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## The Writing of the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** This article is an examination of the people and dates involved in translating the Book of Mormon. Very little of the translation occurred between the time Martin Harris lost the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi and Oliver Cowdery began serving as scribe on April 7, 1829. The author also provides information regarding the hand-written manuscripts of the Book of Mormon.

# THE WRITING *of the* BOOK *of* MORMON

CONCERNING THE TIME, THE PLACE, THE SCRIBES, AND  
THE PRINTING

By DR. FRANCIS W. KIRKHAM

**B**EYOND the persuasion which comes from earnest reading of the Book of Mormon itself towers the truth of its claim that it was translated by an unlettered youth from ancient records "by the gift and power of God," a claim which is far easier to believe than the absurd explanations of its origin which have been advanced by those who insist on disputing—or simply ignoring—the evidence. That there is evidence, unmistakable evidence, that the book was produced exactly as Joseph Smith said it was, it is the purpose of this article to show. And when all the testimony has been cited, "chapter and verse"—for so replete are the sources—the conclusion will remain a simple one, but significant; for if the Book of Mormon can be shown to have been translated in about seventy-five working days, and under the conditions claimed for it, that is in itself evidence of its divine authenticity. The simplicity of the findings is startling: the truth becomes readily apparent. Fortunately, the evidence is such that each may judge for himself, may himself make the same careful, objective study from the same sources as those considered by the writer.

Let us consider the evidence:

**T**HE title page of the first edition of the Book of Mormon records the year and the place of the completion of the printing as follows:

"The Book of Mormon"  
[then follows the preface]  
By Joseph Smith, Junior, Author and  
Proprietor. Palmyra.  
Printed by E. B. Grandin, for the Author.  
1830.

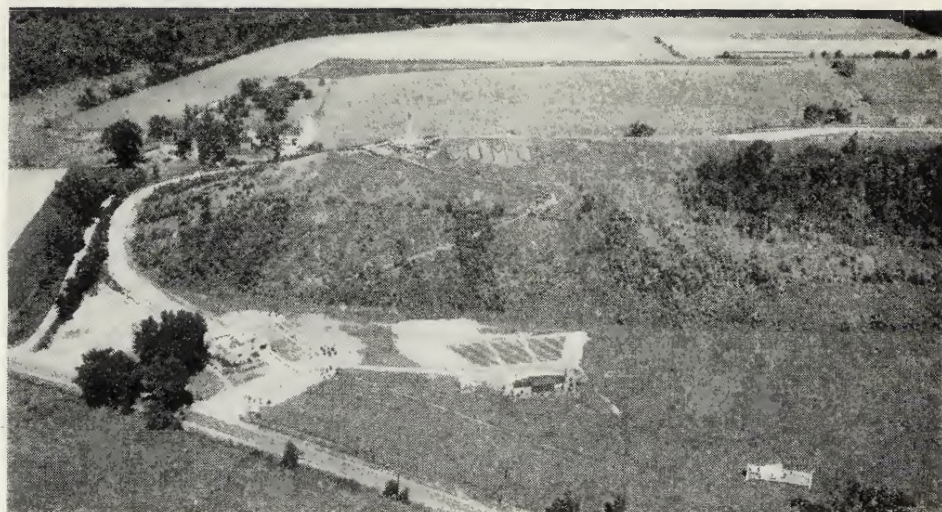
The printing of the book began in August, 1829.

The following autographed letter by the person who set nearly all the type for the Book of Mormon is at the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City. It is self-explanatory:

Palmyra, New York.  
October 23, 1887.

At the request of Elder F. M. Lyman of Utah, I make the following certificate:

"I was born in the town of Richmond, Ontario County, New York, April 13, 1802. I assisted Egbert B. Grandin in estimating



AN AIR VIEW OF CUMORAH TODAY

**I**T may seem unnecessary to prove spiritual realities by scholar's research, but the Lord Himself has said that in the mouths of many witnesses would His truth be established. Here is an ancient record translated "by the gift and power of God." The evidence that it was so translated is the subject of this article by Dr. Kirkham, who has gone into the record contemporary with Joseph Smith's day to find the facts that leave no other possible conclusion.

the expense of printing 5,000 copies of the Mormon Bible, and the price agreed upon was \$3,000. I was the principal compositor of said Bible, commencing on the same in August 1829, and finishing the same in March 1830."

(Signed)

John H. Gilbert.

Another personal witness to the printing of the Book of Mormon, Mr. Pomeroy Tucker of Palmyra, writes as follows in the preface of a book he published in 1867, entitled *Mormonism, Its Origin, Rise and Progress*:

I was well acquainted with "Joe Smith," the first Mormon Prophet. . . . also with Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery and with most of the earlier followers of Smith. . . . I established in Palmyra in 1823, and was

for many years editor and proprietor of the *Wayne Sentinel*. . . . I performed much of the reading of proof sheets of the Book of Mormon.

On page 53 of the same book, Mr. Tucker states:

Mr. John H. Gilbert, as printer, had the chief operative trust of the typesetting and press work of the job.

The personal knowledge of these facts by Mr. Tucker is affirmed by a letter written by S. S. Harding, one-time governor of Utah Territory, dated Milan, Indiana, June 1, 1867, and printed in the appendix of the above-mentioned book:

When I was in Palmyra in 1829, I went with Joe Smith at his special request, to his father's house, in company with Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery for the purpose of hearing read his wonderful "translations" from the sacred plates. . . . I was in the printing office with yourself and also the three Mormons named, when the proof sheet of the first form of the book was revised by you.

This letter also states:

In October following, 1829, the printing was considerably advanced and the ultimate issue of the Book of Mormon had become a fixed fact.

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Laman and Lemuel rebelled against Nephi.  
 Brethren go forth into the wilderness to go up to Jerusalem and it came to pass that we went up unto the house of Ishmael and we did gain favour in the sight of Ishmael in so much that we did speak unto him the words of the Lord and it came to pass that the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael and also his whole household that they took their journey with us down into the wilderness to the tent of our father and it came to pass that as we journeyed in the wilderness I told Laman and Lemuel and two of the daughters of Ishmael and the two sons of Ishmael and their families did rebel against us yea against Nephi and Zane and their father Ishmael and his wife and his three other daughters and it came to pass that in the which rebellion they were delivered into the land of Jerusalem and now I prophesy being grieved for the hardness of their hearts therefore I speak unto them saying yea unto Laman and Zane Lemuel behold thou art mine elder brother and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts and so blind in your minds that ye have not that I your younger brother should speak unto you yea, I set an example for you how is it that ye have not hearkened unto the word of the Lord how is it that ye have forgotten that ye have been a people of the Lord and how is it that ye have forgotten how great things the Lord hath done for us in delivering us out of the hands of Laban and also that we should obtain the land of promise and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will for the children of men if it so be that they exercise faith in him wherefore let him be faithful in him and it shall be that we are faithful in him we shall obtain the land of promise and ye shall know at some future period that the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled concerning the destruction of Jerusalem for all things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the destruction of Jerusalem must be fulfilled for behold the spirit of the Lord crieth soon to strive with them for behold they have rejected the prophets and Jerusalem have they cast into prison and they have sought to take away the life of my father and so much that they have done that if ye will return unto Jerusalem ye shall also perish with them and now if ye have choice go up to the land and remember the words which I speak unto you that if ye go ye will also perish for thus the spirit of the Lord constraineth me that I should speak and it came to pass that I prophesied these words unto my brethren they were angry with me and it came to pass that they did lay their hands upon me and behold they were casting me away and they did bind me with cords for they sought to take away my life that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts but it came to pass

First Nephi, Chapter 7, verses 4-17 (page 16 in the first edition) as it appears in the first of two original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. Evidence shows it to be in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, who wrote the translation "as it fell from the lips of the Prophet." The manuscript from which this photograph was taken is in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

## The Writing of the Book of Mormon

(Continued from page 341)

Later in a letter dated Milan, Indiana, February, 1882, and published by Thomas Gregg in his book, *The Prophet of Palmyra*, these statements are repeated in part.

Another direct statement of the time of beginning and completing the printing of the Book of Mormon comes from an interview with Mr. Gilbert at his home in Palmyra in 1888 by Andrew Jenson, Edward Stevenson, and Joseph S. Black. (See *Infancy of the Church* by Andrew Jenson, page 37):

Our next man was Major John H. Gilbert, the person who set the type for the first edition of the Book of Mormon in Egbert Grandin's printing office fifty-eight years ago. . . . Of the 580 pages of which the book consisted, he set in type about 500 pages himself. The work of printing the book, he remembers distinctly, was commenced in August, 1829, and finished in March, 1830.

THE publisher of the *Wayne Sentinel*, of Palmyra, has preserved for us the exact date of the close of the printing of the Book of Mormon. The following excerpts from this paper printed at Palmyra are quoted in *Source Material Concerning the Origin of the Book of Mormon*, by Francis W. Kirkham, pages 144-145. The original papers are in the New York State Library, Albany, New York:

We are requested to announce that the Book of Mormon will be ready for sale in the course of next week. March 19, 1830.

On March 26, 1830, and for four consecutive weeks, thereafter, the paper published the preface of the Book of Mormon followed by this statement:

The above work containing six hundred pages of large duodecimos is now for sale, wholesale and retail, at the Palmyra Book Store by Howard and Grandin.

The evidence appears complete, that the printing of the Book of Mormon began in August, 1829, and was completed not later than March 26, 1830.

### THE TIME AND THE PLACE OF THE WRITING

FOR the answer as to the time and place of writing, it seems advisable first to review briefly the statements of the Prophet himself from the time he received the plates until he met Oliver Cowdery and from then until the translation was completed.



“On the 22nd of September, 1827,” he writes, “the same heavenly messenger [Moroni] delivered the plates to me.” (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 1, p. 18.) Unable to translate at Palmyra because of opposition, in December, 1827, he returned to his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. He again narrates:

Immediately after my arrival there I commenced copying the characters off the plates. . . . Sometime in the month of February, Martin Harris came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn [i. e. copied] off the plates and started with them to the city of New York. . . . He [Martin Harris] returned to Palmyra and arrived again at my home about the 12th of April, 1828, and commenced writing for me while I translated the plates, which we continued until the 14th of June following, by which time he had written 116 pages of manuscript on foolscap paper. (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, pp. 19, 21.)

In the meantime, while Martin Harris was gone with the writings, [the 116 pages which were lost] I went to visit my father's family at Manchester. I continued there for a short season, and then returned to my place in Pennsylvania. Immediately after my return home, I was walking out a little distance, when, behold, the former heavenly messenger appeared and handed to me the Urim and Thummim again. . . . I inquired of the Lord through it and obtained the following. (See Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 3. Also *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 22.)

After I had obtained the above revelation, both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but in a few days they were returned to me. . . . (See Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 10; also *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 23.) (B. H. Roberts estimates the time of this revelation (Section 10) as August or September, 1828. *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 23.)

Lucy Mack Smith fixes the date when the Urim and Thummim were returned to the Prophet as September 22, 1828. (See *History of the Prophet Joseph* by Lucy Smith, page 124.)

Mother Smith further said: "A few months after Joseph received them [the Urim and Thummim] he inquired of the Lord, and obtained the following revelation." (*Ibid.*, page 126; Doctrine and Covenants, 10.) This would put the date of Section 10 as November or December, 1828. The date published in early editions of the Doctrine and Covenants is May, 1829. As explained by B. H. Roberts, however, this is evidently incorrect. (See *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 23, also *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, page 78.)

Whatever the date, it was after July, 1828, and before February, 1829.

This revelation (Section 10, Doc-

[illegible]

First Nephi, Chapter 6, verse 1, to Chapter 7, verse 11, as it appears in a second manuscript of the Book of Mormon, a copy of the original shown on the opposite page, made for the printer three months after the translation had been completed. The handwriting seems to be the same as that in the first photograph. Proof that Oliver Cowdery wrote the greater part of both manuscripts establishes a significant claim in the accompanying article. The manuscript from which this photograph was taken is in the library of the Reorganized Church, Independence, Missouri.

trine and Covenants) indicates that up to the time it was received no further translation had been made of the Book of Mormon. Note the following:

1. Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings [116 pages lost by Martin Harris] which you had power given unto you to translate, by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them.

2. And you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened.

3. Nevertheless, it is now restored unto you again; therefore see that you are faithful and continue on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work of translation as you have begun.

4. Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate; but be diligent unto

the end. (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 10:1-4.)

The Prophet writes:

I did not, however, go immediately to translating [following the time he received the revelation, Section 10] but went to laboring with my hands upon a small farm which I had purchased of my wife's father in order to provide for my family. In the month of February, 1829, my father came to visit us, at which time I received the following revelation for him. (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 4, dated February, 1829. *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 28.)

The following I applied for and obtained —[March, 1829] at the request of the aforementioned Martin Harris. (Doctrine and Covenants 5; *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 28-31.)

(Continued on page 370)



# The Achievements of Another "Era Year"

(Concluded from page 369)

| Stake                    | Percent | Stake                   | Percent |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|
| 15. San Juan...124.5     |         | 43. Beaver .... 87.4    |         |
| 16. San Ber'dino...123.6 |         | 44. Duchesne .... 84.2  |         |
| 17. Millard ....123.6    |         | 45. Morgan .... 84.1    |         |
| 18. Sacramento...117.8   |         | 46. Weiser .... 83.7    |         |
| 19. Pasadena ....114.    |         | 47. Cassia .... 81.5    |         |
| 20. New York ...111.7    |         | 48. St. Johns ... 78.9  |         |
| 21. Washington...110.3   |         | 49. Timpanogos ... 75.3 |         |
| 22. Portneuf ...110.1    |         | 50. Bannock .... 74.9   |         |
| 23. Moon Lake...109.6    |         | 51. Roosevelt ... 74.1  |         |
| 24. Taylor ....107.2     |         | 52. Blaine .... 69.6    |         |
| 25. San Luis ...107.1    |         | 53. Smithfield ... 69.  |         |
| 26. Malad ....107        |         | 54. South Summit 67.5   |         |
| 27. Lyman ....106.9      |         | 55. Sevier .... 67.2    |         |
| 28. Twin Falls...106.5   |         | 56. Moroni .... 65.6    |         |
| 29. Alberta ....106      |         | 57. Lost River ... 62.6 |         |
| 30. St. Joseph...105.8   |         | 58. B. Cot'wood. 61.3   |         |
| 31. Uvada ....104.4      |         | 59. Zion Park ... 60.5  |         |
| 32. Shelley ....103.9    |         | 60. South Sevier. 59.4  |         |
| 33. Minidoka ...103.1    |         | 61. Summit .... 59.3    |         |
| 34. Bear Lake ...102.6   |         | 62. Lehi .... 57.6      |         |
| 35. Teton ....102.4      |         | 63. Garfield .... 49    |         |
| 36. Raft River...102     |         | 64. S'quin-Tintic 48.3  |         |
| 37. Portland ...101.1    |         | 65. No. Sevier ... 45.5 |         |
| 38. Nevada .... 95.1     |         | 66. Gunnison ... 44.5   |         |
| 39. Young .... 94.3      |         | 67. Panguitch ... 43.8  |         |
| 40. Kanab .... 90.9      |         | 68. Juab .... 36.4      |         |
| 41. Idaho .... 89.7      |         | 69. Wayne .... 27.7     |         |
| 42. Gridley .... 88.2    |         |                         |         |

## TOTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS—GROUP "B"

| Stake                     | Number | Stake                      | Number |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| 1. So. Los Ang. 1309 1/2  |        | 34. Star Valley. 374 3/4   |        |
| 2. Ogden .... 918 1/2     |        | 35. Tooele .... 364 1/2    |        |
| 3. Wells .... 784 3/8     |        | 36. Oquirrh ... 357 3/8    |        |
| 4. Mt. Ogden... 747 7/8   |        | 37. North Weber 354 1/4    |        |
| 5. Liberty .... 725 1/4   |        | 38. No. Ida. F'ls 352 1/8  |        |
| 6. Rexburg ... 704 1/8    |        | 39. Rigby .... 351 1/8     |        |
| 7. Weber .... 667 3/4     |        | 40. Oneida .... 342 1/2    |        |
| 8. Grant .... 667 3/8     |        | 41. Bear River. 332 1/4    |        |
| 9. Pocatello ... 641 1/2  |        | 42. Montpelier. 327 3/8    |        |
| 10. Blackfoot ... 585 5/8 |        | 43. Yellowstone. 318 1/4   |        |
| 11. Salt Lake ... 540 1/4 |        | 44. Carbon .... 295 3/4    |        |
| 12. Bonneville. 529       |        | 45. Parowan ... 289 3/8    |        |
| 13. Los Angeles. 528 7/8  |        | 46. Granite ... 287 1/8    |        |
| 14. Logan .... 523 3/4    |        | 47. Burley .... 283 1/2    |        |
| 15. Cache .... 516 5/8    |        | 48. Utah .... 277 1/8      |        |
| 16. Highland ... 516 1/8  |        | 49. Pioneer ... 272 1/8    |        |
| 17. Big Horn ... 504 5/8  |        | 50. Benson .... 272 1/8    |        |
| 18. Emigration. 500       |        | 51. Hyrum .... 268         |        |
| 19. Idaho Falls. 494 7/8  |        | 52. Deseret ... 261 1/4    |        |
| 20. Riverside ... 478 5/8 |        | 53. Wasatch ... 246 1/2    |        |
| 21. Maricopa ... 478 1/2  |        | 54. East Jordan. 240       |        |
| 22. San Fernando 475 3/8  |        | 55. Cottonwood. 229        |        |
| 23. Box Elder ... 462 1/8 |        | 56. St. George ... 219 1/4 |        |
| 24. Emery .... 443 1/2    |        | 57. Kolob .... 212         |        |
| 25. West Jordan 419 1/2   |        | 58. Alpine ... 188 1/2     |        |
| 26. Snowflake ... 415 7/8 |        | 59. Woodruff ... 170 3/8   |        |
| 27. North Davis. 414 1/2  |        | 60. Palmyra ... 168 1/8    |        |
| 28. Ensign .... 406 3/8   |        | 61. Sharon ... 167 3/4     |        |
| 29. Provo .... 398 5/8    |        | 62. So. Sanpete 144 7/8    |        |
| 30. Oakland ... 398       |        | 63. No. Sanpete 144 1/2    |        |
| 31. Franklin ... 382 5/8  |        | 64. Nebo .... 117 7/8      |        |
| 32. Uintah ... 379 1/2    |        | 65. Oahu .... 83 1/4       |        |
| 33. South Davis 374 3/8   |        |                            |        |

## PERCENT OF QUOTA—GROUP "B"

| Stake                     | Percent | Stake                    | Percent |
|---------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. So. Los Ang. 369.9     |         | 22. Montpelier ... 105.4 |         |
| 2. Los Angeles 168.4      |         | 23. Provo .... 104.9     |         |
| 3. San Fernando 158.1     |         | 24. Grant .... 103.5     |         |
| 4. Big Horn ... 155.3     |         | 25. Emery .... 103.4     |         |
| 5. Snowflake ... 134.2    |         | 26. West Jordan 103.2    |         |
| 6. Salt Lake ... 129.9    |         | 27. Logan .... 103.1     |         |
| 7. Rexburg ... 127.1      |         | 28. Uintah .... 103.1    |         |
| 8. Maricopa ... 122.4     |         | 29. Wells .... 102.5     |         |
| 9. Ogden .... 122.3       |         | 30. Franklin ... 102     |         |
| 10. Blackfoot ... 122.1   |         | 31. Liberty ... 101.7    |         |
| 11. Mount Ogden 121.8     |         | 32. Oneida .... 100.4    |         |
| 12. Idaho Falls ... 117   |         | 33. Emigration ... 100.2 |         |
| 13. No. Ida. F'ls 115.1   |         | 34. No. Davis ... 95.7   |         |
| 14. Riverside ... 113.7   |         | 35. Tooele .... 94.4     |         |
| 15. Star Valley ... 110.2 |         | 36. Benson .... 88.1     |         |
| 16. Bonneville ... 109.8  |         | 37. Highland ... 84.6    |         |
| 17. Oakland ... 108.7     |         | 38. Yellowstone 83.1     |         |
| 18. Weber .... 108.2      |         | 39. Burley .... 76.6     |         |
| 19. Pocatello ... 107.8   |         | 40. Deseret ... 76.6     |         |
| 20. Ensign .... 106.9     |         | 41. So. Davis ... 76.3   |         |
| 21. Cache .... 106.7      |         | 42. Oquirrh ... 75.4     |         |

| Stake                   | Percent | Stake                   | Percent | Stake                  | Percent | Stake                    | Percent |
|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|
| 43. Box Elder ... 74.7  |         | 49. St. George ... 66.4 |         | 55. Parowan ... 59.4   |         | 61. East Jordan ... 45.2 |         |
| 44. Carbon .... 72.3    |         | 50. North Weber. 64.5   |         | 56. Woodruff ... 56.2  |         | 62. Palmyra ... 43.2     |         |
| 45. Hyrum .... 70.5     |         | 51. Utah .... 62.4      |         | 57. Cottonwood ... 52  |         | 63. No. Sanpete ... 40.8 |         |
| 46. Wasatch ... 70      |         | 52. Alpine .... 60.8    |         | 58. Sharon .... 50.7   |         | 64. Nebo .... 36.6       |         |
| 47. Rigby .... 69.4     |         | 53. Kolob .... 60.2     |         | 59. Pioneer .... 46    |         | 65. Oahu .... 24.2       |         |
| 48. Bear River ... 67.4 |         | 54. Granite .... 60.1   |         | 60. South Sanpete 45.7 |         |                          |         |



GROUP "A," PERCENTAGE OF QUOTA

First row, Inglewood Stake, left to right: President Alfred E. Rohner; Heber Grant, superintendent of the Y. M. M. I. A.; Elva Cusworth, Y. W. M. I. A. president; and E. J. Sorensen, Y. M. M. I. A. "Era" director.

Second row, Juarez Stake, left to right: President Claudius Bowman; Y. M. M. I. A. superintendent, Claudius Bowman, Jr.; Mrs. Ella R. Farnsworth, president of the Y. W. M. I. A.; Harvey H. Taylor, Y. M. M. I. A. "Era" director; Marza Lunt, Y. W. M. I. A. "Era" director.

Third row, Phoenix Stake, left to right: President James Robert Price; Wallace E. Broberg, Y. M. M. I. A. superintendent; Ethel Peterson, president of the Y. W. M. I. A.; L. L. Driggs, Y. M. M. I. A. "Era" director; and Mrs. Dora Dana, Y. W. M. I. A. "Era" director.

Fourth row, Union Stake, left to right: President George Ariel Bean; Melvin Westenskow, Y. M. M. I. A. superintendent; Mrs. Mary H. Stoddard, president of the Y. W. M. I. A.; C. Lloyd Walch, Y. M. M. I. A. "Era" director; and Elizabeth Tribe, Y. W. M. I. A. "Era" director.

Fifth row, Denver Stake, left to right: President Douglas M. Todd, Jr.; Eugene T. Whitaker, superintendent of the Y. M. M. I. A.; Barbara Morgan, Y. W. M. I. A. president; and Aaron U. Merrill, Y. M. M. I. A. "Era" director.

## THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 343)

Without any other comment, the Prophet tells of meeting Oliver Cowdery on April 5, as follows:

On the fifth day of April, 1829, [see *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, page 832] 370

Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until which time I had never seen him. . . . Two days after the arrival of Mr. Cowdery (being the 7th of April), I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, and he began to write for me. (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 32.)

Writes Oliver Cowdery on September 7, 1834:

Near the time of the setting of the sun, Sabbath evening, April 5th, 1829, [see *Messenger and Advocate*, Oct., 1834] my natural eyes for the first time beheld this



## THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

brother. He then resided in Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. . . . On Monday the 6th, I assisted him in arranging some business of a temporal nature and on Tuesday the 7th, commenced to write the Book of Mormon. These days were never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom. Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim, or as the Nephites would have said "Interpreters," the history or record called the Book of Mormon.

Do these statements by the translator and scribe mean that they commenced at the *beginning* of the book or at a page which had been written after the date of receiving Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants as noted above?

NOTE that Oliver Cowdery says, "I continued, uninterrupted, to write," and the Prophet adds to the above statement, "During the month of April, I continued to translate and he to write with little cessation." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 35.) . . . "We still continued the work of translation when in the ensuing month of May, etc." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, page 39.) And thus from time to time the Prophet describes the writing until he announces that the translation is completed as if he were describing both the beginning and the end of the great work entrusted to him. A careful reading of both texts leads to the belief that both writers intend to say they commenced at the beginning of the book or very close to the beginning, and worked continually (as circumstances permitted) until the work was finished. There is no intimation by the Prophet in his own writings that after the loss of the 116 manuscript pages he translated any part of the Book of Mormon before April 7, 1829.

Regarding this question, Mother Smith writes:

Joseph had been so hurried with his secular affairs, that he could not proceed with his spiritual concerns so fast as was necessary for the speedy completion of the work; there was also another disadvantage under which he labored: his wife had so much of her time taken up with the care of her house, that she could write for him but a small portion of the time. On account of these embarrassments, Joseph called upon the Lord, three days before the arrival of Samuel and Oliver, to send him a scribe. (*History of the Prophet Joseph*, by Lucy Smith, page 131.)

Mother Smith does not state that

Emma Smith wrote any part of the Book of Mormon before Oliver Cowdery arrived. She seems to try to explain that Emma, Joseph's wife, had not time to write, therefore the need of a scribe. However, verse 30, Section 5, Doctrine and Covenants, given in March, 1829, reads: "When thou hast translated a few more pages, thou shalt stop for a season, even until I command thee again; then thou mayest translate again." This indicates a small part was written by Emma Smith before April 7.

Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet, testifies she wrote for the Prophet, but she does not state when she wrote or that she wrote before the arrival of Oliver Cowdery. (See *Saints' Advocate*, October, 1879; see also "Manner of Translating the Book of Mormon," by Francis W. Kirkham, *Improvement Era*, October, 1939, page 630.)

To the knowledge of the writer, there are no other statements in early Church history that refer to the date of the beginning of the writing of the Book of Mormon.

FORTUNATELY, photographs of both manuscripts of the Book of Mormon are available corresponding to part of page 16 of the first edition (1 Nephi, Chapter 7, present edition). If both these copies at this beginning part of the translation are in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, then no more than sixteen pages could have been written before April 7, 1829, by anyone except Oliver Cowdery, as he first saw the Prophet and wrote at that date.

The question of whether or not the two copies are written by Cowdery is simplified by the fact that not more than four persons wrote on either manuscript. Note the two following citations:

In 1884, George Reynolds, in the *Contributor*, Vol. V, pages 366-367, published the following document:

A description of the portion of the manuscript, mentioned by Sister Kimball and now in the hands of President Joseph F. Smith, will doubtless be of interest to the readers of the *Contributor*. [Sarah Kimball the year previous received from Major Bidaman, husband of Emma Smith, a part of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon here described and gave it to President Joseph F. Smith. Major Bidaman had taken it from the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House shortly before he gave it to Sarah Kimball.] It consists of twenty pages of somewhat rough, unruled writing paper, more resembling narrow bill-cap than any

other size of paper now made, being a little less than fifteen and one-half inches long and full six and one-half inches wide.

The paper is now tinged brown or yellow by time and damp, and the writing in some places is indecipherable. The pages are numbered 3 to 22, pages 1 and 2 having been lost. The manuscript commences at the second verse of the 2nd chapter of 1 Nephi, (i. e. the second chapter of the Book of Mormon), and continues to the 35th verse of the 13th chapter of the same book. At the top of each page is a heading showing its principal contents. These headings, as far as they can be deciphered, are as follows:

3, (undecipherable). 4, Nephi goeth up to Jerusalem to . . . 5, the brethren of Nephi smite him with a rod. 6, Nephi slayeth Laban. . . 7, Nephi obtains the records. 8, Lehi searcheth the records. 9, Lehi prophesieth concerning his seed. 10, Laman and Lemuel rebelleth against Nephi. 11, Laman and Lemuel repent and (go) with Nephi. 12, Lehi's dream of the precious fruit. 13, Lehi fears for Laman and Lemuel, and he exhorts them. 14, Lehi prophesies of the Messiah. . . . 15, Nephi desireth the spirit of prophecy. 16, Nephi caught . . . the spirit . . . 17, Nephi beholdeth the lamb of God, etc. 18, The Messiah crucified (?) etc. 19-22, (undecipherable).

The manuscript is in two, if not three, handwritings. Pages 7 to 18, inclusive, appear to have been written by Oliver Cowdery. Pages 3 to 6 are written in what looks like a woman's handwriting, possibly that of Emma Smith, while the handwriting on pages 19 to 22, if not the same, very much resembles that of pages 3 to 6. The only division made in the manuscript is into chapters. The sentences are not divided by punctuation marks and are seldom commenced with capital letters.

The photograph of that manuscript shown in this article is under the caption "Laman and Lemuel rebelleth against Nephi." This is part of pages 7 to 18, which, in the opinion of George Reynolds, was written by Oliver Cowdery.

S. A. BURGESS, historian of the Reorganized Church, Independence, Missouri, where the only complete manuscript of the Book of Mormon may be seen, states that four persons wrote that manuscript, the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and Christian Whitmer being identified by members of the Whitmer family, and that of Emma Smith by her two sons, Joseph and Alexander. Other writings of Oliver Cowdery were compared with his writing in the manuscript as additional proof. The fourth writer named is Martin Harris. (See *Saints' Herald*, January 30, 1934, page 139.) Thus both manuscripts are identified as being in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery.

Let us consider further the photographs of the writings of both manu-

(Continued on page 372)



## THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 371)

scripts which form part of page 16 of the Book of Mormon, first edition.

There are many similarities in the writing of these two manuscripts as shown by the photographs which are printed herewith (pp. 342, 343). One was written for the printer three months later than the other. In the one written for the printer we might expect capitalization of proper names, more consideration of syllabication and punctuation. The first one would have been written rapidly as the words "fell from the lips of the Prophet," the scribe anticipating additional time later for the correction of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. However, neither copy is correct in these requirements; yet one is more correct than the other.

The expert who compares the photographs is not required therefore to determine that they are exactly alike, only that these two copies are more nearly like each other than either copy is like the other three writings of the manuscript. But he need not go this far. As we know, Oliver Cowdery wrote most of both copies; we need then only ask: "Is the writing pictured on these two photographs similar to the writing of the person who wrote the larger part of both manuscripts?"

In the opinion of the writer, these two copies were written by Oliver Cowdery and, if so, it is conclusive evidence that the sixteenth page of the Book of Mormon was written after April 7, 1829, when Oliver Cowdery first began the work of scribe.

Quotations follow from original sources stating that Oliver Cowdery wrote both manuscripts, except for a little help from about three other persons—assistants who relieved him for short periods.

It should be noted first that both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery state they commenced on April 7, 1829, to translate and to write and that they continued until they finished the manuscripts. Neither the Prophet nor Oliver Cowdery mentions any other person who assisted them.

At a special conference held at Kanesville, Iowa, October 21, 1848, and presided over by Apostle Orson Hyde, Oliver Cowdery was present and made the following remarks:

Friends and Brethren, my name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of this Church I stood identified with

her, as one in her councils. . . . I wrote with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it by the gift and power of God. . . . That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it; Mr. Spaulding did not write it; I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. (See *Contributor*, Vol. 5, page 446; also *Historical Record*, Vol. VI, page 201.)

In an interview with David Whitmer published in the *Historical Record*, Vol. VI, page 208, quoted above, Elder Orson Pratt asked Mr. Whitmer: "Have you in your possession the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon?"

David Whitmer answered, "I have; they are in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting."

In the interview with Andrew Benson, Edward Stevenson, and Joseph S. Black, 1878, quoted above, the following appears (See also *Millennial Star*, Vol. 40, page 773):

Next day, Sunday, September 8, . . . David Whitmer brought out the manuscript of the Book of Mormon. We examined them closely and those who knew the handwriting pronounced the whole of them, excepting comparatively few pages, to be in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. It was thought that these few pages were in the handwritings of Emma Smith and John and Christian Whitmer.

Pomeroy Tucker, who helped read the proof for the Book of Mormon (also quoted above) states on page 35 of his book, *Mormonism, Its Origin, Rise and Progress*:

Translations and interpolations were now entered upon by the Prophet, and manuscript specimens of these, with some of the literally transcribed characters, were shown to people, including ministers and other gentlemen of learning and influence [then follows a brief description of the contents].

The manuscripts were in the handwriting of one Oliver Cowdery, which had been written down by him, as he and Smith declared, from the translations, word for word, as made by the latter with the aid of the mammoth spectacles or Urim and Thummim. (Pages 35-36.)

The loss of the first translations [written by Martin Harris] checked for a time the progress of Mormon events, . . . Some six months passed when the announcement was given out that a new and complete translation of the Book of Mormon had been made by the Prophet, which was ready for the press. . . . The second manuscripts, like the first, were in Cowdery's handwriting. (Page 48.)

This implies a part of the original manuscript in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery was shown to Mr. Tucker at the time of the negotiations for the printing, and that the second manuscript, or the one copied by Oliver Cowdery, was also in his

handwriting. Note the following by Mr. Tucker:

In June, 1829, Smith the Prophet, his brother Hyrum, and Harris, the believer, applied to Mr. Egbert B. Grandin, then publisher of the *Wayne Sentinel* at Palmyra (now deceased,) for his price to do the work of one edition of three thousand copies. Harris offered to pay or secure payment if a bargain should be made. Only a few sheets of the manuscript as a specimen, with the title page, were exhibited at this time [June, 1829], although the whole number of folios was stated, whereby could be made a calculation of the cost. (Pages 50-51.)

By this statement one is justified in concluding that nearly all the translation was completed at this time, for the reason that Joseph Smith could give the whole number of the folios of the manuscript.

ACCORDING to Mr. Tucker, a contract to print was not immediately made. He describes a visit by "the same Mormon party" to Mr. Thurlow Weed, of the *Anti-Masonic Inquirer* at Rochester, and to Mr. Elihu F. Marshall, a book publisher. Both refused to print the book. (Page 52.) Mr. Tucker continues:

Whereupon, the Saints renewed the request upon Mr. Grandin, one reason the manuscripts were to be delivered and proof sheets examined daily by them at the printing office . . . each morning carrying to the printing office the installment required for the day, and withdrawing it the same evening.

This statement by an anti-Mormon writer gives proof of the method of delivering the copy to the printer as described by Mother Smith a little later in this article. It is also evidence that some time elapsed after the translation until the printing contract was signed. (See *Mormonism, Its Origin, Rise, and Progress*, by Pomeroy Tucker, page 9.)

These same facts are repeated in a letter by S. S. Harding, published by Thomas Gregg in the *Prophet of Palmyra*, pages 40 and 47.

As quoted above, the writing in the manuscript now in the possession of the Reorganized Church, at Independence, is identified by many persons as that of Oliver Cowdery.

The conclusion is that only a very few pages of the Book of Mormon were translated before April 7, 1829.

May we return to the question: At what time between April 7 and August, 1829, was the translation of the Book of Mormon completed?

"In the beginning of the month of June," writes the Prophet . . .



## THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

"we accepted the invitation" [to go to the home of the Whitmers at Fayette, Seneca County, New York] "and there resided until the translation was finished and the copyright secured." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, pp. 48-49. Also *Times and Seasons*, vol. 4, p. 885.)

"... In the course of the work of translation we ascertained that three special witnesses were to be provided by the Lord, to whom He would grant that they should see the plates from which this work (the Book of Mormon) should be translated: and that these witnesses should bear record of the same, as will be found recorded." (See Book of Ether, Chapter 5:2-3, and 4, and also II Nephi, Chapter 11:3.) (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, p. 52.) Then follows the description of the appearance of Moroni to the three witnesses.

The revelation given at this time is dated June, 1829. (See Doctrine and Covenants, Section 18.)

The Prophet adds: "Soon after these things had transpired, the following additional testimony was obtained. [The plates were shown by the Prophet to eight other witnesses.] ... Meantime we continued to translate, at intervals when not under the necessity of attending to the numerous inquirers who now began to visit us, etc." (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. I, page 59.) Sections 18 and 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, both dated June, 1829, appear in the record, after which the Prophet states: "Meantime, our translation drawing to a close, we went to Palmyra, Wayne County, New York, secured the copyright, and agreed with Egbert B. Grandin to print five thousand copies for the sum of three thousand dollars." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. I, p. 71.)

It would appear by these writings of the Prophet that the translation was completed sometime near the close of the month of June.

This conclusion is further justified by the fact that the place of the translation in the Book of Ether where the three witnesses were shown the plates by Moroni is within forty-one pages of the completion of the book.

Thus less than nine per cent of the book at that time remained to be translated, or specifically, 547 pages had been translated and 41 pages

were left to be translated at the time Moroni appeared to the three witnesses.

A definite statement of the time of the completion of the translation of the Book of Mormon is made by David Whitmer. The *Kansas City Journal*, June 5, 1881, quotes him in part as follows:

I, as well as all my father's family, Smith's wife, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, were present during the translation [already explained by Mr. Whitmer at his father's home at Fayette, New York]. ... The translation at my father's occupied about one month, that is, from June 1, 1829, to July 1, 1829. (Quoted in Vol V., *Historical Record*, page 206, and also quoted in Thos. Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra*, page 28.)

In an interview with David Whitmer by Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt on September 7, 1879, (*Historical Record*, 208) Elder Pratt asked Mr. Whitmer: "Do you remember what time you saw the plates?" Answer: It was in June, 1829, the latter part of the month, and the eight witnesses saw them, I think, the next day or the day after [i. e. one or two later].

"Joseph Smith showed them the plates himself, but the angel showed us [the three witnesses] the plates."

The copyright of the Book of Mormon is dated June 11, 1829, as printed in the first edition. As the title only of the book was required by law to be deposited with the state to receive the copyright, this date

would not indicate the time the translation was completed.

From the above quotations the reader will note that the Prophet states that he resided at Fayette until the translation was completed, that David Whitmer writes that the translation there continued from June 1 to July 1, and that the witnesses saw the plates late in June when only 47 pages of the book remained to be translated. Thus from these witnesses, we conclude the translation was completed about July 1, 1829, or shortly thereafter.

This conclusion is further supported by the fact that a copy of the manuscript was made after this time to be ready for the printing, which began in August, 1829.

Mother Smith writes as follows:

Soon after this, Joseph secured the copyright; and before he returned to Pennsylvania, where he had left his wife, he received a commandment, which was in substance as follows:

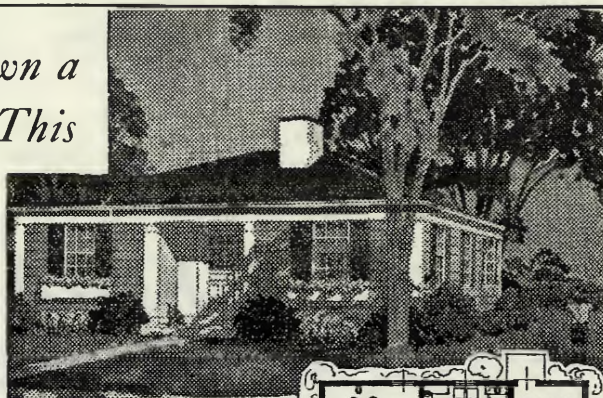
First, that Oliver Cowdery should transcribe the whole manuscript. Second, that he should take but one copy at a time to the office, so that if one copy should get destroyed, there would still be a copy remaining. Third, that in going to and from the office, he should always have a guard to attend him for the purpose of protecting the manuscript. Fourth, that a guard should be kept constantly on the watch, both night and day, about the house, to protect the manuscript from malicious persons, who would infest the house for the purpose of destroying the manuscript. All these things were strictly attended to, as the Lord commanded Joseph. After giving these instructions, Joseph returned to Pennsylvania.

(Continued on page 374)

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## THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 373)

(History of the Prophet Joseph, by Lucy Smith, pages 142-143.)

It appears that the entire copy might have been prepared before the printing began for the reason that the original copy would be kept at a separate place to guard against loss or destruction. In any event, one month to six or seven weeks would be no more than sufficient time to prepare the manuscript, arrange for, and actually begin the printing which, from the evidence presented herewith, began in August, 1829.

The conclusion is this:

The translation and writing of the Book of Mormon commenced April 7, 1829, at page 16 or a little before and was completed about July 1, 1829. The printing began in August, 1829, and was completed the week of March 19-26, 1830, by Egbert Grandin at Palmyra, New York.

*These facts concerning the origin of this strange book are as challenging today as when Orson Pratt wrote:*

This book must be either true or false.

If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God to man. If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions who will receive it as the word of God.

Or when Daniel P. Kidder, an early, bitter anti-Mormon writer declared:

Upon the Book of Mormon rests the whole fabric of Mormonism; let us examine whether it be not a sandy foundation . . . let us see whether it is from above or below . . . let us prove whether its waters are sweet or bitter. (*Mormonism and the Mormons*, 1842, page 19, Daniel P. Kidder.)

Here is a book of six hundred pages that was prepared for the printer in about seventy-five working days. It was dictated from day to day by a young man not yet twenty-four years of age. Many difficulties interfered: the interruption of inquirers, the removal of the translator from Pennsylvania to New York, the slow writing in long hand, etc. No corrections were made in the manuscript. There was no review to make sure that the contents of the book were consistent with its own claims. The translator dictated by the gift and power of God. Those

who wrote for him would have detected deception or fraud.

Whence came the contents of this book of sacred scripture, a book claimed by the translator to contain the fulness of the Gospel, the actual words of the resurrected Christ? Surely not from the mind of the one who dictated as another wrote. He was unlearned, only a farm boy. The accomplishment was far beyond his natural ability to achieve. Whence and when, we repeat, did he obtain the marvelous doctrines of the book and the history of a people who lived on this continent for more than one thousand years?

The answer must lie in its claims. Joseph Smith translated by the gift and power of God the sacred record of an ancient people, "preserved by divine power to come forth by the power of God, to convince the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God."

We do not comprehend nor can we understand, yet we may know for ourselves by the same power by which this book appeared, whether or not it came from God. The book contains this sacred promise:

And when ye shall receive these things,

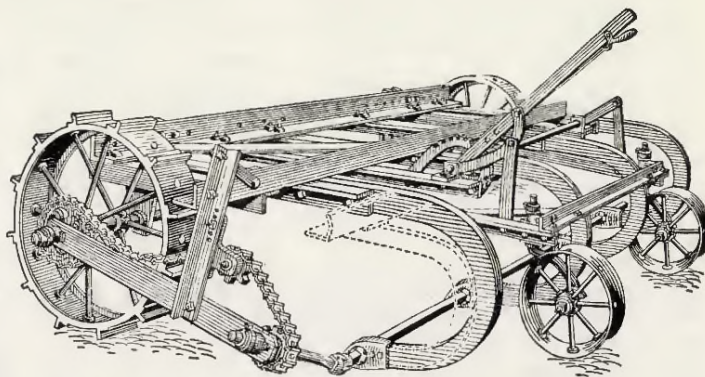
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## The Writing of the Book of Mormon

I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10:4.)

By and through this book, faith in Jesus Christ the Son of the Eternal God may become a vital force among men and lead them into ways of peace and happiness. For this purpose it is sent forth. Liberty and freedom rest upon morality, and morality rests upon faith in God. May the time be hastened when the purpose and the message of this book shall come to all men.

## Tisagago

(Continued from page 339)

head, and listening attentively picked up the sick bleating of sheep, the shrill whinny of horses, the mooing of distressed cows.

Something was wrong at the ranch of White Neighbor. This Tisagago knew. That she was more than likely the only one who realized it, she also recognized. Old and tired as she was, she pulled herself up, and started again toward the cabin. New determination marked her worn brown face and gave strength to her limbs.

WHEN she reached the cabin, she did not knock on the door. She pushed it open, and stumbled into a small room.

Her quick eyes found White Neighbor immediately. He was lying on a narrow cot in one corner of the room. His face was flushed with fever. He tried to raise up when he saw her, but sank back weakly as she moved toward his bed.

"Where you hurt?" Tisagago asked, carefully shaping and enunciating the words.

His hand pressed his stomach, and he smiled at her. She knew suddenly, by his smile and the gladness on his face, that she would not be afraid to ask him about the book; that she could have come sooner, without a gift.

"Where you people?" she questioned again.

"Gone Salt Lake. Two days now."

Then she understood. Here was need, and there was no time to go for a white neighbor; no time to

(Concluded on page 376)

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