

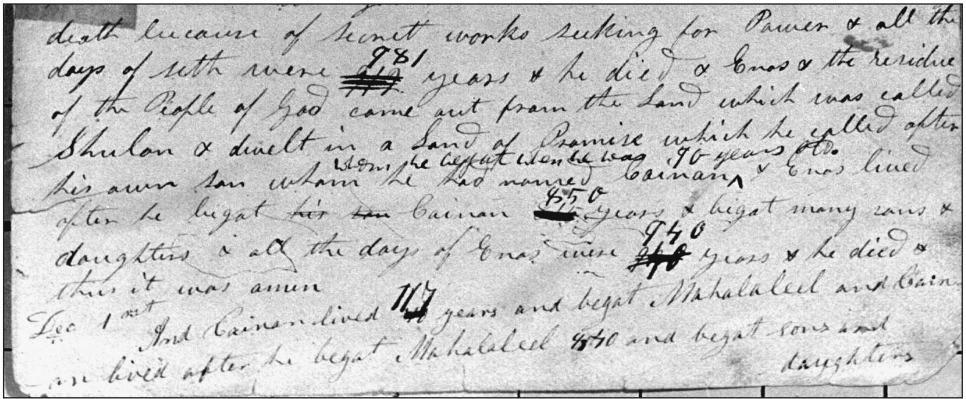
# The Ages of the Patriarchs in the Joseph Smith Translation

*Kent P. Jackson and Charles Swift*

**T**WO DOCUMENTS COMPRISE THE original manuscripts of Joseph Smith’s New Translation of Genesis, named, in order of their composition, Old Testament Manuscript 1 (OT1) and Old Testament Manuscript 2 (OT2).<sup>1</sup>

Old Testament Manuscript 1 is the original dictated text of the first half of Genesis. Between June 1830 and March 1831, the Prophet translated with the assistance of scribes Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Emma Smith, and Sidney Rigdon.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with a revelation received on March 7, 1831, he stopped translating the Old Testament midway through Genesis 24 to work on the New Testament (see D&C 45:60–61). Old Testament Manuscript 2 (OT2) began as a duplicate of OT1, probably with the intent of being a “backup” copy to safeguard the translation. It was copied from OT1 by John Whitmer in March and April 1831.<sup>3</sup>

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Detail of Old Testament Manuscript 1, page 11, lines 33–44. The dictated text is in the handwriting of John Whitmer. The subsequent corrections are in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. Image courtesy of Library-Archives, Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri.

Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible was not complete with the initial dictation. There is much evidence on the manuscripts that the Prophet did additional work on the pages after they were originally written. Some of the changes and additions he made are editorial in nature and clarify and smooth out the words of the dictated text. But others are corrections that provide new insights or even change the meaning of what had been written before. Many of those later revisions make important contributions to the Joseph Smith Translation (JST).

Oliver Cowdery's tenure as Joseph Smith's first scribe on the Bible translation ended in October 1830 when he was sent on the "Lamanite Mission" that established the Church in Ohio and Missouri. Sometime after Cowdery's return from that mission, the Prophet dictated to him fourteen revisions to the translation of Genesis 5 in which he changed the ages of the early Patriarchs from Adam to Methuselah. Cowdery recorded those changes on OT1.<sup>4</sup>

But OT2 had already been written by that time (copied from OT1), and thus the new changes on OT1 never were copied onto OT2. When Joseph Smith finished the New Testament in July 1832 and returned to the Old Testament, it was on OT2 that his scribes recorded the translation to the end of Malachi and the further refinements, additions, and corrections to the Genesis text translated earlier. Thus some of his Genesis refinements were written on OT1 and some (most) on OT2.

Whatever the reason may have been for using OT2 for the recording of the continuing translation, the evidence gives us every reason to believe that the Prophet intended the corrections in the Patriarchs' ages on OT1 to be part of his Bible translation and assumed that they would ultimately appear in print.

We present the fourteen changes here. In the following transcriptions, strikeouts represent text that was lined out (for example, ~~after~~), and angle brackets show text that was inserted, usually directly above the text it replaces (for example, <870>). References to both Genesis and the Book of Moses are included for convenience.

*Genesis 5:4; Moses 6:11:* the days ~~after~~ of Adam after he had begotten Seth were ~~800~~ <870> years<sup>5</sup>

*Genesis 5:5; Moses 6:12:* & all the days that Adam lived were ~~930~~ <1000> years<sup>6</sup>

*Genesis 5:7; Moses 6:14:* & ~~all the days of~~ Seth were a lived after he begat Enos & ~~807~~ <876> <years><sup>7</sup>

*Genesis 5:8; Moses 6:16:* & all the days of seth were ~~912~~ <981> years<sup>8</sup>

*Genesis 5:9; Moses 6:17:* called after his own Son whom he had named Cainan <whom he begat when he was 90 years old.><sup>9</sup>

*Genesis 5:10; Moses 6:18:* & Enos lived after he begat his son Cainan 815 <850> years<sup>10</sup>

*Genesis 5:11; Moses 6:18:* & all the days of Enos were 905 <940> years<sup>11</sup>

*Genesis 5:12; Moses 6:19:* And Cainan lived 70 <117> years and begat Mahalaleel<sup>12</sup>

*Genesis 5:14; Moses 6:19:* And ~~Ca~~al the days of Cainan were ~~nine hundred and ten~~ <fifty-seven> <957> years<sup>13</sup>

*Genesis 5:15; Moses 6:20:* and Mahalaleel lived ~~sixty and five~~ years <115> and begat Jared<sup>14</sup>

*Genesis 5:17; Moses 6:20:* and all the days of Mahalaleel were 895 <945><sup>15</sup>

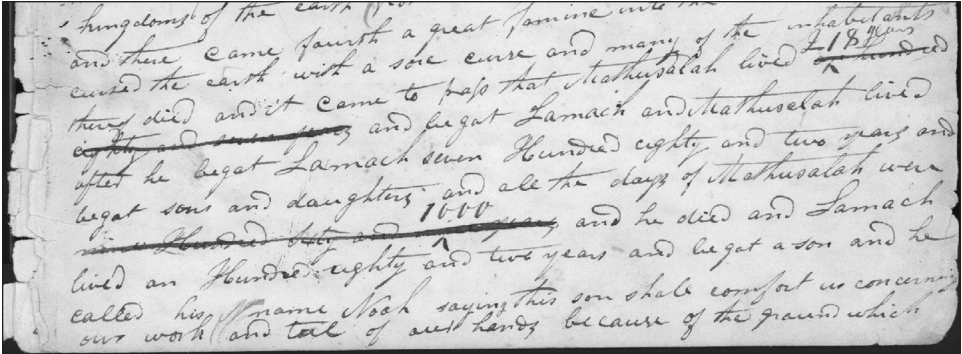
*Genesis 5:23; Moses 8:1:* <And <all> the days of Enoch were ~~4~~ 430 years.><sup>16</sup>

*Genesis 5:25; Moses 8:5:* Mathusalah lived ~~an hundred eighty and seven~~ years <218 years> and begat Lamach<sup>17</sup>

*Genesis 5:27; Moses 8:7:* and all the days of Mathusalah were ~~nine Hundred Sixty and nine~~ years <1000><sup>18</sup>

In 1867 the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints published an edited version of Joseph Smith's Bible translation in book form, complete with corrected spelling and punctuation and chapters and verses in Bible format. It is commonly called the *Inspired Version*.<sup>19</sup> In its preparation, the RLDS Church's publication commit-

The Ages of the Patriarchs in the Joseph Smith Translation



Detail of Old Testament Manuscript 1, page 19, lines 40–50. The dictated text is in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon. The subsequent corrections are in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. Image courtesy of Library-Archives, Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri.

tee, chaired by Joseph Smith III, created a transcript from the original JST manuscripts for the purpose of editing and correcting. The writing on it shows the following process. First, the staff member who made the transcript copied the Genesis translation from OT1. Joseph Smith III, realizing that the translation was not complete with only the text of OT1, edited the transcript against OT2, adding the OT2 revisions his father had made after the original dictation. Then, checking the text against some early, incomplete printings of the Genesis material, Joseph Smith III went through the text again and selectively removed many of his father's corrections. Among those that were removed were all of the corrections to the ages of the Patriarchs except one. The correction now at Moses 8:1, "And all the days of Enoch were 430 years," was retained, but all the others were removed.<sup>20</sup>

In preparation for the 1878 edition of the Latter-day Saint Pearl of Great Price, Elder Orson Pratt of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles took the text of what we now call the Book of Moses directly out of the 1867 RLDS *Inspired Version*. Because all of the later editions of the Book of Moses derive from that text (with some changes that were made in later years), our Book of Moses today still lacks important corrections made by the Prophet Joseph Smith, including the changes in the ages of the Patriarchs. Robert J. Matthews first made note of the lost changes in his research in the 1960s and 1970s, but it was not until the publication of the Joseph Smith Translation manuscripts in 2004 that they became known more broadly.<sup>21</sup>

As we study the changes in the ages of the Patriarchs, we find there is always internal consistency for each man. There is never an instance in which the age has been changed for how long a Patriarch lived after the birth of his son without the same number of years being added to the Patriarch's life. For example, the Prophet added sixty-nine years to the total number of years Seth lived after the birth of his son, and he added sixty-nine years to the total

### Joseph Smith's Changes to the Ages of the Patriarchs in Genesis 5

Patriarch	Age in Bible at birth of son	JST change	Years in Bible lived after birth of son	JST change	Age in Bible at death	JST change	Years added
Adam	130	Same	800	870	930	1000	+70
Seth	105	Same	807	876	912	981	+69
Enos	90	Same	815	850	905	940	+35
Cainan	70	117	840	Same	910	957	+47
Mahalaleel	65	115	830	Same	895	945	+50
Jared	162	Same	800	Same	962	Same	None
Enoch	65	Same	300 <sup>22</sup>	N.A. <sup>23</sup>	430 <sup>24</sup>	N.A.	+65
Methuselah	187	218	782	None	969	1000	+31
Lamech	182	Same	595	Same	777	Same	None

number of years Seth lived. The accompanying table shows the changes made to the ages of the Patriarchs.

Although there is internal consistency for each Patriarch, there is no such consistency throughout the changes. No two men have the same number of years added to their lives. The added years range from zero to seventy. Also, there is no discernible pattern among the changes, but each addition appears to be completely unrelated to any other. The only constant factor among the changes is that each one is an addition, with no subtractions.

Only one of the changes to the ages of the Patriarchs is in the current Book of Moses, but there is a JST change that occurs with the age of Enoch that is in Moses. Enoch's age when he was translated is given in the Bible as 365 years, but the JST uses that number to indicate how long Zion existed: "And all the days of Zion, in the days of Enoch, were three hundred and sixty-five years" (Moses 7:68). We know from the text that Enoch established Zion after Methuselah was born and that he was sixty-five years old at Methuselah's birth. Thus Enoch would have been at least 430 years old when he was translated, in agreement with the OT1 change at Moses 8:1 in the Pearl of Great Price.

Joseph Smith's changes in the ages of the Patriarchs are not found in ancient biblical texts and versions, including the Hebrew Masoretic Text (which underlies the King James Old Testament), the Greek Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Dead Sea Scrolls Genesis texts, or the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.<sup>25</sup> But there are important correlations.

The Septuagint, an ancient Greek version of the Old Testament translated from Hebrew manuscripts in the third and second centuries BC, was the Bible used by Greek-speaking Jews and Christians and was the text used

most often by New Testament authors when they quoted Old Testament passages in their writings. In the ages of the Patriarchs, the Septuagint differs from the current Hebrew Bible in seventeen places, but none agree with the changes made by Joseph Smith. The Samaritan Pentateuch is the distinctive version of the books of Moses passed down through Samaritan tradition, probably originating in about the second century BC from early Hebrew texts, with considerable modification. It contains much younger ages for three of the Patriarchs at the births of their sons and modifies their total years after those births.<sup>26</sup>

Again, none of those differences agree with the changes made by Joseph Smith. The divergent numbers show, however, that different lists of the ages were in circulation in biblical times. Some variations seem to have survived into later centuries, because there are medieval Jewish and Islamic traditions that give different ages for men in Genesis, including a thousand-year lifespan for Adam.<sup>27</sup> One remarkable aspect of Joseph Smith's changes is the profound unlikelihood that he would have known from his environment in 1831–32 of the lack of unanimity in ancient times regarding the numbers.

An early Latter-day Saint source may reflect Joseph Smith's teaching on the age of Adam. Edward Stevenson (1820–97), an early Church member, pioneer, and member of the First Council of the Seventy, wrote the following in his autobiography in the context of a sermon by Joseph Smith about Adam and his priesthood. Adam "was within 6 month of 1000 years old, which is one day with the Lord's time thus fulfilling the Lords decree in the day thou eatest of the fruit of that tree thou shalt shurely die and he did 6 months before the day was out."<sup>28</sup> In the context of the Saints' 1839 expulsion from Missouri, Stevenson wrote: "Father Adam began his work and finished what was



to be done in his time liveing to be 1000 years old with the exception of about 6 months. Truely the bible gives Mathuselaw the credit of being the oldest but the Prophet Joseph had it revealed to him otherwise, it is only an error of Man in translating the record.”<sup>29</sup>

## Notes

1. The names are archival designations. The manuscripts are housed in the Library-Archives of the Community of Christ in Independence, Missouri. For the Joseph Smith Translation in general, see Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004). Joseph Smith and his contemporaries called it the New Translation. The title *Inspired Version* refers to the edited, printed edition published by the Community of Christ.

2. Oliver Cowdery: Genesis 1:1–4:18 (Moses 1:1–5:43); John Whitmer: Genesis 4:18–5:11 (Moses 5:43–6:18; 6:52–7:1); Emma Smith: Genesis 5:12–21 (Moses 6:19–52); Sidney Rigdon: Genesis 5:22–24:41 (including Moses 7:2–8:30).

3. See Doctrine and Covenants 47:1. The date he finished the work is written at the end of OT1: “April 5th 1831 transcribed thus far” (see OT1, page 61, line 5).

4. See OT1, pages 11, 12, and 19. The corrections can probably be dated to sometime between the summer of 1831, when Oliver Cowdery returned from his mission, and July 1832, when the Prophet resumed the translation of the Old Testament (see Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible*, 586).

5. OT1, page 11, lines 22–23. All the transcriptions are from Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible*.

6. OT1, page 11, line 24.

7. OT1, page 11, lines 27–28; “years” was inserted in the hand of John Whitmer.

8. OT1, page 11, lines 33–34.

9. OT1, page 11, line 37.

10. OT1, page 11, lines 37–38.

11. OT1, page 11, line 39.

12. OT1, page 11, line 42.

13. OT1, page 12, line 1.

14. OT1, page 12, lines 2–3.

15. OT1, page 12, lines 4–5.

16. OT1, page 19, line 35.

17. OT1, page 19, lines 43–44.

18. OT1, page 19, lines 46–47.

19. *The Holy Scriptures, Translated and Corrected by the Spirit of Revelation. By Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer* (Plano, IL: The [Reorganized] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1867). The most recent edition was published in Independence, Missouri, in 1991. The title *Inspired Version* was used popularly in the nineteenth century, but it did not appear officially in the title until 1936.

20. The creation of the RLDS Committee Manuscript and the 1867 *Inspired Version* is explained in greater detail in Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 20–33.

21. See Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible—A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 84–85, 219–29; Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible*, 97–98, 110; and Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts*.

22. This number denotes the years to Enoch’s translation, not death.

23. The Book of Moses does not contain a passage equivalent to Genesis 5:22, where we are told that Enoch “walked with God” three hundred years after the birth of Methuselah.

24. This number denotes the age of Enoch at the time of translation, not death.

25. See Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 8; James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985).

26. See August von Gall, ed., *Der hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner*, 5 vols. (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1914–18), 1:7–8; and the discussion in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 130–34.

27. See al-Tabarī, *Ta’rikh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, 156–84, in Franz Rosenthal, trans. and ed., *The History of al-Tabarī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1:327–53; Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Kisā’i, *Qisas al-anbiyā’*, 34–38, in Wheeler M. Thackston Jr., trans., *Tales of the Prophets* (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 1997), 80–91; al-Tha’labī, *‘Arā’is al-Majālis fī Qisas al-Anbiyā’*, 10, in William M. Brinner, trans. and ed., *Lives of the Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 80–85. We thank our colleague Brian M. Hauglid for these references. See also *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, n.d.), 2:242, citing *Genesis Rabbah* 19.8 and *Pirkei de-R. Eliezer* 19.

28. Edward Stevenson, *The Life and History of Elder Edward Stevenson*, 155, photocopy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; original manuscript in Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; original spelling and punctuation retained.

29. Stevenson, *Life and History*, 120–21; original spelling and punctuation retained.

