here was a chocolate colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the prophet found while digging a well in company with his brother Hyrum. It possessed some of the qualities of a Urim and Thummim since by means of it as described above as well as by means of the "Interpreters" found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraven on the plates.

David Whitmer

(James H. Hart interview, 1884):

Sometimes Joseph could not pronounce the words correctly, having had but little education; and if by any means a mistake was made in the copy, the luminous writing would remain until it was corrected. It sometimes took Oliver several trials to get the right letters to spell correctly some of the more difficult words, but when he had written them correctly, the characters and the interpretation would disappear, and be replaced by other characters and their interpretation.

(Skousen, Royal. "Translating the Book of Mormon."

In: Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited. FARMS 1997, p. 65-66)

From Lyndon W. Cook, ed., David Whitmer Interviews, a Restoration Witness
(Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991)

[B. H. Roberts, Defense of the Faith and the Saints, Vol.1, p.257]

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Another account of the manner of translating the record, purporting to have been given by David Whitmer, and published in the Kansas City Journal of June 5, 1881, says:

"He [meaning Joseph Smith] had two small stones of a chocolate color, nearly egg-shape, and perfectly smooth, but not transparent, called interpreters, which were given him with the plates. He did not see the plates in translation, but would hold the interpreters to his eyes and cover his face with' a hat, excluding all light, and before his eyes would appear what seemed to be parchment on which would appear the characters of the plates in a line at the top, and immediately below would appear the translation in English, which Smith would read to his scribe, who wrote it down exactly as it fell from his lips. The scribe would then read the sentence written, and if any mistakes had been made, the characters would remain visible to Smith until corrected, when they would fade from sight to be replaced by another line.

"It is evident that there are inaccuracies in the above statement, due doubtless, to the carelessness of the reporter of the Journal, who has confused what Mr. Whitmer said of the Seer Stone and the Urim and Thummim. If he meant to describe the Urim and Thummim or "Interpreters" given to Joseph Smith with the plates--as seems to be the case--then the reporter is wrong in saying that they were chocolate color and not transparent; for the "Interpreters" given to the prophet with the plates, as we have seen by his own description; were "two transparent stones." If the reporter meant to describe the "Seer Stone"--which is not likely--he would be right in saying it was of a chocolate color, and egg-shaped, but wrong in saying there were two such stones."

Mother Whitmer sees the plates

The experience of Mother Whitmer is related by her son David, in his Address to All Believers.

One morning, he says, while she was on her way to the barn to do the milking, she was accosted by a strange man, as she supposed. He had on his back a kind of knapsack, with something in it. He told her that she had been complaining to herself of late about her added work, on account of the presence in her home of Joseph and Oliver; and he assured her that her sacrifice would not go for nothing, because she was helping to further the purposes and work of God. Thereupon he opened his knapsack and showed her a book of gold plates.

Mrs. Whitmer, David tells us, believed this person to be the messenger Moroni and the book to be the Nephite Record, which was in course of translation.

John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989, 383.)

John C. Whitmer

Mary Whitmer's grandson, John C Whitmer, whose father was Jacob, heard the story from his grandmother. It is substantially the same as what is already told. It is found in Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record*, Oct 1881, p 721. Edward Stevenson also was present when John Whitmer told the story. It is printed in Anderson, *op cit*, p32

Martin Harris

Edward Stevenson, "One of the Three Witnesses. Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris,"

The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star Vol 44 No 5-6

[30 January and 6 February 1882]: 78-9, 86-7

[*B. H. Roberts, Defense of the Faith and the Saints, Vol.1, p.258*]

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Martin Harris' description of the manner of translating while he was the amanuensis of the prophet is as follows:

"By aid of the Seer Stone, sentences would appear and were, read by the prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say 'written' and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but: if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used."

On one occasion Harris sought to test the genuineness of the prophet's procedure in the matter of translation, as follows:

"Martin said that after continued translation they would become weary and would go down to the river and exercise in throwing stones out on the river, etc. While so doing on one occasion, Martin found a stone very much resembling the one used for translating, and on resuming their labors of translation Martin put in place [of the Seer Stone] the stone that he had found. He said that the prophet remained silent unusually and intently gazing in darkness, no trace of the usual sentence appearing. Much surprised, Joseph exclaimed: 'Martin! what is the matter? all is as dark as Egypt.' Martin's countenance betrayed him, and the prophet asked Martin why he had done so. Martin said, to stop the mouths of fools, who had told him that the prophet had learned those sentences and was merely repeating them."

Michael Morse

The first-hand account of Michael Morse, Emma Smith's brother-in-law, was published in an 1879 article in the RLDS publication Saint's Herald:

"When Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon [I] had occasion more than once to go into his immediate presence, and saw him engaged at his work of translation. The mode of procedure consisted in Joseph's placing the Seer

Stone in the crown of a hat, then putting his face into the hat, so as to entirely cover his face, resting his elbows upon his knees, and then dictating word after word, while the scribes — Emma, John Whitmer, O. Cowdery, or some other wrote it down."

W.W. Blair interview with Michael Morse, *Saints' Herald*, vol. 26, no. 12 (June 15, 1879), pp. 190-91 .

[B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, Vol.1, p.261]
LDS Collectors Library, CD ROM Folio Infobases

"At times when Brother Joseph would attempt to translate he would look into the hat in which the stone was placed, he found he was spiritually blind and could not translate. He told us that his mind dwelt too much on earthly things, and various causes would make him incapable of proceeding with the translation. When in this condition he would go out and pray, and when he became sufficiently humble before God, he could then proceed with the translation. Now we see how very strict the Lord is, and how he requires the heart of man to be just right in his sight before he can receive revelation from him."

Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith said on Oct 26, 1831: that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and that it was not expedient for him to relate those things. (HC, 1:220; FWR, 13)

Joseph Smith said in 1832: "The Lord had prepared spectacles...to read the book; therefore I commenced translating the characters." (Ensign, 7[9]:81; PWJS, 8)

Joseph Smith said in 1835: "I obtained [the plates] and translated them into the English language by the gift and power of God and have been preaching it ever since." (Ensign, 7[9]:82)

Joseph Smith said in 1835: "God would give me power to translate it with the assistance of this instrument [the Urim and Thummim]." (Ensign, 6[9]:72)

Oliver Cowdery

Oliver made some comments to Samuel W. Richards while he and his family stayed at his [S. W. Richards] house during a snow storm at Winter Quarters These Richards deposited with the Church Historian's Office in 1905.

Referring to Oliver's recollection of the BoM translation, Richards wrote:

"I was surprised at the bright recollection he seemed to have of his early experiences with the Prophet Joseph, especially in relation to the work of translating the Book of Mormon. He represented Joseph as sitting at a table with the plates before him, translating them by means of the Urim and Thummim, while he (Oliver) sat beside him writing every word as Joseph spoke them to him. This was done by holding the 'translators' over the hieroglyphics, the translation appearing distinctly on the instrument, which had been touched by the finger of God and dedicated and consecrated for the express purpose of translating languages. Every word was distinctly visible even to every letter; and if Oliver omitted a word or failed to spell a word correctly, the translation remained on the 'interpreter' until it was copied correctly. This was a great mystery to Oliver, how Joseph, being comparatively ignorant could thus correct him, even in spelling, without seeing the word written; and he did not rest satisfied until he himself obtained the gift to translate also. To satisfy Oliver, Joseph went with him before the Lord in prayer, and the Lord bestowed on Oliver the gift by which he was enabled to translate; and thus he learned how it was that Joseph could correct him even to the spelling of words"

Signed statement of S. W. Richards, Salt Lake City, May 25, 1907.

Original in Church Historian's Office.

Copy in BYU Library Special Collections.

Translating the Book of Abraham
contrasted with translating the Book of Mormon
[B. H. Roberts, Defense of the Faith and the Saints, Vol.1, p.265]
LDS Collectors Library, CD ROM Folio Infobases

In further proof that translation was not a merely mechanical process with the Prophet Joseph, I call attention to the evident thought and study he bestowed upon the work of translating the rolls of papyrus found with the Egyptian mummies, purchased by the Saints in Kirtland, of Michael H. Chandler, about the 6th of July, 1835. "Soon after this," says the prophet, "with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls

contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt,"etc.

Speaking in his history of the latter part of July, he says: "The remainder of this month I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language."

In his journal entry for November 26, 1835, is the following: "Spent the day in translating the Egyptian characters from the papyrus, though suffering with a severe cold."

Under date of December 16th, this: "I exhibited and explained the Egyptian characters to them [Elders M'Lellin and Young], and explained many things concerning the dealings of God with the ancients, and the formation of the planetary system."

Thus he continued from time to time to work upon this translation, which was not published until 1842, in the "Times and Seasons," beginning in number nine of volume three. It should be remembered in connection with this "preparing an alphabet" and "arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language" that the prophet still had in his possession the "Seer Stone" (or at least Oliver Cowdery had it, for on completing the translation of the Book of Mormon the prophet gave the Seer Stone into Oliver Cowdery's keeping, (David Whitmer's Address to All Believers, p. 32), which he had used sometimes in the translation of the Book of Mormon, yet it seems from the circumstances named that he had to bend all the energies of his intellectual powers to obtain a translation of the Egyptian characters.

Matthew Roper, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, p.162

The witnesses describe the extreme poverty of Joseph Smith and his family, making it unlikely that they even owned a Bible. They testify that the relatively unlearned Joseph Smith dictated hour after hour, day after day, correcting mistakes without seeing them, without the use of Bible, manuscript, or notes of any kind. Those who were there, whose firsthand testimony regarding the dictation of the Book of Mormon text the authors appear to accept, adamantly affirmed that he had none, that he could not have had books or manuscripts without their knowing. "Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon, without apparent hesitation, as fast as a scribe could write it in long hand. There is no chance for error on this point." Moreover, "The dictation from start to finish proceeded while the Prophet's eyes were thus hidden from seeing anything by

the natural light . . . he did not stop to hunt up the passages which resemble, or are identical with, passages in the King James' Version of the Bible. Such an interruption could not have escaped detection, and would surely have been noted in the accounts of the listeners. The quotations, therefore, whether direct or indirect, must be regarded as having come precisely like the rest of the matter, and probably . . . without the conscious knowledge of the translator." That is one of the reasons these early witnesses considered the event a miracle.

An experience with Moroni, from:
THE MORMONS RETURN TO PALMYRA
by Travis Glenn Haws, Ph.D.
<http://www.hillcumorah.net/rtpalmyra.htm>

The following is an account of some of the missionary experiences of Willard and Rebecca Bean during their 24 year mission to Palmyra, New York, during which time they lived in the Joseph Smith house on the Joseph Smith farm. Willard Washington Bean was born May 16, 1868, at Salt Lake City, Utah. He was the 7th child of George Washington Bean and Elizabeth Baum. Willard's wife, Rebecca Rosetta Peterson was born in Richfield, Utah, the 10th child of Ole Peterson and Julia Hansen. They were immigrants from Denmark. Willard and Rebecca were married in the Manti Temple on September, 18, 1914. This is their story as told by Rebecca at a fireside held in Salt Lake City in 1964. At the time of this talk she had been a widow for over 15 years and passed away on June 15th, 1976. I have used excerpts from their inspirational story many times in my Institute classes and would like to share it with you, the reader.

First of all, I would like to mention of course that we had the roadway built up to the top of the Hill Cumorah and planted all of those trees. The Bureau of Information was built there and the Moroni monument was placed on the top of the hill on July 21, 1935. For me that was a special spiritual experience and I would like to tell you why. Brother Knaphus told me this story: (some of you probably know of him) He said that as soon as he heard that we owned the Hill Cumorah, he started making sketches of what he thought an Angel Moroni monument and statue should look like. No one asked him to do this or knew what he was doing. After he had finished seven sketches, one evening all alone he climbed Ensign Peak which looks southward over Salt Lake Valley. In the darkness of the night he laid the seven sketches out on the ground and then he knelt in prayer asking the Lord if he had done the wrong thing. He asked the

Lord to show him which one would be the right one to take to the Church Authorities and if it was right and proper for him to even go to them. When he opened his eyes there was a light all around him and he could see every one of the seven sketches, even though it was dark. And then he saw an angel pointing with his finger to the one that he himself thought was the best and he heard the angel say, "This is the one." And then he asked, "How will I approach the Brethren? What will they think? Have I done the right thing to do this?" Then the angel said, "You go to the Church offices in the morning. They will be waiting for you." When he went to the Church offices the next morning and it was just like it had been planned. They were there and greeted him as if they had sent for him. He laid the seven sketches out on a table and they looked them over and they too pointed to the one that the angel had pointed to. I say "angel", I don't know. I asked Brother Knaphus, when he told me the story, if it was the Angel Moroni that came to him. He said, "Sister Bean, that's my secret." But I really feel that it was the Angel Moroni who came. The placement of the Moroni statue and its dedication was a great celebration and conference that I will always remember. Willard laid a wreath at the foot of the monument which was an honor for him.