

Hard Questions in Church History

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Questions to Consider

- Why did the Three Witnesses leave the Church?
- Was nepotism at play in the selection of the Eight Witnesses?
- Why publish the testimonies of only the eleven witnesses and translator?

Publication of the Book of Mormon

Timeline

1827	E.B. Grandin buys the Palmyra-based newspaper the Wayne Sentinel.
1829	
April-June	Translation of the Book of Mormon; Three and Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon
June	D&C 14-18 (we do not know the date for D&C 19, between late June 1829 and early 1830)
June 26	The Wayne Sentinel publishes the title page of the Book of Mormon.
June 30	Translation of the Book of Mormon completed
July	Publishers E.B. Grandin and Thurlow Weed decline to print the Book of Mormon.
August	Elihu F. Marshall of Rochester, New York is interested in publishing the Book of Mormon.
August 17	Martin Harris enters into a security agreement with E. B. Grandin guaranteeing that before the expiration of eighteen months from the August 1829 date, he would pay the requisite \$3,000 to cover the publication costs for 5,000 copies. In case of non-payment of monies, the sale of his acreage (about 150 acres of his 320-acre farm) would cover the cost of printing.
Fall	Typesetter proofs printed; Oliver Cowdery assists in process.
November	Printer's manuscript prepared through Alma 36.
1830	
January	Abner Cole, alias <i>O. Dogberry</i> , illegally prints extracts of Nephi and Alma in <i>The Reflector</i> . A legal arbitration ensues, and Cole agrees to cease and desist.
March 19	The <i>Wayne Sentinel</i> prints, "We are requested to announce that the 'BOOK OF MORMON' will be ready for the sale in the course of next week."
March 26	Copies of the Book of Mormon are for sale at the E.B. Grandin bookstore for \$1.75 (later dropped to \$1.25)
Summer	Book binding of the Book of Mormon completed.
April 7	Martin Harris sells 150¼ acres of his farm for \$3,000
1832	
January 28	Martin receives full payment and pays Grandin Publishing

Finding a Publisher for the Book of Mormon

After Joseph Smith finished translating the Book of Mormon, his efforts turned to finding a publisher. The young local publisher Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra initially turned down the opportunity to be the publisher. Grandin was relatively new to the business. Not wanting to take on such a controversial book to taint his reputation, he initially turned the offer down. Grandin also feared that he might assist a fraudulent religion.

Undaunted, Joseph Smith asked Martin Harris to join him as Martin was a more mature, successful, and respected voice. They journeyed just over twenty miles to Rochester to meet with other publishers. Thurlow Weed turned them down. Elihu F. Marshall expressed interest at being the publisher but only for a very high price. Joseph returned to Palmyra and—with Martin by his side this time—again

approached Grandin. With the news that it would be published anyway, and Martin’s verbal agreement to cover the cost with his farm if needed, Mr. Grandin agreed to publish the Book of Mormon.

Printing the Book of Mormon was an enormous task. Typically, small publishers in Western New York limited themselves to 500 or 600 copies of books or pamphlets. Yet Joseph Smith wanted 5,000 copies of a nearly 600-page manuscript bound in leather. This was a massive print run in that era— especially for a small printing company. Grandin expanded his printing team to eleven men to be able to accomplish the publishing of the Book of Mormon.

Original and Printer’s Manuscript

Joseph Smith received a revelation “commanding him to see that Oliver transcribed the whole work [Book of Mormon manuscript] a second time and never take both transcripts to the office” (L. F. Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 459). Only a few pages of the manuscript were to be taken to the printing office at any given time. Initially, Hyrum Smith fulfilled that role. He hid the first twenty-four pages in his vest as he carried them to the printing office in August 1829.

Although Oliver was a careful copier, on average there were three inadvertent mistakes per page while copying from the original manuscript to the printer’s manuscript (i.e. omitting an “a,” or misspelling a word). Scholar Royal Skousen numerated each of the errors. Many relatively small errors were introduced in the printing process. Most of these transcription errors have been corrected in the recent editions of the Book of Mormon. For example—

1 Nephi 8:31 (see 1 Nephi 8:24, 30)

Original: “... saw other multitudes *pressing* their way towards that great and spacious building”

Printer’s: “...saw other multitudes *feeling* their way towards that great and spacious building”

1 Nephi 12:18

Original: “... and a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the *sword* of the justice of the Eternal God”

Printer’s: “... and a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the *word* of the justice of the Eternal God”

Other uses of the phrase “the sword of his justice” or “the sword of justice” are found in Alma 26:19; Alma 60:29; Hel. 13:5; 3 Ne. 20: 20; 3 Ne. 29:4; Ether 8:23--suggesting it was an ancient Nephite phrase.

Egbert Bratt Grandin (1806-1845)

At age 18, E.B. Grandin was an apprentice at the *Wayne Sentinel* newspaper office. Three years later, in 1827, Grandin became the third editor of the *Wayne Sentinel*. In March 1829, five months before printing the Book of Mormon, Grandin purchased Peter Smith’s new “Improved Printing Press” (invented in 1821). Unbeknown to him, the larger press was indispensable for printing of the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, everything about the process was done manually. His affiliation with the Book of Mormon tainted his business and he never received much business after that. He died at thirty-nine, leaving Harriet Rogers, his wife of seventeen years, and five living children.

1 Nephi 13:29

Original: “. . . the gosples of the Lamb, & exceeding great many do stumble”

Printer’s: “. . . the gospel of the Lamb *an* exceeding great many do stumble”

Alma 30:52

Original: “. . . yea & I *always* knew that there was a God”

Printer’s: “. . . yea & I *also* knew that there was a God”

As forensic and textual scholars examined the “original manuscript,” they found the phonetical spelling was corrected at the time of writing and written on the same line in the original manuscript:

Original: Helaman 1:15 “& they were led by a man whose name was ~~Coriantumner~~ Coriantumr

Original: Alma 33:15 “Zenos alone spake of these things but ~~Zenock~~ Zenoch also spake”

By reviewing these unintentional mistakes, Royal Skousen also found that the 1830 printing of the Book of Mormon used the printer’s manuscript from 1 Nephi through Helaman 12 and the original manuscript from Helaman 13 through Moroni. This finding is consistent with the pencil punctuation marks on the original manuscript after Helaman 12. By using the original, fewer mistakes were passed on this way (see <https://criticaltext.byustudies.byu.edu/original-book-mormon>).

Punctuation

At first, the need for punctuation slowed down the printing process. When typesetter John H. Gilbert received the first section of the printer’s manuscript, there was no punctuation. That may have been the way it was in the original language, too. (The phrase “And it came to pass” was the ancient way of separating sentences.) Gilbert claimed that he punctuated the entire text. He referred to the Book of Mormon as “The Bible” short for “Golden Bible.” Gilbert wrote:

Names of persons and places were generally capitalized, but sentences had no end. . . . I punctuated it to make it read as I supposed the

Author intended, and but very little punctuation was altered in proof-reading. The Bible was printed 16 pages at a time, so that one sheet of paper made two copies of 16 pages each, requiring 2500 sheets of paper for each form of 16 pages. There were 37 forms of 16 pages each, 570 pages in all [the printed volume totaled 588 pages] (See Larry C. Porter, “The Book of Mormon: Historical Setting for Its Translation and Publication,” in Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. ed., *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man* [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU 1993], 49-64).

Gilbert took the printer’s manuscript home to punctuate at night.

Employees of E.B. Grandin

- John H. Gilbert—composer/typesetter
- J.H. Bortles—presswork
- “Whistling Tom” McAuley—presswork
- William Van Camp—composer
- Abner Cole—composer
- Pomeroy Tucker—foreman/proofreader
- J.N.T. Tucker—practical printer
- Daniel Hendrix—proofreader and typesetter
- Luther Howard—ran the bindery
- Albert Chandler—apprentice
- Robinson—apprentice

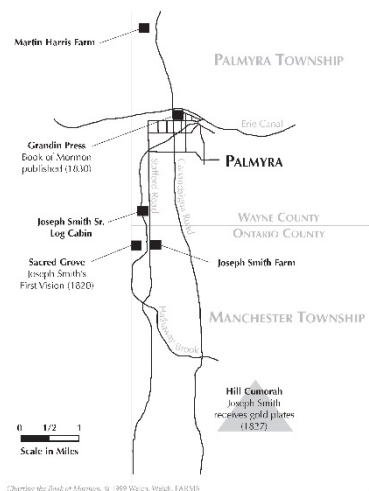
Process of Publishing the Book of Mormon

The printing process was laborious; everything was done by hand. Each letter, punctuation, and space holder were selected out of the type case, set upside down in a “stick,” inked, and printed on a large sixteen-page signature, with two signatures per piece of paper. Then the papers were hung up to dry and proofread, with changes made as needed. It took approximately three days to set the type for each sheet. Due to the “on-site” changes, copies of the 1830 Book of Mormon are not all exactly alike.

John H. Gilbert remembered Oliver Cowdery in the print shop. He would “take up a ‘stick’ and set a part of a page . . . he may have set 10 or 12 pages, all told” (ibid.).

One study estimates that it took Grandin’s employees eleven hours a day, six days a week, excluding Sundays and

Church History Sites near Palmyra, New York, 1820–1831



Map: Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon*

Fraudulent Use of the Text

Abner Cole, a former justice of the peace, worked for Grandin in publishing the Book of Mormon. In September 1829, Cole began publishing a new weekly page in Palmyra called *The Reflector*. When Grandin’s office closed on Sunday, Cole used the press to print his paper. Over time Cole, wrote a satirized version of the Book of Mormon using the pseudonym, O. Dogberry, Esq. On September 2, 1829, he published: “The Gold Bible, by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor, is now in press and will shortly appear. Priestcraft is short lived!” In December 1829, he announced the forthcoming book: “The appellation of ‘Gold Bible’ is only a cant cognomen that has been given it by the unbelievers . . . its revilers and unbelievers—by way of derision” (Russell R. Rich, “The Dogberry Papers and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 [Spring, 1970], 317).

By January 1830, Cole was publishing pirated stories that satirized the Book of Nephi as “The Book of Pukei” and described prophets as having the “spirit of money diggers,” in “fine clothing” including “Indian blankets and moccasins” (Givens, *Hand of Mormon*, 94). The derogatory Dogberry articles were reprinted in the *Telegraph* by editor E.D. Howe in Painesville, Ohio use abbreviation?? (James B. Allen, Glen M. Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints* [SLC: Deseret Book, 1976], 52–53, 80).

Hyrum Smith and Oliver Cowdery tried to stop Abner Cole from printing excerpts of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith Sr. went to Harmony to tell his son Joseph of the copyright breach. Mother Smith wrote that when Joseph arrived in Palmyra, he found Cole in Grandin’s office on Sunday. “Mr. Cole threw [off] his coat and rolling up his sleeves came towards my son in a great rage and roaring out [“do you want to fight sir[?] do you want to fight[?] I will publish just as what I’m a mind to and now if you want to fight just come on” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1844–1845, Page [11], bk. 9, josephsmithpapers.org). Joseph refused to fight Cole. An arbitrator ruled in Joseph’s favor, and Cole agreed to stop violating Joseph’s rights under federal copyright law. Cole still continued to denounce the book.

holidays, for nine months to publish the 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon. The printing process spanned seven months, with the binding trailing on into the summer months. After the Grandin printing office was purchased by The Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, workers found about 300 pieces of printer’s type in the floorboards.

Book of Mormon for Sale (1830)

On March 19, 1830, the Wayne Sentinel printed, “We are requested to announce that the ‘BOOK OF MORMON’ will be ready for sale in the course of next week.” On March

26, 1830, it was available for sale at the Grandin bookstore for \$1.75, the same price as a working man's day labor. The majority of the printed copies were not bound yet. There was no rush. The local boycott was effective. The price of a copy of the Book of Mormon was dropped to \$1.25.

National Reaction to the “Golden Bible” (1830-1831)

In the early 19th century, the spread of printed communication intensified religious discussions and debates that fueled anti-Mormonism. Newspapers and periodicals molded opinions. Most American cities had daily newspapers and even villages in the Burned-over District (upstate NY) had weekly news sheets (Cross, Burned-over District, 102-103). In addition, a host of publications dedicated their print specifically to religious issues. The topics discussed most often dealt with: Revelation, Trinity, and Depravity of man.

Religious periodicals also incessantly attacked deism, atheism, spiritualism, Mormonism, and other “isms.” Usually, religious matters entered the public newspapers only when they carried a political issue (i.e., temperance and anti-slavery). This was not the case in newspaper attacks against the new “species of fanaticism,” the “golden Bible” (ibid., 306, 70). This derogatory name for believers in the Book of Mormon was initially offensive to believers. Its existence questioned the unique infallibility and authoritative nature of the most sacred Protestant value—the Bible.

The Book of Mormon was highly offensive to some Christians because it was not seen as a second witness to the Bible but in competition to the Bible. The first newspaper harassment came in the winter of 1829-1830, as the Book of Mormon was still being printed and the Church was not yet organized. The Palmyra Freeman referred to the prospective book as “the greatest piece of superstition that has come to our knowledge” (Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 58). Within weeks, newspaper articles like that printed in the Palmyra Freeman were picked up and published across New England. On March 26, 1830—within a week after its publication—the headline of the Rochester Daily Advertiser read: “BLASPHEMY” and printed:

The Book of Mormon has been placed in our hands. A viler imposition was never practiced.

It is an evidence of fraud, blasphemy, and credulity shocking both to Christians and moralists.

The *Rochester Daily Advertiser* was not alone in deriding the Book of Mormon. The press response to the Book of Mormon was universally scornful. What did the press find so offensive about the Book of Mormon? The claim that it was a new revelation and scripture (Francis Kirkham, *New Witness of Christ in America*, 39).

Abner Cole published a series of weekly exposés against The Book of Mormon from January 7, 1831 to March 19, 1831. On February 7, 1831, Alexander Campbell published *Delusions*, claiming that the Book of Mormon was not inspired, but rather “Smith, its real author, as ignorant and as impudent a knave as ever wrote a book, betrays the cloven foot in basing his whole book upon a false fact, or pretended fact, which makes God a liar” (Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon*, 11). In 1835, Oliver Cowdery would respond very effectively to Campbell in the *LDS Messenger and Advocate*.

A few months later, in 1831, with Church membership still less than a thousand, a leading newspaper from New York City sent a journalist to the Burned-over District to gather first-hand information

about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the newly formed Church. When the reporter arrived, most of the early converts were living in Kirtland, Ohio. Rather than track them down 250 miles away, the reporter interviewed neighbors and wrote his article. Two weeks later, on August 31, 1831, the article by James Gordon Bennett was printed in the *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer*:

You have heard of MORMONISM—who has not? Paragraph has followed paragraph in the newspapers, recounting the movements, detailing their opinions and surprising distant readers with the traits of a singularly new religious sect which had its origin in this state. Mormonism is the latest device of roguery, ingenuity, ignorance and religious excitement combined and acting on materials prepared by those who ought to know better. It is one of the mental exhalations of Western New York. The individuals who gave birth to these species of fanaticism are very simple personages, and not known until this thrust them into notice. They are the old and young Joe Smith (Leonard J. Arrington, “James Gordon Bennett’s 1831 Report on “The Mormonites,”” *BYU Studies* 10 [Spring 1970]. 357); see Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, 36).

Twelve English Editions of the Book of Mormon

1. 1830 Edition published by E.B. Grandin at Palmyra, New York (5,000 copies).
2. 1837 Edition published by Parley P. Pratt and John Goodson at Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph Smith made hundreds of grammatical changes in the text (e.g., took out 40+ “and it came to pass” phrases) to make it read more “English.” A few emendations were also made in the text. The 1830 Edition and the printer’s manuscript were used as the basis for this edition (3,000 or 5,000 copies).
3. 1840 Edition published by Ebenezer Robinson and Don Carlos Smith at Cincinnati, Ohio and Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith compared the printed text with the original manuscript and discovered a number of errors made in copying the printer’s manuscript from the original. The Prophet Joseph’s changes in the 1840 Edition restored some of the readings of the original manuscript (2,000 copies).
4. 1841 Edition published by J. Tompkins at Liverpool, England for Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Parley P. Pratt. This first European edition was printed with the permission of Joseph Smith. The publication is essentially a reprinting of the 1837 Edition with British spellings, but does not include Joseph’s changes from the 1840 Edition (4,050 copies of 5,000 contracted copies).
5. 1849 Edition (British) with minor edits from the 1841 Edition by Orson Pratt.
6. 1852 Edition (British) edited by Franklin D. Richards with the addition of numbers to the paragraphs.
7. 1879 Edition by Orson Pratt. There were major changes in the format of the text—shortened long chapters from the original text, shortened verses, and added footnotes.
- 8-10. 1905, 1911, 1920 Editions by James E. Talmage. Changes in format includes introductory material, double columns, chapter summaries, and new footnotes. Minor editing in the edition appeared earlier under the editorship of Elder Talmage. The changes were made based on the 1837 and 1841 editions, not Joseph Smith’s 1840 changes.
11. 1981 Edition edited by a committee under the direction of members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The edition added Joseph Smith’s 1840 changes. Otherwise, this edition is a reworking of the 1920 Edition. The text is in double columns. New introductory material, chapter summaries, and footnotes were added. Approximately twenty significant textual errors made in

the printer's manuscript were corrected by reference to the original manuscript. Other corrections were made after comparing the printer's manuscript with the 1840 Edition.

3. 12. 2013 Edition edited by a committee under the direction of members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Sources

John W. Welch, "The Miraculous Translation of the Book of Mormon," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2005), 176-213; Royal Skousen, "Toward a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30, no. 1 (1990), 41-69. Leonard J. Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's 1831 Report on 'The Mormonites,'" *BYU Studies* 10 (Spring 1970). 357. Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997). Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* (Boston, MA: Benjamin Greene, 1832). Francis Kirkham, *New Witness of Christ in America*, 2 vols. (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing, 1951). Whitney R. Cross, *Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Utica, NY: Cornell University, 1982). John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991). Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Lucy's Book: Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Book, 2001). Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002). Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. ed., *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU 1993), including Larry C. Porter's article, "The Book of Mormon: Historical Setting for Its Translation and Publication."