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## Documents of the Translation of the Book of Mormon

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## Documents of the Translation of the Book of Mormon

The following historical documents are presented in these groupings:

- 1–9: Statements in the Doctrine and Covenants while the translation was under way
- 10–43: Accounts by participants, eyewitnesses, or people most closely associated with these events, including Joseph and Emma Smith
- 44–68: Martin Harris, initial scribe and one of the Three Witnesses
- 69–78: Oliver Cowdery, main scribe and another of the Three Witnesses
- 79–100: David Whitmer, the most interviewed of the Three Witnesses
  - 101–4: John Whitmer, another of the scribes
- 105–13: Members of the Joseph Smith Sr. family, including Lucy Mack Smith, William Smith, and Katharine Smith Salisbury
- 114–19: People who were close to those involved with the translation, including Sarah Conrad, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer, Alva Hale, Isaac Hale, Joseph Knight Sr., and Joseph Knight Jr.
- 120–206: Statements listed chronologically, beginning in 1829, made in early newspapers or by people who were in a position to have learned from Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, or other early sources (these people are listed alphabetically in the index at the end of this volume)

### 1. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 3:9, 12, 14 (1828)

Behold thou art Joseph & thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord but because of transgression thou mayest fall. . . .

. . . & when thou deliveredst up that Which that which God had given thee right to Translate thou deliverdest up that which was Sacred into the

hands of a wicked man. . . . this is the reason that thou hast lost thy Privileges for a Season.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

10:1–3, 8, 10–11, 30, 34, 40–41, 45 (1828; 1829)

NOW, behold I say unto you, that because you delivered up so many writings, which you had power to translate, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them, and you also lost your gift at the same time, nevertheless it has been restored unto you again: therefore, see that you are faithful and go on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work as you have begun. . . .

. . . and because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold, they have taken them from you. . . . And, behold, satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands; and behold I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written; . . .

Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands; . . . but behold here is wisdom, and because I show unto you wisdom, and give you commandments concerning these things, what you shall do, show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work. . . .

And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi, is more particular concerning the things, which in my wisdom

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1. “Revelation Book 1,” 2, 3, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/3>; Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books*, vol. 1 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 10. This revelation, given through Joseph Smith in July 1828, appeared initially as chapter 2 in *A Book of Commandments* (Zion [Independence], Mo.: W. W. Phelps, 1833), available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/11>. For a list of the earliest document pertaining to each section of the Doctrine and Covenants, see Church Historian’s Press, “Correlation of Current Doctrine and Covenants with Earliest Sources on the Joseph Smith Papers Website,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/site/correlation-of-current-doctrine-and-covenants-with-earliest-sources-on-the-joseph-smith-papers-website>.

I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account: therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; . . .

. . . Behold, there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel: therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 5:4, 30–31 (1829)

he [Joseph Smith] hath A gift to translate the Book & I have commanded him that he should shall pretend to no other gift for I will grant unto him no other gift . . . & if this be the case I command him that he shall do no more nor trouble me no more Concerning this matter & if this be the case Behold I say unto you Joseph when thou hast translated a few more pages & then shalt thou stop for a season even untill I command thee again. then thou mayest translate & excep thou do this Behold thou shalt have no more gift & I will take away the things which I have entrusted with thee.<sup>3</sup>

### 4. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 6:17, 25 (1829)

I tell thee these things as a witness unto thee [Oliver Cowdery], that the words or the work which thou hast been writing is true: . . .

. . . And behold I grant unto you [Oliver Cowdery] a gift if you desire of me, to translate even as my servant Joseph.<sup>4</sup>

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2. This revelation was given through Joseph Smith in part in summer 1828 and in May 1829; most of this material is from missing pages 3–10 of “Revelation Book 1” and was first published as chapter 9 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*.

3. “Revelation, March 1829 [D&C 5],” 1, 2–3, Newel K. Whitney Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-march-1829-dc-5/1>. This revelation, given through Joseph Smith in March 1829 at Harmony, Pennsylvania, following a request by Martin Harris, appeared initially as chapter 4 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*.

4. This revelation (from missing pages 3–10 of “Revelation Book 1”), given through Joseph Smith in April 1829 and directed to Oliver Cowdery and himself, was first published as chapter 5 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*.

## 5. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 8:11 (1829)

ask that ye [Oliver Cowdery] may know the mysteries of God & that you may Translate all those ancient Records which have been hid up which are Sacred & according to your faith shall it be done unto you.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 9:1–5, 8–10 (1829)

Behol[d] I say unto you my Son [Oliver Cowdery] that because ye did not Translate according to that which ye desired of me & did commence again to write for my servent Joseph even so I would that ye Should continue until ye have finished this Record which I have entrusted unto you & then Behold other Records have I that I will give unto you power that ye may assist to Translate be patient my Son for it is wisdom in me & it is not expedient that ye should translate at this time Behold this is the work which ye are called to do is to write for my Servent & Behold it is because that ye did not continue as ye commenced when ye commenced to Translate that I have taken away this privilege from you. . . . but Behold I say unto you that ye must study it out in your mind then ye must ask me if it be right & if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you therefore ye shall feel that it is right but if it be not right ye shall have no such feelings but ye shall have stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong there ye cannot wriete that which is sacred save it be given unto you [from me.

Now, if you had known this you could have translated: nevertheless, it is not expedient that you should translate now.]<sup>6</sup>

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5. “Revelation Book 1,” 13; Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 15. This revelation, given through Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery in April 1829, was first published as chapter 7 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*.

6. “Revelation Book 1,” 14 (ends where page 15 is missing; the balance is from the 1833 *Book of Commandments*); Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 16–17. This revelation, given through Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery in April 1829, appeared initially as chapter 8 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*.

## 7. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 11:19 (1829)

Yea, cleave unto me with all your heart, that you may assist in bringing to light those things of which has been spoken: Yea, the translation of my work: be patient until you shall accomplish it.<sup>7</sup>

## 8. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 17:6 (1829)

and he [Joseph Smith] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him, and as your Lord and your God liveth, it is true.<sup>8</sup>

## 9. DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 20:6–9 (1830)

but after truly Repenting God ministered unto him [Joseph Smith] by an Holy Angel. . . . & gave unto him Commandments which insp[i]red him from on high & gave unto him power by the means of which was before prepared that he should translate a Book which Book contained a record of a fallen People & also the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.<sup>9</sup>

## 10. JOSEPH SMITH (1830)

I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon; which said account, some person or persons have

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7. This revelation (from missing pages 15–22 of “Revelation Book 1”), given through Joseph Smith for his brother Hyrum, was received at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in May 1829 and was published as chapter 10 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*.

8. The revelation (from missing pages 15–22 of “Revelation Book 1”), given through Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris in June 1829, first appeared in W. W. Phelps, “Letter No. 10 [to Oliver Cowdery],” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (September 1835): 178, available on “Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/7144>.

9. “Revelation Book 1,” 53; Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 60–61. This text appeared as chapter 24 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*. The section heading in the *Book of Commandments* refers to this revelation as the “Articles and Covenants of the church of Christ.”

stolen and kept from me, notwithstanding my utmost exertions to recover it again.<sup>10</sup>

11. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY OLIVER COWDERY (1831)

Br. Hyrum Smith said that he thought best that the information of the coming forth of the book of Mormon be related by Joseph himself to the Elders present that all might know for themselves.

Br. Joseph Smith jr. said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon, & also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things &c.<sup>11</sup>

12. JOSEPH SMITH (1832)

[Martin Harris] immediately came to Su[s]quehanna and said the Lord had shown him that he must go to new York City <with> some of the c<h>aracters so we proceeded to cobby some of them and he took his Journey to the Eastern Cittys and to the Learned <saying> read this I pray thee and the learned said I cannot but if he would bring the blates [plates] they would read it but the Lord had fo<r>bid it and he returned to me and gave them to <me to> translate and I said I said [I] cannot for I am not learned but the Lord had prepared specttike spectacles for to read the Book therefore I commenced translating the characters and thus the Prop[h]icy of Is<ia>ah was fulfilled.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, available on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1>.

11. Minutes of conference at Orange Township, Ohio, October 25, 1831, in "Minute Book 2," 13, Church History Library, available on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/15>; Matthew C. Godfrey and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, vol. 2 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 84. For one explanation of Joseph's reticence to share his vision publicly, see Richard L. Bushman, "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 37, no. 1 (1997–98): 194–97.

12. "Letterbook 1," 5, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library, available on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-1/11>; Karen Lynn Davidson and others, eds., *Histories: Volume 1, Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the

## 13. JOSEPH SMITH (1832)

[The] Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowdry and shewed unto him the plates in a vision and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me his unworthy servant therefore he was desirous to come and write for me to translate now my wife had written some for me to translate and also my Brother Samuel H Smith but we had be come reduced in property and my wives father was about to turn me out of doors & I had not where to go and I cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me to accomplish the work whereunto he had commanded me.<sup>13</sup>

14. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY NANCY TOWLE (1832)

He accordingly went; and was directed by the angel to a certain spot of ground, where was deposited a “Box”—and in that box contained “Plates,” which resembled gold; also, a pair of “interpreters,” (as he called them,) that resembled spectacles; by looking into which, he could *read* a writing engraven upon the plates, though to himself, in a tongue unknown.<sup>14</sup>

15. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY LYDIA BAILEY KNIGHT (1833)

The Prophet commenced by relating the scenes of his early life. He told how the angel visited him, of his finding the plates, the translation of them.<sup>15</sup>

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Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 15. Until the phrase “I commenced,” this portion of Joseph Smith’s 1832 history was written in the Prophet’s handwriting.

13. “Letterbook 1,” 6; Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1*, 16.

14. Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America* (Charleston: James L. Burges, 1832), 138–39, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/1351>. In October 1831, Towle visited Kirtland, where she attended Sabbath meetings, witnessed a baptism, and engaged in a contentious dialogue with W. W. Phelps, Martin Harris, and Sidney Rigdon. She also met Joseph Smith and watched him give the gift of the Holy Ghost to several women and children.

15. “Homespun” [Susa Young Gates], *Lydia Knight’s History*, vol. 1 of Noble Women’s Lives Series (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 18, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/lydiaknightshist00gate#page/18/mode/2up>.



## 16. JOSEPH SMITH TO N. C. SAXTON (1833)

The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians; having been found through the ministration of an holy angel, and translated into our own language by the gift and power of God.<sup>16</sup>

17. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY PETER BAUDER (1834)

[Joseph Smith] went, and after the third or fourth time, which was repeated once a year, he obtained a parcel of plate resembling gold, on which were engraved what he did not understand, only by the aid of a glass which he also obtained with the plate, by which means he was enabled to translate the characters on the plate into English. . . . and after he had a part translated, the angel commanded him to carry the plate into a certain piece of woods, which he did:—the angel took them and carried them to parts unknown to him.<sup>17</sup>

## 18. JOSEPH SMITH (1834)

Bro. Joseph Smith Jun<sup>r</sup>. . . then gave a relation of obtaining and translating the Book of Mormon, the revelation of the priesthood of Aaron. . . . Take away the book of Mormon, and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none.<sup>18</sup>

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16. “Letterbook 1,” 17; Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 354; Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:315 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). N. C. Saxton (or Sexton) was the editor of a Rochester, New York, newspaper.

17. Peter Bauder, *The Kingdom and Gospel of Jesus Christ: Contrasted with That of Anti-Christ. A Brief Review of Some of the Most Interesting Circumstances, Which Have Transpired Since the Institution of the Gospel of Christ, from the Days of the Apostles* (Canajoharie, N.Y.: A. H. Calhoun, 1834), 36–38, cited in Dan Vogel, comp. and ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2002), 1:17.

18. “Minute Book 1” [Kirtland High Council Minutes], 43–44, April 21, 1834, Church History Library, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-1/47>; Matthew C. Godfrey and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, vol. 4 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin, Matthew J. Grow, and Matthew C. Godfrey (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2016), 15; cited in Brian Q. Cannon and BYU Studies Staff, “The Earliest Accounts of the Restoration of the Priesthood,” 253n10.

19. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY OLIVER COWDERY (1835)

[The messenger] said this history was written and deposited not far from that place, and that it was our brother's privilege, if obedient to the commandments of the Lord, to obtain, and translate the same by the means of the Urim and Thummim, which were deposited for that purpose with the record.<sup>19</sup>

20. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY OLIVER COWDERY (1835)

[Joseph Smith] was ministered unto by the angel, and by his direction he obtained the Records of the Nephites, and translated by the gift and power of God.<sup>20</sup>

21. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY OLIVER COWDERY (1835)

The angel said, “. . . they cannot be interpreted by the learning of this generation; consequently, they would be considered of no worth, only as precious metal. Therefore, remember, that they are to be translated by the gift and power of God. By them will the Lord work a great and a marvelous work.”<sup>21</sup>

22. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY WARREN PARRISH (1835)

I called on God, the Angel told me, that the reason why I could not obtain the plates at this time [1823], was because I was under transgression, but to come again in one year from that time, I did so, but did not obtain them, also the third and the fourth year, at which time I obtained them, and translated

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19. Oliver Cowdery, “Letter IV,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (February 1835): 80.

20. Oliver Cowdery, Introduction to blessings, September 1835, in Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, 8–9, Church History Library; cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:452. A transcription has been published in H. Michael Marquardt, *Early Patriarchal Blessings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit, 2007), 3.

21. Oliver Cowdery, “Letter VIII,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (October 1835): 198–200.

them into the english language; by the gift and power of God and have been preaching it ever since.<sup>22</sup>

23. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY TRUMAN COE (1836)

The manner of translation was as wonderful as the discovery. By putting his finger on one of the characters and imploring divine aid, then looking through the Urim and Thummin, he would see the import written in plain English on a screen placed before him. After delivering this to his emanuensi, he would again proceed in the same manner and obtain the meaning of the next character, and so on till he came to a part of the plates which were sealed up, and there was commanded to desist: and he says he has a promise from God that in due time he will enable him to translate the remainder.<sup>23</sup>

24. JOSEPH SMITH (1838)

I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them; by the means of which, I translated the plates; and thus came the book of Mormon.<sup>24</sup>

25. JOSEPH SMITH (1839)

He said there was a book deposited written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants.

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22. "Journal, 1835–1836," November 9, 1835, 25, Church History Library, available on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/26>; Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 89. On this occasion, Joseph Smith was relating the circumstances of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon to Robert Matthias [Robert Matthews], or Joshua "the Jewish minister," who had visited Joseph's home.

23. Truman Coe to Mr. Editor, (*Hudson*) *Ohio Observer*, August 11, 1836; cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:47.

24. "[In obedience to our promise]," *Elders' Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* 1 (July 1838): 43, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/1790>, image 3.

Also that there were two stones in silver bows and these put into a breast plate which constituted what is called the Urim & Thummin deposited with the plates, and that was what constituted seers in ancient or former times and that God <had> prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. . . .

. . . immediately after my arrival there I commenced copying the characters of all the plates. I copied a considerable number of them and by means of the Urim and Thummin I translated some of them which I did between the time I arrived at the house of my wife's father in the month of December [1827], and the February following. . . .

M<sup>r</sup> [Martin] Harris . . . returned again to my house about the twelfth of April, Eighteen hundred and twenty eight, and commenced writing for me while I translated from the plates, which we continued until the fourteenth of June following, by which time he had written one hundred and sixteen <pages> of manuscript on foolscap paper. . . .

I did not however go immediately to translating [in the winter of 1828], 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. . . .

Two days after the arrival of M<sup>r</sup> Cowdery (being the seventh of April [1829]) I commenced to translate the book of Mormon and he commenced to write for me. . . .

During the month of April I continued to translate, and he to write with little cessation, during which time we received several revelations. . . .

Whilst continuing the work of translation during this <the> month of April; Oliver Cowdery became exceedingly anxious to have the power to translate bestowed upon him and in relation to this desire the following revelations were obtained. [D&C 8, 9; see excerpts above] . . .

We still continued the <work of> translation, when in the ensuing month (May, Eighteen hundred and twenty nine) we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins as we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. . . .

. . . my wife's father's family . . . were willing that I should be allowed to continue the work of translation without interruption: And therefore offered and promised us protection from all unlawful proceedings as far as in them lay. . . .

. . . We also showed him [Samuel Smith] that part of the work which we had translated, and labored to persuade him concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . .

. . . M<sup>r</sup> Joseph Knight Sen<sup>r</sup> of Colesville, Broom[e] County, Penn; who having heard of the manner in which we were occupying our time, very

kindly and considerately brought us, a quantity of provisions, in order that we might not be interrupted in the work of translation . . . which enabled us to continue the work. . . .

. . . we accepted the invitation and accompanied M<sup>r</sup> [David] Whitmer to his father's house, and there resided until the translation was finished, and the copyright secured. . . .

. . . John Whitmer, in particular, assisted us very much in writing during the remainder of the work. . . .

In th[e] 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. . . .

. . . when immediately afterwards we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying "These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God; the translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear". . . .

Mean time we continued to translate, at intervals, when not necessitated to attend to the numerous enquirers, that now began to visit us. . . .

I wish also to mention here, that the Title Page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated.<sup>25</sup>

## 26. JOSEPH SMITH, AS RECORDED BY MATHEW L. DAVIS (1840)

Throughout his [Joseph Smith's] whole address he displayed strongly, a Spirit of Charity and Forbearance— The Mormon Bible, he said, was communicated to him, direct from Heaven. If there was such a thing on Earth, as

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25. "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," 5, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21–22, 23, 25, 26, 34, Church History Library, available on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/5>; Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1*, 222, 238–40, 244, 266, 276, 284, 286, 292, 296, 304, 306, 308, 314, 318, 320, 324, 352; Joseph Smith—History 1:59, 62, 67, 75; *History of the Church*, 1:12–71.

the author of it, then he (Smith) was the author; but the idea that he wished to impress was, that he had penned it, as dictated by God.<sup>26</sup>

27. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY GEORGE MOORE (1842)

Called on the “Prophet Jo Smith.” His carriage was at the door, and he was about going away, but he received me very kindly, and asked me into his house. I remained about 10 minutes. He was very communicative. We conversed about the golden plates, which he professes to have dug up and translated into the Book of Mormon. “Those plates are not now in this country,” he said—“they were exhibited to a few at first for the sake of obtaining their testimony—no others have ever seen them—and they will never again be exhibited.” He showed me some specimens of the heiroglyphics, such as, he says, were on the gold plates. He asked me if I was a Clergyman—and of what denomination—and what were the fundamental doctrines of our faith. . . . Our interview was short, but pleasant.<sup>27</sup>

28. JOSEPH SMITH (1842)

With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called “Urim and Thummim,” which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate.

Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift, and power of God.<sup>28</sup>

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26. “History, 1838–1856, Volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842],” 1015, Church History Library, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/187>; *History of the Church*, 4:79. Davis’s letter to his wife (dated February 6, 1840) relates a speech given by Joseph Smith the previous evening in Washington, D.C. While *History of the Church* refers to Mathew L. Davis as a member of Congress, Robert N. Hullinger has identified Davis as a political correspondent. Robert N. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon* (St. Louis, Mo.: Clayton Publishing House, 1980), 11.

27. Excerpts from the diary of Reverend George Moore, in Donald Q. Cannon, “Reverend George Moore Comments on Nauvoo, the Mormons, and Joseph Smith,” *Western Illinois Regional Studies* 5 (Spring 1982): 11.

28. Joseph Smith, “Church History,” *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 1, 1842): 707, available on “Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries,” *BYU Harold B.*

29. JOSEPH SMITH TO THE *TIMES AND SEASONS* (1843)

SIR:—Through the medium of your paper, I wish to correct an error. . . . The error I speak of, is the definition of the word “MORMON.” It has been stated that this word was derived from the Greek word *mormo*. This is not the case. There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of God, translated the Book of Mormon. . . .

Here then the subject is put to silence, for “*none other people knoweth our language*,” [Morm. 9:34] therefore the Lord, and not man, had to interpret, after the people were all dead.<sup>29</sup>

## 30. JOSEPH SMITH TO JAMES ARLINGTON BENNETT (1843)

The fact is, that by the power of God I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics; the knowledge of which was lost to the world: in which wonderful event I stood alone, an unlearned youth, to combat the worldly wisdom, and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries.<sup>30</sup>

## 31. JOSEPH SMITH (1843)

During this month of April, I (Joseph Smith) went on a visit to the residence of Mr. Joseph Knight, of Colesville, Broom county, N. Y., with whom and his family I had been previously acquainted, and of whose name I have above mentioned as having been so kind and thoughtful towards us while translating the Book of Mormon.<sup>31</sup>

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*Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9801>. This short history of the Restoration of the gospel had been taken from a letter Joseph Smith wrote to John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat* (706).

29. “Correspondence [Joseph Smith to Editor of the *Times and Seasons*],” *Times and Seasons* 4 (May 15, 1843): 194.

30. Joseph Smith to J. A. Bennett, November 13, 1843, printed in *Times and Seasons* 4 (November 1, 1843): 373.

31. “History of Joseph Smith,” *Millennial Star* 4 (December 1843): 116, available on “Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/MStar/id/226>.

32. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS PUBLISHED BY I. DANIEL RUPP (1844)

With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called “Urim and Thummim,” which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim on a bow fastened to a breastplate.

Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record, by the gift and power of God.<sup>32</sup>

33. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY PARLEY P. PRATT (1874)

[Smith] spoke in great power, bearing testimony of the visions he had seen, the ministering of angels which he had enjoyed; and how he had found the plates of the Book of Mormon, and translated them by the gift and power of God.<sup>33</sup>

34. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY JOSEPH CURTIS (1881)

[Joseph Smith] saw an angel with a view of the hill Cumorah & the plates of gold had certain instructions got the plates & by the assistance of the Urim & Thumin translated them by the gift & power of God.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Joseph Smith, “Latter Day Saints,” in *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States*, comp. I. Daniel Rupp (Philadelphia: James Y. Humphreys, 1844), 406, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/latter-day-saints-1844/3>.

33. Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 330. Parley P. Pratt was murdered in Arkansas in 1857; his autobiography was published by his son in 1874. The incident described occurred in 1839.

34. Joseph Curtis, “A Short History of Joseph Curtis,” microfilm of holograph, 6, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE1215485](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE1215485), image 12. Curtis states this happened in 1835, but Dan Vogel convincingly argues that the correct year is 1834. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:36.



35. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY EMILY M. AUSTIN (1882)

He [Joseph Smith] also affirmed that he had seen the angel, and had talked with him face to face; and the angel told him at a certain time he would conduct him to the place where the plates could be obtained; also that he was a chosen vessel in the hands of God, to translate them, and bring them to the world.<sup>35</sup>

36. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY ADDISON EVERETT (1882)

And then [Joseph Smith] said as they Ware Tranlating the Book of Mormon at His Father In Laws in Susquhanah County[,] penny [Pennsylvania]. T[h]ey ware thretned By a Mob and in the same time Father Kn<i>ghts came Down from Colevill [Colesville] Broom[e] County[,] New York.<sup>36</sup>

37. JOSEPH SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY JAMES PALMER (NOT DATED)

Said he [Joseph Smith], I did translate the book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, and it is before the world, and all the powers of earth and hell can never rob me of the honour of it.<sup>37</sup>

38. EMMA SMITH BIDAMON,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY EDMUND C. BRIGGS (1856)

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

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35. Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism; or Life among the Mormons* (Madison, Wisc.: M. J. Cantwell, 1882), 34–35, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/mormonismorlifea00austrich#page/34/mode/2up>. Austin, the sister of Newel Knight's first wife, Sally Coburn, met Joseph Smith in the early 1830s and was baptized but eventually left the Church.

36. Addison Everett to Joseph F. Smith, January 16, 1882, microfilm of holograph, 2–3, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE146205](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE146205), images 15–16.

37. James Palmer, “James Palmer’s Travels and Ministry in the Gospel,” microfilm, 75, Church History Library. Palmer does not specify what year this occurred but says it happened at a meeting “near the Temple.”

names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made any 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. Even the word *Sarah* he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him.

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 that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.<sup>38</sup>

### 39. EMMA SMITH BIDAMON TO EMMA PILGRIM (1870)

Now, the first part my husband translated, was translated by the use of Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost *After that he used a small stone*, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color.<sup>39</sup>

### 40. EMMA SMITH BIDAMON, AS INTERVIEWED BY NELS MADSEN AND PARLEY P. PRATT JR. (1877)

Q. Did he receive the plates from which he claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon?

A. Yes, They lay in a box under our bed for months but I never felt at liberty to look at them.

In regard to the Book of Mormon Mrs. Bidemon stated emphatically that he[r] husband, Joseph Smith could not have written such a book without inspiration. He had not read the Bible enough to know that there were walls

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38. Edmund C. Briggs, “A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,” *Journal of History* 9 (October 1916): 454. Edmund C. Briggs and Samuel H. Gurley traveled to Nauvoo to visit Joseph Smith III and testify to him of the reorganization of the Church, which had recently occurred in Wisconsin. Briggs and Gurley arrived at the Mansion House in Nauvoo on December 5, 1856, and interviewed Emma Smith Bidamon three days later.

39. John T. Clark, “Translation of Nephite Records,” *The Return* 4 (July 15, 1895): 2. Written from Nauvoo on March 27, 1870, the original letter is located in the Emma Smith Papers, Library-Archives, Community of Christ, Independence, Mo. (hereafter cited as Community of Christ Library-Archives).

around Jerusalem and he came and asked me if there were walls around the city of Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup>

41. EMMA SMITH BIDAMON,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JOSEPH SMITH III (1879)

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

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

Q. Was Alva Hale one?

A. I think not. He may have written some; but if he did, I do not remember it. . . .

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 nor book to read from.

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

A. If he had 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 table cloth, 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.

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40. Nels Madsen, "Visit to Mrs. Emma Smith Bidemon [*sic*]," 1931, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE5022333](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5022333). Madsen and Parley Pratt Jr. visited Bidamon in Nauvoo while they were missionaries.

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 [and for the first time she used his name direct, having usually used the words, “your father,” or “my husband”] 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, and was present during the translation of the plates, and had cognizance of things as they 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.

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.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (October 1, 1879): 289–90; and Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Advocate* 2 (October 1879): 50–52. Joseph Smith III wrote that Emma reviewed the answers he had recorded for her. The answers “were affirmed by her” on the day before he left Nauvoo. Emma’s husband Lewis C. Bidamon asserted that Emma’s answers were “substantially what she had always stated” at times when they discussed the translation of the Book of Mormon.

42. EMMA SMITH BIDAMON,  
AS RECORDED BY JOSEPH SMITH III (1879)

She wrote for Joseph Smith during the work of translation, as did also Reuben Hale, her brother, and O[liver]. Cowdery; that the larger part of this labor was done in her presence, and where she could see and know what was being done; that during no part of it was did Joseph Smith have any Mss. [manuscripts] or Book of any kind from which to read, or dictate, except the metallic plates, which she knew he had.<sup>42</sup>

43. EMMA SMITH BIDAMON,  
AS RECORDED BY JOSEPH SMITH III (1900)

My mother [Emma Smith] told me that she saw the plates in the sack; for they lay on a small table in their living room in their cabin on her father's farm, and she would lift and move them when she swept and dusted the room and furniture. She even thumbed the leaves as one does the leaves of a book, and they rustled with a metallic sound. Yes, mother did some of the writing for father while he was translating[.] She testified that father found and had the plates, and translated them as the history states; that she had no doubt as to the truth of it.<sup>43</sup>

44. MARTIN HARRIS (1834)

The case of Bro. Martin Harris, against whom certain charges were preferred by bro. Sidney Rigdon, [was presented]. One was that he told Esqr. A. C. Russel that Joseph [Smith] drank too much liquor when he was translating the Book of Mormon and that he wrestled with many men and threw them &c. Another charge was that he exalted himself above bro. Joseph, in that he said bro. Joseph knew not the contents of the Book of Mormon until it was translated. ~~Bro. Martin~~ but that he himself knew all about it before it was translated. Bro. Martin said he did not tell Esqr Russell that bro. Joseph drank too much liquor while translating the Book of Mormon, but this thing took place before the Book of Mormon was translated. He confessed that his mind was darkened and that he had said many things, inadvertently calculating to wound

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42. Joseph Smith III to James T. Cobb, February 14, 1879, Community of Christ Library-Archives, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:544.

43. Joseph Smith III to Mrs. E. Horton, March 7, 1900, Community of Christ Library-Archives, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:546–47.

the feelings of his brother and promised to do better. The council forgave him and gave him much good advice.<sup>44</sup>

45. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JOHN A. CLARK (1840)

[T]hat there had been a revelation made to [Joseph Smith] by which he had discovered this sacred deposit, and two transparent stones, through which, as a sort of spectacles, he could read the Bible, although the box or ark that contained it, had not yet been opened; and that by looking through those mysterious stones, he had transcribed from one of the leaves of this book, the characters which Harris had so carefully wrapped in the package which he was drawing from his pocket. . . .

. . . He was already in possession of the two transparent stones laid up with the GOLDEN BIBLE, by looking through which he was enabled to read the golden letters on the plates in the box. How he obtained these spectacles without opening the chest, Harris could not tell. But still he had them; and by means of them he could read all the book contained. . . .

. . . The way that Smith made his transcripts and transcriptions for Harris was the following. Although in the same room, a thick curtain or blanket was suspended between them, and Smith concealed behind the blanket, pretended to look through his spectacles, or transparent stones, and would then write down or repeat what he saw, which, when repeated aloud, was written down by Harris, who sat on the other side of the suspended blanket. Harris was told that it would arouse the most terrible divine displeasure, if he should attempt to draw near the sacred chest, or look at Smith while engaged in the work of decyphering the mysterious characters. This was Harris's own account of the matter to me.<sup>45</sup>

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44. "Minute Book 1," 28–29, 12 February 1834; Gerrit J. Dirkmaat and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834*, vol. 3 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016), 430.

45. John A. Clark, *Gleanings By the Way* (Philadelphia: W. J. and J. K. Simon, 1842), 224, 228, 230–31; part of this chapter on the Mormons appeared as a letter in the *Episcopal Recorder* 18 (1846): 94, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/4964>. This interview was also reprinted in "Modern Superstition.—The Mormonites.—No. I," *Visitor, or Monthly Instructor* (1841): 62, 63–64.

46. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY DAVID B. DILLE (1859)

“I know that the plates have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice declared it unto us; therefore I know of a surety that the work is true. For,” continued Mr. Harris, “did I not at one time hold the plates on my knee an hour-and-a-half, whilst in conversation with Joseph, when we went to bury them in the woods, that the enemy might not obtain them? Yes, I did. And as many of the plates as Joseph Smith translated I handled with my hands, plate after plate.[”]<sup>46</sup>

47. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY *TIFFANY’S MONTHLY* (1859)

The following narration we took down from the lips of Martin Harris, and read the same to him after it was written, that we might be certain of giving his statement to the world. . . .

“The two stones set in a bow of silver were about two inches in diameter, perfectly round, and about five-eighths of an inch thick at the centre; but not so thick at the edges where they came into the bow. They were joined by a round bar of silver, about three-eighths of an inch in diameter, and about four inches long, which, with the two stones, would make eight inches.”

“The stones were white, like polished marble, with a few gray streaks. I never dared to look into them by placing them in the hat, because Moses said that ‘no man could see God and live,’ and we could see anything we wished by looking into them; and I could not keep the desire to see God out of my mind. And beside, we had a command to let no man look into them, except by the command of God, lest he should ‘look aught and perish.’”<sup>47</sup>

48. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY DAVID H. CANNON (1861)

He testified to me in all solemnity, although not a member of the Church at that time, that the angel did appear with the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and testified that they contained a history of the

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46. D. B. Dille, “Additional Testimony of Martin Harris (One of the Three Witnesses) to the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon,” *Millennial Star* 21 (August 20, 1859): 545. The interview occurred on September 15, 1853.

47. [Joel Tiffany], “Mormonism—No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly* 5 (August 1859): 163, 165–66.

ancient inhabitants of this continent, and that they had been translated by the gift and power of God. There was a feeling accompanied his testimony, when he bore it, that I have never experienced either before or since in any man that I ever heard bear testimony.<sup>48</sup>

49. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *IOWA STATE REGISTER* (1870)

There was also found in the chest, the urim and thummim, by means of which the writing upon the plates was translated, but not until after the most learned men had exhausted their knowledge of letters in the vain effort to decipher the characters.

It had been revealed to Joseph Smith that the writing upon the tablets contained a history of the aborigines of this country down to the time of Columbus' discovery, and after, all human means had failed to secure a translation, Smith was commissioned to undertake the task. By means of the urim and thummim "a pair of large spectacles," as Mr. Harris termed them, the translation was made, and Mr. Harris claims to have written, of the translations as they were given by Smith, "116 solid pages of cap [foolscap]." The remainder was written by others.<sup>49</sup>

50. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THOMAS GODFREY AND FOUR OTHERS  
(1874)

"The angel showed me the plates and I heard the voice of God declare they were translated correctly." He was very earnest and sincere in his testimony.<sup>50</sup>

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48. Beatrice Cannon Evans and Janath Russell Cannon, eds., *Cannon Family Historical Treasury* (Salt Lake City: George Cannon Family Association, 1967), 250, available on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *FamilySearch*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE3008931](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE3008931).

49. "A Witness to the Book of Mormon," *Des Moines Iowa State Register*, August 28, 1870; cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:330.

50. Rhett Stephens James, *The Man Who Knew: The Early Years. A Play about Martin Harris, 1824-1830* (Cache Valley, Utah: Martin Harris Pageant Committee, 1983), 97n3.



## 51. MARTIN HARRIS TO H. B. EMERSON (1875)

I do say that the angel did show to me the plates containing the Book of Mormon. Further, the translation that I carried to Prof. Anthon was copied from these same plates; also, that the Professor did testify to it being a correct translation. I do firmly believe and do know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God; for without I know he [Joseph Smith] could not had that gift; neither could he have translated the same.<sup>51</sup>

52. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS RECORDED BY EDWARD STEVENSON (1881)

Martin Harris related an instance that occurred during the time that he wrote that portion of the translation of the Book of Mormon, which he was favored to write direct from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone. Martin explained the translating 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. . . .

Martin said further that the seer stone differed in appearance entirely from the Urim and Thummim that was obtained with the plates, which were two clear stones set in two rims, very much resembled spectacles, only they were larger. Martin said there were not many pages translated while he wrote; after which Oliver Cowdery and others did the writing.<sup>52</sup>

53. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY SIMON SMITH (1884)

He [Martin Harris] also said, "I was Joseph Smith's scribe, and wrote for him a great deal; for he was such a poor writer, and could not even draw up a

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51. *Saints' Herald* 22 (October 15, 1875): 630. H. B. Emerson, of New Richmond, Ohio, wrote Martin Harris a series of letters seeking information about the early days of the Church. Two of Harris's replies were published in this issue of *Saints' Herald*.

52. Edward Stevenson to the editor, November 30, 1881, *Deseret Evening News*, December 13, 1881. The interview occurred in 1870.

note of hand as his education was so limited. I also wrote for him about one third of the first part of the translation of the plates as he interpreted them by the Urim and Thummim. And I paid the printer about three thousand dollars for the first edition of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>53</sup>

54. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS RECALLED BY REUBEN P. HARMON (C. 1885)

I was well acquainted with Martin Harris, who was often at my house for days at a time. I have questioned him much about the plates from which the “Book of Mormon” purports to have been translated. He never claimed to have seen them with his natural eyes, only spiritual vision. He said it was impossible for the prophet Joseph to get up the “Book of Mormon,” for he could not spell the word Sarah. He had him repeat the letters of the word. He was a very illiterate man.<sup>54</sup>

55. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY EDWARD STEVENSON (1886)

Brother Harris gave Joseph \$50 (£10) on one occasion to help translate the Book of Mormon. . . . [Martin Harris] also stated that the Prophet translated a portion of the Book of Mormon, with the seer stone in his possession. The stone was placed in a hat that was used for that purpose, and with the aid of this seer stone the Prophet would read sentence by sentence as Martin wrote, and if he made any mistake the sentence would remain before the Prophet until corrected, when another sentence would appear. When they became weary, as it was confining work to translate from the plates of gold, they would go down to the river and throw stones into the water for exercise. Martin on one occasion picked up a stone resembling the one with which they were translating, and on resuming their work Martin placed the false stone in the hat. He said that the Prophet looked quietly for a long time, when he raised his head and said: “Martin, what on earth is the matter, all is dark as Egypt.” Martin smiled and the seer discovered that the wrong stone

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53. Simon Smith to the editor, April 30, 1884, *Saints' Herald* 31 (May 24, 1884): 324. Smith visited Martin Harris in Clarkston, Utah, in July 1875.

54. Reuben P. Harmon, Statement, in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (April 1888): 1. Harmon's statement was witnessed by Arthur Deming and Granville Harmon.

was placed in the hat. When he asked Martin why he had done so he replied, to stop the mouths of fools who had declared that the Prophet knew by heart all that he told him to write, and did not see by the seer stone; when the true stone was placed in the hat, the translation was resumed, as usual.<sup>55</sup>

56. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS PUBLISHED BY ANDREW JENSON (1887)

On Sunday, Sept. 4, 1870, Martin Harris addressed a congregation of Saints in Salt Lake City. He related an incident which occurred during the time that he wrote that portion of the translation of the Book of Mormon which he was favored to write direct from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone. Martin explained the translation 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. Martin said that after continued translation they would become weary, and would go down to the river and exercise by throwing stones out on the river, etc. While so doing, on one occasion, Martin Harris found a stone very much resembling the one used for translating, and on resuming their labor of translation, he put in place the stone that he had found. He said that the Prophet remained silent, unusually and intently gazing in darkness, no traces of the usual sentences appearing. Much surprised, Joseph excla[i]med, "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, etc.

Martin said further that the seer stones differed in appearance entirely from the Urim and Thummim obtained with the plates, which were two clear stones set in two rims, very much resembling spectacles, only they

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55. "The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon," *Millennial Star* 48 (June 21, 1886): 389–90. Edward Stevenson gave a similar account in *Reminiscences of Joseph the Prophet and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1893), 30.

were larger. Martin said, there were not many pages translated while he wrote, after which Oliver Cowdery and others did the writing.<sup>56</sup>

57. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY R. W. ALDERMAN (1888)

In February, 1852, I was snowbound in a hotel in Mentor, Ohio, all day. Martin Harris was there, and in conversation told me he saw Jo Smith translate the “Book of Mormon,” with his peep-stone in his hat. Oliver Cowdery, who had been a school-teacher, wrote it down. Sidney Rigdon, a renegade preacher, was let in during the translation. Rigdon had stolen a manuscript from a printing office in Pittsburgh, Pa., which [Solomon] Spaulding, who had written it in the early part of the century, had left there to be printed, but the printers refused to publish it, but Jo and Rigdon did, as the “Book of Mormon.”<sup>57</sup>

58. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS RECORDED BY GEORGE MANTLE (1888)

When he [Martin Harris] was asked if Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, he answered yes; and when asked if the Book of Mormon was true, this was his answer: “Do you know that is the sun shining on us? Because as sure as you know that, I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, and that he translated that book by the power of God.”<sup>58</sup>

59. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY ANTHONY METCALF (1888)

He told me all about the translating of the Book of Mormon, and said he had given \$5,000 towards its publication. He said: “I never saw the golden plates, only in a visionary or entranced state. I wrote a great deal of the Book of

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56. Andrew Jenson, ed., “The Three Witnesses,” *Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 216–17, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/pioneersof184706jens#page/216/mode/2up>.

57. R. W. Alderman, Statement, in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (January 1888): 3. Alderman’s statement was delivered on December 25, 1884, in Claridon, Geauga County, Ohio, and witnessed by Arthur B. Deming and Clara Alderman.

58. George Mantle to the editor, December 26, 1888, *Autumn Leaves* 2 (March 1889): 141.

Mormon myself, as Joseph Smith translated or spelled the words out in English. Sometimes the plates would be on a table in the room in which Smith did the translating, covered over with a cloth. I was told by Joseph Smith that God would strike him dead if he attempted to look at them, and I believed it.”<sup>59</sup>

60. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY OLE A. JENSEN (1918)

[A]nd we did kneel down and pray Imediately the angle [angel] stood before me and said: “Look[”] and when I glanced at the angel, I fell but I stood on my feet and seen the angle turn the leaves of gold and I said “It is enough my Lord and my God.[”] I then heard the voice of God say “The book is true and is translated correctly.”<sup>60</sup>

61. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM HARRISON HOMER (1922)

For I saw the angel, I heard <his> voice, I saw and handled the plates upon which the Book of Mormon was written; and by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, the translation was made by the Prophet Joseph Smith, whom I know by the power and gift of the Holy Ghost, was a true Prophet of God.<sup>61</sup>

62. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM WADDOUPS (1923)

“[W]ith these ears,” pointing to his ears, “I heard the voice of the angel, and with these hands,” holding out his hands, “I handled the plates containing the record of the Book of Mormon, and I assisted the Prophet in the translation thereof. I bear witness that this testimony is true.”<sup>62</sup>

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59. Anthony Metcalf, *Ten Years before the Mast. Shipwrecks and Adventures at Sea. Religious Customs of the People of India and Burmah's Empire. How I Became a Mormon and Why I Became an Infidel* (Malad City, Idaho: n.p., 1888), 70–71. Metcalf visited Martin Harris in Smithfield, Utah, in winter 1875–76.

60. Ole A. Jensen, “Testimony of Martin Harris,” microfilm of holograph, 3–4, n.d., Church History Library.

61. William Harrison Homer, Statement, January 3, 1922, microfilm of typescript, MS 11874, Church History Library.

62. “Martin Harris and the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era* 26 (September 1923): 980. The article contains a report of a statement made by William

63. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM HARRISON HOMER (1925)

Just as surely as the sun is shining on us by day, just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God; so surely do I know that the Book of Mormon was divinely translated. I saw the plates, I saw the angel. I heard the voice of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true.<sup>63</sup>

64. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JOHN E. GODFREY (1933)

And I saw with these two eyes the angel stand with the gold plates in his hands, and I saw him turn leaf by leaf the plates of gold, and I also heard the voice of the Lord saying that these words were true and translated correctly.<sup>64</sup>

65. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THOMAS GODFREY (1933)

“I saw the angel and saw the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and heard the voice of God declare it was translated correctly.” He said this so that all present could hear.<sup>65</sup>

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Waddoups at Benson Stake Conference in April 1923. Waddoups’s interview occurred after Harris had moved to Utah.

63. William Harrison Homer, “The Last Testimony of Martin Harris,” 1925, microfilm of typescript, 3, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE5042942](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5042942), image 5. Homer interviewed Harris in winter 1869–70. For more information on Homer’s visit with Martin Harris in Kirtland in December 1869, see Homer, “The Passing of Martin Harris,” *Improvement Era* 29 (March 1926): 468–72; and William H. Homer Jr., “. . . ‘Publish It upon the Mountains’: The Story of Martin Harris,” *Improvement Era* 58 (July 1955): 505–7, 524–26.

64. John E. Godfrey, Affidavit, June [July] 2, 1933, microfilm of typescript, MS 1042, Church History Library.

65. Thomas Godfrey, Affidavit, July 2, 1933, microfilm of typescript, MS 1042, Church History Library.

66. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM PILKINGTON (1934)

[Martin Harris] related Experiences in connection with the Translation of the Book of Mormon. he told me it was he who took some of the copied Characters along with the Interpretation “which Joseph Smith had made through the gift and Power of God” to Proffessor Charles Anthon. . . .

. . . I offered my services as a scribe for the Prophet in the work of Translating. Joseph gladly accepted my Offer, it was the 12th day of April 1828, when I commenced to write for the Prophet from this time on until the 14th day of June 1828 Joseph dictated to me from the Plates of Gold as the characters thereon assumed through the Urim and Thummim the forms of Equivelent modern words, which were familiar to the understanding of the Prophet and Seer, from the 12th day of April until the 14th day of June he said he had written One Hundred and Sixteen pages Foolscap of the translation he said at this period of the Translation a circumstance happened that he was the cause of the One Hundred and Sixteen pages that he had written being lost, and never was found. . . .

. . . Joseph was told in a Revelation to retranslate from the Small Plates of Nephi, and thereby thwart [thwart] the plans of wicked men, but I was never permitted to write for the Prophet anymore. Oliver Cowdery did all the rest of the writing. . . .

. . . The Heavens were then opened and I heard the voice of God declare, that every thing the Angel had told us was True, and that the Book of Mormon was Translated correct. . . .

. . . I was the first scribe for Joseph in the Translating of the Book of Mormon.<sup>66</sup>

67. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM PILKINGTON (1939)

Joseph Smith had just received the plates from the Angel Moroni, “but I promised them that I would begin translating, but I can not do it, because wicked men haunt me, day and night. And I can not begin the translation,

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66. William Pilkington, Affidavit, April 3, 1934, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE5005099](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5005099); cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:353–56.

and it hurts. Mr. Harris, I am a poor boy; my parents and family are poor, but we are honest. I have a letter in my possession, recently received from my father-in-law [Isaac Hale], stating that if I will come to his house, with my wife, Emma, he will let me have a room where I will be secluded—but I am poor, and have not the money to go there with.” Then it was that Martin Harris put his hand in his pocket. He said, “Take that.” “No, No. I am not giving it to you, I am giving it to the Lord, for His Servant to do his bidding.” . . . [In Harmony, Pennsylvania], through the help of his wife, Emma, and what faith he could muster up, he tried to translate and failed. And he found he had put all his trust in the Lord. It was to be through the Power of God—not through the power of man—through the Power of God. They did some little translating, his wife Emma as Scribe; and the following February, in the winter time, when the snow was deep on the ground, Martin Harris wanted to know more about the Boy Prophet, and he walked all the way through the snow from Palmyra to Harmony. And he found out what he had done. He had quite a long talk with the Prophet, and he finally asked if he would be kind enough to join him in his work, and asked the Prophet if he would let him take what he had written to some learned man, to some linguist.<sup>67</sup>

68. MARTIN HARRIS,  
AS RECORDED BY THEODORE FARLEY (1940)

[A]fter the angel had shown him the plates and disappeared, he [Martin Harris] heard a voice from Heaven that thrilled every fiber of his body, stating that the book had been translated by the gift and power of God, and not of man, and he was commanded by the Lord to so make that statement to the world. And he did.<sup>68</sup>

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67. William Pilkington, Address delivered in the Lewisville Ward, Rigby Stake, April 23, 1939, typescript, 1–2, MS 5501, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE4988417](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE4988417). Pilkington gave several similar accounts, such as William Pilkington to Vern C. Poulter, February 28, 1930, microfilm of holograph, Church History Library.

68. Theodore Farley Sr., Address delivered at Priesthood Session of Sharon Stake Quarterly Conference, March 23, 1940, typescript, 2, MS 4897, Church History Library.



69. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS RECORDED BY ASHBEL KITCHELL (1830)

Oliver Lowdree [Cowdery] . . . stated that he had been one who had been an assistant in the translation of the golden Bible, and had also seen the Angel, and had been commissioned by him to go out and bear testimony, that God would destroy this generation.<sup>69</sup>

70. OLIVER COWDERY TO W. W. PHELPS (1834)

Near the time of the setting of the Sun, Sabbath evening, April 5th, 1829, my natural eyes, for the first time beheld this brother. He then resided in Harmony, Susquehanna county Penn. 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 were days 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 “The book of Mormon.” . . .

No men in their sober senses, could translate and write the directions given to the Nephites, from the mouth of the Savior, of the precise manner in which men should build up his church, and especially, when corruption had spread an uncertainty over all forms and systems practiced among men, without desiring a privilege of showing the willingness of the heart by being buried in the liquid grave, to answer a “good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

After writing the account given of the Savior’s ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent, it was easily to be seen, as the prophet said would be, that darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the minds of the people. On reflecting further, it was as easily to be seen, that amid the great strife and noise concerning religion, none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the gospel. For, the q[ue]stion might be asked, have men authority to administer in the name of Christ, who deny revelations? when his testimony is no less than the spirit of prophecy? and his religion based, built, and sustained by immediate revelations in all ages of

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69. “A Mormon Interview,” transcribed from Ashbel Kitchell, Pocket Journal, May [March] 7, 1831?, photocopy, MSS SC 922, Perry Special Collections. Kitchell was describing a visit of Oliver Cowdery that occurred in fall 1830.

the world, when he has had a people on earth? If these facts were buried, and carefully concealed by men whose craft would have been in danger, if once permitted to shine in the faces of men, they were no longer to us; and we only waited for the commandment to be given, “Arise and be baptized.”

This was not long desired before it was realized.<sup>70</sup>

71. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JOSIAH JONES (1841)

In the last part of October, 1830, four men appeared here by the names of [Oliver] Cowdery, [Parley P.] Pratt, [Peter] Whitmar and [Ziba] Peterson; they stated they were from Palmyra, Ontario county, N.Y. with a book, which they said contained what was engraven on gold plates found in a stone box, in the ground . . . and was found about three years ago by a man named Joseph Smith Jr. who had translated it by looking into a stone or two stones, when put into a dark place, which stones he said were found in the box with the plates. They affirmed while he looked through the stone spectacles another sat by and wrote what he told them, and thus the book was all written. . . .

He [Cowdery] stated that Smith looked into or through the transparent stones to translate what was on the plates. I then asked him if he had ever looked through the stones to see what he could see in them; his reply was that he was not permitted to look into them. I asked him who debarred him from looking into them; he remained sometime in silence; then said that he had so much confidence in his friend Smith, who told him that he must not look into them, that he did not presume to do so lest he should tempt God and be struck dead.<sup>71</sup>

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70. O. Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, September 7, 1834 [Letter 1], printed in *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 14, 15. Phelps replied on December 25, 1834, declaring his spiritual anticipation of the Book of Mormon in 1823. W. W. Phelps, “Letter No. 4,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (February 1835): 65–67.

71. Josiah Jones, “History of the Mormonites,” *Evangelist* 9 (June 1, 1841): 132–34, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/4491>. Jones wrote his history of the Mormons while living at Kirtland in 1831. According to the biographical blurb accompanying the article, Jones was “one of the faithful few belonging to the church of Kirtland, who refused to follow Rigdon when he made a surrender of himself and his flock to the Mormons.”

72. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS RECORDED BY REUBEN MILLER (1848)

Friends and brethren my name is Cowdrey, Oliver Cowdrey, In the early history of this church I stood Identified with her. And [was] one in her councils. . . .

I wrote with my own pen the intire 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, By [the] means of the urum and thummim, or as it is called by that book holy Interpereters. I beheld with my eyes. And handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated. I also beheld the Interpereters. That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr [Solomon] Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the Lips of the prophet.<sup>72</sup>

73. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS RECORDED BY WILLIAM E. MCLELLIN (1871)

In 1833, when mobbing reigned triumphant in Jackson Co. Mo. I and O. Cowdery fled from our homes, for fear of personal violence on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> day of July. The mob dispersed, agreeing to meet again on the next Tuesday. They offered eighty dollars reward for any one who would deliver Cowdery or M<sup>c</sup>Lellan in Independence on Tuesday. On Mond[a]y I slipped down into the Whitmer's settlement, and there in the lonely woods I met with David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery. I said to them, "brethren I never have seen an open vision in my life, but you men say you have, and therefore you positively know. Now you know that our lives are in danger every hour, if the mob can only catch us. Tell me in the fear of God, is that book of Mormon true?" Cowdery looked at me with solemnity depicted in his face, and said, "Brother William, God sent his holy angel to declare the truth of the translation of it to us, and therefore we know. And though the mob kill us, yet we must die declaring its truth." David said, "Oliver has told you the solemn truth, for we could not be deceived. I most truly declare to you its truth"!!

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72. Reuben Miller, Journal, October 21, 1848, microfilm of holograph, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE1899363](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE1899363), images 15–16. Miller recorded Cowdery's testimony at a conference held at Council Bluffs. For more information on Reuben Miller, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery's Reaffirmations," *BYU Studies* 8, no. 3 (1968): 277–93.

Said I, boys I believe you. I can see no object for you to tell me false <hood> now, when our lives are endangered. Eight men testify also to handling that sacred pile of plates, from which Joseph Smith <read off the> translation [of] that heavenly Book.<sup>73</sup>

74. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS RECOUNTED BY GEORGE Q. CANNON (1881)

When I was a boy I heard it stated concerning Oliver Cowdery, that after he left the Church he practised law, and . . . in a court in Ohio, the opposing counsel thought he would say something that would overwhelm Oliver Cowdery, and . . . alluded to him as the man that had testified and had written that he had beheld an angel of God, and that the angel had shown unto him the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. He supposed, of course, that it would cover him with confusion . . . but . . . he [Oliver Cowdery] arose in the court, and in his reply stated that, whatever his faults and weaknesses might be, the testimony which he had written, and which he had given to the world, was literally true.<sup>74</sup>

75. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS RECORDED BY EDWARD STEVENSON (1886)

He testified that he beheld the plates, the leaves being turned over by the angel, whose voice he heard, and that they were commanded as witnesses to bear a faithful testimony to the world of the vision that they were favored to behold, and that the translation from the plates in the Book of Mormon was accepted of the Lord, and that it should go forth to the world and no power on earth should stop its progress.<sup>75</sup>

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73. Mitchell K. Schaefer, ed., *William E. McLellin's Lost Manuscript* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2012), 166–67.

74. George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 22:254 (September 18, 1881), available on “Journal of Discourses,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/8122>. Several others, including Brigham Young, Charles M. Nielsen, and Seymour B. Young, also gave accounts of this incident, but none of the accounts is firsthand. Historian Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 59–60, considers the Cannon account the most correct.

75. Edward Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” *Millennial Star* 48 (July 5, 1886): 420.

76. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS RECORDED BY WILLIAM M. FRAMPTON (1901)

Brother Cowdery looked up[on] the people for a short time without speaking, his manner caused deep attention then in a distinct and very impressive voice, said “My name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery, in an early day I was identified with this Church in her councils, I wrote the Book Of Mormon, Spaulding did not write it, Sidney Rigdon did not write it, I wrote it (with the exception of a few pages) with this right hand, (extending his hand) as the inspired words fell from the lips of Joseph Smith.”<sup>76</sup>

77. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY SAMUEL WHITNEY RICHARDS (1907)

He [Oliver Cowdery] represents Joseph as sitting by a table with the plates before him. and he reading the record with the Urim & Thummim. Oliver, his scribe, sits close beside to hear and write every word as translated. This is done by holding the translators over the words of the written record, and the translation appears distinctly in the instrument, which had been touched by the finger of God and dedicated and consecated for the express purpose of translating languages. This instrument now used fully performed its Mission. Every word was made distinctly visible even to every letter, and if Oliver did not in writing spell the word correctly it remained in the translator until it was written correctly. This was the Mystery to Oliver, how Joseph being compar[a]tively ignorant could correct him in spelling, without seeing the word written, and he would not be satisfied until he should be permitted or have the gift to translate as well as Joseph.<sup>77</sup>

78. OLIVER COWDERY,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JACOB F. GATES (1912)

I am a dying man, and what would it profit me to tell you a lie? I know . . . that this Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God. My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my understanding was touched, and I know

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76. William M. Frampton to John E. Booth, September 15, 1901, microfilm of typescript, MS 5641, Church History Library.

77. Samuel W. Richards, Statement, May 21, 1907, holograph, 2–3, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE4987076](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE4987076), images 3 and 5.

that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind,—it was real.<sup>78</sup>

79. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS RECORDED BY WILLIAM E. MCLELLIN (1871)

In open day light, in an open wood lot, with their sensitive powers all calm and serene, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris testify that an angel of glorified appearance and countenance came down from heaven, and stood before them, and took the the plates which Joseph Smith had possessed, from which he had translated <read <off> the translation of the book> the Book, and held them in his hand, and showed as many of <the> leaves or plates as Joseph had translated <completed>, to them. So that they saw, and looked upon them until they were entirely satisfied. And he <the angel> spoke to David Whitmer and said, “David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keepeth his commandments.” These men saw his form, saw his glorified appearance, heard his words, saw all that he showed them, and then saw him ascend to heaven again. This was no collusion. These men could not be mistaken. They either told the truth, or they wilfully lied. How shall we tell which, how shall we know? This vision was in 1829. More than forty years ago, and what has been the conduct of those men since that day? Two of them are dead— <and probably> two living. Those who are dead testified to the last hour of their lives of to the truth of their vision. Those who are still living are firm in their testimony. I visited David Whitmer after he was more than 65 years of age, and <he> solemnly declared to me “I saw the angel of God, I heard his voice, hence I know of a truth! [”] Martin Harris is some over 89 years of age, and still he carries the book of Mormon under his arm, and testifies to all great and small, “I am Martin Harris in all the world, and I know the book of Mormon to be verily true. And although all men should deny the truth of that book, I dare not do it. My heart is fixed. O God, my heart is fixed! I could not know more truly or certainly than I do.”<sup>79</sup>

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78. Jacob F. Gates, Affidavit, January 30, 1912, 1, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE8579042](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE8579042), image 5. Jacob Gates’s testimony of his meeting with Oliver Cowdery was recorded by his son, Jacob F. Gates.

79. Schaefer, *William E. McLellin’s Lost Manuscript*, 165–66.

80. DAVID WHITMER (1878)

David Whitmer brought out the manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. We examined them closely and those who knew the handwriting pronounced the whole of them, excepting comparatively a few pages, to be in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. It was thought that these few pages were in the handwriting of Emma Smith and John and Christian Whitmer.<sup>80</sup>

81. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY P. WILHELM POULSON (1878)

I—How did you know Joseph to be at that time?

He—As a very humble and meek man, and very simple minded indeed. He did the will of the Lord, and an arduous task it was to translate the Book of Mormon.

I—Did Joseph use the Urim and Thummim when he translated?

He—The Urim and Thummim were two white stones, each of them cased in as spectacles are, in a kind of silver casing, but the bow between the stones was more heavy, and longer apart between the stones, than we usually find it in spectacles. Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, Emma and my brother John each at different times wrote for Joseph as he translated.<sup>81</sup>

82. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THOMAS WOOD SMITH (1879)

I personally heard him state, in Jan. 1876 in his own house in Richmond, Ray Co. Mo. . . . that he saw Joseph translate, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, time and again, and he [David] then produced a large pile of foolscap paper closely written in a very fair hand, which he declared was the manuscript written mainly by Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, as the translation was being read by the aid of the Urim and Thummim of the characters on the plates by Joseph Smith, which work of translation and transcription he frequently saw.<sup>82</sup>

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80. Jenson, "Three Witnesses," 210. Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith visited Whitmer on September 7, 1878, at Richmond, Missouri.

81. P. Wilhelm Poulson, *Deseret Evening News*, August 16, 1878.

82. Thomas Wood Smith, *Fall River Herald*, March 28, 1879; cited in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 10.

83. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY J. L. TRAUGHBER JR. (1879)

I, too, have seen the “manuscripts” and examined them. I, too, have heard Father [David] Whitmer say that he was present many times while Joseph was translating; but I never heard him say that the translation was made by aid of Urim and Thummim; but in every case, and his testimony is always the same, he declared that Joseph first offered prayer, then took a dark colored, opaque stone, called a “seer-stone,” and placed it in the crown of his hat, then put his face into the hat, and read the translation as it appeared before him. This was the daily method of procedure, as I have often heard Father Whitmer declare; and, as it is generally agreed to by parties who know the facts, that a considerable portion of the work of translation was performed in a room of his father’s house, where he then resided, there can be no doubt but what Father David Whitmer is a competent witness of the manner of translating. . . .

With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state that he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim; but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone, called a “Seer Stone,” which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light. Then, a spiritual light would shine forth, and parchment would appear before Joseph, upon which was a line of characters from the plates, and under it, the translation in English; at least, so Joseph said.<sup>83</sup>

84. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THOMAS WOOD SMITH (1880)

[U]nless my interview with David Whitmer in January, 1876, was only a dream, or that I failed to understand plain English, I believed then, and since, and now, that he said that Joseph possessed, and used the Urim and Thummim in the translation of the inscriptions referred to, and I remember of being much pleased with that statement, as I had heard of the “Seer stone” being used. And unless I dreamed the interview, or very soon after failed to recollect the occasion, he described the form and size of the said Urim and Thummim. The nearest approach to a retraction of my testimony as given in the Fall River *Herald* and that given publicly in many places from the

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83. J. L. Traughber Jr., “Testimony of David Whitmer,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (November 15, 1879): 341.



stand from January, 1876, till now, is, that unless I altogether misunderstood “Father Whitmer” on this point, he said the translation was done by the aid of the Urim and Thummim. If he says he did not intend to convey such an impression to my mind, then I say I regret that I misunderstood him, and unintentionally have misrepresented him. But that I understood him as represented by me frequently I still affirm. If Father Whitmer will say over his own signature, that he never said, or at least never intended to say, that Joseph possessed or used in translating the Book of Mormon, the Urim and Thummim, I will agree to not repeat my testimony as seen in the *Fall River Herald* on that point.<sup>84</sup>

85. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY ERI B. MULLIN (1880)

Mr. D. Whitmer told me in the year 1874, that Joseph Smith used the Urim and Thummim when he was translating. . . .

I for my part know he said that Joseph had the instrument Urim and Thummim. I asked him how they looked. He said they looked like spectacles, and he (Joseph) would put them on and look in a hat, or put his face in the hat and read. Says I, “Did he have the plates in there.” “No, the words would 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.”<sup>85</sup>

86. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *KANSAS CITY JOURNAL* (1881)

After several months Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Pa.—whither Joseph Smith had gone with the plates on account of persecutions of his neighbors—and see him about the matter. He did go and on his way stopped at my father’s house and told me that as soon as he found out anything either

TRUTH OR UNTRUTH

he would let me know. After he got there he became acquainted with Joseph Smith, and shortly after, wrote to me telling me that he was convinced that Smith had the records and that he (Smith) had told him that it was the will of heaven that he (Cowdery) should be his scribe to assist in the

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84. Thomas Wood Smith, Letter to the editor, *Saints’ Herald* 27 (January 1, 1880): 13.

85. Eri B. Mullin, Letter to the editor, *Saints’ Herald* 27 (March 1, 1880): 76.

translation of the plates. He went on and Joseph translated from the plates and he wrote it down. Shortly after this Cowdery wrote me another letter in which he gave me a few lines of what they had translated, and he assured me that he knew of a certainty that he had a record of a people that inhabited this continent, and that the plates they were translating gave a complete history of these people. When Cowdery wrote me these things and told me that he had revealed knowledge concerning the truth of them, I showed these letters to my parents, and brothers and sisters. Soon after I received another letter from Cowdery, telling me to come down into Pennsylvania and bring him and Joseph to my father's house, giving as a reason therefor that they had received a commandment from God to that effect. I went down to Harmony, and found everything just as they had written me. The next day after I got there they packed up the plates and we proceeded on our journey to my father's house where we arrived in due time, and the day after we commenced upon the translation of the remainder of the plates. I, as well as all of my father's family, Smith's wife, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris were present during the translation. The translation was by Smith and

THE MANNER AS FOLLOWS:

"He had two small stones of a chocolate color, nearly egg shaped and perfectly smooth, but not transparent, called interpreters, which were given him with the plates. He did not use the plates in the 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 mistake had been made the characters would remain visible to Smith until corrected, when they faded from sight to be replaced by another line. The translation at my father's occupied about one month, that is from June 1 to July 1, 1829."

"Were the plates under the immediate control of Smith all the time?"

"No, they were not. I will explain how that was. When Joseph first received the plates he translated 116 pages of the book of 'Lehi,' with Martin Harris as scribe. When this had been completed they rested for a time, and Harris wanted to take the manuscript home with him to show to his family and friends. To this Joseph demurred, but finally

ASKED THE LORD

if Harris might be allowed to take it. The answer was 'no.' Harris teased Joseph for a long time and finally persuaded him to ask the Lord a second

time, pledging himself to be responsible for its safe keeping. . . . [T]hrough some carelessness [Martin Harris] allowed it to be stolen from him. This incurred the Lord's displeasure, and he sent an angel to Joseph demanding the plates, and until Joseph had thoroughly repented of his transgressions would not allow him to have the use of them again. When Joseph was again allowed to resume the translation the plates were taken care of by a messenger of God, and when Joseph wanted to see the plates this messenger was always at hand. The 116 pages of the book of 'Lehi' which were stolen were never recovered, nor would the Lord permit Joseph to make a second translation of it.

"A few months after the translation was completed, that is in the spring of 1830, Joseph had the book published and this (showing a well worn volume) is a copy of the first edition which I have had in my possession ever since it was printed."<sup>86</sup>

#### 87. DAVID WHITMER (1881)

To the Editor of the [Kansas City] Journal.

RICHMOND, Mo., June 13 [1881].—I notice several errors in the interview had with me by one of your reporters as published in the *Daily Journal* of June 5th, '81, and wish to correct them.

. . . In regard to my going to Harmony, my statement was that "I found everything as Cowdery had written me, and that they packed up next day and went to my father's, (did not say 'packed up the plates') and that he, Smith, (not 'we') then commenced the translation of the remainder of the plates." I did not wish to be understood as saying that those referred to as being present were all of the time in the immediate presence of the translator, but were at the place and saw how the translation was conducted. I did not say that Smith used "two small stones," as stated nor did I call the stone "interpreters." I stated that "he used one stone (not two) and called it a sun stone." The "interpreters" were as I understood taken from Smith and were not used by him after losing the first 116 pages as stated. It is my understanding that the stone referred to was furnished him when he commenced translating again after losing the 116 pages.

My statement was and now is that in translating he put the stone in his hat and putting his face in his hat so as to excluded the light and that then the light and characters appeared in the hat together with the interpretation

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86. *Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 5, 1881.

which he uttered and was written by the scribe and which was tested at the time as stated.<sup>87</sup>

88. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *CHICAGO TIMES* (1881)

It was not until June, 1829, that he met the future prophet who visited his father's [Peter Whitmer Sr.] house, and while there completed the translation of the "Book of Mormon;" and thus he became conversant with its history, having witnessed Smith dictate to Oliver Cowdery the translation of the characters that were inscribed on the plates, said by Mr. Anthon, our Egyptian scholar, to resemble the characters of that ancient people. Christian Whitmer, his brother, occasionally assisted Cowdery in writing, as did Mrs. Joseph Smith, who was a Miss Hale before she was married. . . .

After the plates had been translated, which process required about six months, the same heavenly visitant appeared and reclaimed the gold tablets of the ancient people, informing Smith that he would replace them with other records of the lost tribes that had been brought with them during their wanderings from the Asia, which would be forthcoming when the world was ready to receive them. . . .

The tablets or plates were translated by Smith, who used a small oval kidney-shaped stone, called Urim and Thummim, that seemed endowed with the marvelous power of converting the characters on the plates, when used by Smith, into English, who would then dictate to Cowdery what to write. Frequently, one character would make two lines of manuscript, while others made but a word or two words. Mr. Whitmer emphatically asserts as did Harris and Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had no manuscript notes or other means of knowledge save the seer stone and the characters as shown on the plates, he being present and cognizant how it was done.<sup>88</sup>

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87. David Whitmer to the editor, *Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 19, 1881; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 71–72.

88. *Chicago Times*, October 17, 1881; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 74–76.

89. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM H. KELLEY  
AND G. A. BLAKESLEE (1882)

I know Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and he translated the Book of Mormon by the inspiration of God from the plates of the Nephites. . . .

. . . He [Joseph Smith] *had* to trust in God. He could not translate unless he was humble and possessed the right feelings towards every one. To illustrate, so you can see. One morning when he was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. Something that Emma, his wife, had done. Oliver and I went up stairs, and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation, but he could not do anything. He could not translate a single syllable. He went down stairs, out into the orchard and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, asked Emma’s forgiveness and then came up stairs where we were and the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful.<sup>89</sup>

90. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY E. C. BRIGGS (1884)

“The boys, Joseph and Oliver, worked hard, early and late, while translating the plates. It was slow work, and they could write only a few pages a day.”

Of Joseph he continued:

“He could not do a thing except he was humble, and just right before the Lord.”

I said, “Why not?”

He replied:

“The Urim and Thummim would look dark; he could not see a thing in them.”

“How did it appear in them?” we asked.

His answer was:

“The letters appeared on them in light, and would not go off until they were written correctly by Oliver. When Joseph could not pronounce the words he spelled them out letter by letter.”<sup>90</sup>

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89. Interview conducted on January 15, 1882, in Richmond, Missouri; published in the *Saints’ Herald* 29 (March 1, 1882): 68.

90. E. C. Briggs, Letter to the editor, *Saints’ Herald* 31 (June 21, 1884): 396–97.

91. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JAMES H. HART (1884)

“In regard to the translation,” said Mr. Whitmer, “it was a laborious work for the weather was very warm, and the days were long and they worked from morning till night. But they were both young and strong and were soon able to complete the work.

“The way it was done was thus: Joseph would place the seer-stone in a deep hat, and placing his face close to it, would see, not the stone, but what appeared like an oblong piece of parchment, on which the hieroglyphics would appear, and also the translation in the English language, all appearing in bright luminous letters. Joseph would then read it to Oliver, who would write it down as spoken. 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.

“When the seer-stone was not placed in the hat, no characters or writing could be seen therein, but when so placed then the hieroglyphics would appear as before described. Some represented but one word, or name, some represented several, and some from one to two lines.

“Emma, Joseph’s wife, came to my father’s house a short time after Joseph and Oliver came, and she wrote a little of the translation, my brother Christian wrote some, but Oliver wrote the greater portion of it.”<sup>91</sup>

92. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY GEORGE Q. CANNON (1884)

In speaking of the translating he [David Whitmer] said that Joseph had the stone in a hat from which all light was excluded. In the stone the characters appeared and under that the translation in English and they remained until the scribe had copied it correctly. If he had made a mistake the words still remained and were not replaced by any other.<sup>92</sup>

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91. James H. Hart, “About the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret Evening News*, March 25, 1884.

92. George Q. Cannon, interview, February 27, 1884, George Q. Cannon Journal, Church History Library; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 108.

93. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *ST. LOUIS REPUBLICAN* (1884)

“Yes,” said Mr. Whitmer, “I have no objections to giving the particulars of my early life. . . . The translation was done in my father’s house; at least two months of the time, was thus taken up with it there. Oliver Cowdery was the principal amanuensis. . . .

“Joseph Smith dictated every word in the book. The understanding we have about it was that when the book was discovered an angel was present and pointed the place out. In translating from the plates, Joseph Smith looked through the Urim and Thummim, consisting of two transparent pebbles set in the rim of a bow, fastened to a breastplate. He dictated by looking through them to his scribes.”<sup>93</sup>

94. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY ZENAS H. GURLEY (1885)

Questions asked of David Whitmer at his home in Richmond Ray County Mo. Jan 14 1885. relating to Book of Mormon, and the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of L. D. S. by Elder Z. H. Gurley. . . .

19. Were the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated in Joseph Smiths possession while translating and seen and handled by several different persons, if not, where were they?

Ans—I do not know.

20. Q—Did Joseph use his “peep stone” to finish up the translation? if so why?

Ans—He used a stone called a “Seers stone,” the “Interpreters” having been taken away from him because of transgression. . . .

25: Q. Were you present during any of the time of translation, if so, state how it was done.

Ans—The “Interpreters” were taken from Joseph after he allowed Martin Harris to carry away the 116 pages of Ms of the Book of Mormon as a punishment, but he was allowed to go on and translate by the use of a “Seers stone” which he had, and which he placed in a hat into which he buried his face, stating to me and others that the original Character appeared upon parchment and under it the translation in english which [enabled him?] to read it readily.<sup>94</sup>

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93. *St. Louis Republican*, July 16, 1884; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 143.

94. Zenas H. Gurley, “Questions Asked of David Whitmer,” holograph, 1, 3, 4, Gurley Collection, Church History Library; cited in Cook, *David*

95. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* (1885)

In order to give privacy to the proceeding a blanket, which served as a portière, was stretched across the family living room to shelter the translators and the plates from the eyes of any who might call at the house while the work was in progress. This, Mr. Whitmer says, was the only use made of the blanket, and it was not for the purpose of concealing the plates or the translator from the eyes of the amanuensis. In fact, Smith was at no time hidden from his collaborators, and the translation was performed in the presence of not only the persons mentioned, but of the entire Whitmer household and several of Smith's relatives besides.

The work of translating the tablets consumed about eight months, Smith acting as the seer and Oliver Cowdery, Smith's wife, and Christian Whitmer, brother of David, performing the duties of amanuenses, in whose handwriting the original manuscript now is. Each time before resuming the work all present would kneel in prayer and invoke the Divine blessing on the proceeding. After prayer Smith would sit on one side of a table and the amanuenses, in turn as they became tired, on the other. Those present and not actively engaged in the work seated themselves around the room and then the work began. After affixing the magical spectacles to his eyes, Smith would take the plates and translate the characters one at a time. The graven characters would appear in succession to the seer, and directly under the character, when viewed through the glasses, would be the translation in English. Sometimes the character would be a single word, and frequently an entire sentence. In translating the characters Smith, who was illiterate and but little versed in Biblical lore, was oftentimes compelled to spell the words out, not knowing the correct pronunciation, and Mr. Whitmer recalls the fact that at that time Smith did not even know that Jerusalem was a walled city. Cowdery, however, being a school-teacher, rendered invaluable aid in pronouncing hard words and giving their proper definition.

. . . It seems that Smith, who was puffed up with his great importance as a confidential secretary to the Lord, displeased the Master by entering into some carnal confab in relation to the work. For this offense he was punished by having the celestial visitant, who first commissioned him to inaugurate the work, suddenly appear and carry off the plates and spectacles. . . .

. . . Smith's offense of tattling the secrets of the work among his neighbors was less readily condoned [than Harris losing the 116 pages], and for a long

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*Whitmer Interviews*, 152–58. The interview took place on January 14, 1885, and was recorded on January 21, 1885.



time the work was suspended, the angel being in possession of the plates and spectacles. Finally, when Smith had fully repented of his rash conduct, he was forgiven. The plates, however, were not returned, but instead Smith was given by the angel a Urim and Thummim of another pattern, it being shaped in oval or kidney form. This seer's stone he was instructed to place in his hat, and on covering his face with the hat the character and translation would appear on the stone.

This worked just as satisfactorily as the old method, but at no time thereafter was the backsliding Joseph intrusted with the precious plates. However, the entire portion of the golden volume, which the angel said might be translated, was reduced by the nimble amanuenses to readable manuscript.<sup>95</sup>

96. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *OMAHA HERALD* (1886)

Much of the translation of the plates was accomplished at the house of Peter Whitmer, the father of David, and the latter witnessed demonstrations, on more occasion than one, of the prophet's manipulation of the stone spectacles. He [David] states that the work of translation occupied fully eight months, and that at times this peculiar instrument would refuse to perform its functions. On such occasions the prophet would resort to prayer, and after a short season he would return to his work to find that the urim and thummum reflected the words of the translation with its wonted power. This rigorous exactment required him to be humble and spotless in his deportment in order that the work might progress. On one occasion the prophet had indulged in a stormy quarrel with his wife. Without pacifying her or making any reparation for his brutal treatment, he returned to the room in the Whitmer residence to resume the work with the plates. The surface of the magic stone remained blank, and all his persistent efforts to bring out the coveted words proved abortive. He went into the woods again to pray, and this time was gone fully an hour. His friends became positively concerned, and were about to institute a search, when Joseph entered the room, pale and haggard, having suffered a vigorous chastisement at the hands of the Lord. He went straight in humiliation to his wife, entreated and received her forgiveness, returned to his work, and, much to the joy of himself and his anxious friends surrounding him, the stone again glared forth its letters of fire. The urim and thummum, in this strange process of translation, would reflect a number of words in pure English, which would

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95. "The Book of Mormon," *Chicago Tribune*, December 17, 1885, 3. The *Tribune* correspondent visited and interviewed Whitmer on December 15, 1885, at Whitmer's home in Richmond, Missouri.

remain on its face until the party acting as scribe had got it correctly written, and the occasional disposition of the characters to remain long after they had been so written was always an infallible evidence that there was something wrong in the translation of the record, and a close comparison would invariably reveal this fact. When the necessary corrections ha[d] been made the words would instantly disappear from the urim and thummum and new ones take their place. . . . [After the loss of the 116 pages, the Lord] took from the prophet the urim and thummum and otherwise expressed his condemnation. By fervent prayer and by otherwise humbling himself, the prophet, however, again found favor, and was presented with a strange oval-shaped, chocolate-colored stone about the size of an egg, only more flat, which, it was promised, should serve the same purpose as the missing urim and thummim. . . . With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated.<sup>96</sup>

97. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY M. J. HUBBLE (1886)

A part of the book of Lehigh [Lehi] had been translated, about 150 pages & taken to Philadelphia by one of the parties, who put it in a bureau drawer at night, the next morning it was gone and has never yet been found. Joseph Smith was informed that for his transgressing the command, to keep it always under his care, he would be punished and the “gift” of reading through the spectacles was taken from him for about 3 months & never was allowed to see the “plates” again but at the end of his punishment, he was told that he might translate the book of Mormon, instead of the book of Lehigh but would not be permitted to see the “plates” that the “Characters” would appear before him & when he translated them correctly they would disappear & new

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96. *Omaha Herald*, October 17, 1886; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 199–200. See also *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 17, 1886; and *Saints’ Herald* 33 (November 13, 1886): 706. Although David Whitmer here states that the Urim and Thummim was not returned to Joseph Smith after the 116 pages were lost, Lucy Mack Smith quotes Joseph as saying the Urim and Thummim was returned on September 22, 1828. See “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” book 7, p. 11, Church History Library, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/91>. In addition, David Whitmer was apparently unaware that rather than receiving the seer stone in 1828, Joseph Smith and others had discovered it while digging a well for Willard Chase in 1822. See Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 69–70.

ones come in their place if not translated correctly the first time they would remain until they were which in several instances he knew to be true because he said Joseph Smith was a man of limited education and could hardly write legibly. . . .

He said the Brass or Gold Plates were bound together at the back by having 3 rings run through & when a page was translated it turned back on the ring.

He said Smith translated by means of a pair of large bound Spectacles ie the “Book of Mormon”, that the Characters would appear in the air & stay until correctly translated and then disappear 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—Smith not believing it was a walled city.<sup>97</sup>

### 98. DAVID WHITMER (1887)

The people cannot understand why the Lord would bring forth his word from “a book (plates) that is sealed” and was buried in the ground by his ancient prophets on this land: and why He should have the words of the book delivered “to one that is learned,” telling him to read it, etc.; (see Isa. xxix) but the learned and wise men of the world could not read it; God gave to an unlearned boy, Joseph Smith, the gift to translate it by the means of a stone. . . .

. . . I will say that all who desire to investigate the Spaulding manuscript story will not be obliged to go very far before they will see the entire falsity of that claim. I testify to the world that I am an eye-witness to the translation of the greater part of the Book of Mormon. Part of it was translated in my father’s house in Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y. . . .

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the 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 character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book

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97. M. J. Hubble, interview, November 13, 1886; located at Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Mo.; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 210–11.

of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man. . . .

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. . . .

After the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished, early in the spring of 1830, before April 6th, Joseph gave the stone to Oliver Cowdery and told me as well as the rest that he was through with it, and he did not use the stone any more. . . .

Now, bear in mind that these revelations were given through the “stone,” while the Book of Mormon was being translated. The revelations in June, 1829, were given about the time the translation of the book was finished. As I have stated before, Brother Joseph gave up the stone a few months after translating the Book of Mormon.<sup>98</sup>

99. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS RECORDED BY THE *RICHMOND DEMOCRAT* (1888)

When he [David Whitmer] was twenty-four years of age . . . Oliver Cowdery . . . mentioned the matter [the discovery of the gold plates] to him and announced his determination to visit Smith. . . . A few days later he [Whitmer] received a letter from Cowdery, urging him to join him, which he did. . . . After remaining long enough to satisfy himself of the divine inspiration of Smith, the three returned to Whitmer’s home, where it was agreed that the work of translation should be prosecuted. . . .

. . . The “urim and thummim,” mentioned in the account of the vision were a pair of transparent stone spectacles. Smith would put on the spectacles, when a few words of the text of the Book of Mormon would appear on the lenses. When these were correctly transcribed by Cowdery, who

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98. 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, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/addresstoallbeli00whit#page/6/mode/2up>.

acted as his amanuensis, these words would disappear and others take their place. . . . [After the loss of the 116 pages, Smith] again found favor with the Lord, and was presented with a strange oval-shaped, chocolate colored stone, about the size of an egg but more flat, which it was promised should answer the same purpose. With this stone all the present book was translated. The prophet would place the stone in a hat, then put his face in the hat and read the words that appeared thereon.<sup>99</sup>

100. DAVID WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY NATHAN A. TANNER JR. (1909)

He [David Whitmer] said that Joseph was separated from the scribe by a blanket, as I remember; that he had the Urim and Thummim, and a chocolate colored stone, which he used alternately, as suited his convenience, and he said he believed Joseph could as well accomplish the translation by looking into a hat, or any other stone, as by the use of the Urim and Thummim or the chocolate colored stone. David expressed absolute faith in the Prophet's power to get any information he desired, and by any means he should adopt for the purpose. I mean he appeared to have absolute faith in the Prophet's power with God, to get any information he wished for. And he did not think that either the Urim and Thummim or the stone he had were essential, or absolutely essential, to the obtaining of the information.

He said that Joseph would—as I remember—place the manuscript beneath the stone or Urim and Thummim, and the characters would appear in English, which he would spell out, and they would remain there until the word was fully written and corrected, when it would disappear and another word appear, etc.<sup>100</sup>

101. JOHN WHITMER (1836)

I desire to testify to all that will come to the knowledge of this address; that I have most assuredly seen the plates from whence the book of Mormon is translated, and that I have handled these plates, and know of a surety that

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99. *Richmond (Missouri) Democrat*, January 26, 1888; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 228, 230. According to Cook, this account was probably borrowed from the *Omaha Herald* report mentioned above.

100. Nathan A. Tanner Jr. to Nathan A. Tanner, February 17, 1909, photocopy of typescript, 5, Church History Library. The interview occurred in May 1886.

Joseph Smith, jr. has translated the book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, and in this thing the wisdom of the wise most assuredly has perished.<sup>101</sup>

102. JOHN WHITMER (1839)

[Theodore] Turley said, “Gentlemen, I presume there are men here who have heard [John] Corrill say, that ‘Mormonism’ was true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and inspired of God. I now call upon you, John Whitmer: you say Corrill is a moral and a good man; do you believe him when he says the Book of Mormon is true, or when he says it is not true? There are many things published that they say are true, and again turn around and say they are false?” Whitmer asked, “Do you hint at me?” Turley replied, “If the cap fits you, wear it; all I know is that you have published to the world that an angel did present those plates to Joseph Smith.” Whitmer replied: “I now say, I handled those plates; there were fine engravings on both sides. I handled them;” and he described how they were hung, and “they were shown to me by a supernatural power;” he acknowledged all.

Turley asked him, “Why is not the translation now true?” He said, “I could not read it [in the original] and I do not know whether it [i.e., the translation] is true or not.” Whitmer testified all this in the presence of eight men.<sup>102</sup>

103. JOHN WHITMER,  
AS RECORDED BY WILLIAM E. MCLELLIN (1871)

I [W. E. McLellin] in company with <a> friend, <I> visited one of the eight witnesses [John Whitmer] <in 1869>—the only one who is now alive, and he bore a very lucid and rational testimony, and gave us many interesting particulars. He was a young man when he had those testimonies. He is ~~now~~ <was then> sixty eight years old, and still he is firm in his faith. Now I would ask what will I do with such a cloud of faithful witnesses, bearing such a rational and yet solemn testimony? These men while in the prime of life, saw the vision of the angel, and bore their testimony to all people. And eight men saw the plates, and handled them. Hence these men all knew the things

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101. John Whitmer, “Address,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (March 1836): 286–87.

102. “History, 1838–1856, Volume C-1,” 913; *History of the Church*, 3:307–8.

they declared to be positively true. And that too while they were young, and now when old they declare the same things.<sup>103</sup>

104. JOHN WHITMER,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY ZENAS H. GURLEY (1879)

He had seen the plates; and it was his especial pride and joy that he had written sixty pages of the Book of Mormon. . . . When the work of translation was going on he sat at one table with his writing material and Joseph at another with the breast-plate and Urim and Thummim. The latter were attached to the breast-plate and were two crystals or glasses, into which he looked and saw the words of the book. The words remained in sight till correctly written, and mistakes of the scribe in spelling the names were corrected by the seer without diverting his gaze from the Urim and Thummim.<sup>104</sup>

105. JOSEPH SMITH SR.,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY FAYETTE LAPHAM ([1830]/1870)

Under the first plate, or lid, he found a pair of spectacles, about one and a half inches longer than those used at the present day, the eyes not of glass, but of diamond. On the next page were representations of all the masonic implements, as used by masons at the present day. The remaining pages were closely written over in characters of some unknown tongue, the last containing the alphabet of this unknown language. Joseph, not being able to read the characters, made a copy of some of them, which he showed to some of the most learned men of the vicinity. . . . Returning home, he one day tried the spectacles, and found that, by looking through them, he could see everything—past, present, and future—and could also read and understand the characters written on the plates. Before proceeding to translate the characters, Joseph was directed to choose twelve Apostles, who must be men who believed in the supernatural. . . . Joseph succeeded in finding the requisite number of believers, among them Martin Harris, who was chosen Scribe. . . . [H]e and Martin went to Harmony, in Pennsylvania, where they would be less persecuted, and where Joseph, with spectacles on, translated the characters on the gold plates, and Harris recorded the result.

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103. Schaefer, *William E. McLellin's Lost Manuscript*, 167.

104. S. F. Walker, "Synopsis of a Discourse Delivered at Lamoni, Iowa," *Saints' Herald* 26 (December 15, 1879): 370.

After thus translating a number of plates, Harris wanted to return to Palmyra, taking a part of the writings with him; but the Lord objected, for fear that Harris would show them to unbelievers, who would make sport and derision of them. But Harris finally obtained leave to take them, on condition that he should let no one see them, except those who believed in them: in this he was indiscreet, and showed them to some one that he ought not to. When he next went to his drawer to get them, behold! they were not there; the Lord had taken them away.

Joseph and Harris returned to Harmony, and found the plates missing—the Lord had taken them also. Then Joseph put on the spectacles, and saw where the Lord had hid them, among the rocks, in the mountains. Though not allowed to get them, he could, by the help of the spectacles, read them where they were, as well as if they were before him. They were directed not to re-translate the part already gone over, for fear the new work would not correspond, in every particular, with the old; their enemies might take advantage of that circumstance, and condemn the whole. But they could begin where they left off, and translate until they were directed to stop; for, in consequence of their indiscretion, they would not be allowed to translate the whole, at present. At some future time, they would be allowed to translate the whole; and then their translation, the gold plates, the gold hilt, ball and pointers could all be circulated together, each a witness of the others.<sup>105</sup>

#### 106. LUCY MACK SMITH TO SOLOMON MACK JR. (1831)

Joseph after repenting of his sins and humbling himself before God was visited by an holy Angel whose countenance was as lightning and whose garments were white above all whiteness and gave unto him commandments which inspired him from on high. and gave unto him by the means of which was before prepared that he should translate this this book, and by <reading> this this our eyes are opened that we can see the situation in which the world now stands that the eyes of the whole world are blinded, that the churches have all become corrupted, yea every church upon the face of the earth that the Gospel of Christ is no where preached. this is the situation which the world is now in, and you can judge for yourselves if we did not need something more than the wisdom of men for to show us the right way.<sup>106</sup>

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105. Fayette Lapham, “The Mormons,” *Historical Magazine*, 2d ser., 7 (May 1870): 307–8. This interview with Joseph Smith’s father reportedly occurred in 1830.

106. Lucy Mack Smith to Solomon Mack Jr., January 6, 1831, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, <https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/>



107. LUCY MACK SMITH,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY HENRY CASWALL (1842)

“. . . The angel of the Lord appeared to him fifteen years since, and shewed him the cave where the original golden plates of the book of Mormon were deposited. He shewed him also the Urim and Thummim, by which he might understand the meaning of the inscriptions on the plates, and he shewed him the golden breastplate of the high priesthood. My son received these precious gifts, he interpreted the holy record, and now the believers in that revelation are more than a hundred thousand in number. I have myself seen and handled the golden plates; they are about eight inches long, and six wide; some of them are sealed together and are not to be opened, and some of them are loose. They are all connected by a ring which passes through a hole at the end of each plate, and are covered with letters beautifully engraved. I have seen and felt also the Urim and Thummim. They resemble two large bright diamonds set in a bow like a pair of spectacles. My son puts these over his eyes when he reads unknown languages, and they enable him to interpret them in English. I have likewise carried in my hands the sacred breastplate. It is composed of pure gold, and is made to fit the breast very exactly.”<sup>107</sup>

108. LUCY MACK SMITH (1844–45)

It soon became necessary to take some measures to accomplish the translation of the record into English but he was instructed to take off a fac simile of the ~~alphabet Egyptian~~ characters <composing the alphabet which were called reformed egyptian> Alphabetically and send them to all the learned men that he could find and ask them for the translation of the same. Joseph was very solicitous about the work but as yet no means had come into his hands of accomplishing ~~the same~~ it. . . .

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DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\_pid=IE5048856. See further Janiece Johnson, “‘Give Up All and Follow Your Lord’: Testimony and Exhortation in Early Mormon Women’s Letters, 1831–1839,” *BYU Studies* 41, no. 1 (2002): 77–107, esp. 83–89.

107. Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo, in 1842* (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1842), 27, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/3627>. Caswell was an early anti-Mormon writer from England who visited Nauvoo on April 15–17, 1842. See Craig L. Foster, “Henry Caswell: Anti-Mormon Extraordinaire,” *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 144–59.

. . . when she [Lucy Harris] returned home which was ~~in~~ about 2 weeks from the time she arrived ~~there~~ in Harmony she endeavored to dissuade Mr H[arris] from having any thing farther to do with writing or translating the record but ~~Martin~~ he paid but little attention to her and as he agreed to go back and write for a season at least he did so— . . .

I ~~then~~ continued[,] <said> Joseph[,] my supplications to God without cessation that his mercy might again be exercised towards me and on the 22 of september I had the joy and satisfaction of again receiving the ~~record~~ <urim and Thummin> into my possession and I have commenced translating and Emma writes for me now but the angel said that if I ~~get the plates again~~ that the Lord would send some one to write for me and I trust that it will be so—he also said that ~~the angel seemed~~ <he was> rejoiced when he gave ~~him~~ <me> back the ~~plates~~ <urim and Thummin> and said that ~~he~~ <God> was pleased with ~~his~~ <my> faithfulness and humility ~~also that the Lord was pleased with him~~ and loved ~~him~~ <me> for his <my> penitence and diligence in prayer in the which ~~he~~ <I> had performed his duty so well as to receive the ~~record~~ <urim and Thummin> and ~~he~~ <was> able to enter upon the work of translation again. . . .

. . . Emma had so much of her time taken up with her work that she could ~~not~~ write but little for him[,] accordingly 2 or 3 days before the arrival of Oliver and Samuel he feeling it his priviledge to lay hold of the promise of the angel that the Lord would send him a scribe he called upon ~~the~~ His Heavenly Father for the promised assistance and was informed that the same should be forthcoming in a few days as soon <after> Oliver was introduced to him he said Mr Smi<th> I have come for the purpose of writing for you. This was not at all unexpected to Joseph for ~~although he had never seen Mr Cowdray before he knew that the Lord was able to perform and that he had been faithful to fulfill all his promises~~ <informed Joseph what his business was> They ~~then~~ sat down and conversed together untill late bed time and Joseph told Oliver His entire history as far as it was necessary for his information in those things which concerned him. They <were> soon deeply engaged in the work of writing and translation and pr[o]gressed rapidly. one morning however they sat down to their usual work when the first thing that presented itself to Joseph was a commandment from God that he and Oliver should repair to the water each of them be baptized they immediately went down to the susquehanah river and obeyed the ~~comm~~ mandate given them through the urim and Thumim. . . .

In the mean time Joseph was 150 miles distant and knew naught of the matter except an intimation that was given through the urim and thumim

for as he one morning applied the latter to his eyes to look upon the record instead of the words of the book being given him he was commanded to write a letter to one David Whitmore[.] this man Joseph had never seen but he was instructed to say [to] him that he must come with his team immediately in order to convey Josep<h> and his family <Oliver> back to His house which was 135 miles that they might remain with him there untill the translation should be completed for that an evil designing people were seeking to take away Joseph's life in order to prevent the work of God from going forth among the world. . . .

The Trio viz Joseph, Oliver, and David whitmore started for Waterloo where they arived after a short and plasant Journey in health and fine spirits for commencing anew on their labors[.] here they continued translating untill the whole work was completed.<sup>108</sup>

109. WILLIAM SMITH,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY JAMES MURDOCK (1841)

After this Joseph Smith was supernaturally assisted to read and to understand the inscription; and he was directed to translate a great part of it. The pages which he was not to translate were found to be sealed together, so that he did not even read them and learn their contents. With an assistant to correct his English, he translated so much of the inscription as now makes the book of Mormon.<sup>109</sup>

110. WILLIAM SMITH (1883)

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

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108. "Lucy Mack Smith, History 1844–1845," book 6, p. 3, through book 8, p. 10.

109. James Murdock, "The Mormons and Their Prophet," *Hartford and New Haven, Conn. Congregational Observer* 2 (July 3, 1841): 1, reprinted as "Origin and Present Condition of the Mormons," *Christian Watchman*, August 27, 1841, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/2555>, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:479. Younger brother of Joseph Smith, William Smith was born in 1811.

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.<sup>110</sup>

111. WILLIAM SMITH (1884)

When Joseph received the plates he a[l]so received the Urim and Thummim, which he would place in a hat to exclude all light, and with the plates by his side he translated the characters, which were cut into the plates with some sharp instrument, into English. And thus, letter by letter, word by word, sentence by sentence, the whole book was translated.<sup>111</sup>

112. WILLIAM SMITH,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY J. W. PETERSON AND W. S. PENDER  
(1921)

Explaining the expression as to the stones in the Urim and thummim being set in two rims of a bow he said: A silver bow ran over one stone, under the other, arround over that one and under the first in the shape of a horizontal figure 8 much like a pair of spectacles. That they were much too large for Joseph and he could only see through one at a time using sometimes one and sometimes the other. By putting his head in a hat or some dark object it was not necessary to close one eye while looking through the stone with the other. In that way sometimes when his eyes grew tires [tired] he releaved them of the strain.<sup>112</sup>

113. KATHARINE SMITH SALISBURY (1895)

And when he went to Pennsylvania he commenced translating the book of Mormon, and translated some one hundred and sixteen pages that Martin Harris took home and lost, and when my brother found they were lost, he was very much troubled and said:

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110. William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Steam Book, 1883), 80. William was excommunicated in 1845 and joined the RLDS Church in 1878.

111. "The Old Soldier's Testimony," *Saints' Herald* 31 (October 4, 1884): 644. This is an excerpt from a sermon delivered by William B. Smith in the Saints' Chapel at Deloit, Iowa, on June 8, 1884, as reported by C. E. Butterworth.

112. "Statement of J. W. Peterson concerning William Smith," May 1, 1921, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, Community of Christ Library-Archives, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:508.

“I am afraid I have broken the commandments and will not be allowed to translate the record.”

The angel came and took the Urim and Thummim from him. He fasted and prayed several days, and the angel returned them again, and told him that his sins were forgiven, and for him to go ahead and translate, but not to translate that that was lost, but to begin where he had left off. He commenced, and when he had got the record partly translated, persecution rose there, and he wrote for David Whitmer to come and take him to his house. David came, and he asked how he should carry the plates and he was told that they would be there when he got there, in the garden.

When he got to Father Whitmer’s he found the records, as he had been told he would, and there he finished tra[n]slating the Book of Mormon.<sup>113</sup>

114. SARAH (SALLY) HELLER CONRAD,  
AS RECORDED BY OLIVER B. HUNTINGTON (1897)

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.<sup>114</sup>

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113. “An Angel Told Him: Joseph Smith’s Aged Sister Tells about Moroni’s Talk,” *Kansas City Times*, April 11, 1895, 1; quoted in Kyle R. Walker, “Katharine Smith Salisbury’s Recollections of Joseph’s Meetings with Moroni,” *BYU Studies* 41, no. 3 (2002): 16. Katharine was born on July 28, 1813.

114. Oliver B. Huntington, “History of the Life of Oliver B. Huntington,” typescript, 49–50, available on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *FamilySearch*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE5829301](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5829301). 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.

115. ELIZABETH WHITMER COWDERY,  
AS RECORDED BY WILLIAM E. McLELLIN (1870)

I staid in Richmond two days and nights. I had a great deal of talk with widow Cowdry, and her amiable daughter. She is married to a Dr Johnson, but has no children. She gave me a certificate, And this is the copy. “Richmond, Ray Co., Mo. Feb 15, 1870— — — I cheerfully certify that I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith’s translating the book of Mormon. He translated the most of it at my Father’s house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light, and then [read the words?] as they appeared before him.”<sup>115</sup>

116. ALVA HALE (1834)

ALVA HALE, son of Isaac Hale, states, that Joseph Smith Jr. told him that his (Smith’s) gift in seeing with a stone and hat, was a gift from God,” but also states “that Smith told him at another time that this “*peeping*” was all d—d nonsense. He (Smith) was deceived himself but did not intend to deceive others;—that he intended to quit the business, (of peeping) and labor for his livelihood.” That afterwards, Smith told him, he should see the Plates from which he translated the book of Mormon,” and accordingly at the time specified by Smith, he (Hale) “called to see the plates, but Smith did not show them, but appeared angry.” He further states, that he knows Joseph Smith Jr. to be an impostor, and a liar, and knows Martin Harris to be a liar likewise.<sup>116</sup>

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115. William E. McLellan to “My Dear Friends,” February 1870, Community of Christ Library-Archives; cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 233–34. Elizabeth Whitmer, born in 1815, was the daughter of Peter Whitmer Sr. and Mary Whitmer (and the sister of David Whitmer). She was fourteen years old when the translation was completed at her parents’ home in Fayette, New York. She married Oliver Cowdery in 1832. McLellan’s letter was found among papers in the RLDS/Community of Christ archives in 1961 when Richard Howard began to catalog boxes of unprocessed documents. Richard Howard to John W. Welch, email.

116. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, a Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: By the author, 1834), 268, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive>

## 117. ISAAC HALE (1841)

About this time, Martin Harris made his appearance upon the stage; and Smith began to interpret the characters or hieroglyphics which he said were engraven upon the plates, while Harris wrote down the interpretation. It was said, that Harris wrote down one hundred and sixteen pages, and lost them. . . .

. . . I went to the house where Joseph Smith Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the Book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were “*my servant seeketh a greater witness, but no greater witness can be given him.*” There was also something said about “*three that were to see the thing*”—meaning I supposed, the Book of Plates, and that “*if the three did not go exactly according to the orders, the thing would be taken from them.*” I enquired whose words they were, and was informed by Joseph or Emma, (I rather think it was the former) that they were the words of Jesus Christ. I told them, that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it. The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same 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!

After this, Martin Harris went away, and Oliver Cowdery came and wrote for Smith, while he interpreted as above described. This is the same Oliver Cowdery, whose name may be found in the Book of Mormon. Cowdery continued a scribe for Smith until the Book of Mormon was completed as I supposed and understood.<sup>117</sup>

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.org/stream/mormonismunvaile00howe#page/268/mode/2up. Alva Hale was the brother of Emma Hale Smith; he was born in 1795. Such statements were collected by the excommunicated apostate Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. While attempting to damage Joseph Smith’s reputation, these statements also confirm that the miraculous nature of the translation was openly being claimed, although not accepted by all. For a forensic and historical discrediting of these affidavits, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reappraised,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 (1970): 283–314. For an 1843 testimonial of the youthful prophet’s good character, see Mark Ashurst-McGee, “The Josiah Stowell Jr.–John S. Fullmer Correspondence,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 109–17, with Josiah Stowell Jr. stating, “I never new him to git drunk” (113).

117. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 264–65. Isaac Hale’s statement also appears in “Modern Superstition.—The Mormonites.—No. II,” *Visitor, or Monthly Instructor* (1841): 154–55. Isaac was the father of Emma Hale Smith.

## 118. JOSEPH KNIGHT JR. (C. 1844)

[A]t last he [Joseph Smith] got the plates, and rode in my Father's wagon and carried them home. I left my Father, purchased a building spot adjoining my Father's and began to work for myself, and nearly ready to build a large house. Joseph had commenced to translate the plates, he told my Father he wanted fifty dollars; my Father could not raise it; he then came to me, the same day I sold my house lot and sent him a one horse wagon. Father and I often went to see him and carry him something to live upon: at last Oliver Cowdery came to write for him, then he got along faster, after many trials and troubles he got it wrote off.<sup>118</sup>

## 119. JOSEPH KNIGHT SR. (C. 1847)

Nothing material took place untill to[w]ard fall the forepart of September. I went to Rochester on Buisness and returnd By Palmyra to be there about the 22nt of September. I was there several Days. I will say there [was] a man near By By the name Samuel Lawrance. He was a Seear [Seer] and he had Bin to the hill and knew about the things in the hill and he was trying to obtain them. He [Joseph Smith] had talked with me and told me the Conversation he had with the personage which told him if he would Do right according to the will of God he mite obtain [the plates] the 22nt Day of Septemer Next and if not he never would have them. Now Joseph was some affraid of him [Samuel Lawrence] that he mite be a trouble to him. He therefore sint his father up to Sams as he Called him near night to see if there was any signs of his going away that night. He told his father to stay till near Dark and if he saw any signs of his going you till him if I find him there I will thrash the stumps with him. So the old man came a way and saw no thing like it. This is to shoe [show] the troubles he had from time to time to obtain the plates.

So that night we all went to Bed and in the morning I got up and my Horse and Carriage was gone. But after a while he Came home and he turned out the Horse. All Come into the house to Brackfirst [breakfast]. But no thing said about where they had Bin. After Brackfirst Joseph Cald me into the other Room and he set his foot on the Bed and leaned his head on his hand and says, "Well I am Dissopinted. "Well," says I, "I am sorrey." "Well," says he, "I am grateley Dissopinted; it is ten times Better then I expected." Then he

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118. "Joseph Knight's incidents of history from 1827 to 1844," microfilm, 1, Church History Library. Compiled from loose sheets in Joseph Knight's possession, this history was written by Thomas Bullock on August 16, 1862.



went on to tell the length and width and thickness of the plates, and said he, "they appear to be Gold." But he seemed to think more of the glasses or the urim and thummim than [than] he did of the plates, for, says he, "I can see any thing; they are marvelous. Now they are written in characters and I want them translated."

Now he was commanded not to let no [any] one see those things but a few for witness at a given time. Now it soon got about that Joseph Smith had found the plates and people come in to see them but he told them that they could not for he must not show [show] them. But many insisted and offered money and property to see them. But, for keeping them from the people they persecuted and abused them [him] and they [the Smiths] were obliged to hide them [the plates], and they hid them under a brick hearth in the west room. About this time came this Samuel Lawrance and one Beeman a great rodder and wanted to talk with him. And he went into the west room and they proposed to go shares with him and tried every way to bargain with him but could not. Then Beeman took out his rods and held [held] them up and they pointed down [down] to the hearth where they were hid. "There," says Beeman, "it is under that hearth." So they had to guard the house until some time in November. He obtained fifty dollars in money and hired a man to move him and his wife to Pennsylvania to his father, his wife being on well and wanted to go to her father. He bought [bought] a piece of land of his father with a house and barn on it. Here the people began to tease him to see the book and to offer him money and property and they crowded so hard that he had to hide it in the mountain.

He now began to be anxious to get them translated. He therefore with his wife drew off [off] the characters exactly like the ancient and sent Martin Harris to see if he could get them translated. . . . Now he [Joseph Smith] being [being] an unlearned man did not know what to do. Then the Lord gave him power to translate himself. Then were the learned men confounded, for he, by the means he found with the plates, he could translate those characters better than the learned.

Now the way he translated was he put the urim and thummim into his hat and darkened his eyes then he would take a sentence and it would appear in bright 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 spelled right it would not go away till it was right, so we see it was marvelous. Thus was the whole [whole] translated.

Now when he began to translate he was poor and was put to it for provisions and had no one to write for him but his wife, and his wife's brother

would sometimes write a little for him through the winter. The Next Spring Oliver Cowdry a young man from palmyra Came to see old Mr Smith, Josephs father, about this work and he sent him Down to pensylveny to see Joseph and satisfy him self. So he Came Down and was soon Convinced of the truth of the work. 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. . . . [Following the loss of the 116 pages] There fore Joseph Lost his privilige for a while. But after Repenting he again received the prilvelage 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. . . . In January his father and Samuel [Smith] came from Manchester to my house when I was Buisey a Drawing Lumber. I told him they had traviled far enough. I would go with my sley and take them down to morrow. I went Down and found them well and the[y] were glad to see us. We conversed about many things. 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. The old gentlemen told me to Come and see him once in a while as I Could I went home followed teaming till the last of March the slaying [sleighing] Being good. I told my wife I must go Dow[n] and see Joseph again. "Why Do you go soon, for," said she. Says I, "Come go and see." And she went with me. Next morning we went Down and found them well and ware glad to see us. Joseph talked with us about his translating and some revelations he had Received and from that time my wife Began to Beleve and Continuwed a full Believer untill she Died and that was the 7 Day of August 1831.

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. Now Joseph and Oliver Came up to see me if I Could help him to some provisons, [they] having no way to Buy any. But I was to Cattskill. But when I Came home my folks told me what Joseph wanted. 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. And when I came home I Bought some nine or ten Bushels of grain and five or six Bushels taters [potatoes] and a pound of tea, and I went Down to see him and they ware in want. Joseph and Oliver ware gone to see if they Could

find a place to work for provisions, But found none. They returned home and found me there with provisions, and they ware glad for they ware out. Their familey Consisted of four, Joseph and wife, Oliver and his [Joseph's] Brother Samuel. Then they went to work and had provisions enough to Last till the translation was Done. Then he agreed with Martin Harris to print. They therefore agreed with E Grandin to Print five thousand Coppies which was Printed and Bound at Palmiry in the Spring of 1830.<sup>119</sup>

#### 120. JESSE SMITH TO HYRUM SMITH (1829)

You state your Father cannot write by reason of a nervous affection this is a poor excuse, worse than none, he can dictate to others and they can write, ~~he can~~ If he knows not what to write, he can get your Brother's spectacles he would then be as able to write dictate a letter, as Joe is to decypher hieroglyphics, if more should be wanting he can employ the same scoundrel of a scribe, and then not only the matter but manner and style would be correct.<sup>120</sup>

#### 121. WAYNE SENTINEL (1829)

Just about in this particular region, for some time past, much speculation has existed, concerning a pretended discovery, through superhuman means, of an ancient record, of a religious and divine nature and origin, written in ancient characters, impossible to be interpreted by any to whom the special gift has not been imparted by inspiration. It is generally known and spoken of as the "Golden Bible." . . . It is pretended that it will be published as soon as the translation is completed.<sup>121</sup>

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119. Joseph Knight, Reminiscences, 2–6, MS 3470, Church History Library, available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE1276586](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE1276586), images 3–6; Dean C. Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (1976): 32–36.

120. Jesse Smith to Hyrum Smith, June 17, 1829, in "Letterbook 2," 60–61, Church History Library, available on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-2/65>. Jesse Smith was the oldest brother of Joseph Smith Sr. As this excerpt shows, he was hostile to the Restoration.

121. This is the first known published reference to the Book of Mormon and appeared before the translation was completed. *Wayne Sentinel*, June 26, 1829, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU*

122. *ROCHESTER ADVERTISER AND DAILY TELEGRAPH* (1829)

## “GOLDEN BIBLE”

The Palmyra Freeman says—The greatest piece of superstition that has ever come within our knowledge, now occupies the attention of a few individuals of this quarter. It is generally known and spoken of as the “*Golden Bible*.” Its proselytes give the following account of it—In the fall of 1827, a person by the name of *Joseph Smith*, of Manchester, Ontario county, reported that he had been visited in a dream by the spirit of the A[l]mighty and informed that in a certain hill in that town, was deposited this Golden Bible, containing an ancient record of a divine nature and origin After having been thrice thus visited, as he states, he proceeded to the spot, and after penetrating “mother earth” a short distance, the Bible was found, together with a huge pair of spectacles! He had been directed, however, not to let any mortal being examine them, “under no less penalty” than instant death! They were therefore nicely wrapped up and excluded from the “vulgar gaze of poor wicked mortals!” It was said that the *leaves* of the bible were *plates* of gold, about 8 inches long, 6 wide, and one eighth of an inch thick, on which were engraved characters or hieroglyphics. By placing the spectacles in a hat, and looking into it, Smith could (he said so, at least,) interpret these characters.

An account of this discovery was soon circulated. The subject was almost invariably treated as it should have been—with *contempt*. A few, however, believed the “*golden*” story, among whom was *Martin Harris*, an honest and industrious farmer of this town, (Palmyra). So blindly enthusiastic was Harris, that he took some of the characters interpreted by Smith, and went in search of some one besides the interpreter, who was learned enough to *English* them; but all to whom he applied (among the number was Professor Mitchell, of New York) happened not to be possessed of sufficient knowledge to give satisfaction! Harris returned, and set Smith to work at interpreting the Bible. He has at length performed the task, and the work is soon to be put to press in Palmyra. Its language and doctrine are said to be far superior to those of the book of life!!!<sup>122</sup>

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*Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/188>.

122. “Golden Bible,” *Rochester Advertiser and Daily Telegraph*, August 31, 1829, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/176>, italics in original; cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:221–22. This article is a reprint of one published that same month in the *Palmyra Freeman*. No original copies of the *Freeman* article have been found.

## 123. ROCHESTER GEM (1829)

By placing the spectacles in a hat and looking into it, Smith interprets the characters into the English language.

Harris states that he went in search of some one to interpret the hieroglyphics, but found that no one was intended to perform that all important task but Smith himself.<sup>123</sup>

124. LUCIUS FENN OF COVERT, SENECA COUNTY, NEW YORK,  
TO BIRDSEYE BRONSON OF WINCHESTER, CONNECTICUT  
(1830)

There is something that has taken place lately that is mysterious to us it is this there has been a bible found by 3 men but a short distance from us which is somthig remarkable we think. there was it is said an an [*sic*] angel appeared to these 3 men and told them there was a bible concealed in such a place and if one of them would go to that place he would find it he went and found as the angel said it was in a stone chest what is most to be wondered at is this that the man that found it could not read at all in the english language but he read [read?] this bible and nobody else cannot it has been concealed there for fourteen hundred years it is written on a kind of gold leaf it is the same that our is only there is an addition to it they are a printing it in Palmyra it is expected that it will come out soon so that we can see it it speaks of the Millennium day and tells when it is a goeing to take place and it talks that the man that is to find this bible his name as Joseph and his fathers name is Joseph. some people think that it is all a speculation and some think that something is going to take place different from what has been for my part I do not know how it will be but it is something singular to me, as it respects religion there has been considerable of an attention paid to it this winter between these lakes and there has been considerable many as we humbly hope have been [renewed?] by the grace of God there is a general solemnity upon the people generally in these parts and we hope that there will be a greater ourpouring of the spirit than ever.<sup>124</sup>

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123. "Golden Bible," *Rochester Gem*, September 5, 1829, 70, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/161>; cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:273.

124. Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Note on Mormon Americana at Yale," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 (1970): 387–88. The entire letter, with spelling and punctuation

125. *REFLECTOR* (PALMYRA, N.Y.) (1830)

## DIABOLICAL.

Our readers must be aware of the great difficulty we labor under in translating our foreign correspondence. The inspired man who wrote the “Gold Bible” on “plates of brass,” in the “*reformed Egyptian*” language, on account of its brevity, as we are informed, through the medium of one of these psuedo prophets, never had half the trouble that we experience in deciphering the unseemly scrolls of this dark representative of old Pluto’s dominions.<sup>125</sup>

126. *ROCHESTER GEM* (1830)

An ignoramous near Palmyra, Wayne county, pretended he had found some “Gold Plates,” as he is pleased to call them, upon which is said to be engraved characters of marvelous and misunderstandable import, which he, nor no other mortal could divine. These characters he has translated into the English language, and lo! they appear to be no other than the mysticisms of an unrevealed Bible! A person more credulous or more cunning, than him who found the plates, ordered the translation thereof, mortgaged his farm, sold all he had, and appropriated it to the printing and binding of several thousand copies of this pearl, which is emphatically of GREAT PRICE! . . . The translator if we take his word for it, has been directed by an angel in this business, for the salvation and the edification of the world!<sup>126</sup>

127. *REFLECTOR* (1830)

2. Now Walters, the Magician, was a man unseemly to look upon, and to profound ignorance added the most consummate impudence,—he obeyed the summons of the idle and slothful, and produced an old book in an unknown tongue, (Cicero’s *Orations in latin*,) from whence he read in the

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corrections, appears in William Mulder and Russell A. Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 26–29.

125. “Diabolical,” *Palmyra (N.Y.) Reflector*, February 27, 1830, 66, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/366>.

126. “Imposition and Blasphemy,” *Rochester Gem*, May 15, 1830, 15; cited in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, rev. and enl., 2 vols. (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing, 1947–51), 2:46–47.

presence of the Idle and Slothful strange stories of hidden treasures and of the spirit who had the custody thereof.

3. And the Idle and Slothful paid tribute unto the Magician, and besought him saying, Oh! thou who art wise above all men, and can *interpret* the book that no man understandeth, and can discover hidden things by the power of thy enchantments, lead us, we pray thee to the place where the Nephites buried their treasure. . . .

10. Now the rest of the acts of the magician, how his *mantle* fell upon the *prophet* Jo. Smith Jun. and how Jo. made a league with the *Spirit*, who afterwards turned out to be an angel, and how he obtained the “Gold Bible,” Spectacles, and breast plate—will they not be faithfully recorded in the book of Pukei?<sup>127</sup>

### 128. DIEDRICH WILLERS (1830)

In the month of July [June 1829], Joseph Smith made his appearance in Seneca County. . . . There a certain David Whitmer claimed to have seen an angel of the Lord, so Smith proceeded to his house, in order to complete the translation of the above work [Book of Mormon] himself. According to the reports, only there could he work—where men who have had association with the other world also reside. . . .

. . . The Angel indicated that the Lord destined him to translate these things into English from the ancient language, that under these plates were hidden spectacles, without which he could not translate these plates, that by using these spectacles, he (Smith) would be in a position to read these ancient languages, which he had never studied, and that the Holy Ghost would reveal to him the translation in the English language. Therefore, he (Smith) proceeded to Manchester township, Ontario County, and found everything as described, the plates buried next to the spectacles in the earth, and soon he completed the translation of this work.<sup>128</sup>

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127. “The Book of Pukei.—Chap. 1,” *Reflector*, June 12, 1830, 36–37. The Book of Pukei was a parody of the Book of Mormon which offered a satirical alternative interpretation of the coming forth of the scriptural book.

128. Diedrich Willers to Reverend Brethren, June 18, 1830, Diedrich Willers Collection, the John M. Olin Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.; cited in D. Michael Quinn, trans. and ed., “The First Months of Mormonism: A Contemporary View by Rev. Diedrich Willers,” *New York History* 54 (July 1973): 326–27. Willers was the Reformed (German) minister at Fayette and wrote this letter to warn others about Mormonism.

129. *REFLECTOR* (1830)

7. Knowest thou not, thou weak one of earth, that this same Mormon wrote a book on plates of gold, in the language I now speak . . . and knowest thou not, that thou art greater than all the “money-digging rabble,” and art chosen to interpret the book, which Mormon has written, to wit, the gold Bible?

8. “And lo! I answered the spirit of the money diggers saying, how can these things be, as I can neither read nor write? And he said unto me: “I will give thee a breast plate, to keep thee from evil, and I will send thee an assistant, even Oliver, the pedagogue.”<sup>129</sup>

130. *REFLECTOR* (1830)

Although there may appear much of *jest*, in the self-conceits of our fellow mortals, it frequently has the faculty to impress upon our minds, a melancholy *tinge*; still the vices and follies of others, if rightly appreciated are full of instruction, & we only require JO SMITH’S Magic Spectacles, or some other powerful optical instrument to turn them to our own advantage.<sup>130</sup>

131. *PAINESVILLE TELEGRAPH* (1830)

Some two or three years since, an account was given in the papers, of a book purporting to contain new revelations from Heaven, having been dug out of the ground, in Manchester in Ontario Co. N.Y. The book, it seems, has made its appearance in this vicinity.—It contains about 500 octavo pages, which is said to be translated from Egyptian Hieroglyphics, on metal plates, by one Smith, who was enabled to read the characters by instruction from Angels. About two weeks since some persons came along here with the book, one of whom pretends to have seen Angels, and assisted in translating the plates. . . . In the neighboring township of Kirtland, we understand that twenty or thirty have been immersed into the new order of things; many of whom had been previously baptised.—The name of the person here, who pretends to have a divine mission, and to have seen and conversed with Angels, is *Cowdray*.<sup>131</sup>

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129. “The Book of Pukei.—Chap. 2,” *Reflector*, July 7, 1830, 60.

130. “Every thing in this world,” *Reflector*, August 28, 1830, 108.

131. “The Golden Bible,” *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU*



132. *PAINESVILLE TELEGRAPH* (1830)

This new Gospel they say was found in Ontario co. N. Y. and was discovered by an Angel of light, appearing in a dream to a man by the name of Smith, who, as directed, went to a certain place and dug from the earth a stone box, containing plates of gold, on which this gospel was engraved in characters unknown. The said Smith though a man so illiterate that he cannot write, was, by divine inspiration, enabled to give the true interpretation, and the man who wrote from the mouth of Smith, is one of the four mentioned above.<sup>132</sup>

## 133. JAMES GORDON BENNETT (1831)

By the special interposition of God, the golden plates, on which was engraved the Book of Mormon, and other works, had been buried for ages in the hill by a wandering tribe of the children of Israel, who had found their way to western New York, before the birth of christianity itself. Joe Smith is discovered to be the second Messiah who was to reveal this word to the world and to reform it anew. . . .

At last a printer in Palmyra undertook to print the manuscript of Joe Smith, Harris becoming responsible for the expense. They were called translators, but in fact and in truth they are believed to be the work of the Ex-Preacher from Ohio [Sidney Rigdon], who stood in the background and put forward Joe to father the new bible and the new faith. After the publication of the golden bible, they began to make converts rapidly.<sup>133</sup>

## 134. DAVID MARKS (1831)

Next day [March 29, 1830], we . . . tarried at the house of Mr. Whitmer. . . . They affirmed, that an angel had showed them certain plates of metal, having

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*Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/258>.

132. "Beware of Impostors," *Painesville Telegraph*, December 14, 1830. This article had originally appeared in the *Milan (Huron County) Free Press*.

133. James Gordon Bennett, "Mormon Religion," *Morning Courier and Enquirer*, September 1, 1831, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/480>, cited in Leonard J. Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's 1831 Report on 'The Mormonites,'" *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 (1970): 361–62.

the appearance of gold, that were dug out of the ground by one Joseph Smith; that on these plates was written a history of the ten tribes of Israel which were lost, and revelations to different prophets that arose among them. They stated the writing could be read by no person, except by the said Smith; and, that the Lord had inspired him to translate and publish the book.<sup>134</sup>

135. W. W. PHELPS TO E. D. HOWE (1831)

[H]e [Martin Harris] is honest, and sincerely declares upon his soul's salvation that the book is true, and was interpreted by Joseph Smith, through a pair of silver spectacles, found with the plates. The places where they dug for the plates, in Manchester, are to be seen. When the plates were said to have been found, a copy of one or two lines of the characters, were taken by Mr. Harris to Utica, Albany and New York; at New York, they were shown to Dr. Mitchell, and he referred to professor Anthon who translated and declared them to be the ancient short-hand Egyptian. So much is true. The family of Smiths is poor, and generally ignorant in common learning.<sup>135</sup>

136. *PAINESVILLE TELEGRAPH* (1831)

He [Sidney Rigdon] then spoke of the supernatural gifts with which he said Smith was endowed: he said he could translate the scriptures from any language in which they were now extant, and could lay his finger on every interpolation in the sacred writings, adding, that he had proved him in all these things. But my friend knowing that Mr. Rigdon had no knowledge of any language but his own vernacular tongue, asked him how he knew these things, to which Mr. R. made no direct reply.<sup>136</sup>

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134. David Marks, *The Life of David Marks, to the 26th Year of His Age* (Limerick, Maine: Morning Star, 1831), 340, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/3864>. David Marks was an itinerant preacher who stayed with the Whitmer family between the publication of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the Church. His reference to the Book of Mormon is the first known published account in a book.

135. W. W. Phelps to E. D. Howe, January 15, 1831, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 273. Phelps wrote this letter before joining the Church.

136. "Mormonism," *Painesville Telegraph*, February 15, 1831.

137. *REFLECTOR* (1831)

There remains but little doubt, in the minds of those at all acquainted with these transactions, that Walters, who was sometimes called the conjurer . . . first suggested to Smith the idea of finding a book. Walters . . . had procured an old copy of Cicero's Orations, in the latin language, out of which he read long and loud to his credulous hearers, uttering at the same time an unintelligible jargon, which he would afterwards pretend to interpret, and explain, as a record of the former inhabitants of America.<sup>137</sup>

138. *EVANGELICAL INQUIRER* (1831)

This golden bible consisted of metallic plates six or seven inches square, of the thickness of tin, and resembling gold, the surface of which was covered with hieroglyphic characters, unintelligible to Smith, the finder, who could not read English. However the angel (ghost!) that discovered the plates to him, likewise informed him that he would be inspired to translate the inscription without looking at the plates, while an amanuensis would record his infallible reading all of which was accordingly done. But now the book must be published, the translation of the inscriptions which Smith had been authorized to show to no man save a few accomplices, who subscribe a certificate of these pretended facts at the end of the volume.<sup>138</sup>

139. *PAINESVILLE TELEGRAPH* (1831)

He [Martin Harris] told all about the gold plates, Angels, Spirits, and Jo Smith.—He had seen and handled them all, *by the power of God!*<sup>139</sup>

140. *REFLECTOR* (1831)

Harris declares, that when he acted as *amanuenses*, and wrote the translation, as Smith dictated, such was his fear of the Divine displeasure, that a screen (sheet) was suspended between the prophet and himself. . . .

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137. "Gold Bible, No. 5," *Reflector*, February 28, 1831, 109.

138. "Something New—The Golden Bible," *Evangelical Inquirer*, March 7, 1831, 218–19, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/598>, cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:112.

139. *Painesville Telegraph*, March 15, 1831.

On opening that portion of the book which was not secured by the *seals*, he discovered inscribed on the aforesaid plates, divers and wonderful *characters*; some of them large and some small, but beyond the wisdom of man to understand without supernatural aid.<sup>140</sup>

#### 141. *PAINESVILLE TELEGRAPH* (1831)

The first idea of a “Book,” was doubtless suggested to the Smiths by one Walters, a juggling fortune-teller, who made the ignorant believe that an old book in his possession, in the Latin language, contained an account of the anti-deluvians, & c. and the word was given out that the book Smith was about to find, was a history of hidden treasures. . . .

The [Book of Mormon] is chiefly garbled from the Old and New Testaments, the Apocraphy having contributed its share. . . . A quarto Bible now in this village, was borrowed and nearly worn out and defaced by their dirty handling. Some seven or eight of them spent many months in copying, Cowdery being principal scribe.<sup>141</sup>

#### 142. *EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE AND GOSPEL ADVOCATE* (1831)

During the trial it was shown that the Book of Mormon was brought to light by the same magic power by which he pretended to tell fortunes, discover hidden treasures, &c. Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the book, testified under oath, that said Smith found with the plates, from which he translated his book, two transparent stones, resembling glass, set in silver bows. That by looking through these, he was able to read in English, the reformed Egyptian characters, which were engraved on the plates.<sup>142</sup>

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140. “Gold Bible, No. 6,” *Reflector*, March 19, 1831, 126.

141. *Painesville Telegraph*, March 22, 1831. This passage was taken from a letter dated March 12, 1831, and written by ten “individuals of the first respectability” residing in Palmyra.

142. “Mormonites,” *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* 2 (April 9, 1831): 120, available on “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/373>. From a letter to the editors signed “A. W. B.”—probably A. W. Benton—and sent from South Bainbridge, New York; cited in John Phillip Walker, ed., *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 338. The letter describes a trial reportedly held in 1826. For more on Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial,

143. *INDEPENDENT MESSENGER*  
(WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS) (1831)

He [Joseph Smith] has 10 years' translating to do; he looks in a small stone he has, and there reads the will of the Lord and writes it for the good of his fellow-men; he can read a person's heart by looking in his *face*.<sup>143</sup>

144. *MORNING COURIER AND NEW-YORK ENQUIRER*  
(NEW YORK CITY) (1831)

At last a printer in Palmyra undertook to print the translations of Joe Smith, Harris becoming responsible for the expense. They were called translations, but in fact and in truth they are believed to be the work of the Ex-Precacher from Ohio, who stood in the back ground and put forward Joe to father the new bible and the new faith. After the publication of the golden bible, they began to make converts rapidly.<sup>144</sup>

145. EZRA BOOTH (1831)

[I]n translating.—The subject stands before his eyes in print, but it matters not whether his eyes are open or shut; he can see as well one way as the other.

You have probably read the testimony of the three witnesses appended to the Book of Mormon. These witnesses testify, that an angel appeared to them, and presented them the golden plates, and the voice of God declared it to be a Divine Record. To this they frequently testify, in the presence of large congregations. . . .

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see Marvin S. Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," *BYU Studies* 12, no. 2 (1972): 223–33; Gordon A. Madsen, "Being Acquitted of a 'Disorderly Person' Charge in 1826," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters*, ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2014), 71–92.

143. Letter from "A Presbyterian," *Worcester (Mass.) Independent Messenger*, May 27, 1831, 96. The letter was dated February 22, 1831.

144. "Mormon Religion— Clerical Ambition— Western New York.— The Mormonites Gone to Ohio," (*New York City*) *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, September 1, 1831, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/480>, reprinted as "Mormon Religion," *Bennington Vermont Gazette*, September 13, 1831.

. . . These [buried] treasures were discovered several years since, by means of the dark glass, the same with which Smith says he translated most of the Book of Mormon.<sup>145</sup>

#### 146. *NEW HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE* (1831)

At the place appointed he found in the earth a box which contained a set of thin plates resembling gold, with Arabic characters inscribed on them. The plates were minutely described as being connected with rings in the shape of the letter D, which facilitated the opening and shutting of the book. The preacher said he found in the same place two stones with which he was enabled by placing them over his eyes and putting his head in a dark corner to decypher the hieroglyphics on the plates!<sup>146</sup>

#### 147. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL (1832)

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in N. York for the last ten years. . . .

. . . it is a translation made throu[g]h stone spectacles, in a dark room, and in the hat of the prophet Smith, from the *reformed Egyptian!!* . . . His three witnesses, I am credibly informed . . . represented Walter Scott and myself as employed in translating these plates, and as believers in the book of Mormon.<sup>147</sup>

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145. Ezra Booth, "Mormonism—No. III," *Ravenna Ohio Star*, October 27, 1831, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/509>.

146. *New Hampshire Gazette*, October 25, 1831, cited in Kirkham, *New Witness for Christ*, 2:405–6. The same text was published in (*Gardner, Me.*) *Christian Intelligencer*, November 18, 1831, 184, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/431>, with an indication that it was a reprint from the *Illinois Patriot* of September 16.

147. Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832), 13, 15, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/delusionsanalysisi01camp#page/12/mode/2up>, italics in original.

148. NATHANIEL W. HOWELL AND OTHERS  
TO ANCIL BEACH (1832)

The neighbours of Smith and the others give the following account of them—Joseph Smith has lived in about Manchester for several years an idle worthless fellow; previous to the Mormon project he had been engaged for some time in company with several others of the same Character Employed in digging for money[.] They were poor as well as worthless and for a time were supported by a man Mr Fish an illiterate man of some property who was duped by them, and when he found that his money diggers were like to consume what he had gathered by his industry he turned them off—Joseph Smith then pretended to have found a box, in digging in the woods, containing some gold plates with Characters upon them which none but himself could decypher—Cowdry who certifies to the Book of Mormon was a school master in the town of Manchester and went away with Smith to the State of Pennsylvania and was employed by Smith to write down for him what he interpreted from the mystic characters upon the plates—They then induced Martin Harris a farmer of respectable property to become responsible for an edition of 5000 copies of the Book which was accordingly published in Palmyra.<sup>148</sup>

149. WILLIAM E. MCLELLIN (1832)

Some time in July 1831, Two men [Elders Samuel H. Smith and Reynolds Cahoon] came to Paris & held an evening meeting. . . . They said that in September 1827 an Angel appeared to Joseph Smith (in Ontario Co. New York) and showed to him the confusion on the earth respecting true religion. It also told him to go a few miles distant to a certain hill and there he should find some plates with engravings, which (if he was faithful) he should be enabled to translate. He went as directed and found plates (which had the appearance of fine Gold) about 8 inches long 5 or 6 wide and altogether about

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148. Nathaniel W. Howell and Others to Ancil Beach, January 1832, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:14–16. Howell (1770–1850), first judge of Ontario County, New York, from 1819 to 1833, was a resident of Canandaigua. Five other Canandaigua citizens signed this letter: W. Hubbell, master in chancellery; A. D. Eddy, pastor; Henry Chapin, commissioner of judiciary; Jared Wilson, surrogate; and Lewis Jenkins, postmaster. Ancil Beach was a Methodist minister living in Indiana who had sent a letter to Canandaigua seeking information on the “character of individuals who have published the Book of Mormon.”

6 inches thick; each one about as thick as thin paste board fastened together and opened in the form of a book containing engravings of reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphical characters: which he was inspired to translate and the record was published in 1830 and is called the book of Mormon.<sup>149</sup>

#### 150. WILLARD CHASE (1833)

Samuel T. Lawrence . . . went with him [Joseph Smith] to a singular looking hill, in Manchester, and shewed him [Lawrence] where the treasure was. Lawrence asked him [Joseph Smith] if he had ever discovered any thing with the plates of gold; he said no: he then asked him to look in his stone, to see if there was any thing with them. He looked, and said there was nothing; he told him to look again, and see if there was not a large pair of specks with the plates; he looked and soon saw a pair of spectacles, the same with which Joseph says he translated the Book of Mormon. . . .

He [Joseph] met one day in the streets of Palmyra, a rich man, whose name was Martin Harris, and addressed him thus; "I have a commandment from God to ask the first man I meet in the street to give me fifty dollars, to assist me in doing the work of the Lord by translating the Golden Bible." Martin being naturally a credulous man, hands Joseph the money. . . .

In April, 1830, I again asked Hiram for the stone which he had borrowed of me; he told me I should not have it, for Joseph made use of it in translating his Bible.<sup>150</sup>

#### 151. HENRY HARRIS (1833)

I then asked him [Joseph Smith] what letters were engraved on them, he said italic letters written in an unknown language, and that he had copied some of the words and sent them to Dr. Mitchell and Professor Anthon of New York. By looking on the plates he said he could not understand the words, but it was made known to him that he was the person that must translate them, and on looking through the stone was enabled to translate.<sup>151</sup>

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149. William E. McLellin to Beloved Relatives, August 4, 1832, microfilm, photocopy of holograph, MS 617, Church History Library. The original letter is found in the Community of Christ Library-Archives, published in Jan Shippis and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin: 1831-1836* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies; Urbana: University of Illinois, 1994), 79.

150. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 243-47. See note 116 above.

151. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 252. See note 116 above.



## 152. AARON WRIGHT (1833)

Spalding had many other manuscripts, which I expect to see when Smith translates his other plate. In conclusion, I will observe, that the names of, and most of the historical part of the Book of Mormon, were as familiar to me before I read it, as most modern history. If it is not Spalding's writing, it is the same as he wrote; and if Smith was inspired, I think it was by the same spirit that Spalding was, which he confessed to be the love of money.<sup>152</sup>

153. *THE EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR* (1833)

It [the Book of Mormon] was translated by the gift and power of God, by an unlearned man, through the aid of a pair of Interpreters, or spectacles—(known, perhaps, in ancient days as Teraphim, or Urim and Thummim).<sup>153</sup>

## 154. BARTON STAFFORD (1833)

Even since he [Joseph Smith] professed to be inspired of the Lord to translate the Book of Mormon, he one day while at work in my father's field, got quite drunk on a composition of cider, molasses and water.<sup>154</sup>

## 155. ABIGAIL HARRIS (1833)

In the early part of the winter in 1828, I made a visit to Martin Harris' and was joined in company by Jos[eph]. Smith, sen. and his wife. The Gold Bible business, so called, was the topic of conversation, to which I paid particular attention, that I might learn the truth of the whole matter.—They told me that the report that Joseph, jun. had found golden plates, was true, and that he was in Harmony, Pa. translating them—that such plates were in existence, and that Joseph, jun. was to obtain them, was revealed to him by the spirit of one of the Saints that was on this continent, previous to its being discovered

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152. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 284. See note 116 above. The Spaulding theory of Book of Mormon origins is no longer tenable. See generally Lance D. Chase, "Spaulding Manuscript," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1402–3.

153. "The Book of Mormon," *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (January 1833): 58, available on "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon," *BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/704>.

154. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 250–51. See note 116 above.

by Columbus. . . . The old lady [Lucy Mack Smith] said also, that after the book was translated, the plates were to be publicly exhibited—admittance 25 cents.<sup>155</sup>

#### 156. WILLIAM STAFFORD (1833)

The two Josephs and Hiram, promised to show me the plates, after the book of Mormon was translated. But, afterwards, they pretended to have received an express commandment, forbidding them to show the plates. Respecting the manner of receiving and translating the book of Mormon, their statements were always discordant. The elder Joseph would say that he had seen the plates, and that he knew them to be gold; at other times he would say that they looked like gold; and other times he would say he had not seen the plates at all.<sup>156</sup>

#### 157. JESSE TOWNSEND TO PHINES STILES (1833)

Joe visited a visionary fanatic by the name of Martin Harris, and told him he had received some golden plates of ancient records from the Lord, with a “revelation” to call on him for fifty dollars to enable him to go to Pennsylvania and translate the contents of the plates. . . .

. . . Some other men, having a great dislike to labor, joined Joe in his deceptions, among whom was a sort of schoolmaster named Cowdery, who assisted him in writing or transcribing the “Book of Mormon,” as a pretended translation of the golden plates which he affirmed he had been directed by the Spirit of the Lord to dig from the earth. This was all done in the most secret manner. At the same time it was assumed to the uninitiated that it would be “immediate death” for any except the translators to see the plates.<sup>157</sup>

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155. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 253. See note 116 above.

156. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 240. See note 116 above.

157. Jesse Townsend to Phines Stiles, December 24, 1833, printed by the Christian Tract Society as “A Minister’s Opinion of Joseph Smith, Jr.,” copy in Perry Special Collections. Townsend (1766–1838) served as pastor of the Western Presbyterian Church of Palmyra from 1817 to 1820. He was one of fifty-seven Palmyra residents who signed a statement criticizing the Smith family and Martin Harris. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:48–55.

## 158. E. D. HOWE (1834)

[Martin Harris] says he wrote a considerable part of the book, as Smith dictated, and at one time the presence of the Lord was so great, that a screen was hung up between him and the Prophet; at other times the Prophet would sit in a different room, or up stairs, while the Lord was communicating to him the contents of the plates. He does not pretend that he ever saw the wonderful plates but once, although he and Smith were engaged for months in deciphering their contents. . . .

Now, whether the two methods for translating, one by a pair of stone spectacles “set in the rims of a bow,” and the other by one stone, were provided against accident, we cannot determine—perhaps they were limited in their appropriate uses—at all events the plan meets our approbation.

We are informed that Smith used a stone in a hat, for the purpose of translating the plates. The spectacles and plates were found together, but were taken from him and hid up again before he had translated one word, and he has never seen them since—this is Smith’s own story. . . .

Before the publication of the book, Smith found many to believe its contents, from the ghost stories which he related concerning it. Soon after it was issued from the press, a person by the name of Parley P. Pratt *happened* to be passing on the canal through Palmyra, and hearing of the wonders of the gold plates and huge spectacles, called on the prophet, and was soon converted.<sup>158</sup>

## 159. LEVI LEWIS (1834)

Mr. Lewis says that he “knows Smith to be a liar;—that he saw him (Smith) intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon.”<sup>159</sup>

## 160. JOSHUA M’KUNE (1834)

*Joshua M’Kune* states, that he “was acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, during their residence in Harmony, Pa., and knew them to be artful seducers;”—That they informed him that “Smith had found a sword, breast-plate, and a pair of spectacles, at the time he found the gold plates”—that these were to be shewn to all the world as evidence of the truth of what

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158. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 14, 77, 100. Based on reports by Doctor Philastus Hurlbut.

159. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 268. See note 116 above.

was contained in those plates,” and that “he (M’Kune) and others should see them at a specified time.” He also states that “the time for the exhibition of the Plates, &c. has gone by, and he has not seen them.” “Joseph Smith, Jr. told him that (Smith’s) first-born child was to translate the characters, and hieroglyphics, upon the Plates into our language at the age of three years; but this child was not permitted to live to verify the prediction.”<sup>160</sup>

161. CHARLES ANTHON TO E. D. HOWE (1834)

Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a *hoax*. When I asked the person, who brought it, how he obtained the writing, he gave me, as far as I can now recollect, the following account: A “gold book,” consisting of a number of plates of gold, fastened together in the shape of a book by wires of the same metal, had been dug up in the northern part of the state of New York, and along with the book an enormous pair of “*gold spectacles*”! These spectacles were so large, that, if a person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would have to be turned towards *one* of the glasses merely, the spectacles in question being altogether too large for the breadth of the human face. Whoever examined the plates through the spectacles, was enabled not only to *read* them, but fully to *understand* their meaning. All this knowledge, however, was confined at that time to a young man, who had the trunk containing the book and spectacles in his sole possession. This young man was placed behind a curtain, in the garret of a farm house, and, being thus concealed from view, put on the spectacles occasionally, or rather, looked through one of the glasses, decyphered the characters in the book, and, having committed some of them to paper, handed copies from behind the curtain, to those who stood on the outside. Not a word, however, was said about the plates having been decyphered “by the gift of God.” Every thing, in this way, was effected by the large pair of spectacles.<sup>161</sup>

162. NATHANIEL C. LEWIS (1834)

At one time, however, he came to my house, and asked my advice, whether he should proceed to translate the Book of Plates (referred to by Mr. Hale) or not. He said that God had commanded him to translate it, but he was afraid

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160. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 267–68. See note 116 above.

161. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 270–71; italics in original. Here, Howe reprints a letter, dated February 17, 1834, written by Charles Anthon. See also document 168 below and note 30 in the chronology above.

of the people: he remarked, that he was to exhibit the plates to the world, at a certain time, which was then about eighteen months distant. I told him I was not qualified to give advice in such cases. Smith frequently said to me that I should see the plates at the time appointed.<sup>162</sup>

#### 163. JESSE TOWNSEND TO ELISHA CAMP (1834)

The Smiths used Martin [Harris]’s money freely—some other men, who had a great dislike to honest labor, about that time, joined Joe in his acts of deception. In that reinforcement was a ready writer by name [Oliver] Cowdry and a Whitney who declared he had once been in heaven, who assisted Joe in writing the Book of Mormon, as a pretended translation of the Golden Plates which Smith affirmed he had been directed by the Spirit of the Lord to dig from the earth. The whole was done in the most secret manner. At the same time, Smith affirmed that it would be immediate death for any one to see those plates besides himself & the writers of the Book of Mormon.<sup>163</sup>

#### 164. W. R. HINE (1834?)

[Joseph] had a very clear stone about the size and shape of a duck’s egg, and claimed that he could see lost or hidden things through it. He said he saw Captain Kidd sailing on the Susquehanna River during a freshet, and that he buried two pots of gold and silver. He claimed he saw writing cut on the rocks in an unknown language telling where Kidd buried it, and he translated it through his peep-stone. I have had it many times and could see in it whatever I imagined. Jo claimed it was found in digging a well in Palmyra, N.Y. He said he borrowed it. . . .

. . . About the spring of 1828, Jo . . . said he had found some metal plates which would be of great use to the world. He had them in a box in a handkerchief which he carried in one hand. I said, “Let me see them.” Jo Smith said they must first be sent to Philadelphia to be translated. He said the only man in the world who could translate them lived there. After they were translated the world could see them. . . . Soon I learned that Jo claimed to be translating the plates in Badger’s Tavern, in Colesville, three miles from my house. I went there and saw

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162. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 266. See note 116 above.

163. Jesse Townsend to Elisha Camp, August 16, 1834, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:26. Camp, a lawyer in Jefferson County, New York, where the Mormons had missionary success, wrote Townsend, a Presbyterian minister in Palmyra, on August 5, 1834, “requesting information concerning the people called Mormonites.” The letter quoted here is Townsend’s reply. See also note 158.

Jo Smith sit by a table and put a handkerchief to his forehead and peek into his hat and call out a word to Cowdery, who sat at the same table and wrote it down. Several persons sat near the same table and there was no curtain between them. Martin Harris introduced himself to me, and said they were going to bring the world from darkness into light. Martin's wife cooked for them, and one day while they were at dinner she put one hundred and sixteen pages, the first part they had translated, in her dress bosom and went out. . . .

. . . Newel Knight, who lived a few miles from me was brought before Justice N. K. Nobles as a witness for reporting Prophet Jo Smith had cast three devils out of him. . . . Jo was discharged. Noble told me later that it made his heart ache to hear the puppy swear. This occurred during the pretended translation of the plates.<sup>164</sup>

165. ORSON PRATT,  
AS RECORDED BY THE *BROOKVILLE ENQUIRER* (INDIANA)  
(1835)

On last Saturday evening, for the first time, in this place, a gentleman, and minister belonging to this new sect, preached in the court house, to a very respectable audience; and discoursed briefly on the various subjects connected with his creed; explained his faith and gave a brief history of the book of Mormon—united it with the Holy Bible, &c. . . .

He believes the book of Mormon to be a series of revelations, and other matters appertaining to the Ephraimites, Lamanites, &c. whom he believes to have been the original settlers of this continent; and that an ancient Prophet caused the plates from which the book of Mormon was translated to be buried nearly two thousand years ago, in what is now called Ontario county; New York. He is also of the belief that Joseph Smith was cited to the plates by an angel from Heaven, and endowed with the gift to translate the engraving upon them into the known language of the country.<sup>165</sup>

166. *CHRISTIAN JOURNAL* (EXETER, N.H.) (1835)

Smith pretended that he had found some golden or brass plates, like the leaves of a book, hid in a box in the earth, to which he was directed by an

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164. W. R. Hine, Statement, in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (January 1888): 2.

165. Reprinted in *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (February 1835): 77. Elders Pratt and Barnes spoke twice in the courthouse at Brookville, Indiana. See also document 176.

*Angel*, in 1827,—that the writing on them was in the “Reformed Egyptian language,”—that he was *inspired* to interpret the writing, or engraving, by putting a plate in his hat, putting two smooth flat stones, which he found in the box, in the hat, and putting his face therein—that he could not write, but as he translated, one Oliver Cowdery wrote it down. . . .

. . . The probability is that Smith, who had been a book-pedlar, and was frequently about printing establishments, had procured some old copper plates for engravings, which he showed for his golden plates.

It is pretended that the “Book of Mormon,” was translated by Joe Smith from these plates.<sup>166</sup>

### 167. JOHN CORRILL (1839)

Sometime in the fall of 1830, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer and Tiba [Ziba] Peterson, came through the county of Ashtabula, Ohio, where I then resided, on their way westward. They professed to be special messengers of the Living God, sent to preach the Gospel in its purity, as it was anciently preached by the Apostles. They had with them a new revelation, which they said had been translated from certain golden plates that had been deposited in a hill, (anciently called Camorah,) in the township of Manchester, Ontario county, New York. . . .

. . . Through much difficulty, on account of persecution and poverty, he [Joseph Smith] translated it by degrees, with the assistance of Oliver Cowdery and others, who wrote as he dictated. If I remember right, the language in which it was written on the plates, was the reformed Egyptian. And Martin Harris, who contributed much towards the publication of the Book, drew off several of the characters on paper, took them to the learned in New York, to see if they could be translated, but was requested to bring them the plates, which Smith was forbidden to do of the Lord, but was commanded to translate them himself, which he did, by the help of what he calls the Urim and Thummim, two stones set in a bow, and furnished by an Angel for that purpose.

After finishing the translation, the plates and stones of Urim and Thummim were again taken and concealed by the Angel for a wise purpose, and the translation published to the world in the winter of A. D. 1829 and '30.<sup>167</sup>

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166. “Mormonism,” *Exeter (N.H.) Christian Journal*, May 28, 1835.

167. John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons); Including an Account of Their Doctrine and Discipline; with the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church* (St. Louis: By the author, 1839), 7, 12, available on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith*

## 168. CHARLES ANTHON TO T. W. COIT (1841)

On my asking him by whom the copy was made, he gravely stated, that along with the golden book there had been dug up a very large *pair of spectacles!* so large in fact that if a man were to hold them in front of his face, his two eyes would merely look through one of the glasses, and the remaining part of the spectacles would project a considerable distance sideways! These spectacles possessed, it seems a very valuable property, of enabling any one who looked through them, (or rather through one of the lenses,) not only to decypher the characters on the plates, but also to comprehend their exact meaning, and be able to translate them!! My informant assured me that this curious property of the spectacles had been actually tested, and found to be true. A young man, it seems, had been placed in the garret of a farmhouse, with a curtain before him, and having fastened the spectacles to his head, had read several pages in the golden book, and communicated their contents in writing to certain persons stationed on the outside of the curtain. He had also copied off one page of the book in the original character, which he had in like manner handed over to those who were separated from him by the curtain, and this copy was the paper which the countryman had brought with him.<sup>168</sup>

## 169. BRIGHAM YOUNG (1841)

I met with the Twelve at brother Joseph's. He conversed with us in a familiar manner on a variety of subjects, and explained to us the Urim and Thummim which he found with the plates, called in the Book of Mormon the Interpreters. He said that every man who lived on the earth was entitled to a seer stone, and should have one, but they are kept from them in consequence of their wickedness, and most of those who do find one make an evil use of it; he showed us his seer stone.<sup>169</sup>

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*Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-corrill-a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-christ-of-latter-day-saints-1839/5>. John Corrill wrote this work after leaving the Church in 1838 and being elected to the Illinois legislature. Prior to that time he served faithfully and was a counselor to Edward Partridge, first bishop in the Church.

168. Charles Anthon to Reverend T. W. Coit, April 3, 1841, in Clark, *Gleanings By the Way*, 234–35.

169. Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 112a.



## 170. HIRAM PAGE (1848)

To say my mind was so treacherous that I had forgotten what I saw. To say that a man of Joseph's ability, who at that time did not know how to pronounce the word Nephi, could write a book of six hundred pages, as correct as the book of Mormon, without supernatural power. . . . [I]t would be treating the God of heaven with contempt, to deny these testimonies.<sup>170</sup>

## 171. BRIGHAM YOUNG (1855)

I will here relate a few of the circumstances which I personally knew concerning the coming forth of the plates, from a part of which the Book of Mormon was translated. This fact may be new to several, but I had a personal knowledge with regard to many of those circumstances.

I well knew a man who, to get the plates, rode over sixty miles three times the same season they were obtained by Joseph Smith. About the time of their being delivered to Joseph by the angel, the friends of this man sent for him, and informed him that they were going to lose that treasure, though they did not know what it was. . . .

When Joseph obtained the treasure, the priests, the deacons, and religionists of every grade, went hand in hand with the fortune-teller, and with every wicked person, to get it out of his hands, and, to accomplish this, a part of them came out and persecuted him.<sup>171</sup>

## 172. SOLOMON CHAMBERLAIN (1858)

When the boat came to Palmyra I felt as if some genii or good spirit told me to leave the boat. . . . [M]y guide directed me to put up for the night, which I did to a farm-house. In the morning the people of the house asked me if I had heard of the gold Bible [Book of Mormon]. When they said "gold Bible" there was a power like electricity went from the top of my head to the end of my toes. . . . I soon made my way across lots to father Smith's and found Hyrum walking the floor. . . .

They then called the people together which, consisted of five or six men who were out at the door. Father Smith was one of them and some of the

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170. Hiram Page to William McLellan, May 30, 1847, printed in *The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* (Kirtland, Ohio) 1 (January 1848): 63. The letter was written from Ray County, Missouri.

171. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:180–81 (February 18, 1855).

Whitmer's. . . . They then made known to me that they had obtained a gold record, and just finished translating it here. No[w] the Lord revealed to me by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost that this was the work I had been looking for.<sup>172</sup>

173. SAMUEL SMITH,  
AS RECORDED BY PHINEAS YOUNG (1863)

I know the book to be a Revelation from God, translated by the gift and [sic] power of the Holy Ghost, and that my brother Joseph Smith is a Prophet Seer and Revelator.<sup>173</sup>

174. POMEROY TUCKER (1867)

He [Joseph Smith] was "commanded" . . . [to] take out of the earth a metallic book of great antiquity in its origin . . . which was a record, in mystic letters or characters, of the long-lost tribes of Israel . . . and the power to translate which to the nations of the earth was also given to him only, as the chosen servant of God! . . .

. . . It was understood, however, that the custodian of the precious treasure afterward in some way procured a chest for his purpose, which, with its sacred deposit, was kept in a dark garret of his father's house, where the translations were subsequently made, as will be explained. . . .

With the book was also found, or so pretended, a huge pair of spectacles in a perfect state of preservation, or the *Urim* and *Thummim*, as afterward interpreted, whereby the mystic record was to be translated and the wonderful dealings of God revealed to man, by the superhuman power of Joe Smith. This spectacle pretension, however, is believed to have been purely an after-thought, for it was not heard of outside of the Smith family for a considerable period subsequent to the first story. . . .

. . . The *Urim* and *Thummim*, found with the records, were two transparent crystals set in the rims of a bow, in the form of spectacles of enormous

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172. "Life Sketch of Solomon Chamberlain," typescript, 2, MSS SC 1748, Perry Special Collections. See further Larry C. Porter, "Solomon Chamberlain's Missing Pamphlet: Dreams, Visions, and Angelic Ministrants," *BYU Studies* 37, no. 2 (1997-98): 113-40.

173. "Life of Phineas Howe Young," typescript, 3, MSS SC 1073, Perry Special Collections. Samuel Smith (1808-44) was a brother of Joseph Smith.

size. This constituted the seer's instrument whereby the records were to be translated and the mysteries of hidden things revealed, and it was to supersede the further use of the magic stone. . . .

Translations and interpretations 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. . . . 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, and verbally announced by him from behind a blanket-screen drawn across a dark corner of a room at his residence—for at this time the original revelation, limiting to the prophet the right of seeing the sacred plates, had not yet been changed, and the view with the instrument used was even too brilliant for his own spiritualized eyes in the light! This was the story of the first series of translations, which was always persisted in by the few persons connected with the business at this early period of its progress. The single significance of this theory will doubtless be manifest, when the facts are stated in explanation, that Smith could not write in a legible hand, and hence an amanuensis or scribe was necessary. Cowdery had been a schoolmaster, and was the only man in the band who could make a copy for the printer.

. . . Among others, Mr. George Crane, of the adjoining town of Macedon, a Quaker of intelligence, property, and high respectability (now deceased), was called upon by Smith with several foolscap quires of these so-called translations, for his perusal and opinion, and also for his pecuniary aid to get the work through the press. . . .

The work of translation this time [after the loss of the 116 pages] had been done in the recess of a dark artificial cave, which Smith had caused to be dug in the east side of the forest-hill near his residence. . . . [T]hough another version was, that the prophet continued to pursue his former mode of translating behind the curtain at his house, and only went into the cave to pay his spiritual devotions.<sup>174</sup>

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174. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton, 1867), 29–49, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/originriseprogre00tuck#page/n35/mode/2up>.

## 175. STEPHEN S. HARDING TO POMEROY TUCKER (1867)

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.<sup>175</sup>

## 176. ORSON PRATT (1871)

Thus the engravings were shown to three other witnesses. The angel at the same time placed his hands upon the head of David Whitmer and said, "Blessed be the Lord and they that keep his commandments." At the time that the angel was showing the records, they heard a voice out of the heavens saying, that the records had been translated correctly by the gift and power of God, and they were commanded to bear witness of the same to all people to whom the work should be sent.<sup>176</sup>

177. HIRAM PAGE,  
AS RECORDED BY WILLIAM E. MCLELLIN (1871)

One circumstance I'll relate of one of these eight witnesses. While the mob was raging in Jackson Co. Mo. in 1833 some young men ran down Hiram Page <in the woods> one of the eight <witnesses,> and commenced beating and pounding him with whips and clubs. He begged, but there was no mercy. They said he was <a> damned Mormon, and they meant to beat him to death! But finally one then said to him, if you will deny that damned book, we will let you go. Said he, how can I deny what I know to be true? Then they pounded him again. When they thought he was about to breathe his last, they said to him, Now what do you think of your God, when he dont save you? Well said he, I believe in God—Well, said one of the most intelligent among them, I believe the damned fool will stick to it though we kill him. Let us let him go. But his life was nearly run out. He was confined to his bed for a length of time. So much for a man who knows for himself. Knowledge is beyond faith or doubt. It is positive certainty.<sup>177</sup>

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175. Stephen S. Harding to Pomeroy Tucker, June 1, 1867, published in Tucker, *Origin*, 284. Harding had previously served as governor of the Utah Territory.

176. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:144 (March 19, 1871).

177. Schaefer, *William E. McLellin's Lost Manuscript*, 165–66.

## 178. EMILY C. BLACKMAN (1873)

It is a fact . . . that Susquehanna County harbored such a madman as Joe Smith at the period when he was engaged in the compilation, or, rather, the translation, of the Book of Mormon. . . .

. . . [I]t is certain he was here in 1825 and later; and, in 1829, his operations here were finished, and he had left the county. . . .

His [Isaac Hale's] sons were: Jesse, David, Alvah, Isaac Ward, and Reuben. The last named "assisted Joe Smith to fix up some characters such as Smith pretended were engraven on his book of plates." . . .

From Dr. Peck's 'Early Methodism' we obtain the following:—

"Joe Smith married a niece of Nathaniel Lewis. . . . After the story of the Golden Bible, and the miracle-working spectacles had come out, Joe undertook to make a convert of Uncle Nat. The old gentleman . . . proceeded:

"'Joseph, can anybody else translate strange languages by the help of them spectacles?'

"'O, yes!' . . .

"'. . . I've got Clarke's Commentary, and it contains a great many strange languages; now if you will let me try the spectacles, and if, by looking through them, I can translate these strange languages into English, then I'll be one of your disciples.'

"'This was a poser, and Joe had to run.'<sup>178</sup>

## 179. PARLEY P. PRATT (1874)

We visited an old Baptist deacon by the name of Hamlin. After hearing of our appointment for evening, he began to tell of a *book*, a strange book, a VERY STRANGE BOOK! in his possession, which had been just published. This book, he said, purported to have been originally written on plates either of gold or brass, by a branch of the tribes of Israel; and to have been discovered and translated by a young man near Palmyra, in the State of New York, by the aid of visions, or the ministry of angels. I inquired of him how or where the book was to be obtained. He promised me the perusal of it, at his house the next day, if I would call. I felt a strange interest in the book. . . .

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178. Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Haffelfinger, 1873), 577, 104–5, available on *Internet Archive*, [https://archive.org/stream/historyofsusqueh00blac\\_0#page/576/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/historyofsusqueh00blac_0#page/576/mode/2up).

He [Hyrum Smith] also unfolded to me the particulars of the discovery of the Book; its translation; the rise of the Church of Latter-Day Saints, and the commission of his brother Joseph, and others, by revelation and the ministering of angels, by which the apostleship and authority had been again restored to the earth. . . .

This was the [Whitmer] family, several of whose names were attached to the Book of Mormon as witnesses—Mr. Joseph Smith having translated much of the book in Whitmer’s chamber.<sup>179</sup>

180. SIDNEY RIGDON,  
AS RECORDED BY JOHN MURDOCK (1876)

Joe, he said, was a very illiterate man, was unable either to read or write; but when he put on his nose the prophet’s spectacles, and took the gold plates one by one, letter by letter and word by word presented themselves, and with the aid of an amanuensis the Bible that he held in his hand was a literal translation of the writing upon the gold plates.<sup>180</sup>

181. JOHN H. GILBERT,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY THE *POST AND TRIBUNE* (1877)

Upon the title page appears the name of Joseph Smith as “Author and Proprietor.” In all subsequent editions he appears simply as “Translator.” This change was rendered necessary to carry out the theory afterward adopted that Smith dug up these writings and translated them from “reformed Egyptian” by means of a pair of supernatural spectacles. . . .

As he claimed to be the author of the “Book of Mormon” his story was that by the aid of his wonderful stone he found gold plates on which were inscribed the writings in hieroglyphics. He translated them by means of a pair of magic spectacles which the Lord delivered to him at the same time that the golden tablets were turned up. But nobody but Joe himself ever saw the golden tablets or the far-seeing spectacles. He dictated the book, concealed behind a curtain, and it was written down by Cowdery. This course

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179. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 37, 39, 43. The incident described occurred in 1830.

180. [John Murdock], “Sidney Rigdon. A Report of a Lecture He Delivered Forty Years Ago in Meadville [Pennsylvania]—Rigdon’s Account of Joe Smith’s Revelation,” *Pittsburgh Telegraph*, August 24, 1876, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:50. Compare document 188.

seemed to be rendered necessary by the fact that Joe did not know how to write.<sup>181</sup>

182. JOHN H. GILBERT TO JAMES T. COBB (1879)

I cannot say whether the entire work of “translation” was completed at the time the printing was commenced or not, but think it was. . . .

Late in 1827 or early in ’28, was the first I heard Harris speak of Jo’s finding the plates, and with the plates a pair of large spectacles, by looking through which Jo could translate the hieroglyphics on the plates into English.<sup>182</sup>

183. MICHAEL MORSE,  
AS RECORDED BY W. W. BLAIR (1879)

When Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon, he, (Morse), 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.<sup>183</sup>

184. HIEL AND JOSEPH LEWIS (1879)

The statement that the prophet Joseph Smith, jr. made in our hearing, at the commencement of his translating his book, in Harmony, as to the manner of his finding the plates, was as follows: . . . He said that by a dream he was informed that at such a place . . . were some gold plates with curious engravings, which he must get and translate, and write a book. . . . That in

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181. “Joe Smith. Something about the Early Life of the Mormon Prophet,” *Detroit Post and Tribune*, December 3, 1877, 3, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:517, 520. John Gilbert (1802–95) was principal typesetter and proofreader when the Book of Mormon was printed in 1829–30. Compare documents 182, 195, 201, 202.

182. John H. Gilbert to James T. Cobb, February 10, 1879, Theodore A. Schroeder Papers, Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:523–24.

183. W. W. Blair, Letter to the editor, *Saints’ Herald* 26 (June 15, 1879): 191. Michael Morse was married to Tryal Hale, Emma Hale Smith’s sister, and is quoted here by W. W. Blair, a member of the First Presidency of the RLDS Church, in 1879.

the same box with the plates were spectacles; the bows were of gold, and the eyes were stone, and by looking through these spectacles all the characters on the plates were translated into English.<sup>184</sup>

185. HIEL LEWIS (1879)

Smith translated his book of Mormon mostly with this same peep stone and hat—he, sitting in his house, and the plates hid far away. . . .

. . . Smith translated the book of Mormon by means of the same peep stone, and under the same inspiration that directed his enchantments and dog sacrifices; it was all by the same spirit.<sup>185</sup>

186. JOSEPH LEWIS (1879)

[I]t is a fact that he translated nearly all of it [his “golden bible”] with this same stone and hat.<sup>186</sup>

187. SAMUEL BRUSH,  
AS RECORDED BY FREDERIC G. MATHER (1880)

Among the callers was Samuel Brush, now a vigorous man of seventy-five, who carries on a large farm and a lumber-mill three miles south-west of Susquehanna. At the time of the translation he often called Reuben Hale away from his work, and the pair went for a walk. Reuben also explained the phenomenon of the peek-stone on the theory of “deflected light.” Mr. Brush declares that Martin Harris was a believer in “second sight,” and that “Smith was a good and kind neighbor,”—testimony which is also given by Mrs. McKune, Mrs. Squires and Mr. Skinner.<sup>187</sup>

188. SIDNEY RIGDON,  
AS RECORDED BY JOHN M. RIGDON (C. 1880)

Along come Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdrey and one Zibe Paterson with the Book of Mormon. It was a bound volume and it was the first time Sidney

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184. Joseph Lewis and Hiel Lewis, “Mormon History,” *Amboy (Ill.) Journal*, April 30, 1879. Hiel and Joseph Lewis, brothers, were cousins of Emma Hale Smith.

185. Hiel Lewis, “Review of Mormonism,” *Amboy Journal*, June 4, 1879.

186. Joseph Lewis, “Review of Mormonism,” *Amboy Journal*, June 11, 1879.

187. Frederic G. Mather, “Early Days of Mormonism,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* (August 1880): 201.



Rigdon ever saw it or ever heard of the man called Joseph Smith. Parley Pratt presented the Book to my Father Sidney Rigdon in the presence of my mother and my oldest sister who was a young girl of 10 years of age. Parley Pratt . . . said, "Brother Rigdon, here is a book which is a revelation from God. One Joseph Smith, a young boy had an angel appear to him who told him where to go to find the Plates upon which the Book was engraved. They were gold. Joseph Smith went as directed by the angel and found the plates in a hill near Palmera New York and brought them to his home and there by the power of God translated them and it was the ever lasting Gospel given to the children of men."<sup>188</sup>

189. NANCY N. TRACY (1880)

At length [about 1833] it began to be rumoured around about a prophet Called Joseph Smith and that he had found ancient records in the hill Comorah shown to him by an Angel and he had translated the hieroglyphics into the english language.<sup>189</sup>

190. HIRAM JACKWAY,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM H. KELLEY (1881)

Where was Joe when he was translating his book?

"At home; it was translated in the farmhouse."

Mr. Gilbert, across here, said it was done in a cave; now you don't agree? What does Tucker say? (reading Tucker).

"They all differ. Now, Tucker has a statement from Willard Chase in his book, and Chase said Tucker never called on him at all to find out what he knew."<sup>190</sup>

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188. "Lecture Written by John M. Rigdon on the Early History of the Mormon Church," typescript, Perry Special Collections. John Rigdon was Sidney Rigdon's son, born in 1833.

189. Nancy N. Tracy (1814?-1902), Narrative, November 4, 1880, microfilm of holograph, 4, Church History Library; the original document is located at the Bancroft Library, San Marino, Calif. She was present at the August 8, 1844, meeting in Nauvoo when Brigham Young appeared as Joseph Smith.

190. William H. Kelley, "The Hill Cumorah, and the Book of Mormon," *Saints' Herald* 28 (June 1, 1881): 166.

191. EZRA PIERCE,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM H. KELLEY (1881)

What about Joe's learning?

"I know that he was ignorant; and he knew no more about hieroglyphics than that stove," pointing to the stove in the room.<sup>191</sup>

192. ADELINE M. BERNARD TO THOMAS GREGG (1881)

Joe Smith said that as fast as he translated from the golden plates the B. of M., the angel took them from them and nothing was left him but the B. of M.<sup>192</sup>

193. WILLIAM LANG TO THOMAS GREGG (1881)

The plates were never translated and could not be, were never intended to be. What is claimed to be a translation is the "Manuscript Found" worked over by C [Oliver Cowdery].<sup>193</sup>

194. ALICE GREY COWAN TO ELLEN E. DICKINSON (1881)

There was living three years ago, near the town of Gilroy, Santa Clara Co., California, a Mrs. Monroe, who claims that Joe Smith was living in her father's house when he discovered the golden plates on which the "Book of Mormon" was inscribed, and that the translation was made then.<sup>194</sup>

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191. Kelley, "Hill Cumorah," 163.

192. Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914), 57, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/thetrueoriginoft00shoouoft#page/56/mode/2up>. According to Shook, Adeline Bernard was Oliver Cowdery's adopted daughter.

193. Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, 55. Lang was Oliver Cowdery's friend and legal associate in Tiffin, Ohio, in the early 1840s. Although he claims that the Book of Mormon was produced from an alleged Solomon Spaulding manuscript, he admits in the same letter that Oliver Cowdery "would never allow any man to drag him into a conversation on the subject [Mormonism]" (56). Henry Gibson, another prominent Tiffin resident agreed that Oliver Cowdery "never conversed on the subject [Mormonism] with his most intimate friends" (57).

194. Ellen E. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), 263, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/newlightonmormo00dick#page/262/mode/2up>.

195. JOHN H. GILBERT,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY WILLIAM H. KELLEY (1881)

“. . . I am the party that set the type from the original manuscript for the Book of Mormon. They translated it in a cave. . . . [Hyrum Smith] said at the time it was translated from plates by the power of God, and they were very particular about it. We had a great deal of trouble with it. It was not punctuated at all. . . .

. . . If you ever saw a Book of Mormon you will see that they changed it afterwards.”

. . . How is it changed now?

. . . “Here on the title page it says,” (reading) “Joseph Smith, Jr[.], author and proprietor.’ Afterwards, in getting out other editions they left that out, and only claimed that Joseph Smith translated it.”

Well, did they claim anything else than that he was the translator when they brought the manuscript to you?

“Oh, no; they claimed that he was translating it by means of some instruments he got at the same time he did the plates, and that the Lord helped him.”<sup>195</sup>

196. DIEDRICH WILLERS (1882)

[T]o show how easily the Whitmers were duped, it is related, that by some contrivance of Smith and his associates a wooden image or representation was placed in a tree in a field where one of Whitmer’s sons was engaged in ploughing, and that when interrogated as to whether he had not seen an angel, he answered in the affirmative. “Then,” said Smith, “this is the place where the ‘Book of Mormon’ must be completed, since the angel has already appeared eleven times, and it has been revealed to me that at the place of the twelfth appearing of the angel, the book must be completed.” Hence Whitmers’

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195. Kelley, “Hill Cumorah,” 165. In a letter to Thomas Gregg, dated June 19, 1881, Gilbert claimed that Kelley’s “report of the conversation had with me is full of misrepresentations. In the first paragraph, Hyrum said, ‘It was translated from plates by the power of God,’ etc., is utterly false. I never had any conversation with Hyrum in regard to the translation. . . . In regard to Smith claiming to be author, etc., I told him I understood in later editions he only claimed to be translator, etc.; the balance of the story in regard to this authorship, is all his own coining and answering.” Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914), 37–38, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/trueoriginofmorm00shoo#page/36/mode/2up>.

in West Fayette, became the resort of Smith and his fellow-impostors during the progress of this work.<sup>196</sup>

#### 197. JOSIAH QUINCY (1883)

I have quoted enough to show what really good material Smith managed to draw into his net. Were such fish to be caught with Spaulding's tedious romance and a puerile fable of undecipherable gold plates and gigantic spectacles?<sup>197</sup>

#### 198. THURLOW WEED (1884)

About 1829 a stout, round, smooth-faced young man [Joseph Smith], between twenty-five and thirty, with the air and manners of a person without occupation, came into the "Rochester Telegraph" office and said he wanted a book printed, and added that he had been directed in a vision to a place in the woods . . . and that he found a "golden Bible," from which he was directed to copy the book which he wanted published. He then placed what he called a "tablet" in his hat, from which he read a chapter of the "Book of Mormon," a chapter which seemed so senseless that I thought the man either crazed or a very shallow impostor, and therefore declined to become a publisher.<sup>198</sup>

#### 199. LORENZO SAUNDERS (1887)

I was frequently at the house of Joseph Smith from 1827 to 1830. That I saw Oliver Cowdery writing, I suppose the "Book of Mormon" with books and manuscripts laying on the table before him.<sup>199</sup>

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196. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism*, 251.

197. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 395, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/leavesoldjournal00quinrich#page/394/mode/2up>. See further Jed Woodworth, "Josiah Quincy's 1844 Visit with Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 71–87.

198. Harriet A. Weed, ed., *The Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 1:358–59, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/lifethurlow01weedrich#page/358/mode/2up>. Thurlow Weed made a similar statement in 1880. His memory of Joseph Smith—calling him "stout," and "compactly built, about five feet eight inches in height"—is not accurate. See Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism*, 261.

199. Lorenzo Saunders, Statement, *Naked Truths about Mormonism*, 2. A variety of sources agree that Oliver Cowdery taught school in the Palmyra

## 200. RHAMANTHUS M. STOCKER (1887)

It [the “golden Bible”] was written in an unknown language; hence its translation became necessary in the manner in which it was done. . . .

. . . Mrs. Squires says that Mrs. Harris destroyed about one hundred pages of her husband’s manuscript, and that Smith dare not attempt another translation of it for fear that it would not conform with the first translation. . . .

. . . Joseph Fowler McCune . . . boarded in this neighborhood . . . while Smith was engaged in translating the Bible, and was quite often in Smith’s house. Mr. McCune states that Reuben Hale acted as scribe a part of the time. He says Smith’s hat was a very large one, and what is commonly called a “stove-pipe.” The hat was on the table by the window and the stone in the bottom or rather in the top of the hat. Smith would bend over the hat with his face buried in it so that no light could enter it, and thus dictate to the scribe what he should write.<sup>200</sup>

## 201. JOHN H. GILBERT (1892)

In the fall of 1827, he [Martin Harris] told us what wonderful discoveries Jo Smith had made, and of his finding plates in a hill in the town of Manchester, (three miles south of Palmyra,)- also found with the plates a large pair of “spectacles,” by putting which on his nose and looking at the plates, the spectacles turned the hyroglyphics into good English. The question might by [be] asked here whether Jo or the spectacles was the translator?<sup>201</sup>

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area. Lucy Mack Smith reports that he boarded with the Smiths. “Lucy Mack Smith, History 1844–1845,” book 7, p. 12. Therefore, it hardly seems unusual that a schoolteacher would be working at a table with books and manuscripts. In addition, Joseph Smith was in Pennsylvania during this time (1828–29 school year), and he and Oliver Cowdery had not yet met.

200. Rhamanthus M. Stocker, *Centennial History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: R. T. Peck, 1887), 555, 556, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924028854689#page/n829/mode/2up>.

201. John H. Gilbert, “Memorandum made by John H. Gilbert, Esq., Sep 8, 1892 Palmyra, N.Y.,” typescript, 4, Palmyra King’s Daughters’ Free Library, Palmyra, N.Y., available on *Church History Library*, [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE5029933](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5029933).

202. JOHN H. GILBERT,  
AS INTERVIEWED BY *NEW YORK HERALD* (1893)

I tried to learn something about the humbug, but they declared that everything they gave me was a direct translation from the golden plates. As I understood it, those golden plates were taken from the mountain to Smith's house and put in a bag. He was so frightened at first after he had recovered them from the guardianship of the angel that he hid them for a day and then took them to his house. Later the alleged plates were carried to a cave for translation.<sup>202</sup>

203. ALBERT CHANDLER TO WILLIAM A. LINN (1898)

My recollections of the early history of the Mormon Bible are vivid to-day. I knew personally Oliver Cowdery, who translated the Bible, Martin Harris, who mortgaged his farm to procure the printing, and Joseph Smith Jr., but slightly. What I knew of him was from hearsay, principally from Martin Harris, who believed fully in him. Mr. Tucker's "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism" is the fullest account I have ever seen. I doubt if I can add anything to that history.

The whole history is shrouded in the deepest mystery. Joseph Smith Jr., who read through the wonderful spectacles, pretended to give the scribe the exact reading of the plates, even to spelling, in which Smith was woefully deficient. Martin Harris was permitted to be in the room with the scribe, and would try the knowledge of Smith, as he told me, saying that Smith could not spell the word February, when his eyes were off the spectacles through which he pretended to work. This ignorance of Smith was proof positive to him that Smith was dependent on the spectacles for the contents of the Bible. Smith and the plates containing the original of the Mormon Bible were hid from view of the scribe and Martin Harris by a screen.<sup>203</sup>

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202. "Mormon Leaders at Their Mecca," *New York Herald*, June 25, 1893, 12, cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:551.

203. William A. Linn, *The Story of the Mormons* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 48, available on *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/stream/storyofmormonsfr00linn#page/48/mode/2up>. Chandler was eighty-five years old when he wrote this letter; he reports that he was an apprentice in the Sentinel book bindery in 1829.

## 204. BENJAMIN F. JOHNSON (NOT DATED)

In the year 1829, in our village paper [in western New York], was published an account of some young man's professing to have seen an angel, who had shown and delivered to him golden plates, engraved in a strange language and hid up in the earth, from which he had translated a new Bible; and I could hardly refrain from wishing or hoping it might be so.<sup>204</sup>

## 205. NEWEL KNIGHT (NOT DATED)

During this time we were frequently visited by my young friend, Joseph Smith, who would entertain us with accounts of the wonderful things which had happened to him. It was evident to me that great things were about to be accomplished through him—that the Lord was about to use him as an instrument in His hands to bring to pass the great and mighty work of the last days. This chosen instrument told us of God's manifestations to him, of the discovery and receiving of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, of his persecutions for the gospel's sake, and many other items of his eventful life. . . .

Joseph persevered, and the Lord raised up friends who aided him in the great work of translating and printing the record which the unsealed part of the sacred plates contained.<sup>205</sup>

## 206. EBENEZER ROBINSON (NOT DATED)

They were both [two manuscripts of the Book of Mormon] mostly written in Oliver Cowdery's hand writing, as I have seen both. He was scribe for Joseph most of the time he was translating the Book of Mormon.<sup>206</sup>

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204. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1997), 3.

205. "Scraps of Biography—Newel Knight's Journal," in *Classic Experiences and Adventures* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 48–49.

206. Ebenezer Robinson (1816–91), *Autobiography* (1832–43), appears in *The Return* 2 (August 1890): 314, 316. Robinson was a printer and editor for Church publications in Kirtland and Nauvoo.