

If you are reverent and prayerful and obedient, the day will come when there will be revealed to you why the God of heaven has commanded us to address him as *Father*, and the Lord of the Universe as *Son*. Then you will have discovered the pearl of great price spoken of in the scriptures and willingly go and sell all that you have that you might obtain it.

The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages.

And so now with an unbroken line of priesthood authority, an unbroken line of priesthood power, we move confidently

forward in unity and faith, led by Christ the Redeemer, whose church this is, and His earthly prophet, through whom He will speak. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Sweet Is the Work."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will now address us.

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

Book of Mormon translation a miracle

My dear brothers and sisters, do we realize the profound miracle that is the translation of the Book of Mormon? A miracle is "an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., p. 742). Consistent with that definition, the translation of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith is indeed a modern-day miracle.

The current process of translation

The Book of Mormon is presently in print in over eighty languages and is now being translated or prepared for publication in many, many more. Consider the Church's current process of translating the Book of Mormon from English into another language. The Church contracts capable, experienced member translators who are fluent in English as well as their native tongue and

who possess integrity and high moral character so that the spirit of inspiration will guide their work. Just as in Joseph Smith's day, the ability to translate holy writ today is a spiritual gift from God.

Unlike Joseph's day, however, many of our modern translators utilize computers and word processors, lexicons and encyclopedias to help and guide them in their sacred assignment. The modern work is extensive, and each step must be critically analyzed by Church translation experts. Yet even with the most competent member translators and advanced technology available, the entire process, from beginning to publication, requires approximately four years.

Conditions in which Joseph translated

Now contrast the translation of the Book of Mormon by young Joseph Smith. Joseph was raised on a farm in upstate New York and was only twenty-three years of age at the time he completed his

translation of this sacred record from “reformed Egyptian” to English (Mormon 9:32).

He had little financially and was busy supporting his wife and family. Of necessity he planted and harvested crops, chopped wood, hauled water, and cared for animals.

The conditions under which Joseph translated were less than ideal. His life was threatened, and mobs tried to rob him of the plates, requiring him to hide the ancient records and often move them from place to place (see Joseph Smith—History 1:60). Joseph had no telephone, no dictating equipment, fax, word processor, or copy machine—not even electric light.

Translated by the gift and power of God

Joseph had little formal education, perhaps no more than three years of elementary school. Prior to translating, Joseph had not enrolled in a university. There were no literary magazines or academic periodicals delivered to his doorstep. He never visited South America or the Middle East. He belonged to no professional societies, had performed no extensive research projects, nor did he have learned colleagues with whom to discuss the ancient text of the plates. He may have studied basic reading, writing, and arithmetic and perhaps a little American history. We know he read the Bible in English, but by the standards of the world, Joseph was neither a scholar nor a theologian, much less a professional translator of holy scriptures.

What skills did Joseph possess to aid in his translation? Oliver Cowdery, who was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon, said of Joseph’s source of translating power that “the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . translated [the Book of Mormon] by the gift and power of God, by the [assistance or] means of the Urim and Thummim” (“Last Days of Oliver Cowdery,” *Deseret News*, 13 Apr. 1859, p. 48).

Typically a literary work undergoes extensive revisions and editions before a final, finely tuned draft is completed. For example, Abraham Lincoln rewrote his Gettysburg Address five different times, each version varying slightly from the other (see *World Book Encyclopedia*, 22 vols. [Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1992], 8:176–77).

In preparing for this conference address, I had the glorious experience of quietly examining several pages of Joseph’s original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, which is safely protected in the Church archives. I was overwhelmed at the purity of the transcription, which had only a very few insignificant corrections, such as a misspelled word. Joseph’s original manuscript is so perfect it could have come from only one source—divine revelation.

Miraculous pace of the translation

On Joseph’s shoulders rested not only the translation of the Book of Mormon but also the restoration and reestablishment of the Church of Jesus Christ. Even as Joseph translated, he received many revelations and visitations from heavenly messengers who gave him additional important assignments, such as the restoration of the priesthood and the revelation on baptism (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–74). Joseph’s many responsibilities often interrupted the translation process, sometimes for several months. Yet once Joseph was free to dedicate his entire effort to translation, the work surged forward and he translated eight to ten pages a day, completing the preponderance of the Book of Mormon translation in approximately sixty-three working days (see John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information” [Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986], pp. 14–27).

Oliver, reflecting on this miraculous event, testified, "Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated . . . the history, or record, called 'The book of Mormon'" (*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, p. 14).

Magnitude of the Prophet's work

Joseph was the first person in over 1,400 years to read the words of the Savior as written by Nephi, Alma, Mormon, Moroni, and the other prophets of the Book of Mormon. His ability to translate was nothing short of a "marvelous work and a wonder" (2 Nephi 25:17).

Joseph's original English translation, except for a few minor grammatical and textual emendations, remains the text that we use today and is the standard for all other language translations of the Book of Mormon throughout the world (see *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 1:185-86). As Nephi of old prophesied, his "words shall [whisper] forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto [his] people" (2 Nephi 29:2).

Could any one of us today produce such a work? Could a thousand of the world's best theologians and scholars of ancient languages or antiquities write a similar book of such supernal, transcendent value?

No other person with such limited education and facility as Joseph has single-handedly translated in such a short period of time from ancient writings over five hundred pages of scriptural text. That translation now has seventy-three million books in distribution.

Joseph's translation of this ancient, sacred scripture has withstood the scrutiny of many skeptics. The Book of Mormon stands as a miraculous work for the world to examine. This divine spark from

heaven, over 165 years ago, has ignited a flame that is dawning a new day. No wonder "the Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, no. 2). All over the world people are seeking the witness of Jesus Christ as found in the Book of Mormon. They come from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. As was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name" (D&C 122:1). And why are they seeking after the name of Joseph Smith? Because the Book of Mormon testifies of the divinity and atonement of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Because Joseph is the prophet of the Restoration.

With deep appreciation for the miracle that transpired through the translation of the Book of Mormon, we sing:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensa-
tion. . . .
Millions shall know "Brother Jo-
seph" again.
["Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27]

Evidence that Joseph is a prophet

I testify that the translation miracle of the Book of Mormon clearly evidences that Joseph is a prophet of God, called to "lay the foundation of [Christ's] church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). The Book of Mormon is the "keystone of our religion" and will bring us "nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 194). May we appreciate this miraculous translation, and may it be our desire to come to know and follow the Savior

through his teachings in the Book of Mormon, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Do What Is Right," fol-

lowing which we shall hear from Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The chorus and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

Elder J Ballard Washburn

Dear brothers and sisters, it's my honor and privilege to join with you in expressing our love and support for President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, President Packer, and the Twelve. I am happy to say that I love you. I am grateful to be one with you in the work of the kingdom.

Going to the temple as families

Recently after a stake conference, I was talking with a family with teenage children. I said to them, "You must live righteously so that someday you can go to the temple with your parents." A sixteen-year-old daughter responded, "Oh, we go to the temple with our parents almost every week. We go and do baptisms for our family file names." I thought, *What a wonderful thing, for families to go to the temple together.*

When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him to the temple. I think it is more than coincidental that our sons and daughters can go to the temple with us when they are twelve years old. Joseph and Mary did not say, "Bishop, will you take our son to the temple?" They took him.

Our efforts as parents, wards, and stakes should be to help our youth live worthily to go to the temple *now*. The goal is the same for young women as for young men: *be temple worthy now*. When the bishop interviews the youth

each year, he will include a worthiness interview.

What a wonderful goal for priesthood leaders and young women leaders to help parents inspire every young woman and every young man to go to the temple every year. What a great blessing for parents to be in the temple with their children, ages twelve and over, at least once a year where circumstances allow.

The Holy Ghost leads to the temple

One thing that will help us more than anything else to want to be in the temple is to have the Holy Ghost with us.

Two important things are necessary to have the Holy Ghost: first, we must live worthy of it; and second, we must ask for it.

"Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men."¹

If we will ask in faith, we will receive the Holy Ghost, and it will lead us to the temple.

Go to the temple worthily

Let me give a word of caution here. We cannot go to His holy house unworthily without bringing upon ourselves