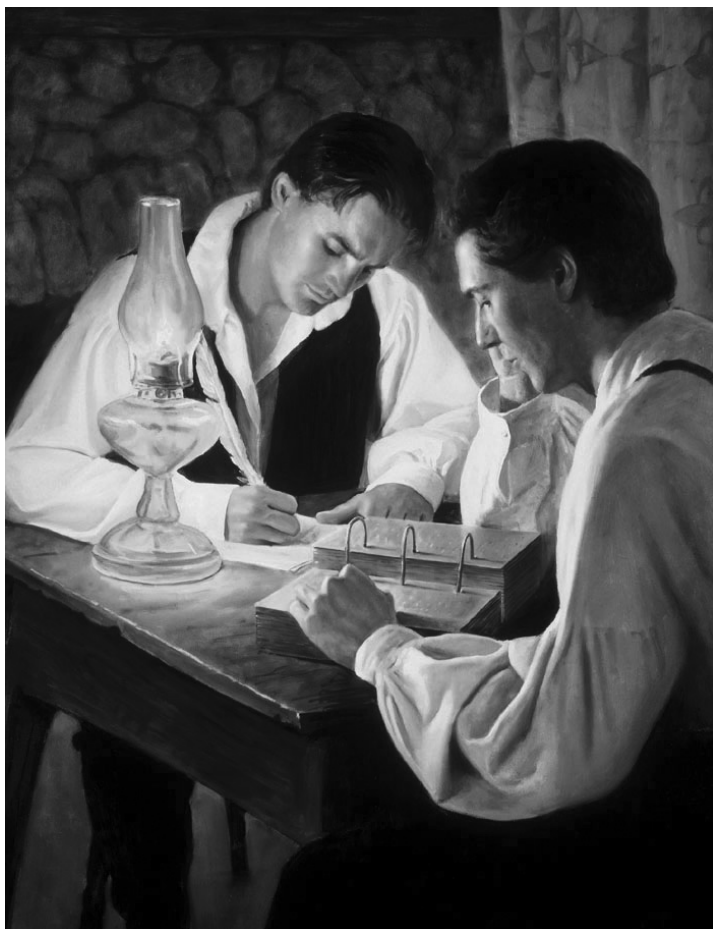


The Conversion of Oliver Cowdery

that Joseph used the seer stone to translate during this time. Both Joseph and Oliver, however, apparently used “Urim and Thummim” generically, sometimes referring to the apparatus delivered by Moroni and sometimes referring to the seer stone (which was purportedly discovered by Alvin, Joseph Jr., and Willard Chase when the three of them were digging a well in 1822; see Chase statement, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:65).



Kenneth Riley, Translating the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery served as a scribe to the Prophet Joseph as he translated the Book of Mormon. In describing his experience, Oliver wrote: "These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim" (© 1997 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved).



OLIVER COWDERY AS
BOOK OF MORMON SCRIBE

IN this chapter I discuss Oliver Cowdery's role in the early transmission of the English-language text of the Book of Mormon. There are three aspects to his work, with him acting as (1) the main scribe for Joseph Smith in taking down Joseph's dictation of the text, (2) the main copyist for producing the copy text for the 1830 printer, and (3) an assistant in various tasks involved in the printing of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. A fourth aspect, only briefly mentioned here, was Oliver's work on the printing of the second edition the Book of Mormon in Kirtland, Ohio (published in 1837); the preface to that edition mentions that Oliver helped Joseph in comparing the 1830 edition against the manuscripts. Indirect evidence suggests that Oliver helped with the extensive grammatical editing for the 1837 edition.

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THE MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR SCRIBES

There are two manuscripts for the text of the Book of Mormon. The first is the original manuscript (O), which is the manuscript that the scribes wrote down as Joseph Smith dictated the text. Having lost the first 116 pages of O, Joseph decided that the original should not be taken to the printer, so he had the scribes produce a copy called the printer's manuscript (P). For most of the text, the 1830 edition was set from P, although there is firm evidence that from Helaman 13:17 through the end of Mormon, the text was set from O rather than P.

Today only about 28 percent of O is extant (I exclude the lost 116 pages from this calculation); 25 of the 28 percent is owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1841 Joseph Smith placed O in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House; when the manuscript was removed by Louis Bidamon in 1882, most of it had been destroyed by mold and water. The first part of the text (1 Nephi and the beginning of 2 Nephi) is mostly extant. These portions were apparently written down at the Whitmer home near the end of the translation (in June 1829). In addition to Oliver Cowdery, there are two unidentified scribes (probably Whitmers) for this part of the text covering the small plates of Nephi, with Oliver (designated as scribe 1 of O) responsible for almost half of the extant portions for the first 48 pages of manuscript:

Oliver Cowdery	20.4 pages	47 percent
scribe 2 of O	10.6 pages	25 percent
scribe 3 of O	12.0 pages	28 percent

The larger portion of O that is extant covers most of the text from Alma 22 through Helaman 3, although no leaf there is fully extant. All of this section is in Oliver Cowdery's hand except for twenty-eight words in Joseph Smith's hand (in Alma 45:22). There

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are also a large number of smaller fragments covering various other parts of the text, including significant portions from 2 Nephi 4 through Enos 1, Alma 10–13, Helaman 13 through 3 Nephi 4, and Ether 3–15. All of these other fragments are in Oliver’s hand.

Besides these scribes, we know of two other scribes that made significant contributions in taking down Joseph Smith’s dictation, namely, Emma Smith and Martin Harris. Both also left their own accounts of their work as scribes. Their scribal work seems to have been restricted to the book of Lehi (now missing) and the first part of the book of Mosiah (of which the first two original chapters were also lost). Evidence from witness statements suggests that Emma was the first scribe (at the beginning of the book of Lehi), followed by Martin Harris, who took down the rest of the dictation of the 116 pages. Martin would have been responsible for the first two original chapters of the book of Mosiah, now missing. Some of the following part of Mosiah (a few manuscript pages) would have been in Emma Smith’s hand, with Oliver Cowdery taking over as scribe in April 1829. A few other individuals have been mentioned as scribes of O, but their contribution was undoubtedly minor.

The other manuscript, the printer’s manuscript (P), is virtually intact. Only three lines of its text, from the first leaf of the manuscript, have been worn away. This manuscript is owned by the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). Oliver Cowdery is the main scribe for P:

Oliver Cowdery	84.6 percent
scribe 2 of P	14.9 percent
Hyrum Smith	0.5 percent

Scribe 2 has not yet been identified but may have been Martin Harris.

Internal evidence from the printer’s manuscript and historical statements clearly demonstrate that P was produced as needed

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throughout the printing process, not all at once in one marathon copying session (say in July and August of 1829), as some have assumed. To begin the typesetting at the end of August 1829, Oliver Cowdery copied only enough material from O to produce the first twenty-four pages of P. And in a letter to Joseph Smith (November 6, 1829), Oliver indicated that he had gotten as far as Alma 36 in his copy work: “I have just got to Alma’s commandment to his sons in copying the manuscript.”

It appears that scribe 2 of P acted as a backup scribe for Oliver Cowdery for two large sections of P: (1) from Mosiah 25:14 to Alma 13:20 and (2) from 3 Nephi 19:21 to the end of Mormon. For the first section, Hyrum Smith briefly relieved scribe 2 on five different occasions but only once for more than a page; usually Hyrum copied only a few lines, once only a few words. The second section of P that scribe 2 produced (from 3 Nephi 19:21 to the end of Mormon) appears to be related to the decision to take O rather than P in to the print shop. The apparent reason for this decision is that these scribes fell behind in their copy work, so they took in O because they hadn’t yet produced the corresponding part of P. But they still worked at catching up in their copy work, with Oliver continuing from Helaman 13:17 to 3 Nephi 19:20. Then they apparently decided to split up the copy work: scribe 2 took over for Oliver while Oliver himself skipped ahead to begin copying the book of Ether. Thus scribe 2 completed the long section from 3 Nephi 19:21 to the end of Mormon.

OLIVER COWDERY’S SCRIBAL WORK IN COMPARISON

Oliver was by far the best scribe that worked on the Book of Mormon manuscripts (based on the evidence we have for the

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extant portions of O and the virtually complete P). His penmanship is excellent. When we look at Oliver's copywork (that is, when he copied the text from O into P), we find that on average he made about three textually substantive changes for every manuscript page he copied. (In most cases, these textually substantive changes, such as an added *a* or an omitted *the*, make little or no difference in meaning. Such changes may not be semantically substantive, but they are nonetheless changes in the text.) Oliver's copywork is considerably better than, for instance, scribe 2 of P's work. On the other hand, the 1830 compositor (that is, typesetter) had about the same error rate when he set the type from manuscript. Oliver's copywork is actually quite good; it is very difficult to produce errorless copy, especially when copying from a manuscript.

We should also note that there were some minor deficiencies in Oliver Cowdery's work. To be sure, his spelling is much better than the two unknown scribes in O (probably Whitmers) as well as the two scribes in P, namely, the unknown scribe 2 (possibly Martin Harris) and Hyrum Smith. Even so, there are a good many nonstandard spellings in Oliver's writing, as in the following sampling from extant portions of the first 48 pages of O (from the beginning of 1 Nephi to 2 Nephi 1:30): *exceding*, *obediant*, *immaginations*, *treasurey*, *fateagued*, *expediant*, *miricles*, and *espesially*. Nor was Oliver's grammar standard. He frequently wrote *was* in place of the correct *were*, mistakes which he typically corrected (but not always). More significantly, there is little evidence that he ever edited the actual instances of nonstandard *was* in the original text to *were* (see the discussion of this issue under Mosiah 10:14 in volume 4 of the critical text). Nor does Oliver correctly distinguish between the following pairs of words: *racked* versus *wrecked*, *wrest* versus *arrest*, *dregs* versus *drugs*, and *faction*

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versus *fraction*. The 1830 typesetter, John Gilbert, was considerably more skilled than Oliver in matters of spelling, grammar, and lexicon. One must not be deceived by Oliver's reputation as a schoolteacher; Hyrum Smith, undoubtedly the worst scribe in the Book of Mormon manuscripts, also taught school. Despite this evaluation of Oliver's scribal ability, his prose style was highly sophisticated and ornate, yet often bordered on being pompous and void of any substantive content (as exemplified by his seven letters to W. W. Phelps, published in 1834–35 in the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*).

EMENDING THE TEXT

Oliver was also very much aware that he was the better scribe. We can see this in various ways. First of all, he seems to have been inclined to consciously emend readings in O that had originally been taken down by other scribes (namely, the two scribes, probably Whitmers, whose work covers the first two-thirds of 1 Nephi). In several places, Oliver independently changed the reading directly in O, emending the text to what he felt was a superior reading. In each case, these emendations were unnecessary; in fact, in some cases, the original reading was actually better:

replacing “the commandment” with “the commandment of the Lord”

1 Nephi 3:16 (line 49, page 4 of O), correcting scribe 2 of O

and all this he hath done because of the commandment >
and all this he hath done because of the commandment
of the Lord

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adding the clause “and it fell”

1 Nephi 11:36 (line 16, page 18 of O), correcting scribe 3 of O

the great and spacious building was the pride of the world >
the great and spacious building was the pride of the world
and it fell

emending “that it rent the rocks” to “and the rocks that they rent”

1 Nephi 12:4 (line 37, page 18 of O), correcting scribe 3 of O

and I saw the earth **that it rent the rocks** >
and I saw the earth **and the rocks that they rent**

In some cases, Oliver emended his own scribal work in O, especially when he felt that there was something wrong with what he had originally written down, as in the following example from an Isaiah quotation (quoting Isaiah 48:11 in the King James Bible):

emending a nonparallel clause

1 Nephi 20:11 (line 21, page 41 of O)

for **how should I** suffer my name to be polluted >
for **I will not** suffer my name to be polluted

There are also examples where Oliver noticed an error when he was copying the text from O into P. In such cases, he typically corrected P first and then made the correction in O (inevitably with heavier ink flow), as in the following example where he tried to guess what the original conjunction should have been:

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adding *after* to both O and P (correcting O after correcting P, both corrections in heavier ink)

Jacob 7:1 (line 6, page 111 of O; line 10, page 108 of P)

O*, P* (the asterisk stands for what was originally written)

And now it came to pass that some years had passed away
there came a man among the people of Nephi

O^c, P^c (the superscript *c* stands for the corrected reading)

And now it came to pass that **after** some years had passed away
there came a man among the people of Nephi

Although this emendation seems perfectly fine, usage elsewhere in the text argues that the original text had an *and*, which was accidentally omitted when Oliver took down Joseph's dictation:

original text for Jacob 7:1 (conjectured)

And now it came to pass that some years had passed away
and there came a man among the people of Nephi

Another example of this same kind of independent editing is found near the end of the book of Alma:

adding the clause "than to retake it from them" (correcting O after correcting P, both corrections in heavier ink)

Alma 59:9 (line 20, page 354' of O; line 6, page 320 of P)

O*, P*

and knowing that it was easier to keep the city
from falling into the hands of the Lamanites
he supposed that they would easily maintain that city

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O^c, P^c

and knowing that it was easier to keep the city
from falling into the hands of the Lamanites

than to retake it from them

he supposed that they would easily maintain that city

Oliver's revision to the text goes considerably beyond what the context implies. In this instance, the implied meaning actually is that 'it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites **by sending men to the city.**' There is no need to make any emendation to the text for this passage.

Overall, Oliver's conjectural emendations (including cases of conscious editing) are, for the most part, unacceptable, especially those that he made in O. The critical text project, in its evaluation of Oliver's manuscript emendations, rejects the majority of them—and to a very high degree in O. We have the following results for the first half of the text, up through Alma 21:

Oliver's emendations in O	accept 3	reject 11
Oliver's emendations in P	accept 10	reject 16

The 1830 typesetter, it turns out, was considerably more successful in his emendations:

John Gilbert's emendations	accept 34	reject 23
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For a list of these emendations, see the appendix to my article "Conjectural Emendation in the Book of Mormon."

PREPARING THE GATHERINGS

Oliver Cowdery also prepared the gatherings of sheets for writing down the dictation (O) and later for copying the text (P). His typical procedure was to first rule (or line) six sheets of

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paper, then fold the group of sheets to form a gathering (of twelve leaves—that is, twenty-four pages). The folded sheets normally remained loose until filled with the handwritten text. Only then were the folded sheets sewn together—by piercing several holes (called “stabs”) along the fold, interweaving thread (or yarn) in a figure-eight pattern through the stab holes, and firmly tying the thread. (For further details, see page 34 of volume 1 of the critical text; see also pages 31–32 of volume 2.)

Oliver usually took great care in ruling his gatherings. But in P, when he took over for scribe 2 of P (following scribe 2’s initial work, from Mosiah 25:14 to Alma 13:20), Oliver found that scribe 2 had been ruling the leaves of the gathering as he went along in his copywork (perhaps doing only a page at a time, just prior to writing on that page) rather than ruling the entire gathering in advance. Oliver was thus required to rule the subsequent leaves of that gathering as he continued the work of copying the text. This change in the ruling procedure seems to have irritated Oliver since his rulings in P for the pages following Alma 13 (beginning with page 203 of P) are very carelessly done, with slanting lines and much wider rulings than the careful rulings (horizontal, evenly spaced, and narrow) that he produced prior to scribe 2’s work. In fact, Oliver’s rulings for most of the gatherings for the rest of the book of Alma are done in the same rough way. Only when Oliver reached the fifteenth gathering (beginning with page 333 of P, at Helaman 1:29) did he return to producing his careful rulings in P.

SPELLING THE NAMES

Several witnesses to the translation process claimed that Joseph Smith sometimes spelled out names to the scribe. And

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we can find evidence in O in support of this process. Frequently, Oliver spelled the first occurrence of a Book of Mormon name phonetically, then he corrected that spelling. In some instances, the incorrect spelling was crossed out and followed inline with the correct spelling, thus indicating that the correction was an immediate one, as in the following example where the less-than and greater-than symbols are used to represent a crossout (for instance, <X> means that X has been crossed out):

Alma 33:15 (reading in O)

for is is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things but
<Zenock> Zenoch also spake of these things

Here in the original manuscript, Oliver initially wrote *Zenock* using the expected *ck* English spelling for the syllable-final /k/ sound when preceded by a short vowel. But then Oliver crossed out the whole name and immediately afterwards, on the same line, wrote *Zenoch*, thus indicating that the correct spelling agrees with the biblical name *Enoch*. This example also suggests that Joseph spelled out the *ch* sequence for Oliver, although it is possible that Joseph could have repronounced the *ch* sequence with the incorrect *ch* sound /ç/ rather than with the correct /k/ sound in order to help Oliver get it down right. Interestingly, when Oliver copied the text from O to P, he systematically reverted to his original phonetic spelling, *Zenock* (here and elsewhere in the text). This is why the current standard text of the Book of Mormon has only the incorrect spelling, *Zenock*. As we shall see below, there are other names that Oliver systematically changed when he copied from O into P.

But there are also examples for which it is impossible to find a repronunciation that will guarantee the correct spelling. For

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instance, near the beginning of the book of Helaman, Oliver wrote the name *Coriantumr* phonetically, as *Coriantummer*, then he crossed the whole name out and wrote inline the correct spelling, *Coriantumr*:

Helaman 1:15 (reading in O, original spellings retained)

& they were lead by a man whose name was <Coriantummer>
Coriantumr

In this case, no matter how slowly or carefully Joseph might have repronounced *Coriantumr*, it would have been impossible for him to have indicated that there was no vowel between the /m/ and /r/ sounds at the end of the name except by actually spelling out the individual letters *m* and *r*. Nor could Oliver have guessed this spelling since no word (or name) in English ends in *mr*. In fact, Oliver ended the correct spelling *Coriantumr* with a large flourish on the final *r*, which Oliver produced nowhere else in either manuscript. This added swirl seems to reveal Oliver's frustration at having to initially guess at such a weird spelling.

The original manuscript suggests that the spelling of names could be checked whenever the scribe felt unsure of the spelling. This situation would naturally occur with the first occurrence of an unfamiliar Book of Mormon name in the text. It could also occur after a substantial hiatus during which the scribe might have forgotten the spelling. A good example of this phenomenon is the spelling in O of the name *Amalickiah*. The first couple of occurrences are spelled correctly by Oliver, but then he starts spelling the second and third vowels of *Amalickiah* as *e*'s. At first Oliver corrects these errors. But eventually he realizes that once he has made sure that the first occurrence of a name is spelled correctly in the manuscript, there is really no need to worry about spelling

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variance for subsequent occurrences of the name. Thus the first spelling of *Amalickiah* in O establishes the correct spelling. As long as this is kept in mind, there is no problem if subsequent occurrences of *Amalickiah* are spelled differently.

Yet even with this procedure in place, there are a few cases where Oliver consciously decided to change the spelling of a Book of Mormon name when he copied the name from O into P. Here are two clear examples where the first occurrence of the name is extant in O, yet Oliver changed the spelling in P for some unknown reason: (1) *Kishcumen* (O) > *Kishkumen* (P) and (2) *Morionton* (O) > *Morianton* (P). For each of these names, the spelling in O is consistent yet systematically differs from the reading in P. Such examples show that Oliver felt free to make name changes whenever it seemed appropriate to him.

SPECIFYING THE CHAPTER NUMBERS

Another responsibility of Oliver's was to add the numbers for the chapter specifications in the manuscripts. As Joseph dictated the text, when he came to the end of a section of text (probably identified by some blankness), Joseph had the scribe (normally, Oliver) write down the word *Chapter* but without specifying any chapter number. The numbers themselves were added considerably later, almost always in heavier ink and more carefully than the earlier written *Chapter*. In one instance in P, Oliver added the number in blue ink rather than in the normal black ink. In another instance, he got off in his chapter numbering in P. For the original chapter 8 in the book of Mosiah, Oliver wrote it as "Chapter IX," which the 1830 typesetter caught and corrected to "Chapter 8." Subsequent numbering in the book of Mosiah was also off by one in the printer's manuscript. These peculiarities,

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among others, show that the chapter numbering system was not original to the text, although the breaks themselves between sections of the text were original.

OLIVER COWDERY AND THE PRINTING OF THE 1830 EDITION

When the manuscript was taken into the print shop for type-setting, Oliver Cowdery played an active role. According to John Gilbert, the compositor (that is, typesetter) for the 1830 edition, Oliver occasionally took up the composing stick and would set a part of a page; in all, Gilbert estimates, Oliver set perhaps ten to twelve pages of the 1830 edition. Gilbert also states that Oliver, along with Martin Harris and Hyrum Smith, would proof the printed sheets against the copytext (the manuscript). In one case, for signature 22, covering pages 337–52 of the 1830 edition (from Alma 41:8 to 46:30), Oliver proofed the sheet against O rather than P, even though this signature had been set from P. As a consequence, Oliver was able to correct a few errors that had entered the text when he had originally copied P from O for that part of the text.

We also find that on one occasion Oliver Cowdery emended this part of the original manuscript to make it agree with a change the 1830 compositor had accidentally introduced during his type-setting. In Alma 42:31, both O and P had read “and now my son,” but the 1830 compositor accidentally set “and now O my son.” When Oliver proofed the 1830 sheet against the original manuscript, he decided that the 1830 reading was correct, so he supralinearly inserted in pencil the word *O* in the original manuscript. Unfortunately, he placed the *O* in the wrong place, so that the original manuscript now reads “and now my O son.” (For a

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summary of the evidence for proofing signature 22 against O, see under Alma 42:31 in part 4 of volume 4 of the critical text. Also see plate 11 in volume 1 of the critical text for a photograph of Oliver's inserted *O* in the original manuscript.)

We have definite evidence that Oliver Cowdery was learning from his proofing of the 1830 edition. For instance, by the time he got into 3 Nephi in his copywork, Oliver had learned that *exceeding(ly)* is spelled with two *e*'s after the *c*, not as *exceding(ly)*, which is how he had consistently spelled the word in O as well as in P prior to reaching 3 Nephi 12:12. From then on in P, Oliver always spelled *exceeding(ly)* correctly.

Oliver Cowdery also learned to hyphenate at the end of lines. Earlier he had always hyphenated at the beginning of lines (in O and the first part of P). For example, in the original manuscript, if only *accord of according* fit at the end of a line, Oliver would have written *accord* at the end of the line and *-ing* at the beginning of the next line. But when he finally learned that hyphenation occurs at the end of the line, Oliver would have written *accord-* at the end of the line, but still he would have kept the hyphen at the beginning of the next line (that is, *-ing*), thus ending up with two hyphens. Oliver started this practice of double hyphenation at the beginning of 2 Nephi (page 49 in P), but there he put hyphens at the end of a line only once or twice a page, so that for this part of P most hyphenated words had only a single hyphen, at the beginning of a line. But by the time Oliver got through 200 pages of P, he started to hyphenate more frequently at the ends of lines, so that ultimately in the last half of the manuscript, we often find double hyphenation more than ten times a page.

Originally, very little punctuation appeared on the printer's manuscript and virtually none on the original manuscript. For the first part of P, Oliver Cowdery copied from O into P without

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adding punctuation. He finally realized that he himself could add the punctuation, so beginning with page 106 of P, Oliver started to add a little punctuation, but only sporadically and never systematically. Moreover, John Gilbert, the typesetter, basically ignored Oliver's punctuation, so by page 132 of P Oliver stopped adding punctuation. Similarly, beginning with page 129 of P, Oliver Cowdery added paragraph marks as he prepared this manuscript, but by page 145 he stopped this practice, again probably because he realized that the typesetter was ignoring his suggested paragraph breaks.

OLIVER COWDERY AS TRANSLATOR?

Finally, there is the issue of whether Oliver Cowdery ever translated part of the Book of Mormon text. Sections 8 and 9 of the Doctrine and Covenants state that Oliver wanted to translate. It probably seemed easy enough as Oliver watched Joseph read off what appeared to be a fully prepared text. Ultimately, Oliver's permission to translate was taken away. One verse in section 9 suggests that he might have been able to translate a little at first, perhaps like the Apostle Peter, who did take a few steps on the water but then became afraid and sank into the water (see Matthew 14:22–33, especially verse 29). Verse 4 in section 9 of the Doctrine and Covenants reminds Oliver that his calling is to write for Joseph, not to translate; then the Lord adds:

Doctrine and Covenants 9:5

and behold it is because that you did not continue as you commenced when you began to translate that I have taken away this privilege from you

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One place in the original manuscript where we might be tempted to think Oliver was the translator is for twenty-eight words that are in Joseph's hand, not Oliver's; in the following transcript of O, the part written by Joseph is set in bold:

Alma 45:22 (original spellings retained)

therefore Helaman & his Brethren went forth
to establish the church again in all the land
yea in every city throughout all the land
which was possessed by the people of Nephi
and it came to pass that they did appoint
priests and teachers throughout all the land
over all the churches

Yet manuscript evidence elsewhere in this passage argues that Oliver was getting tired. There is a particular error he made in the previous verse (in Alma 45:21) that suggests he had virtually fallen asleep as he was taking down Joseph's dictation. He was supposed to write "and the many little dissensions" but instead he wrote a very strange clause, "they had become exceeding dissenting" (although the last word, apparently written as *desenting*, is written quite unclearly and unevenly). Oliver seems to have nodded off as he wrote, with very little control, the last word, *desenting*. Catching himself, he immediately crossed this whole clause out and then continued inline with the correct text, "and the many little dissensions and disturbances which had been among the people." His mistake was influenced, in part, by the following noun *dissensions*; perhaps the later use of *became expedient* ("it became expedient that . . .") led him to write the similar-sounding *become exceeding* in O. His sleepy mind seems to have created an

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impossible clause, one that he immediately crossed out as soon as he realized his scribal lapse.

When Joseph and Oliver got to the next verse, they apparently decided to break off, but Joseph needed to write down the rest of the text he was viewing before he too could take a break (which would mean that the text he was viewing could cut off at the end of a phrase in the middle of a sentence). If Joseph had just quit where he was, what he was viewing would have disappeared without recovery. Joseph's wife Emma said that Joseph didn't have to be told by the scribe where he left off, which suggests that when starting up for the day the interpreters or seer stone would simply start with new text, namely, text that continued precisely after what Joseph had last seen (and presumably had finished reading off to the scribe).

AN OVERALL EVALUATION

In our days of computerized copying and publishing, we may not be appreciative of the difficulties that Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Emma Smith, and the other scribes had in taking down oral dictation for a 607-page manuscript (the original manuscript, including the lost 116 pages), or in dealing with the different set of difficulties presented to the scribes when they copied from one manuscript into another, namely, from what remained of the original manuscript into the printer's manuscript (also a hefty task, given that the printer's manuscript was 464 pages). Much of this copywork seems to have been done in the evenings, after a long day at the print shop. And there was also work to be done at the press, including the proofing of printed signatures against the manuscript. Throughout this process, unintended errors did enter the text. Yet everyone, no matter what their level of skill, did their best to faithfully transmit the text, even when

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they sometimes thought to correct what seemed to be an error. And throughout this transmission process, from taking down the dictation to providing the copytext for the printing of the book, Oliver Cowdery played the central role.

In the final analysis, there is only one miraculous stage in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in 1828–30, namely, the stage in which the Lord himself made sure that the English-language text revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith was correct, word for word and letter for letter. Yet Joseph himself had to take care that he read off the text correctly and that he spelled the Book of Mormon names correctly. But it was the knowledge that he was receiving a revealed text from the Lord that motivated both Joseph Smith and his scribes, including Oliver Cowdery, to make as faithful a transmission of the text as was possible but still subject to human error.

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“Conjectural Emendation in the Book of Mormon.” *The FARMS Review* 18, no. 1 (2006): 187–231.

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A fuller description of the manuscripts and their scribes are found in the introductions to volumes 1 and 2 of the critical text:

The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text. Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001.

The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts. Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001.

The references to specific changes in the text are fully discussed in volume 4 of the critical text under the appropriate scriptural reference:

Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon. Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005.

All six parts of volume 4 have now been published:

2004	Part 1	Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1 – 2 Nephi 10
2005	Part 2	2 Nephi 11 – Mosiah 16
2006	Part 3	Mosiah 17 – Alma 20
2007	Part 4	Alma 21 – 55
2008	Part 5	Alma 56 – 3 Nephi 18
2009	Part 6	3 Nephi 19 – Moroni 10, with Addenda