

General Introduction to the Book of Mormon

With respect to the Book of Mormon, regarding its content, composition, translation, publication and historical context, several matters are discussed below.

The Plates of Nephi, the Book of Lehi, and the Book of Mormon

To better understand plate composition and authorship in the earlier sections of the Book of Mormon, pertinent passages are reviewed. Conclusions drawn at the end.

1 Ne. 1:16-17

16 And now, I Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account. 17 But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with my own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life.

The book of First Nephi, which is of the small plates, starts as an abridgment of the record of Lehi. After that record, Nephi will go on to make his own record. Nephi is using the large plates as a source for the small plates.

1 Ne. 6:1

1 And now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do not write it in this work.

The small plates are not only an abridgment of the larger record, but they deliberately omit some material which is found in the large plates. One can assume anything in the small plates by Nephi is in the large plates by Nephi up until the command is issued to start the small plates.

1 Ne. 9:1-4

1 And all these things did my father see and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel, and also a great many more things, which cannot be written upon these plates. 2 And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of my people; for the plates upon which I make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these plates also are called the plates of Nephi. 3 Nevertheless, I have received a

commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people. 4 Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people.

The small plates of Nephi are specifically aimed at the religious dealings of the ministry to Lehi's family. The large plates of Nephi contain a more detailed record and includes secular history as well.

1 Ne. 10:1

1 And now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry; wherefore, to proceed with mine account, I must speak also somewhat of the things of my father, and also my bretheren.

Nephi now stops abridging the record of Lehi and proceeds to make his own record.

1 Ne. 19:1

1 And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them.

While Lehi wrote his own record, which Nephi employed in the small plates, it was Nephi who inscribed Lehi's record onto the large plates.

1 Ne. 19:2

2 And I knew not at that the time when I made them that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates; wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those first plates of which I have spoken; wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates.

Lehi's record, which Nephi inscribed onto the plates, is included in with the comprehensive religious and secular history of Nephi's large plates.

1 Ne. 19:3-4

3 And after I hade made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the

instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord. 4 Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this I have done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord.

Nephi indicates that he had first received command to start a comprehensive history of his people and then significantly later received a command to start a record that focuses on the religious dealings of his people. The second religious record is a distillation of the first comprehensive record. This pattern is instituted and is to be continued by his descendants.

2 Ne. 4:14

14 For I, Nephi, was constrained to speak unto them, according to his word for I had spoken many things unto them, and also my father, before his death; many of which sayings are written upon mine other plates; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates.

Again, the comprehensive large plates contain both religious and secular history to a greater detail than the smaller plates which are religious history only.

2 Ne. 5:28-33

28 And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem. 29 And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far. 30 And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of they people. 31 Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things. 32 And I engraven that which is pleasing unto God. And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates. 33 And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates.

The command to make separate accounts is placed in time and the small religious plates are now being written "real time" rather than a distillation of the small plates. Nephi indicates that at the initial command to make the comprehensive record he did not know he would later be instructed to make this smaller account (it is interesting to note that the text preceding this passage is a selectively typological history where the text following it is mainly prophecy, scripture quotes and exegesis mixed

with scant history).

Nephi may have stopped writing the large plates at this point and passed it on or he may have continued it himself in parallel with the small plates until his death. At some point the large plates are kept and written by separate individuals. Jacob indicates that he is custodian of only the small plates (Jacob 1:1-2, 4:1-2, 7:27), he makes no mention of being custodian of the large plates (Jacob 1:3). Jacob indicates that previous to Nephi's death he anoints a man to be "king" (Jacob 1:9), while Jacob obviously remains the spiritual leader of the people. Jarom positively indicates that the "kings" possess the large plates and are having the record added to (Jarom 1:14), and Abinidom echoes the same (Omni 1:11). The small and large plates are rejoined under a single possessor with king Benjamin (Omni 1:25, WofM 1:10). Nephi probably separated the recording of the two sets of plates just previous to death with the responsibility for the small plates going to Jacob and the responsibility for the large plates going to the king. Who obtained possession of Nephi's portion of the large plates under this division is unclear.

At this point the large plates appear to become a largely secular historical record with the small plates being the religious record. The two accounts are operating fairly independently, whereas the small plates by Nephi was largely a religious derivative of his comprehensive writings on the large plates. The original large plates by Nephi started out as a comprehensive history, in the above passage they appear to experience a shift to secular history. This apparently continues until the plates are again united under a single owner with Benjamin and the comprehensive record keeping starts up again.

WofM 1:3

3 And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgement from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates, which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi.

Mormon does not include Nephi's writings in with the "small" account, instead he indicates that he has

possession of "many of the words of Nephi". As we know Mormon had access to all of Nephi's writings from both sets of plates, this implies the plates Mormon had at his disposal were the small plates and Nephi's autographed comprehensive portion of the large plates which contained Nephi's inscription of Lehi's writings.

WofM 1:5-6

5 Wherefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people. 6 But behold, I shall take these plates, which contain these prophesyings and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my record, for they are choice unto me; and I know they will be choice unto my brethren.

Mormon indicates that he will take this set of plates of Nephi and append it to his abridgment. He does not specifically reference only the small plates as being appended to his abridgment. Instead, he states he will "take from the plates of Nephi", and both sets of the plates that Nephi wrote do contain "prophesyings and revelations".

D&C 10:38-39

38 And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, is engraven upon the plates of Nephi; 39 Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi.

Smith translated a portion of the plates delivered to him called the "Book of Lehi". In that section of the large plates translated by Smith was at least one reference by Nephi to the small plates accounts of the events. This indicates that the record Smith translated was the comprehensive account written by Nephi that covered at least up until 30 years after they left Jerusalem as Nephi could not have referenced the small records previous to that time. The "Book of Lehi" contained the record of Lehi, which was scribed into the large plates by Nephi, as well as the comprehensive history scribed by Nephi which covered the events up until 30 years after they left Jerusalem.

D&C 10:40-42

40 And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular

concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account-- 41 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; 42 and behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words.

Smith is told to translate the small plates and not to attempt retranslating Nephi's large plates again. The publication of the Book of Mormon is to include the small plates account, but not Nephi's large plate account. Smith had already begun translating part of Mormon's abridged account and had retained that text when he let the Book of Lehi out of his possession. This indicates the small plates of Nephi were not sandwiched between the large plates of Nephi and Mormon's account.

Preface to the First Edition Book of Mormon

PREFACE.

====

TO THE READER--

As many false reports have been circulated respecting the following work, and also many unlawful measures taken by evil designing persons to destroy me, and also the work, 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 stolen and kept from me, notwithstanding my utmost exertions to recover it again--and being commanded of the Lord that I should not translate the same over again, for Satan has put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words, that they did read contrary to from that which I translated and caused to be written; and if I should bring forth the same words again, or, in other words, if I should translate the same over again, they would publish that which they had stolen, and Satan would stir up the hearts of this generation, that they might not receive this work: but behold, the Lord said unto me, I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing: therefore thou shalt translate from the plates of Nephi, until ye come to that which ye have translated, which ye have retained; and behold ye shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will shew unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the Devil. Wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, I have, through his grace and mercy, accomplished that which he hath commanded me respecting this thing. I would also inform you that the plates of which hath been spoken, were found in the township of Manchester, Ontario county, New-York.

The material translated by Smith and subsequently lost was a review of the "Book of Lehi" written by Mormon. The plates translated by Smith were not the original Book of Lehi scribed by Nephi.

Conclusions

The "Book of Lehi" was a composite of Lehi's writings inscribed by Nephi as well as original material by Nephi which was the more verbose source material for Nephi's subsequent small plates. Nephi's original writings are probably entitled the "Book of Lehi" because Lehi was alive while the comprehensive large plates were being written and was the acting patriarch. Only after Lehi's death and the subsequent separation from the Lamanites are the small plates started, and Nephi was the patriarch at that point. Mormon reviewed the Book of Lehi and abridged that record into what was included in the unsealed portion of the plates. Thus, the record lost by Harris was not simply the writings of Lehi, but was an abridgement by Mormon of the section of the large plates authored by Nephi, which contained a comprehensive history of his people during Lehi's lifetime.

Mormon appears to have placed his own abridgment of the large plates first and then the small plates of Nephi. The Words of Mormon were possibly placed after Mormon's abridgement and before the small plates of Nephi. Smith would have then moved them into chronological order after the loss of the Book of Lehi. It is possible the small plates of Nephi were grouped by Mormon among the sealed portion of the collection of plates, thus removing them from the chronological order of the other records. And with the loss of Nephi's large plates, Smith was permitted to translate the small plates and publish them in their place. However, there is no documentary evidence which suggests this.

Internal Chronology of the Plates of Nephi

Chronology of the Small Plates of Nephi

Nephi1 - begins the small plates as religious sub-history of the large plates some time between 569-559 BC (cf. 2 Ne. 5:28-34)

15-25 years

Jacob - obtains plates 544 BC from Nephi1 (cf. Jacob 1:1), gives plates to son Enos (cf. Jacob 7:27), no date given

$(544 \text{ BC} - 420 \text{ BC}) = 124, 124/2 = 62 \text{ years } (?)$

Enos - dies 420 BC and gives plates to son Jarom (cf. Enos 1:25-26)

62 years (?) see above

Jarom - obtains plates 420 BC and passes them to son Omni in 361 BC (cf. Jarom 1:13-15)

59 years

Omni - obtains plates 361 BC and passes them to son Amaron in 317 BC (cf. Omni 1:3)

44 years

Amaron - obtains plates 317 BC and passes them to brother Chemish in 279 BC (cf. Omni 1:5-8)

38 years

Chemish - obtains plates 279 BC and passes them to son Abinadom, but no date given, next explicit date is at the retirement of king Benjamin at 124 BC

$(279 \text{ BC} - 124 \text{ BC}) = 155 \text{ years}, 155 / 3 = 52 \text{ years } (?)$

Abinadom - obtains plates and passes them to son Amaleki, but no date given

52 years (?) see above

Amaleki - obtains plates, and turns them over to king Benjamin as he has no direct relations, no date is given

52 years (?) see above

Benjamin - receives plates, places them together with secular plates and the small plates stop being recorded as a separate religious history, he gives up throne 124 BC (cf. Mosiah 6:4) and dies 121 BC (cf. Mosiah 6:5)

Chronology of the Large Plates of Nephi

Benjamin - has both large and small plates, see above

52 years (?) see above

Mosiah - inherits plates from father (cf. Mos. 1:16) about 124 BC

32 years

Alma2 - is given plates by king Mosiah (cf. Mos. 28:20) about 92 BC

19 years

Helaman2 - receives plates from father (cf. Alma 37:1-2) about 73 BC

23 years

Shiblon - receives plates from brother (cf. Alma 63:1) in 56 BC

3 years

Helaman3 - receives plates from uncle (cf. Alma 63:11) in 53 BC, dies in 39 BC (cf. Hela. 3:37)

14 years

Nephi2 - reader never explicitly informed when he gets the plates or even that he has them until they go to his son

Nephi3, we would assume he obtained them from his father Helaman3 upon his death in 39 BC (cf. Hela 3:37)

39 years

Nephi3 - obtains plates 1 AD from father (cf. 3 Ne. 1:2)

34 years

Nephi4 - obtains plates 34 AD from father, assuming 4 Ne. 1:1 division implies change in possession

76 years

Amos - obtains plates 110 AD from father (cf. 4 Ne. 1:19)

84 years

Amos - obtains plates 194 AD from father (cf. 4 Ne. 1:22)

112 years

Ammaron - obtains plates 306 AD from brother (cf. 4 Ne. 1:47)

16 years

Mormon - "obtains" plates 322 AD at age 10 from Ammaron, who's family relation is not identified (cf. Morm. 1:2)

63-78 years

Moroni - obtains plates from father at some point between 385 AD (cf. Mormon 6:5) and 400 AD (cf. Mormon 8:6)

21-36 years

Buried in hill Cumorah 421 AD (cf. Moroni 10:1)

Historical Background to the Internal Setting of the Book of Mormon Narrative

As historical background to the beginning of the Book of Mormon, below is an excerpt from the writings of Josephus. The events detailed in the history portray a sharp division between the religious leaders of the time, with the "false prophets" being very active in political matters and colluding with the present political leaders, whom Josephus characterizes as wicked. Jeremiah takes considerable punishment at their hands, and they act deceitfully with Zedekiah in an attempt to have Jeremiah disposed of. Thus, we more clearly see the historical context of 1 Ne. 1:18-2:2.

Now Zedekiah was twenty and one year's old when he took the government; and had the same mother with his brother Jehoiakim, but was a despiser of justice and of his duty, for truly those of the same age with him were wicked about him, and the whole multitude did what unjust and insolent things they pleased; for which reason the prophet Jeremiah came often to him, and protested to him, and insisted, that he must leave off his impieties and transgressions, and take care of what was right, and neither give ear to the rulers, (among whom were wicked men,) nor give credit to their false prophets, who deluded them, as if the king of Babylon would make no more war against them, and as if the Egyptians would make war against him, and conquer him, since what they said was not true, and the events would not prove such [as they expected]. Now as to Zedekiah himself, while he heard the prophet speak, he believed him, and agreed to every thing as true, and supposed it was for his advantage; but then his friends perverted him, and dissuaded him from what the prophet advised, and obliged him to do what they pleased. Ezekiel also foretold in Babylon what calamities were coming upon the people, which when he heard, he sent accounts of them unto Jerusalem. But Zedekiah did not believe their prophecies, for the reason following: It happened that the two prophets agreed with one another in what they said as in all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive; but Ezekiel disagreed with him, and said that Zedekiah should not see Babylon, while Jeremiah said to him, that the king of Babylon should carry him away thither in bonds. And

because they did not both say the same thing as to this circumstance, he disbelieved what they both appeared to agree in, and condemned them as not speaking truth therein, although all the things foretold did come to pass according to their prophecies, as we shall shew upon a fitter opportunity.

Now when Zedekiah had preserved the league of mutual assistance he had made with the Babylonians for eight years, he brake it, and revolted to the Egyptians, in hopes, by their assistance, of overcoming the Babylonians. When the king of Babylon knew this, he made war against him: he laid his country waste, and took his fortified towns, and came to the city Jerusalem itself to besiege it. But when the king of Egypt heard what circumstances Zedekiah his ally was in, he took a great army with him, and came into Judea, as if he would raise the siege; upon which the king of Babylon departed from Jerusalem, and met the Egyptians, and joined battle with them, and beat them; and when he had put them to flight, he pursued them, and drove them out of all Syria. Now as soon as the king of Babylon was departed from Jerusalem, the false prophets deceived Zedekiah, and said that the king of Babylon would not any more make war against him or his people, nor remove them out of their own country into Babylon; and that those then in captivity would return, with all those vessels of the temple of which the king of Babylon had despoiled that temple. But Jeremiah came among them, and prophesied what contradicted those predictions, and what proved to be true, that they did ill, and deluded the king; that the Egyptians would be of no advantage to them, but that the king of Babylon would renew the war against Jerusalem, and besiege it again, and would destroy the people by famine, and carry away those that remained into captivity, and would take away what they had as spoils, and would carry off those riches that were in the temple; nay, that, besides this, he would burn it, and utterly overthrow the city, and that they should serve him and his posterity seventy years; that then the Persians and the Medes should put an end to their servitude, and overthrow the Babylonians; "and that we shall be dismissed, and return to this land, and rebuild the temple, and restore Jerusalem." When Jeremiah said this, the greater part believed him; but the rulers, and those that were wicked, despised him, as one disordered in his senses. Now he had resolved to go elsewhere, to his own

country, which was called Anathoth, and was twenty furlongs distant from Jerusalem; (12) and as he was going, one of the rulers met him, and seized upon him, and accused him falsely, as though he were going as a deserter to the Babylonians; but Jeremiah said that he accused him falsely, and added, that he was only going to his own country; but the other would not believe him, but seized upon him, and led him away to the rulers, and laid an accusation against him, under whom he endured all sorts of torments and tortures, and was reserved to be punished; and this was the condition he was in for some time, while he suffered what I have already described unjustly.

Now in the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah, on the tenth day of the tenth month, the king of Babylon made a second expedition against Jerusalem, and lay before it eighteen months, and besieged it with the utmost application. There came upon them also two of the greatest calamities at the same time that Jerusalem was besieged, a famine and a pestilential distemper, and made great havoc of them. And though the prophet Jeremiah was in prison, he did not rest, but cried out, and proclaimed aloud, and exhorted the multitude to open their gates, and admit the king of Babylon, for that if they did so, they should be preserved, and their whole families; but if they did not so, they should be destroyed; and he foretold, that if any one staid in the city, he should certainly perish by one of these ways, either be consumed by the famine, or slain by the enemy's sword; but that if he would flee to the enemy, he should escape death. Yet did not these rulers who heard believe him, even when they were in the midst of their sore calamities; but they came to the king, and in their anger informed him what Jeremiah had said, and accused him, and complained of the prophet as of a madman, and one that disheartened their minds, and by the denunciation of miseries weakened the alacrity of the multitude, who were otherwise ready to expose themselves to dangers for him, and for their country, while he, in a way of threatening, warned them to flee to the enemy, and told them that the city should certainly be taken, and be utterly destroyed.

But for the king himself, he was not at all irritated against Jeremiah, such was his gentle and righteous disposition; yet, that he might not be engaged in a quarrel with those rulers at such a time, by opposing what they intended, he let them do with the prophet whatsoever they

would; whereupon, when the king had granted them such a permission, they presently came into the prison, and took him, and let him down with a cord into a pit full of mire, that he might be suffocated, and die of himself. So he stood up to the neck in the mire which was all about him, and so continued; but there was one of the king's servants, who was in esteem with him, an Ethiopian by descent, who told the king what a state the prophet was in, and said that his friends and his rulers had done evil in putting the prophet into the mire, and by that means contriving against him that he should suffer a death more bitter than that by his bonds only. When the king heard this, he repented of his having delivered up the prophet to the rulers, and bid the Ethiopian take thirty men of the king's guards, and cords with them, and whatsoever else they understood to be necessary for the prophet's preservation, and to draw him up immediately. So the Ethiopian took the men he was ordered to take, and drew up the prophet out of the mire, and left him at liberty [in the prison].

But when the king had sent to call him privately, and inquired what he could say to him from God, which might be suitable to his present circumstances, and desired him to inform him of it, Jeremiah replied, that he had somewhat to say; but he said withal, he should not be believed, nor, if he admonished them, should be hearkened to; "for," said he, "thy friends have determined to destroy me, as though I had been guilty of some wickedness; and where are now those men who deceived us, and said that the king of Babylon would not come and fight against us any more? but I am afraid now to speak the truth, lest thou shouldst condemn me to die." And when the king had assured him upon oath, that he would neither himself put him to death, nor deliver him up to the rulers, he became bold upon that assurance that was given him, and gave him this advice: That he should deliver the city up to the Babylonians; and he said that it was God who prophesied this by him, that [he must do so] if he would be preserved, and escape out of the danger he was in, and that then neither should the city fall to the ground, nor should the temple be burned; but that [if he disobeyed] he would be the cause of these miseries coming upon the citizens, and of the calamity that would befall his whole house. When the king heard this, he said that he would willingly do what he persuaded him to, and what he declared would be to his advantage, but that he was afraid of those of his own

country that had fallen away to the Babylonians, lest he should be accused by them to the king of Babylon, and be punished. But the prophet encouraged him, and said he had no cause to fear such punishment, for that he should not have the experience of any misfortune, if he would deliver all up to the Babylonians, neither himself, nor his children, nor his wives, and that the temple should then continue unhurt. So when Jeremiah had said this, the king let him go, and charged him to betray what they had resolved on to none of the citizens, nor to tell any of these matters to any of the rulers, if they should have learned that he had been sent for, and should inquire of him what it was that he was sent for, and what he had said to him; but to pretend to them that he besought him that he might not be kept in bonds and in prison. And indeed he said so to them; for they came to the, prophet, and asked him what advice it was that he came to give the king relating to them. And thus I have finished what concerns this matter. (Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 10, Chapter 7, sections 2-6)

Title Page of the Book of Mormon

Regarding the title page of the Book of Mormon, Smith stated:

"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; the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that, said title page is not by any means a modern composition either of mine or of any other man's who has lived or does live in this generation." (Joseph Smith Jr., Times and Seasons 3:943, also in HofC 1:71)

It is generally assumed the author is Moroni given the reference to the account of the Jaredites, which was abridged by him (cf. Ether 1:1). However, the material preceding that may well have been written by Mormon, which might be suggested by the statement "an account written by the hand of Mormon". If this is the case, the paragraph on the Jaredites would have been appended later by Moroni. But, it is more likely, given the lack of evidence, that Moroni identified his father as the principle author-abridger of the record when composing the final comments.

Smith used this same statement in his copyright application for the Book of Mormon, as it is included on the original form.

THE
BOOK OF MORMON
AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY
THE HAND OF MORMON
UPON PLATES TAKEN
FROM THE PLATES OF
NEPHI

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The

interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven—Which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUN.

This statement, presumably by Moroni, is the definition of the covenant theology driving the entirety of the Book of Mormon text.

Moroni identifies the former and ultimate subjects as natural Israel, but the intended initial target as Gentiles. All of it is guided by the hand of the Lord, as required by the covenant with Abraham.

Moroni then references the lineage of Jared, which has been annihilated, showing the great mercy the Lord has had on natural Israel, as they have not been annihilated. They have been protected by Abraham's covenant, which the Lord has fulfilled. Which Lord came in flesh into the world for Israel, but also Gentiles as well, who may participate via adoption, if they do not reject the things of God, and accept Christ.

Moroni effectively condenses the covenant theology of the entire Book of Mormon into a couple of paragraphs.

The majority of Christendom has largely forgotten about or dismissed the covenant with Abraham as something that's been fulfilled, and therefore no longer of great relevance. Their view is since the Lord has come into mortality and completed His part of the covenant, then it is done and now available to all nations, regardless of paternal origin, so the covenant isn't all that important anymore. The Book of Mormon makes it clear the Lord's interest in the covenant with Abraham persists into contemporary times, as He actively seeks to preserve the lineage of Lehi, as a part of the lineage of Abraham, but also with their own specific covenants.

The contrasting fate of the Jaredites and Lehites shows the importance of the covenant with Abraham, hence Moroni's inclusion of them in the context of the fathers, the covenants

and not being cast off. Without the protection of the Abrahamic covenant the Lehites, any all of natural Israel, would have ended up like the Jaredites. As will the Gentiles, if they do not accept Jesus as the Lord, and His work.

Testimony of Three Witnesses and of Eight Witnesses

THE TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

OLIVER COWDERY
DAVID WHITMER
MARTIN HARRIS

THE TESTIMONY OF EIGHT WITNESSES

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

CHRISTIAN WHITMER
JACOB WHITMER
PETER WHITMER, JUN.
JOHN WHITMER
HIRAM PAGE
JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.
HYRUM SMITH
SAMUEL H. SMITH

Comparing the two testimonies, the first is substantially different from the second, owing to who delivered the plates for inspection. In the first case, a heavenly angel delivered them for inspection, and in the second case, Smith himself delivered them for inspection, absent a heavenly messenger. The text of D&C 17 suggests the three witnesses also saw other related artifacts as well.

Smith stated:

Not many days after the above commandment was given, we four, viz., Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself, agreed to retire into the woods, and try to obtain, by fervent and humble prayer, the fulfillment of the promises given in the above revelation—that they should have a view of the plates. We accordingly made choice of a piece of woods convenient to Mr. Whitmer's house, to which we retired, and having knelt down, we began to pray in much faith to Almighty God to bestow upon us a realization of these promises.

According to previous arrangement, I commenced vocal prayer to our Heavenly Father, and was followed by each of the others in succession. We did not at the first trial, however, obtain any answer or manifestation of divine favor in our behalf. We again observed the same order of prayer, each calling on and praying fervently to God in rotation, but with the same result as before.

Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, 'David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments;' 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.'

I now left David and Oliver, and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance, fervently engaged in prayer. He soon told me, however, that he had not yet prevailed with the Lord, and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer, that he also might realize the same blessings which we had just received. We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desires, for before we had yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view, at least it was again opened to me, and I once more beheld and heard the same things; whilst at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, "'Tis enough; 'tis enough; mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld;" and jumping up, he shouted, 'Hosanna,' blessing God, and otherwise rejoiced exceedingly.

Having thus, through the mercy of God, obtained these glorious manifestations, it now remained for these three individuals to fulfill the commandment which they had received, viz., to bear record of these things; in order to accomplish which, they drew up and subscribed⁵ the following document:" (Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, Volume 1, pages 52-56)

Cowdery stated:

It was a clear, open beautiful day, far from any inhabitants, in a remote field, at the time we saw the record, of which it has been spoken, brought and laid before us, by an angel, arrayed in glorious light, ascend out of the midst of heaven. (statement of Oliver Cowdery to Cornelius C. Blatchly, November 9, 1829, originally published in Gospel Luminary, Vol. II, No. 49, Thursday, December 10, 1829, page 194, New York City, modern publication in Larry E. Morris, Documentary History of the Book of Mormon, page 375)

Whitmer stated:

We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon but also the brass plates, the plates of the Book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret

combinations of the people of the world down to the time of their being engraved, and many other plates ... there appeared as it were, a table with many records or plates upon it, besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the Sword of Laban, the Directors i.e., the ball which Lehi had-and the Interpreters [Urim and Thummim]. I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God." (Sydney B. Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium, pages 55-56, Orson Pratt interview of David Whitmer occurring 1878)

Martin Harris stated:

"Gentlemen," holding out his hand, "do you see that hand? Are you sure you see it? Or are your eyes playing you a trick or something? No. Well, as sure as you see my hand so sure did I see the Angel and the plates." The following year Harris affirmed that "No man heard me in any way deny the truth of the Book of Mormon [or] the administration of the angel that showed me the plates." (Letter of Martin Harris Sr. to Hanna B. Emerson, January 1871, Smithfield, Utah Territory, documented in *Saints' Herald*, Vol. 22, page 630, October 15, 1875, also modernly published in Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, page 338)

"Do I believe it! Do you see the sun shining! Just as surely as the sun is shining on us and gives us light, and the [moon] and stars give us light by night, just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, chosen of God to open the last dispensation of the fulness of times; 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 and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I might as well doubt my own existence as to doubt the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon or the divine calling of Joseph Smith." (William Harrison Homer, "The Passing of Martin Harris," *Improvement Era*, Vol. 29, No. 5, page 472, March 1926)

Lucy Mack Smith stated:

When they returned to the house it was between three and four o'clock p.m. Mrs. Whitmer, Mr. Smith and myself, were sitting in a bedroom at the time. On coming in, Joseph threw himself down beside me, and exclaimed, 'Father, mother, you do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself. They have seen an angel, who has testified to them, and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear, and it rejoices my soul, that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world.' Upon this, Martin Harris came in: he seemed almost overcome with joy, and testified boldly to what he had both seen and heard. And so did David and Oliver, adding that no tongue could express the joy of their hearts, and the greatness of the things which they had both seen and heard." (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by his Mother, page 153)

Documentary Sources of Statements Regarding the Translation of the Book of Mormon

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Negative

It was said that the leaves of the Bible were plates, of gold about eight inches long, six 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.

[\(Jonathan A. Hadley, Golden Bible, The Palmyra Freeman, August 11, 1829\)](#)

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Negative

A fellow by the name of Joseph Smith, who resides in the upper part of Susquehannah county, has been, for the last two years employed in dictating as he says, by *inspiration*, a new bible. He pretended that he had been entrusted by God with a golden bible which had been always hidden from the world. Smith would put his face into a hat in which he had a *white stone*, and pretend to read from it, while his coadjutor transcribed. The book purports to give an account of the "Ten Tribes" and strange as it may seem, there are some who have full faith in his Divine commission—The book it seems is now published. We extract the following from the Rochester Republican.

BLASPHEMY.—"Book of Mormon" alias *The Golden Bible*.— 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 to the Christian and moralist. The "author and proprietor is one Joseph Smith, Jr." a fellow who, by some hocus pocus, acquired such an influence over a wealthy farmer of Wayne county, that the latter mortgaged his farm for \$3,000 which he paid for printing and binding, 5000 copied of this blasphemous work. The volume consists of about 600 pages, and is divided into the books of Nephi, of Jacob, of Mosiah, of Alma, of Mormon, of Ether, and of Helaman. "Copyright secured." ([William Sasman, Wayne Enquirer, Vol. 1, No. 18, May 10, 1830](#) [this article is reproduced in part of in full in several other newspapers, some with incorrect source attribution, e.g., [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)])

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Neutral

It was printed at Palmyra, contains near six hundred pages, and claims to be divine inspiration, or written by men who had frequent interviews with God & angels. It is stated to have been written in the Egyptian language, on plates of gold, and to have been found in the town of Manchester, and county of Ontario, in a box of stones well cemented together, and buried in the earth, where it must have lain, according to things said in the book ever since A.D. 420. Joseph Smith Jr. found it, and he translated it, not from any knowledge of the language on the plates, but by means of two stones or glasses found with it in the box, which give light, and exhibit objects, when looked into in the dark. ([Clericus, Brattleboro Messenger, Vol. IX, No. 40, October 30, 1830](#))

Source: Newspaper, secondhand

Disposition: Negative

The account which they [Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris] give is substantially as follows: -- at a recent period an angel appeared to a poor, ignorant man residing in or near Palmyra, in Ontario County, in the state of New York, directed him to open the earth at a place designated, where he would find the new revelation engraved on plates of metal. In obedience to the celestial messenger, Smith repaired to the spot, and on opening the ground discovered an oblong stone box, tightly closed with cement. He opened the sacred depository and found enclosed a bundle of plates resembling gold, carefully united at one edge with three silver wires, so that they appeared [sic - opened?] like a book. The plates were about 7 inches long and 6 broad, and the whole pile was about 6 inches deep, each plate about the thickness of tin. -- They were engraved in a character unintelligible to the learned men of the United States, to many of whom it is said to have been presented. The angel afterwards appeared to the three individuals, and showed them the plates. To Smith it was given to transcribe the character[s], which he was enabled to do by looking through two semi-transparent stones, but as he was ignorant of writing, Cowdery and others wrote as Smith interpreted. They say that part of the plates escaped from them in a supernatural manner and are to be again revealed when the events of time shall require them. ([The Geauga Gazette, November 16, 1830](#))

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Neutral

The letter is dated Oct. 18th, 1830, and the extract is as

follows: "You have probably heard of the Gold Bible taken from the earth by Joseph Smith, the money-digger. This he has translated from the Egyptian reformed language to English, by a pair of stone spectacles (provided by an angel) and a dark hat before his eyes...." ([Clericus, quoting an unattributed letter, Brattleboro Messenger, Vol. IX, No. 40., November 20, 1830](#))

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Negative

it is a translation made through stone spectacles, in a dark room, and in the hat of the prophet Smith from the *reformed Egyptian!!!* ([Alexander Campbell, The Millennial Harbinger, No. 2, Vol. 2, page 95, February 17, 1831](#))

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Negative

The principal personage in this farce, is a certain Jo. Smith, an ignorant and nearly unlettered young man, living at or near the village of Palmyra; the second, an itinerant pamphlet pedlar, and occasionally a journeyman printer, named Oliver Cowdry; the third, Martin Harris, a respectable farmer, at Palmyra. Other less important actors, have been brought in, as the exigencies of the three first named required. About two years since, Smith pretended to have been directed, in a dream or vision, to a certain spot located between the village of Palmyra and Manchester. A slight excavation of the earth, enabled him to arrive at this new revelation, written in mysterious characters, upon gold plates. A pair of spectacles, of strange and peculiar construction, were found with the plates, to aid the optics of Jo. and his associates. Soon after, another very fortunate circumstance occurred. This was the introduction of no less a personage than Oliver Cowdry, to whom, and whom only, was given the ability -- with the aid of the spectacles -- to translate the mysterious characters -- All this arranged, but one thing was wanting to promulgate the new revelation -- money. Martin Harris was possessed of a valuable farm, acquired by industry and economy; in his religious sentiments, he was a credulous zealot. His credulity and his money, were too conspicuous to be overlooked by the modern apostles. In due time, a divine command came to Harris, through Jo, to devote his property, and all that was his, to the project. Harris' farm was mortgaged, and the printing of the Bible executed. ([Orasmus Turner, Lockport Balance, May 31, 1831](#))

Source: Newspaper, secondhand

Disposition: Negative

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 [likely William E. McLellen] 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! ([J. G. Edwards, Illinois Patriot, Vol. 1, No. 8, September 16, 1831](#))

Source: Newspaper, secondhand

Disposition: Negative

It passes for a current fact in the Mormonite church, that there are immense treasures in the earth, especially in those places in the State of N. Y. from whence many of the Mormonites emigrated last spring: and when they become sufficiently purified, these treasures are to be poured into the lap of their church; and then, to use their own language, they are to be the richest people in the world. These 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. -- Several of those persons, together with Smith, who were formerly unsuccessfully engaged in digging and searching for these treasures, now reside in this county, and from themselves I received this information.

([Ezra Booth, The Ohio Star, Vol. 2, No. 43, October 27, 1831](#))

Source: Newspaper, firsthand

Disposition: Negative

Questions proposed to the Mormonite Preachers and their answers obtained before the whole assembly at Julien Hall, Sunday Evening, August 5, 1832.

[...]

Q. -- In what manner was the interpretation, or translation made known, and by whom was it written?

A. -- It was made known by the spirit of the Lord through the medium of the Urim and Thummim; and was written partly by Oliver Cowdery, and partly by Martin Harris.

Q. -- What do you mean by Urim and Thummim?

A. -- The same as were used by the prophets of old, which were

two crystal stones, placed in bows, something in the form of spectacles, which were found with the plates.

[the "Mormonite Preachers" were [Samuel H. Smith](#) (see page 20 of linked pdf) and [Orson Hyde](#) (see page 14 of the linked pdf)]
([Boston Investigator, Vol. 2, No. 20, August 10, 1832](#))

Source: Newspaper reproduction of minutes of witness testimony of court case against Smith, thirdhand

Disposition: Negative

about two years since, witness [Josiah Stowell] was at Palmyra, and saw prisoner; that prisoner told witness, that the Lord had told prisoner that a golden Bible was in a certain hill; that Smith, the prisoner, went in the night, and brought the Bible, (as Smith said;) witness saw a corner of it; it resembled a stone of a greenish caste; should judge it to have been about one foot square and six inches thick; he would not let it be seen by any one; the Lord had commanded him not; it was unknown to Smith, that witness saw a corner of the Bible, so called by Smith; told the witness the leaves were of gold; there were written characters on the leaves; prisoner was commanded to translate the same by the Lord; and from the Bible got from the hill, as aforesaid, the prisoner said he translated the book of Mormon; prisoner put a certain stone into his hat, put his face into the crown, then drew the brim of the hat around his head to prevent light -- he could then see, as prisoner said, and translate the same, the Bible, got from the hill in Palmyra, at the same time under a lock and in a chest; and the prisoner, when looking for money, salt springs, hid treasures, &c., looked in the same manner; did not know that prisoner could find money lost, &c.; and that prisoner told witness after he was arrested in Bainbridge, he would not look for money, &c. any more; told witness he could see into the earth forty or fifty feet, &c.
([New England Christian Herald, Vol. 4, No. 6, November 7, 1832](#), see [here](#) for background on court case)

Source: Newspaper, unattributed

Disposition: Negative

The plates were said to have been discovered in 1827, and to have been written in "Reformed Egyptian" language, which Smith translated into English, by reading in a dark place, through a transparent stone! ([American Traveler, Vol. 12, No. 19, Friday, August 26, 1836](#))

The Pilkington Papers

Late in life, Martin Harris moved to Utah and died there. His caregiver was William Pilkington, who [documented](#) Harris' final testimony, which follows:

Miscellaneous papers, 1934-1936.

Transcription of folder two with statements by Pilkington telling about his association with Martin Harris and Harris's testimony.

Of the 22 pages, the following were back sides and were blank: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20.

Unless otherwise noted, all transcriptions are of handwritten pages.

Page 1 of 22

Affidavit Of Testi[mony – word cut off due to ripped paper]

State of Utah ss
County of Cache

On the 3rd day of April 1934 Before me Joseph W. Peterson a Notary Public in and for the State of Utah, County of Cache, personally appeared William Pilkington, of Smithfield, Utah. Known to me, who being first duly sworn on his Oath deposed and said as follows, That the attached Eight pages of Manuscript written by William Pilkington and containing an account of the Dying Testimony of Martin Harris, One of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, which Testimony was given by said Martin Harris to the writer on the 9th day of July 1875, at Clarkston, Cache County, Utah, is a true and correct account of said Testimony and circumstances in relation thereto. In Witness Thereof he has hereunto subscribed his name this 3rd day of April 1934.

Signed: William Pilkington

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 3rd day of April 1934:

Signed: Joseph W. Peterson, Notary Public,
residing at Smithfield, Utah.

(SEAL) My commission expires Feb 6th 1936.

Page 3 of 22 – transcription of typed & signed page

Affidavit of Testimony

State of Utah

ss

County of Cache

On this 3 day of April 1934 before me, Jos.W.Peterson, a Notary Public in and for the State of Utah, County of Cache, personally appeared William Pilkington of Smithfield, Utah, known to me, who being first duly sworn on his oath deposed and said as follows:-

That the attached eight pages of manuscript written by William Pilkington and containing an account of the dying testimony of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, which testimony was given by said Martin Harris to the writer on the 9 day of July 1875 at Clarkston, Utah, is a true and correct account of the said testimony and circumstances in relation thereto.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF he has hereunto subscribed his name this 3 day of April 1934.

[signature] William Pilkington

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 3 day of April 1934.

[signature] Jos. W. Peterson
Notary Public, residing at
Smithfield, Utah.

My commission expires Feb.6,1936.

[notary seal]

Page 5 of 22

The Dying Testimony of Martin Harris As Given to William Pilkington By Martin Harris Himself In Clarkston, Cache County, Utah.

I first met Martin Harris, "One of the Three Witnesses To The Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," in Smithfield in October 1874. I was hired by his Son, "Martin Harris Jr," to live in the Harris family for One Year. Martin Harris Senior was living with his Son. I found him a poor Emaciated little man in whome the Winters of life were weighing heavily. In his face might be read the story of his life. There were the marks of Spiritual upliftment, there was the marks of disappointment. There were the strain and worry of Mind. The contentment, the divine calm that it seemed could come no more into his Life. He was a pathetic figure, and yet he seemed strong in body and mind, there was something about that little man which you could tell that he had lived richly.

Noble Experience had come into his life, which had come to the lives of but very few men. At times he would let his mind go back to the early rise of the Church, and would mention the name of Brigham Young very reluctantly, as it seemed that he did not have a great deal of respect for Brigham Young. Although he told me that when he arrived in Salt Lake City from Kirtland Ohio, which was on the 30th day of August 1870, that he was taken to the Office of President Young and had a long talk with him and that all their differences were settled, and that he tried not to hold any ill feeling against President Young.

After staying a few days in Salt Lake City and Ogden, he went to live with his Wife and Family who were living in Smithfield

Page 7 of 22

2//

Cache County, Utah.

His family consisted of, his Wife Caroline, Martin Jr, John, Solomon, Ida and Julia. When I would ask him Questions pertaining to the early rise of the Church, his eyes would radiate with interest. he 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 Professor Charles Anthon, who pronounced them genuine Egyptian Characters, and that the Translation was correct, and he give me a Certificate to that effect. afterwards when I told him whome the man Joseph Smith got the Plates from, and who delivered the Gold Plates to him, he demanded the Certificate back again, and destroyed it saying, There is no such thing as ministering of angels in these days, but if I would bring him the Gold Plates, he would Translate them. I told him that a considerable portion of the Plates were sealed and could not be opened to human gaze. He then exclaimed "I Can not Read a Sealed Book."

And thus the Prophecy of Isaiah were fulfilled, which will be found in the 29 Chapter and 11 verse, but I did not know that I was fulfilling it at the time. I was then convinced that it was true. and 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, 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 equivalent modern words, which were familiar to the understanding of the Prophet and Seer.

Page 9 of 22

3//

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. he said he believed his Wife burned it up, as she was very bitter against him having anything to do with Joseph Smith.

It was caused through her insisting that he bring the Manuscript home and letting her and the rest of the family handle and see it. His family then consisted of his first Wife, his Father and Mother, his Brother Preserved Harris, and his Wifes Sister, a Mrs. Cobb. I promised Joseph that I would not let anyone else see it. Joseph enquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim if Harris should be permitted to take them, and was forbidden Twice, but the Third time he was permitted to take them after promising Joseph that he would not let any more see it. but he said when he arrived home, there were more people in the House besides the Five, and his Wife took the manuscript and he never saw it any more.

So you see Willie, it was stolen from me, and I could not take it back. but he said, the Lords work cannot be stopped by mortal man. and Joseph was told in a Revelation to retranslate from the Small Plates of Nephi, and thereby 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. he said when the Saints moved to Missouri he stayed in Kirtland. he was the Custodian of the Kirtland Temple, and he told me how the Temple was in a delipated condition when he left it in August 1870, and how he left his

Page 11 of 22

4//

his Daughter by his "First Wife," and her Two Little children.

He told me how his Soninlaw was drafted in the Army during the Civil War between the North and South, and that he was Killed himself. his sick Daughter and her Two children were left alone. I was in that condition when found by a Mormon Elder namely William H Homer ("his oldest Sons Brotherinlaw") who was on his way home from a Mission to England. he said a great injustice had been done him. He should have been chosen President of the Church, after the Death of the Prophet.

I asked him, Is it not true that you were active in the performance of your duties in the early rise of the Church, and that you give your money liberally to help the Prophet and the Church along?

That is all True, replied Harris.

Everything was all right then. I was honored while the Saints were in Kirtland, but now that I am old and Poor, it is all different. I Mortgaged my Farm to pay for the first publication of 5,000 copsy of the Book of Mormon. I asked him if he still believed that the Book of Mormon was True, and that Joseph Smith was indeed a true Prophet of God?

His whole being became Electrified and it seemed that a changed man stood before me.

It was no longer a man with an Imagined grievance. It was a man with a message, a man with Noble Convictions in his Heart. Inspired of God, and indowed with a Divine Knowledge. He said, Just as sure as you see the Sun shining. Just as sure am I that I stood in

Page 13 of 22

5//

the presence of an Angel of God with Joseph Smith, and saw him hold the Gold Plates in his Hands. I also saw the Urim and Thummim, The Breastplate, and the Sword of Labon. I saw the Angel desend from Heaven, and when he had finished his message I saw him assend up into Heaven, the Heavens were then opened and I heard the Voice of God declare, that everything the Angel had told us was True, and that the Book of Mormon was Translated correct. I was commanded by Gods Voice to testify to the whole World what I had seen and heard.

I cried out in my Esticy, Tis Enough; Tis Enough; mine eyes have beheld of the glories of God.

Hosanna; Hosanna; Hosanna; To God and The Lamb. And I fell on my face on the ground. the next thing I knew the Prophet was helping me up.

I said Brother Harris, This is Electricity to me, to have the priviledge of conversing with a man that has stood and talked with angels of the Lord, it is grand to hear you Bare your Testimony.

I asked him, Did you, or either one of the other Witnesses ever at any time deny your Testimony as recorded in the Preface of the Book of Mormon?

He answered, No; Not one of the Three Witnesses to the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon ever at any time denied his Testimony.

They all Died reaffirming it with their last Breath; His voice throbbed with the sincerity and the conviction of his message. he was then the real Martin Harris whoes burning Testimony, no Power on Earth could Quench. he said again, he spent his money freely for the

Page 15 of 22

6//

Church. I was the first scribe for Joseph in the Translating of the Book of Mormon. I was called by Revelation to assist in the selection and Ordination of the first Twelve Apostles of the newly organized Church. It was Martin Harris who was called upon to accompany the Prophet to Missouri to assist in the selection of the Land of Consecration, it was Martin Harris who also aided in the Selection of the first High Council to the Church and he was also a member of that Body.

No wonder that Martin Harris felt greatly dissappointed because he was not appointed President of the Church after the Death of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

He said that Edward Stevenson was appointed to collect money by subscription to bring him from Kirtland in Ohio to Utah. he said that he arrived in Salt Lake City on the 30th day of August 1870. After spending a few days in Salt Lake City and Ogden, he left for Smithfield, Cache County, Utah, to live with his family.

I had many Interviews with Martin Harris as I lived in the Harris family Eighteen Months. about Ten months prior to his Death, "While my name is not Harris," I became a member of the family through living with them so long.

I am the only one alive today of his immediate family that knows anything pertaining to his Testimony, as taken from his own Lips. In his talks with me he would say, Now Willie, I am not going to live very long; and after I am Dead I want you to tell the people what I have told you, for it is all True; and he would hold up his

Page 17 of 22

7//

right hand and sware himself that he was telling the Truth. I would Invariably tell him: Yes Grandpa, I will sure tell the people what you have told me, for I know you have told me the truth: on the 9th day of July 1875, while he was Dying I knelt by his Cot. "as he was lying on a Cot in the SouthWest corner of the room in a House owned by a man by the name of Carbine, it was situated on the North Side of Clarkston, Cache County, Utah."

I wanted to get what I thought would be his last words, but he could not talk audible. I could not understand what he wanted to tell me, he tried hard to tell me.

So I stroked his Hair back on his Forehead and Knelt down and prayed to the Lord and asked him in the name of Jesus to streghhten his servents voice so that I could understand his last words, but I could get no responce. he was lying on his left side, facing in the room, and as I knelt down I placed my Hands on his right arm, and as I moved to stand up I was in the act of moving my hands and he shook his Head, as if he did not want me to move. I then Knelt down again and prayed to the Lord as before.

and I was Inspired by the Lord to ask Grandpa, if he wanted me to hold up his right Hand so that he could bare his Testimony. I asked him and his answer came clear,

Yes: While I held his right hand up strength was given to him and he bore his Testimony, as he had done many times before, and I understood every word.

He then bore the same Testimony to the whole World, and then layed back exhausted. There were Two other men

Page 19 of 22

standing in the room and heard him bare his Testimony One of them was Thomas Godfery of Clarkston who just recently Died.

Martin Harris's spirit departed the next day, the 10th of Day of July 1875, in Clarkston, Cache County, Utah, aged 92 years. I attended his Funeral and assisted in his burial in the Clarkston Cemetary.

Signed William Pilkington
Smithfield, Utah

Page 21 of 22

A Dying Testimoney Given By Martin Harris, To William Pilkington July 9th 1875.

My Dear Breathern and Sisters: I am sure pleased to be here on this auspicious occasion.

I first became acquainted with Martin Harris in the fall of 1874, in the early part of October, when I was 14 years of age. I was hired out to work and live in the Harris family for one year. they then lived in Smithfield Cache County, Utah. they moved across the Valley to Clarkston in the fall of 1874. On the 9th day of July 1875, while he was dying, "as he died the next day, the 10 day of July 1875," I held up his right hand while he bore the following Testimoney.

I did go in the Woods with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer and beheld an angel desend from Heaven in a dazzling light of glory, and stood about two feet from the ground. I saw the Gold Plates. I saw the Urim and Thummim. I saw him turn the leaves over one by one I saw the Breast Plate, and the Sword of Labon. After the angel had delivered his message, I saw him assend up into Heaven. And I heard the voice of God in the dazzling light declare that the Book of Mormon was Translated correct. And I was commanded by Gods voice to testify to all the World what I had seen and heard: I cried out in my Esticity Tis Enough: Tis Enough: Mine Eyes have beheld the glories of God. Hosannah To God and The Lamb. Jumping up I praised the Lord.

Breathern and Sisters, I thank you for your kind attention. and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ: Amen.

(over)

Page 22 of 22

This Testimoney is just as I read it at the Pilgrimage of the Aaronic Priesthood at the Grave of Martin Harris in the Clarkston Cemetary on the 19th day of May 1934.

Signed, William Pilkington
Smithfield, Utah

Copyright © 2024 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.