



CHAPTER 8

The Rise of the Church of Christ

This is chapter 8 of the new four-volume narrative history of the Church titled Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days. The book is available in 14 languages in print, in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app, and at saints.lds.org. The previous chapters were published in past issues and are available in 47 languages in the Gospel Library app and at saints.lds.org.

In early July 1828, with manuscript in hand, Joseph knew the Lord wanted him to publish the Book of Mormon and spread its message far and wide. But the publishing business was unfamiliar to him and his family. He had to keep the manuscript safe, find a printer, and somehow get the book in the hands of people willing to consider the possibility of new scripture.

Publishing a book as long as the Book of Mormon would also not be cheap. Joseph's finances had not improved since he started the translation, and all the money he made went toward providing for his family. The same was true for his parents, who were still poor farmers working land they did not own. Joseph's only friend who could finance the project was Martin Harris.

Joseph set to work quickly. Before he completed the translation, he had filed for the book's copyright to protect the text from anyone who might steal or plagiarize it.¹ With Martin's assistance, Joseph also started looking for a printer who would agree to publish the book.

They went first to Egbert Grandin, a printer in Palmyra who was the same age as Joseph. Grandin declined the proposal at once, believing the book was a fraud. Undeterred, Joseph and Martin kept searching and found a willing printer in a nearby city. But before accepting his offer, they returned to Palmyra and asked Grandin once more if he wanted to publish the book.²

This time, Grandin seemed more willing to take the project, but he wanted to be paid \$3,000 to print and bind 5,000 copies before he even started work. Martin had already promised to help pay for the printing, but to come up with that kind of

which was not yet bound or ready for sale.

Abner soon began poking fun at the “Gold Bible” in his newspaper, and during the winter he printed excerpts from the book alongside sarcastic commentary.¹¹

When Hyrum and Oliver learned what Abner was doing, they confronted him. “What right have you to print the Book of Mormon in this way?” Hyrum demanded. “Do you not know that we have received a copyright?”

“It is none of your business,” Abner said. “I have hired the press and I will print what I please.”

“I forbid you to print any more of that book in your paper,” Hyrum said.

“I don’t care,” Abner said.

Unsure what to do, Hyrum and Oliver sent word to Joseph in Harmony, who returned to Palmyra at once. He found Abner at the printing office, casually reading his own newspaper.

“You seem hard at work,” Joseph said.

“How do you do, Mr. Smith,” Abner replied dryly.

“Mr. Cole,” Joseph said, “the Book of Mormon and the right of publishing it belong to me, and I forbid you meddling with it.”

Abner threw off his coat and pushed up his sleeves. “Do you want to fight, sir?” he barked, pounding his fists together. “If you want to fight, just come on.”

Joseph smiled. “You had better keep your coat on,” he said. “It’s cold, and I am not going to fight you.” He calmly continued, “But you have got to stop printing my book.”

“If you think you are the best man,” Abner said, “just pull off your coat and try it.”

“There is law,” Joseph responded, “and you will find that out if you did not know it before. But I shall not fight you, for that will do no good.”

Abner knew he was on the wrong side of the law. He calmed down and stopped printing excerpts from the Book of Mormon in his newspaper.¹²

Solomon Chamberlin, a preacher on his way to Canada, first heard about the “Gold Bible” from a family he lodged

with near Palmyra. Like Thomas Marsh, he had moved from church to church throughout his life but felt dissatisfied with what he saw. Some churches preached gospel principles and believed in spiritual gifts, but they did not have God’s prophets or His priesthood. Solomon felt the time was coming when the Lord would bring forth His church.

As Solomon listened to the family talk about Joseph Smith and the gold plates, he felt electrified from head to toe, and he determined to find the Smiths and learn more about the book.

He set out for the Smith house and met Hyrum at the door. “Peace be to this house,” Solomon said.

“I hope it will be peace,” Hyrum replied.

“Is there anyone here,” asked Solomon, “that believes in visions or revelations?”

“Yes,” Hyrum said, “we are a visionary house.”

Solomon told Hyrum about a vision he had seen years before. In it, an angel had said that God had no church on the earth but would soon raise one up that had power like the Apostles’ church of old. Hyrum and the others in the house understood what Solomon said and told him they shared his belief.

“I wish you would make known some of your discoveries,” Solomon said. “I think I can bear them.”

Hyrum invited him to stay at the Smith farm as a guest and showed him the Book of Mormon manuscript. Solomon studied it for two days and went with Hyrum to Grandin’s printing office, where a printer gave him 64 printed pages. With the unbound pages in hand, Solomon continued on to Canada, preaching everything he knew about the new faith along the way.¹³

By March 26, 1830, the first copies of the Book of Mormon had been bound and were available for sale on the ground floor of Grandin’s printing office. They were tightly bound in brown calfskin and smelled of leather and glue, paper and ink. The words *Book of Mormon* appeared on the spines in gold letters.¹⁴

Lucy Smith treasured the new scripture and saw it as a

and faith. For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.”²³

Later, Joseph stood beside a stream and witnessed the baptisms of his mother and father into the Church. After years of taking different paths in their search for truth, they were finally united in faith. As his father came out of the water, Joseph took him by the hand, helped him onto the bank, and embraced him.

“My God,” he cried, burying his face in his father’s chest, “I have lived to see my father baptized into the true church of Jesus Christ!”²⁴

That evening, Joseph slipped away into some nearby woods, his heart bursting with emotion. He wanted to be alone, out of sight of friends and family. In the 10 years since his First Vision, he had seen the heavens open, felt the Spirit of God, and been tutored by angels. He had also sinned and lost his gift, only to repent, receive God’s mercy, and translate the Book of Mormon by His power and grace.

Now Jesus Christ had restored His Church and authorized Joseph with the same priesthood that Apostles had held anciently when they carried the gospel to the world.²⁵ The happiness he felt was too much for him to hold in, and when Joseph Knight and Oliver found him later that night, he was weeping.

His joy was full. The work had begun.²⁶ ■

A complete list of works cited is available at saints.lds.org.

The word *Topic* in the notes indicates additional information online at saints.lds.org.

NOTES

1. Copyright for Book of Mormon, June 11, 1829, in *JSP*, D1:76–81.
2. “Prospect of Peace with Utah,” *Albany Evening Journal*, May 19, 1858, [2]; “From the Troy Times,” *Albany Evening Journal*, May 21, 1858, [2]; John H. Gilbert, Memorandum, Sept. 8, 1892, photocopy, Church History Library.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 19 (Revelation, circa Summer 1829, at josephsmithpapers.org); see also Historical Introduction to Revelation, circa Summer 1829 [D&C 19], in *JSP*, D1:85–89; and Knight, Reminiscences, 6–7.
4. McBride, “Contributions of Martin Harris,” 1–9; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 34, in *JSP*, H1:352 (draft 2).
5. John H. Gilbert, Statement, Oct. 23, 1887, Church History Library; Indenture, Martin Harris to Egbert B. Grandin, Wayne County, NY, Aug. 25, 1829, Wayne County, NY, Mortgage Records, volume 3, 325–26, microfilm 479,556, U.S. and Canada Record Collection, Family History Library; Historical Introduction to Revelation, circa Summer 1829 [D&C 19], in *JSP*, D1:85–89.
6. Copyright for Book of Mormon, June 11, 1829, in *JSP*, D1:76–81; John H. Gilbert, Memorandum, Sept. 8, 1892, photocopy, Church History Library; Porter, “The Book of Mormon,” 53–54.
7. John H. Gilbert, Memorandum, Sept. 8, 1892, photocopy, Church History Library; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 9, [8]; Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, Oct. 22, 1829, in *JSP*, D1:94–97.
8. John H. Gilbert, Memorandum, Sept. 8, 1892, photocopy, Church History Library; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 9, [2]; “Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon,” in *JSP*, R3, Part 1:xxvi. **Topic:** Printing and Publishing the Book of Mormon
9. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, Nov. 6, 1829, in *JSP*, D1:100–101; Mosiah 3:18–19; 5:5–7; 4 Nephi 1:17; see also Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, Dec. 28, 1829, in *JSP*, D1:101–4.
10. Thomas B. Marsh, “History of Thomas Baldwin Marsh,” *LDS Millennial Star*, June 4, 1864, 26:359–60; June 11, 1864, 26:375–76.
11. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 9, [9]. For examples of excerpts from the Book of Mormon published by Abner Cole, see “The Book of Mormon,” *Reflector*, Sept. 16, 1829, 10; “Selected Items,” *Reflector*, Sept. 23, 1829, 14; “The First Book of Nephi,” *Reflector*, Jan. 2, 1830, 1; and “The First Book of Nephi,” *Reflector*, Jan. 13, 1830, 1. **Topic:** Critics of the Book of Mormon
12. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 9, [9]–[12]; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 166–68.
13. Chamberlin, Autobiography, 4–11.
14. Copyright for Book of Mormon, June 11, 1829, in *JSP*, D1:76–81; John H. Gilbert, Memorandum, Sept. 8, 1892, photocopy, Church History Library; “Book of Mormon,” *Wayne Sentinel*, Mar. 26, 1830, [3]. Some books were also bound in sheepskin.
15. Title Page of Book of Mormon, circa early June 1829, in *JSP*, D1:63–65; see also Lucy Mack Smith to Solomon Mack, Jan. 6, 1831, Church History Library.
16. Testimony of Three Witnesses, Late June 1829, in *JSP*, D1:378–82; Testimony of Eight Witnesses, Late June 1829, in *JSP*, D1:385–87.
17. Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 60–61.
18. See Lucy Mack Smith to Solomon Mack, Jan. 6, 1831, Church History Library.
19. Joseph Smith History, circa Summer 1832, 1, in *JSP*, H1:10; Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13 (Revelation, circa Aug. 1830, in Doctrine and Covenants 50:3, 1835 ed., at josephsmithpapers.org); Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, Mar. 23, 1846, Church History Library; “Joseph Smith Documents Dating through June 1831,” in *JSP*, D1:xxxvii–xxxix; see also Cannon and others, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 163–207. **Topic:** Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood
20. Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 27, in *JSP*, H1:326–28 (draft 2).
21. Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 37, in *JSP*, H1:364 (draft 2); Stevenson, Journal, Dec. 22, 1877; Jan. 2, 1887; An Act to Provide for the Incorporation of Religious Societies (Apr. 5, 1813), *Laus of the State of New-York* (1813), 2:212–19. **Topic:** Founding Meeting of the Church of Christ
22. Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 37–38, in *JSP*, H1:364–71 (draft 2).
23. Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 37, in *JSP*, H1:366; Doctrine and Covenants 21 (Revelation, Apr. 6, 1830, at josephsmithpapers.org); “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1, 1842, 3:928–29.
24. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 9, [12]; Knight, Reminiscences, 8; see also Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 110.
25. Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 38, in *JSP*, H1:372 (draft 2); Joseph Smith, “Latter Day Saints,” in Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 404–5, in *JSP*, H1:506.
26. Knight, Reminiscences, 7.