

The Early Reception of the Book of Mormon in Nineteenth-Century America

Jeremy J. Chatelain

Jeremy J. Chatelain is a teacher at the Fremont Seminary in Ogden and a field curriculum writer for Seminaries and Institutes. He is a PhD candidate at the University of Utah.

Not long after the Book of Mormon was first printed, it came into the hands of a man who hesitatingly declared, “Hold on. . . . Wait a little while; what is the doctrine of the book, and of the revelations the Lord has given? Let me apply my heart to them.” Finally, after examining “the matter studiously for two years,” he made up his mind to “receive that book.” Who was this careful, contemplative man who “wished time sufficient to prove all things” for himself? He was none other than Brigham Young, who later said, “I knew it was true, as well as I knew that I could see with my eyes, or feel by the touch of my fingers, or be sensible of the demonstration of any sense.”¹

About the same time, however, the New York newspapers the *Rochester Daily Advertiser* and the *Rochester Republican* printed: “BLASPHEMY—‘BOOK OF MORMON,’ alias THE GOLDEN BIBLE. The ‘Book of Mormon’ has been placed in our hands. A viler imposition was never practised. It is an evidence of fraud, blasphemy and credulity, shocking to the Christian and moralist.”² At least ten more newspapers in Massachusetts,

Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, and Vermont reprinted this article during April and May 1830. Moreover, by the time these articles were printed, no fewer than forty-one articles on the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith had already been published in the previous year. The arrival of the famous and infamous book would irreversibly influence the course of humankind.

The reception of the Book of Mormon in the first half of the nineteenth century reveals a fascinating dichotomy of ridicule and dismissal, and quiet, deep discernment of the word of God. Newspaper editors, philanthropists, and religionists were stridently critical of the new scripture for a variety of reasons: from exasperation about the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening to the fear of losing members of their own flock to Mormonism. On the other hand, those seeking the restoration of Christ's Church often felt the import of the book without even having met the Prophet Joseph.

This chapter will consider the reaction to the Book of Mormon in its first three years: from its publication beginning in 1829 to the end of 1831. The Book of Mormon was more heavily addressed in newspapers in these three years than in the next nine years combined. The primary sources used for the study are from a newly assembled collection of over 10,000 articles on Mormonism in more than 660 newspapers from 1829 to 1844.³ Among these sources are at least 583 articles that mention the Book of Mormon by name. More than two-thirds of those articles were written in the first three years. The attitudes toward and perceptions of the Book of Mormon found in these newspapers will be reviewed for content and development over time, and juxtaposed with accounts by those like Brigham Young, who had the sincere intent and faith to obtain the promised witness that the book is true, some even before the book was bound.

Since its tenuous start, the Book of Mormon has been printed in over 100 languages, surpassed 150 million copies, was recognized as one of the most influential books in American history, and is now carried throughout the world in the hands of more than 83,000 missionaries.⁴ The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a marvelous work and a wonder.

The Book of Mormon Goes to Print, 1829

Unlike Joseph's religious contemporaries whose ministries began with a feeling to preach, Joseph's arrival on the religious scene began with a book. For the Smith family, the book was "the source of so much secret gratification,"⁵

but because of the book, they would be excoriated and vilified on thousands of newspaper pages. No fewer than twenty-four articles mentioning some aspect of the Book of Mormon appeared in newspapers from June to December 1829, before the Book of Mormon was even available for sale. This time frame included, among other things, completing the translation, searching for a printer in Palmyra and Rochester, obtaining the copyright, making formal arrangements with E. B. Grandin, having the eleven witnesses see the plates, receiving the revelation directing Martin Harris to not covet his property and to pay the printer's debt,⁶ beginning the printer's manuscript, receiving the first printer's proofs, and starting the typesetting and printing. One of the first-known references to the Book of Mormon in the newspapers is found in E. B. Grandin's June 26, 1829, newspaper from Palmyra, New York, called the *Wayne Sentinel*:

Just about in this particular region, for some time past, much speculation has existed, concerning a pretended discovery, through superhuman means, of an ancient record, of a religious and divine nature and origin, written in ancient characters, impossible to be interpreted by any to whom the special gift has not been imparted by inspiration. It is generally known and spoken of as the "*Golden Bible*." Most people entertain an idea that the whole matter is the result of a gross imposition, and a grosser superstition. It is pretended that it will be published as soon as the translation is completed. Meanwhile we have been furnished with the following, which is represented to us as intended for the title page of the work—we give it as a curiosity.⁷

Grandin had initially turned down Joseph's request to print the book. His reluctance is evident in his passive reference to the publication of the work and his distanced statement that "most people entertain an idea that the whole matter is the result of a gross imposition, and a grosser superstition." Nevertheless, the copyright request for the Book of Mormon was filed in the office of Richard R. Lansing, clerk of the Northern District Court in Utica, New York, on June 11, 1829,⁸ and Grandin agreed to print five thousand copies for three thousand dollars.⁹

Local newspapers from July and August 1829 included some vague allusions to the Book of Mormon,¹⁰ but it was the *Palmyra Freeman* of August 11, 1829, that would perpetuate the next significant reactions and

rumors. The article contains a variety of details of how Joseph obtained the plates, including three divine visits, the discovery of the buried plates “together with a huge pair of spectacles,” the dimensions of the plates, the warning not to show them to others, and a description of placing the spectacles in a hat during the process of translation. The article also tells of Martin Harris’s visit to Professor Mitchell, “who was learned enough to English them,” but “happened not to be possessed of sufficient knowledge to give satisfaction!”¹¹ (For more about this visit, see chapter 6 by Richard E. Bennett herein.) The writer’s disbelieving commentary was striking and contagious. The article entered the nineteenth-century American “newspaper exchange”¹² and spread quickly. At least six additional newspapers reprinted the article, or variations of it, from August 1829 to January 1830, repeating such caustic barbs as “the greatest piece of superstition,” “the subject [the Book of Mormon] was almost invariably treated as it should have been—with *contempt*,” and “It is certainly a ‘*new thing*’ in the history of superstition, bigotry, inconsistency, and foolishness. It should, and doubtless will, be treated with the neglect it merits. The public should not be imposed upon by this work.”¹³

To what degree such articles shaped the reception of the Book of Mormon in the minds of Americans is difficult to assess. Yet print historians have recognized the power of the “national print culture” that took shape in the early nineteenth century, and one such scholar declared, “An expanding press was a visible force for change in the new nation, its impact registered in every area of American life.”¹⁴ Regarding the barrage of bad press directed at Joseph and the Book of Mormon, historian Richard L. Bushman wrote, “The [news]papers elevated Joseph from an obscure money-digger of local fame to full-blown religious imposter.”¹⁵

By September 1829, another local editor named Abner Cole began manipulating the reception of the still-printing Book of Mormon. Cole, writing under the pseudonym Obadiah Dogberry, printed his Palmyra newspaper, the *Reflector*, in the evenings and on Sundays on the same press engaged in printing the Book of Mormon. Setting the type for his newspaper while surrounded by drying, unbound sheets of the Book of Mormon, Cole was, no doubt, aware of the stories and rumors in the small village about the plates and about the young, pretentious “Jo Smith,” and Cole was not impressed.¹⁶ But his proximity to the printing of the controversial

scripture gave him unprecedented firsthand knowledge and access. The fact that Cole was perusing the text of the Book of Mormon in Grandin's offices is apparent in his tongue-in-cheek reference to the noticeable frequency of the phrase "and it came to pass" in the Book of Mormon. He printed, "The Book of Mormon is expected to be ready for delivery in the course of one year.—Great and marvellous things will 'come to pass' about those days."¹⁷ "The Gold Bible," he wrote, "by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor, is now in press and will shortly appear. Priestcraft is short lived!"¹⁸ This was Cole's first mention of the book, and the only time he honored Joseph by using a formal version of his name. Ironically, Cole accused the editor of the aforementioned *Palmyra Freeman* of examining "the hidden mysteries" of the unfinished Book of Mormon—something he himself was doing.¹⁹ Cole, the first prolific writer on Joseph and early Mormonism, wrote other harmless banter in September 1829. "We understand," he printed with feigned concern, "that the Anti-Masons have declared war against the Gold Bible.—Oh! how impious."²⁰

While Abner Cole was dismissing the possibility that God had again spoken on earth, Solomon Chamberlain was inquiring "through the country . . . if there was any strange work of God, such as had not been on the earth since the days of Christ." Being guided by the Spirit to Palmyra, a town with which he was unfamiliar, he was asked if he had heard of the Gold Bible. "When they said 'Gold Bible,'" he wrote, "there was a power like electricity [that] went from the top of my head to the end of my toes." He soon arrived at the home of the Smith family, where he recalled, "The Lord revealed to me by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost that this was the work I had been looking for." Solomon accompanied Hyrum Smith to the printing office where, "as soon as they had printed 64 pages," Solomon "took [the pages] with their leave" and journeyed to Canada to preach the Book of Mormon. Solomon was present the next spring when the Book of Mormon went on sale; he purchased "8 or 10 of them" and quickly resumed his mission.²¹

Thomas B. Marsh had a similar experience. Being unable to make his Methodist faith "correspond" with the Bible, he wrote that he "kept aloof from sectarians"²² until one day a "lady enquired if [he] had heard of the Golden Book found by a youth named Joseph Smith." Being "very anxious to know concerning the matter," Thomas traveled to Palmyra and discovered

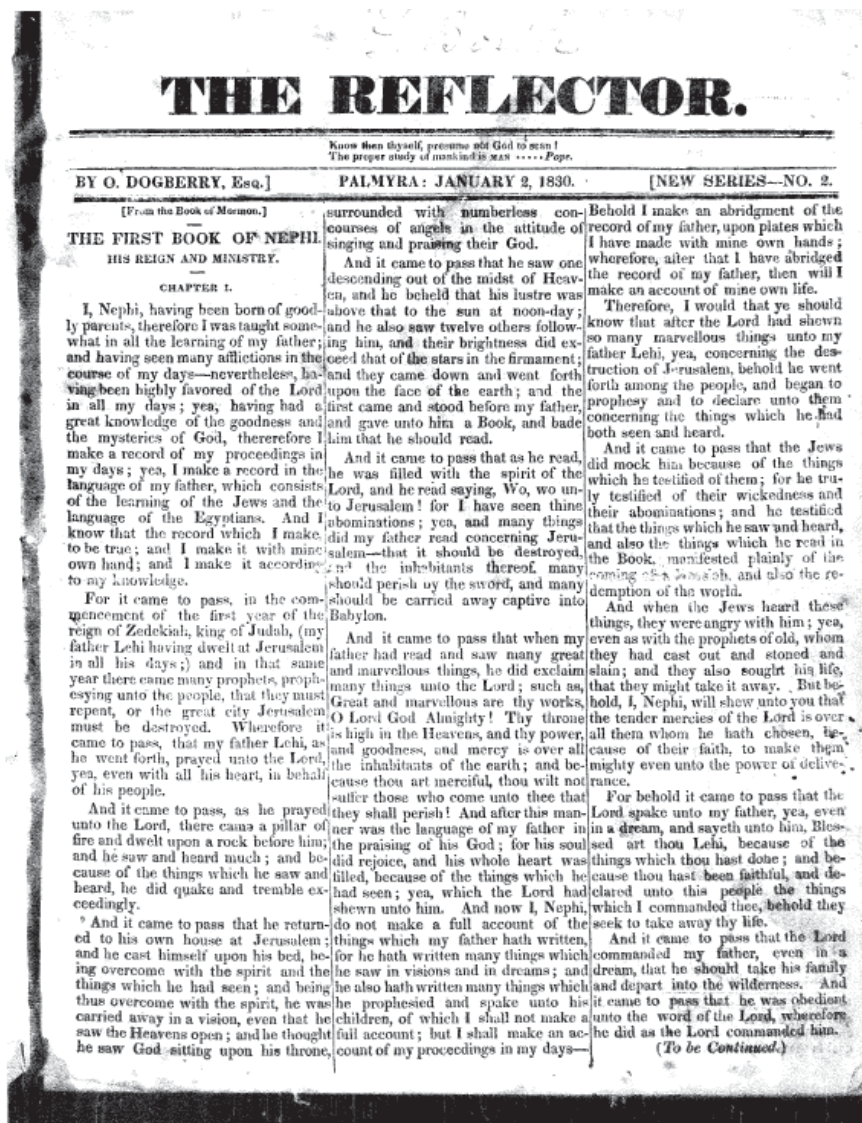
Martin Harris at the printing office, where the proof sheets of the first sixteen pages had just been struck. After learning of Joseph's experiences, he took the proof sheet home to his wife, who "was well pleased, believing it to be the work of God."²³

By October 1829, on the other hand, Abner Cole's sarcasm had increased, along with his familiarity with the Book of Mormon. "The 'New-Jerusalem Reflector' states that the building of the TEMPLE OF NEPHI is to be commenced about the beginning of the first year of the millennium. Thousands are already flocking to the standard of Joseph the Prophet. The Book of Mormon is expected to astonish the natives!"²⁴ Cole's approach intensified in December when he offered a tantalizing glimpse of the controversial book, perhaps seizing the opportunity to increase his readership and try to defame Joseph. Citing the "much curiosity" in the area regarding the Book of Mormon and the "solicitation of many of [his] readers," Cole promised in the December 9 issue to "commence publishing *extracts* from it" in January 1830.²⁵ True to his word, the entire front page of the January 2, 1830, issue of the *Reflector* contained pilfered text from 1 Nephi 1:1 through 2:3 and concluded with the assurance that it was "To be Continued."²⁶

President Ezra Taft Benson deftly described in 1988 what was already beginning on the pages of newspapers and in the hearts of men and women in 1829. "I have noted," he proclaimed, "a difference in discernment, insight, conviction, and spirit between those who know and love the Book of Mormon and those who do not. That book is a great sifter."²⁷ Those like Cole who wagged their heads in derision would never experience what those like Solomon Chamberlain gained from bowing theirs.

The Book of Mormon in Print, 1830

Historians have questioned Cole's motives for copying from the Book of Mormon and have written on his cantankerous personality.²⁸ Most recently, scholars have found evidence that Cole was a freethinker, part of the American Freethought movement from 1825 to 1850.²⁹ Not disposed to orthodoxy or angelic ministrations, Cole instead gloried in his brash attempts at "lifting the veil, tearing off the mantle, and stripping the cloak from the vain pretender, and hold[ing] him up to public ridicule for the finger of scorn to point at."³⁰ His intractable nature led to the well-known confrontations with Hyrum, Oliver, and Joseph over his unauthorized printing



The front page of the January 2, 1830, issue of Abner Cole's *Reflector* (Palmyra, NY).

of the Book of Mormon. According to Lucy Mack Smith's later recollection,³¹ Hyrum, acting on an uneasy feeling, took Oliver into Palmyra one Sunday afternoon to discover Cole hard at work on his newspaper and beligerently denying the illegality of his actions. Joseph, who then lived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, was sent for. He went into town to confront the irascible Cole. The older editor hoped for a fistfight, but "Joseph could not

help smiling at [Cole's] grotesque appearance" and ridiculous behavior.³² The copyright infringement was instead settled through arbitration,³³ but not before Cole printed excerpts in two more January issues of his newspaper.³⁴

The arbitration may have had softening, or, at the least, legally mandated, effects on Cole. Assuming an uncharacteristically objective position regarding the Book of Mormon, Cole included in the same issue as the First Book of Nephi an opinion that he did not intend to "discuss the merits or demerits of this work." He claimed to be "astonished" that certain citizens should be so uneasy about "the Book [which] must stand or fall, according to the whims and fancies of its readers." Although he had not "as yet examined many of its pages" (which is doubtful), he was prepared to state that he could not "discover anything *treasonable*, or which will have a tendency to subvert our liberties." Then, more characteristically ironic, he declared: "As to its religious character, we have as yet no means of determining, and if we had, we should be quite loath to meddle with the *tender* consciences of our neighbors."³⁵

Eleven days later, Cole published a front-page continuation of First Nephi and, once again, also donned an atypical professionalism towards Joseph and the book: "We inadvertently neglected in our remarks last week, respecting this *wonderful* work, to accompany them with the *explanations* requisite to a correct understanding of it." He then clarified that the "appellation of 'Gold Bible'" was an improper form of the proper name, "The Book of Mormon," which was a compilation of books in ancient hieroglyphics written on plates of gold by one named Mormon.³⁶ Cole gave no indications as to what inspired his change in temperament. Nevertheless, one can still see his irrepressible disdain embedded in the text. His third installment, an extract from Alma 27, appeared in the *Reflector* without commentary.³⁷

Unhappy about the legal restraints, Cole turned to satire over the next couple months. His "Book of Pukei" mocked the "prophet Jo," his "book, and his rusty sword, and his magic stone."³⁸ By June 1830, Cole had shed any restraint and resumed his outright castigation: "No prophet . . . has performed half so many wonders as have been attributed to that *spindle shanked* ignoramus **Jo Smith** [who] appears to possess the *quint essence* of impudence."³⁹ The first serious agitator in print, Cole addressed some aspect of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith in no fewer than fifty-three articles from 1829 to the *Reflector's* conclusion in 1831.

Meanwhile, the March 19, 1830, *Wayne Sentinel* announced the upcoming availability of the Book of Mormon.⁴⁰ At least thirty-six articles had been printed in the nine months since the *Sentinel's* first cautious recognition of the Book of Mormon. One week later, March 26, 1830, with a surprising lack of fanfare considering what had been printed to this point about the book, the *Sentinel* reprinted the title page of the Book of Mormon and this addition: "The above work, containing about 600 pages, large Duodecimo, is now for sale, wholesale and retail, at the Palmyra Bookstore, by HOWARD & GRANDIN."⁴¹

The quietness with which the Book of Mormon went on sale was shattered less than one week later. The *Rochester Daily Advertiser* of April 2, 1830, printed an article that surpassed the earlier rebuke of the *Palmyra Freeman* in the number of exchange-newspaper reprints, geographical coverage, and derision. At least eleven newspapers, with a small degree of variation, gave the aforementioned shout: "**BLASPHEMY**—... The 'Book of Mormon' has been placed in our hands. A viler imposition was never practised. It is an evidence of fraud, blasphemy and credulity, shocking to the Christian and moralist." The editors were aghast that "a fellow" named Joseph Smith Jr. had, "by some hocus pocus, acquired such an influence over a wealthy farmer of Wayne county [Martin Harris], that the latter mortgaged his farm for \$3,000 which he paid for printing and binding 5000 copies of this blasphemous work." The editors then included a surprisingly accurate, brief description of the books of the Book of Mormon, and reproduced, without

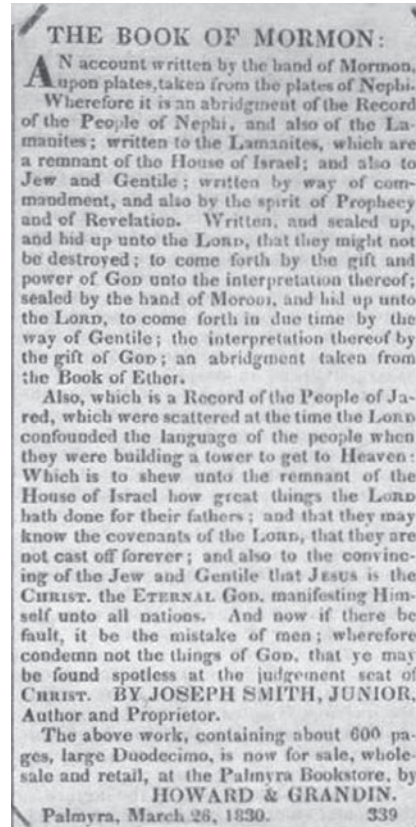


Figure 2. Egbert B. Grandin's announcement that the Book of Mormon was now for sale in the Friday, March 26, 1830, *Wayne Sentinel*. Courtesy of the Church History Museum.

alteration, the preface regarding the 116 stolen pages and the “testimonials” of the three and eight witnesses.⁴²

The 1830 preface,⁴³ prepared by Joseph approximately eight months earlier in August 1829, revealed the nefarious scheme of those who stole the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi in the summer of 1828:

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 . . . some person or persons have stolen and kept from me [one hundred and sixteen pages], . . . for Satan has put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words, that they did read contrary from that which I translated and caused to be written.⁴⁴

Joseph had been directed in a revelation currently published as Doctrine and Covenants 10 to keep this knowledge to himself, to “hold [his] peace until [the Lord] shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter.”⁴⁵ Thus, those who had calculated to discredit Joseph and the Book of Mormon by attempting to reveal contradictory versions of the book were frustrated in their designs.⁴⁶ It is not entirely clear why the editors of these newspapers would have followed their brash denunciation of “credulity, . . . knavery, . . . [and] Blasphemy” eight months later with an almost sympathetic reprint of the lawlessness perpetrated against Joseph and the bold testimonies of eleven witnesses.⁴⁷ Regardless of the reason, Joseph learned the Lord’s omniscience was conclusive: “I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.”⁴⁸ Perhaps the devil had not learned that even in the 1830s, bad press is still press.

Five more newspapers simultaneously reproduced from April to June 1830 a fairly objective summary of the Book of Mormon that recognized the “viler imposition” article but focused instead on the letters of the “eleven individuals, setting forth the excellence of the work and the existence of the original ‘plates,’ of gold, on which the contents of the volume were engraved, in a language which the translator was taught by inspiration.” The harshest words were these: “We subjoin, with some hesitancy, one of the certificates [testimony of the three witnesses], which smacks pretty strongly of what would once have been called blasphemy.”⁴⁹ Whether the aforementioned

editors' intents were positive or negative, they aided the responsibility of the witnesses "to witness unto the world that which [they had] seen"⁵⁰ by reprinting the testimony in at least twenty-four newspaper articles, across seven states, and in nineteen cities.

Those Who Believed

Samuel H. Smith, Joseph's younger brother, enthusiastically departed for his opportunity to declare the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon in the summer of 1830. However, Samuel struggled, according to Lucy Mack Smith's later reminiscences, to find a sincere listener. Dejected, he placed a copy with Methodist preacher John P. Greene, who dismissed it as a "nonsensical fable." His wife, Rhoda Young Greene, on the other hand, believed it and "burst into tears" when Samuel came to collect it. Samuel was touched by her emotion and felt impressed to leave it with her as a present. Not knowing the future of the book, Samuel returned "sick at heart" to Joseph after his mission, claiming he had failed. Meanwhile, Rhoda eventually convinced her husband to read it seriously, and then passed it along to her brothers, Phineas, Lorenzo, Brigham, and Joseph Young.⁵¹ The book continued its circuitous course and landed in the hands of Heber C. Kimball's mother-in-law. "Thus was this book," wrote Lucy, observing the Lord's hand in the matter, "the means of convincing this whole family, and bringing them into the Church, where they have continued faithful members from the commencement of their career until now. And, through their faithfulness and zeal, some of them have become as great and honorable men as ever stood upon the earth."⁵²

Very few neutral or positive commentaries on the Book of Mormon can be found in the newspapers during 1829 and 1830. One must generally turn to personal, autobiographical accounts to find the life-changing power of the book.⁵³ Parley P. Pratt was moved in August 1830 to stop in an unfamiliar region of New York for reasons he did not know but which were "plainly manifest by the Spirit." After visiting with "an old Baptist deacon," he was told "of a *book*, a strange book, a VERY STRANGE BOOK!" Parley remarked, "I felt a strange interest in the book. . . . Next morning I called at his house, where, for the first time, my eyes beheld the 'BOOK OF MORMON,'—that book of books . . . which was the principal means, in

the hands of God, of directing the entire course of my future life.”⁵⁴ Parley continued:

I opened it with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of the several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he exists. My joy was now full, as it were, and I rejoiced sufficiently to more than pay me for all the sorrows, sacrifices and toils of my life.⁵⁵

Parley determined to find Joseph Smith but, finding Joseph absent from his home, spent the night conversing with Hyrum. Parley left the next morning to fill a preaching commitment with a copy of the Book of Mormon in hand. As he walked, he considered the joy that filled his soul and enlarged his heart to be of more value than “all the beautiful farms, houses, villages and property,” he mused, “which passed in review before me on my journey.” The book had changed him. “After duly weighing the whole matter in my mind I saw clearly that these things were true,” he wrote in his autobiography.⁵⁶ Little did he know the extent the book would “[direct] the entire course of [his] future life”—Parley died a martyr at the age of fifty while on a mission bearing testimony of the Book of Mormon.⁵⁷

Likewise, in the fall of 1830, amid the printed insults and derision, a bridge- and mill-builder named Ezra Thayre physically felt the power of the Book of Mormon. Ezra was initially “filled with wrath” about the Book of Mormon—so much so that he offered to loan “a pair of horses [to take Joseph Smith] to prison.” However, upon hearing Hyrum speak, Ezra recalled, “Every word touched me to the inmost soul. . . . The tears rolled down my cheeks. . . . When Hyrum got through, he picked up a book and said, ‘here is the Book of Mormon.’ I said, let me see it. I then opened the book, and I received a shock with such exquisite joy that no pen can write and no tongue can express. . . . I opened it again, and I felt a double portion of the Spirit, that I did not know whether I was in the world or not. I felt as though I was truly in heaven.” Ezra saw the Prophet Joseph the next

Sunday and related his experience to him. Joseph asked him what hindered him “from going into the water [to be baptized. Ezra] said, I am ready and willing at any time.”⁵⁸

Ezra told his brother, who also believed the Book of Mormon, that “when God shows a man such a thing by the power of the Holy Ghost he knows it is true. He cannot doubt it.”⁵⁹ Ezra rejoiced when the Lord called him to sound a trump of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon “unto a crooked and a perverse generation.”⁶⁰

Other sincere seekers such as John and Julia Murdock and William W. Phelps had equally compelling encounters with the Book of Mormon. The power and spirit of the Book of Mormon influenced some of the early Saints so profoundly that even the critical newspapers took note. Early Mormon missionaries declared the marvelous work and wonder with as much enthusiasm as editors denounced it. Like Solomon Chamberlain, these irrepressible missionaries frequently carried printer’s proof sheets because they could not wait for the finished, bound copies before preaching the Restoration.⁶¹ Such zeal showed up in the papers. One concerned citizen wrote, “Mr. Editor—Please advise *hyrum* smith, and some of his ill-bred associates, not to be quite so impertinent, when *decent* folks denounce the imposition of the ‘**Gold-Bible.**’ The anathemas of such ignorant wretches, although not feared, are not quite so well relished by some people—Apostles should keep cool.”⁶² Apparently, the Lord’s imposed waiting period for Hyrum a year earlier to “obtain [the Lord’s] word” before preaching was satisfied. Hyrum now had the Lord’s “Spirit, and [His] word: Yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men,”⁶³ insomuch that citizens wrote to the newspapers about it.

The first year of the published Book of Mormon concluded with a few objective descriptions, reports of missionaries preaching, additional criticisms, and Abner Cole gnashing, “It is time the wretch [Joseph Smith] was unmasked and his hideous form exhibited.”⁶⁴ Whatever its reception so far, the Book of Mormon could not be recalled.

The Copious Commentary of 1831

The year 1831 included more than 115 articles on the Book of Mormon, outnumbering the sum of the previous two years, as well as the combined number of the next six years. The articles became more refined and more vitriolic and were reprinted more frequently in the exchange than previously. The

year began, not surprisingly, with Abner Cole applying his “censorial lash.”⁶⁵ On January 1, 1831, he quipped, “We have been informed, that one of Jo Smith’s Gold bibles was lately burnt at the stake in the village of Newark, Wayne county.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the humor would be short-lived. In the final three months before his newspaper failed in March 1831, Cole wrote a series of haphazard editorials on the Gold Bible. “It is our intention,” he declared in his introduction, to give “a plain and unvarnished statement of facts . . . [connected] with the origin, rise, and progress of the book in question; so that our readers may . . . judge . . . matters for themselves.”⁶⁷ Six articles of considerable length were printed somewhat biweekly over three months. The content of the articles wandered across a fanciful history of the Smith family, Mohammed and the Koran, Joanna Southcott,⁶⁸ and a criticism of the alleged variations in the historical details of the testimonies of the Book of Mormon witnesses. Two Ohio newspapers, the *Ashtabula Journal* and the *Painesville Telegraph*,⁶⁹ reprinted three of the series, perhaps as a result of Joseph and the New York Saints arriving in nearby Kirtland, Ohio, in early 1831.

More profound in its ability to shape the reception of the Book of Mormon than Cole’s Gold Bible series was the reaction of the *Ashtabula Journal* to its new neighbors. “The believers in the sacred authenticity of this miserable production,” it denounced, “are known by the name of ‘Mormonites’” and are led by “additional revelation from the prolifick [*sic*] prophet, Smith.” The article reported the Mormon population in the adjoining counties at four hundred. The article then recounted a revelation to a young man “written in heaven by the finger of God . . . [in] letters of gold,” but as soon as he attempted to copy the ethereal call to the ministry, the letters entirely vanished. Then followed a description of a “man of colour, a chief man,” said to fancy he could fly and, “sometimes seized with strange vagaries, and conceits,” jumped off a cliff of twenty-five feet but fell unharmed into a tree.⁷⁰ The article was swept up in the exchange, and variations were reprinted fourteen times from February to June 1831. It made its way back to the *Wayne Sentinel* in Palmyra, and, for the first time, more than nine hundred miles away to Little Rock, Arkansas Territory.

February 1831 saw the first comprehensive, methodical excoriations of the Book of Mormon. The first anti-Mormon pamphlet was also the first formal anti-Book of Mormon pamphlet. Written by reformist clergyman

Alexander Campbell, *Delusions* contained a surprisingly succinct summary of the 590-page Book of Mormon. Campbell's most well-known criticism was that Joseph endeavored to answer in the Book of Mormon "every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies;—infant baptism, . . . the trinity, . . . the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, . . . the general resurrection, eternal punishment, . . . the question of free masonry [*sic*], republican government, and the rights of man."⁷¹ *Delusions* was first printed in Campbell's highly recognized *Millennial Harbinger* (Bethany, VA) on February 7, 1831. Newspapers such as the *Painesville Telegraph* and the *Cleveland Herald* anticipated the opportunity to reprint the review "from the able pen of Alexander Campbell [which] unequivocally and triumphantly sets the question of the divine authenticity of the 'Book' forever at rest, to every *rational* mind."⁷² *Delusions* was still circulating in the newspaper exchange at least eighteen months later and one newspaper, the *Essex Gazette* from Haverhill, Massachusetts, even printed it twice, consuming the entire front page for two consecutive weeks.⁷³

Campbell had not taken lightly the defection of Sidney Rigdon to Mormonism,⁷⁴ and the source of Rigdon's conversion, the Book of Mormon, would bear the brunt of his attack. The bitterness between the factions became sufficiently noteworthy to surface in the papers. An article printed on March 22, 1831, in the *Vermont Telegraph* (Brandon, VT) reprinted a letter written to the Utica, New York, *Baptist Register* on the subject: "Campbellism with us,' wrote the author, 'is on the decline. Many of its votaries have embraced Mormonism, or the new revelation. The war has changed its appearance, and seems now to be between Campbellites and Mormonites."⁷⁵ Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon had aroused the ire of one of the most recognized religionists of the time. When Joseph lamented in his 1838 history that his "circumstances in life [were] such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, Yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against [him] and create a hot [bitter] persecution,"⁷⁶ he may well have had in mind such persons as Alexander Campbell.

Campbell was not the only writer to systematically analyze the Book of Mormon. The editors of the Hudson, Ohio, *Observer and Telegraph* conceded to "clear up [the] doubts" of a reader "solicitous to know the truth"

concerning the “volume of silly impostures,” and they presented a five-point discourse defining why new revelation was impossible.⁷⁷ Those who are familiar with the Book of Mormon can readily recognize in the argument Nephi’s prophecy of the latter days wherein “many of the Gentiles [would] say, A Bible, a Bible, we have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.”⁷⁸ A portion of the article was reprinted in the *Connecticut Observer* (Hartford) two weeks later.⁷⁹

The reception of the Book of Mormon in its first three years was continually shaped by descriptions of the Saints themselves. A letter sent to an Ohio newspaper “signed by ten individuals of the first respectability,” declared the followers of the “gold bible [to be] few and generally of the dregs of community, and the most unlettered people that can be found anywhere.”⁸⁰ The Saints were continually classified by and identified in the pages of newspapers with small jabs at their belief in the Book of Mormon.⁸¹

Believers in the Book of Mormon were not spared being called names either. Articles since 1829 included a flurry of epithets using the word “Mormon.” Religious devotees of Joseph’s time were, like Book of Mormon peoples, frequently termed “-ites” of their leader. Followers of Joseph were referred to as “Smithites” in at least one article.⁸² Interest in and skepticism of the name Mormon by 1831 led to the regular use of the appellation *Mormonites*, which was later shortened to *Mormons*. It was, nevertheless, not used in kindness. The New York–based *Brockport Free Press* of April 6, 1831, helped spread a contortion of the unfamiliar name: “We hear much these days about the Mormonites, the Mormon Bible, the Book of Mormon, and people are very desirous to know what *Mormon* signifies. . . . The word Mormon comes from the Greek word *mormoo* [and signifies,] ‘bugbear, hobgoblin, raw head and bloody bones.’” The editors claimed the definition came from an English dictionary “of quite ancient date,” and, conveniently for them, only “very few copies are now extant”—and only in London. The editors reassured their readers, though, that they had seen a copy of the dictionary and verified the definition. They then surmised that Joseph’s choice of the word *Mormon* “was no doubt done for the purpose of carrying out his experiment on human credulity to the greatest extent—even to give the book a name, in addition to its contents, which would carry on the very face of it the nature of its true character—a fiction of hobgoblins and bugbears.”⁸³

This definition stayed in the newspaper exchange over the years and eventually resurfaced thirteen years later in the *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* (Concord, NH). However, the editor claimed to increase the “credibility” of the definition by citing ancient Greek texts and added to the end of the definition the phrase, “a hideous spectre, a frightful mask, something to frighten children.”⁸⁴ Even Joseph’s clarification in the *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL) that Mormon’s name literally means “more good”⁸⁵ was trivialized by the editor when he claimed that Joseph “ignorantly [pretended] that Mormon was a sacred Jewish name . . . and [has] attempted to clothe the word Mormon with a sacred meaning.”⁸⁶

The months of May, June, and July in 1831 presented what must have been an especially painful surprise when Joseph and Emma (and John Murdock) opened their papers. “The wife of a Mr. Murdock . . . and a believer in Mormonism,” it rapaciously reported, “died among them in child-bed [birth], for want of professional assistance. The wife of the prophet Smith hardly escaped the same fate; she was in labor three days, during which time they tried their spells in vain, at last they called an accoucheur,⁸⁷ and she was delivered of the dead bodies of two fine boys. The mother barely survived.”⁸⁸ The editor was careful not to miss the fact that Mormons claimed the gift of healing and added this flippant, poignant example to regularly printed examples of failed Mormon miracles. What new wounds did it cause, particularly for Emma, as it was reprinted in at least four different exchange newspapers in four different states (Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts)?⁸⁹

Occasionally, editors exhibited a rare degree of professionalism and objectivity in reporting about the Book of Mormon. Controversial free-thinker and social reformer Francis (Fanny) Wright published a high-profile New York City newspaper named the *Free Enquirer*. The editor, Robert Dale Owen, printed on September 10, 1831, a nearly full-page “comparison between the Book of Mormon and the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, or the Golden Bible vs. the Holy Bible” written by his brother. He, “after a pretty careful perusal,” wrote that “the Golden Bible will bear a very good comparison with the holy Bible. I find nothing in the former inconsistent with the doctrines or opposed to a belief in the latter; on the contrary, the one seems to corroborate the other; and I can discover no good reason why the generality of Christians should scoff, as I have generally

found them do, and hoot at the idea of believing in such a monstrously absurd book.”⁹⁰ These conclusions are surprising, considering how many editors were reprinting opposite claims that Joseph had cobbled together the Book of Mormon by plagiarizing the Bible.⁹¹

The year 1831 ended with an unexpected, counterintuitive boon. Apostate Ezra Booth wrote nine derogatory letters on Mormonism that were published in the *Ohio Star* (Ravenna, OH) from October 13 to December 8, 1831, centered on his dissatisfaction with the dedicatory trip to Zion in June and July 1831. His second letter denounced the alleged idea that the Book of Mormon was the “test by which every man’s fate is to be tried”—that those who reject it “are threatened with eternal damnation,” and shall be “swept off as with the besom of destruction.”⁹² It reemphasized the oft-published claim that Mormons considered the Book of Mormon far superior to the Bible, an incriminating accusation in the Bible-loving America. The letters initially had a dire effect. Ambrose Palmer, a Church member, wrote letters to Oliver Cowdery in which he described Booth’s letters as giving the Book of Mormon such a coloring and appearance of falsehood that observers worried Mormonism would be overthrown by them.⁹³ Booth’s letters were reprinted in the exchange primarily, it appears, by three newspapers in Ohio, but as far as one hundred miles from Kirtland. The letters would make another appearance in the first formal anti-Mormon book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, written by *Painesville Telegraph* newspaper editor Eber D. Howe two years later.

The effect of the letters was potent enough that on December 1, 1831, the Lord called Joseph and Sidney (and others) to leave their work of translating the Bible to go on “a mission for a season.” They were to “confound [their] enemies . . . both in public and in private” and were promised that although the detractors may “bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord,” they “shall be confounded.”⁹⁴ Sidney Rigdon challenged Ezra Booth and Symonds Rider “in public” on pages of the same *Ohio Star* newspaper to a written or oral debate in December 1831 and January 1832. Booth and Rider declined, and the missions proved effective in defeating the rumors and spreading the truth.⁹⁵ Once again, the devil’s attempt to thwart the work instead propelled it forward. After about six weeks, Joseph declared, “We did much towards allaying the excited feelings which were growing out of the scandalous letters.”⁹⁶

As for Ezra Booth, Joseph did not mince words. Booth's letters, "by their coloring, falsity, and vain calculations to overthrow the work of the Lord," railed Joseph, "exposed his weakness, wickedness and folly, and left him a monument of his own shame for the world to wonder at."⁹⁷ Historian Richard L. Bushman observed, "Booth then dropped from sight. Only his letters . . . remained to mark his trail across Joseph's life."⁹⁸

The year concluded with an unintended reaffirmation of the unstoppable spread of the marvelous, wonderful work. The *Philadelphia Album and Ladies' Literary Gazette* of December 18, 1831, marked the swelling deluge: "The book which these men have pretended to translate from these sheets of gold has been printed, and they are now busily engaged in scattering copies of it throughout the country."⁹⁹

Conclusion

The first three years of the publication of the Book of Mormon included more than 208 articles mentioning the Book of Mormon in 88 newspapers identified thus far. The Book of Mormon was more frequently addressed in newspapers from 1829 to 1831 than in the next nine years combined. The attitudes toward and perceptions of the Book of Mormon found in these newspapers were overwhelmingly negative. Nevertheless, truthful, diligent seekers ignored the pointing fingers from the great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27, 33) and felt both spiritual and physical power as they prayerfully pondered its pages. From the first announcement in the *Wayne Sentinel* that the Book of Mormon was for sale, the Book of Mormon continued to trickle into villages, hamlets, and townships all through the country—and to the edges of the ever-expanding frontier.

How much of the destiny of this book written upon gold plates and deposited in nearby Cumorah could Joseph have fathomed the night Moroni first mentioned it? The unearthing of this book that whispered from the dust (see Isaiah 29:4; 2 Nephi 3:19–20; 33:13) was a turbulent sifting process for nineteenth-century America. Nevertheless, the backwash of negative newspaper reception could never stem the tide stirred by the Book of Mormon. The worst that nineteenth-century tongue, quill, or printing press screeched could not halt the coming forth of the marvelous work called the Book of Mormon.

Notes

1. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt, 1856), 3:91.
2. “Blasphemy,” *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, April 2, 1830; “Blasphemy,” *Rochester Republican*, April 6, 1830; emphases and spelling in original. It is interesting to note that on the same date the *Rochester Republican* printed the article, the Church was being formally organized in Fayette, New York. See Doctrine and Covenants 21.
3. These sources have been collected by the author for his PhD at the University of Utah. The dissertation, which has a journalism history emphasis, is an examination of the influence of the printing press on the development of the Church in its formative years. It is expected to be completed in late 2015. The numerical descriptions given in this essay are expected to increase as additional newspapers are digitized and chronicled.
4. See “Book of Mormon Reaches 150 Million Copies,” *Church News*, April 20, 2011; “20 Books That Changed America,” *ABC News*, January 7, 2006; Statistical Report, 2013, in Conference Report (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 2014).
5. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, [132], in *The Joseph Smith Papers*.
6. The date of Martin’s revelation, now section 19, has been changed from the previously thought spring of 1830 to the earlier summer of 1829, based on new evidence discovered by scholars of the Joseph Smith Papers Project. For more information, see Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 85–92 (hereafter *JSP*, D1).
7. *Wayne Sentinel*, June 26, 1829; emphasis in original.
8. “Copyright for Book of Mormon, 11 June 1829,” in *JSP*, D1:76–81. It is unknown if it was Joseph Smith or someone acting on his behalf that completed the copyright registration. See the “Historical Introduction” on page 77 of the same volume.
9. See Joseph Smith Jr., “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” n.d., 34, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*.
10. See, for example, “From the Golden Bible,” *Paul Pry’s Weekly Bulletin*, July 25, 1829; “From the Golden Bible,” *Paul Pry’s Weekly Bulletin*, August 1, 1829; “From the Golden Bible,” *Paul Pry’s Weekly Bulletin*, August 8, 1829. From the titles, the connection may seem obvious; however, the editor was writing a satire using biblical references, not addressing the Book of Mormon directly.
11. “Golden Bible,” *Palmyra Freeman*, August 11, 1829; emphases in original.
12. Antebellum newspaper editors exchanged their papers with each other for little or no cost, through the US postal service—courtesy of the Post Office Act of 1792. This system allowed national news to be disseminated throughout the new Republic and for noteworthy local news to spread beyond its hometown

- origin. See Richard A. Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 1:4–7; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 226–27.
13. “Golden Bible,” *Palmyra Freeman*, August 11, 1829; emphases in original.
 14. Robert A. Gross, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *A History of the Book in America: An Extensive Republic, Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790–1840*, ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 2:4; emphasis removed for clarity.
 15. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 82.
 16. See Abner Cole, “Selected Items,” *Reflector*, September 23, 1829, 2.
 17. Abner Cole, *Reflector*, September 16, 1829, 2; emphases and spelling in original. Joseph endured frequent ridicule for his “overuse” of the English iteration of the Hebrew literary connecting thought, wayehi. Mark Twain, decades later, called the phrase “Joseph’s ‘pet.’” “If he had left that out,” Twain continued, “his Bible would have been only a pamphlet.” Samuel L. Clemens, *Roughing It* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1873), 127–28. Joseph removed a number of redundant instances of the phrase when reviewing the 1830 edition for the 1837 printing.
 18. Abner Cole, *Reflector*, September 2, 1829, 2.
 19. Abner Cole, “Beware of Secret Associations,” *Reflector*, September 30, 1829, 1.
 20. Cole, “Selected Items,” 2.
 21. As reproduced in Larry C. Porter, “Solomon Chamberlain—Early Missionary,” *BYU Studies* 12, no. 33 (1972): 1–3. A holograph of Chamberlain’s autobiography can be found in the “Book of Abraham Project” associated with the BYU Harold B. Lee Library, at <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/SChamberlain.html>.
 22. Thomas B. Marsh, “History of Thomas Baldwin Marsh,” *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, June 4, 1864, 360.
 23. Thomas B. Marsh, “History of Thomas Baldwin Marsh,” *Millennial Star*, June 11, 1864, 375.
 24. Abner Cole, *Reflector*, October 7, 1829, 2; emphasis in original. It is unclear if Cole’s reference to “the natives” meant the Palmyra citizens, or the Native Americans, regarding which Mormonism would later be sharply criticized, but which had not surfaced significantly in the papers yet. If Cole’s remark was about the Native Americans, it is evidence of his deeper reading of the Book of Mormon.
 25. Abner Cole, “Gold Bible,” *Reflector*, December 9, 1829, 1; emphasis in original.
 26. Abner Cole, “The First Book of Nephi,” *Reflector*, January 2, 1830, 1. Despite his growing antagonism, Cole’s reprinted text is largely without error or intentional corruption.
 27. Ezra Taft Benson, “Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign*, December 1988, 4. President Benson was speaking of the difference in members of the Church who had and had not developed an abiding love for the Book of Mormon.

28. See, for example, Andrew H. Hedges, "The Refractory Abner Cole," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Truman G. Madsen et al. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002).
29. For an examination of Cole's freethought philosophies and an alternate theory about his reasons and methods of writing, see Kimberley Mangun and Jeremy J. Chatelain, "For 'the Cause of Civil and Religious Liberty': Abner Cole and the Palmyra, New York, Reflector," *American Journalism* 32, no. 1 (2015): forthcoming.
30. Abner Cole, "To the Public," *Reflector*, September 2, 1829, 1.
31. Lucy Mack Smith's history was recorded with the assistance of Martha Jane Coray approximately fifteen years after the events with Abner Cole took place, and when she was 70 years old, which makes it prone to errors in accuracy. See "Historical Introduction" for Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*. To date, no account of this interaction has been discovered in the histories of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, or Hyrum Smith to corroborate the details.
32. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, [165–68].
33. See Nathaniel Hinckley Wadsworth, "Copyright Laws and the 1830 Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 3 (2006): 77–99.
34. See Abner Cole, "The First Book of Nephi (Continued from Our Last.)," *Reflector*, January 13, 1830, 1; Abner Cole, "Book of Mormon," *Reflector*, January 22, 1830, 3.
35. Abner Cole, "GOLD BIBLE," *Reflector*, January 2, 1830, 5; emphases in original; spelling has been modernized for readability.
36. Abner Cole, "Gold Bible," *Reflector*, January 13, 1830, 4; emphases in original.
37. See Cole, "Book of Mormon," 3–4.
38. Abner Cole, "The Book of Pukei," *Reflector*, June 12, 1830; see also Abner Cole, "The Book of Pukei Chapter 2," *Reflector*, July 7, 1830.
39. Abner Cole, *Reflector*, June 30, 1830; emphases in original.
40. See *Wayne Sentinel*, March 19, 1830.
41. See "The Book of Mormon," *Wayne Sentinel*, March 26, 1830. Similarly, the bookbinder, Luther Howard, also advertised the availability of the Book of Mormon in his Palmyra newspaper, buried amid titles of other books for sale. See, for example, Luther Howard, "Miscellaneous Books," *Western Spectator and Public Advertiser*, April 5, 1831. "Duodecimo" refers to a book size of about 5 × 7.5 inches (13 × 19 cm), determined by printing on sheets folded to form twelve leaves or twenty-four pages.
42. "Blasphemy," *Ithaca Journal and General Advertiser*, April 28, 1830; emphasis and spelling in original.
43. This preface was discontinued in the next version of the Book of Mormon in 1837.
44. Preface, *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, NY: E. B. Grandin, 1830), 1, iv.
45. *Book of Commandments* (Independence, MO: W. W. Phelps & Co., 1833), chap. IX:8; see also D&C 10:37.

46. The manuscript was stolen from Martin Harris in the summer of 1828; the Book of Mormon went on sale March 26, 1830. If the conspirators were waiting until all five thousand copies were finished and the \$3,000 had been spent so as to maximize the damage, the cunning plan of the devil would have required nearly two years of patience on the part of his workers. Lucy Harris, Martin's wife, did not escape implication. Her role in the plot also made it into the exchange and was printed in various newspapers at least in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. "She it was," the articles state, "who purloined several pages of the first revelation, and which, by the direction of the angel, have never been supplied." "The Progress of Mormonism," *Philadelphia Album*, May 28, 1831, 173.
47. Some editors may have hoped that revealing some of the "style of the work [the Book of Mormon]" would expose weaknesses. B. F. Hallett, *Rhode Island American*, April 16, 1830, 4. Indeed, many people found fault with the close relationships of the witnesses. Mark Twain sarcastically wrote that he would not have been any more convinced of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon had the entire Whitmer family witnessed of it. See Clemens, *Roughing It*, 130.
48. *Book of Commandments*, chap. IX:10; See also D&C 10:43.
49. *United States Gazette*, April 13, 1830, 4.
50. "Testimony of Eight Witnesses," in Book of Mormon (1830), 590. The witness testimonies are found at the end of the 1830 edition as opposed to the front, as is more common today.
51. An alternate account of Brigham Young's introduction to the Book of Mormon is recounted in the autobiography of the aforementioned Solomon Chamberlain. Solomon recalled the story twenty-nine years later, saying that he used the proof sheets printed in 1829 on his Canadian mission to preach to a group of reformed Methodist preachers. "[They] abused me very bad," he wrote. He claimed that Brigham Young and his brother, Phineas, were attending the conference. "They did not oppose me," he explained, "but used me well." "Autobiography of Solomon Chamberlain," as reproduced in Porter, "Solomon Chamberlain—Early Missionary," 3. This is an instance of later recollections becoming convoluted. Brigham's account on the first page of this essay was given in a conference in 1852, some twenty-two years later, and he states he received the Book of Mormon from a man two or three weeks after it was printed. Whereas Solomon only had proof sheets at the Canadian conference, he would not have been able to leave a copy of the Book of Mormon with Brigham at that time, which was prior to March 1830 anyway. Lucy does not state that when Rhoda Young gave her copy of the book to her brothers that they hadn't already heard of it, but seems to indicate it was that specific copy that converted the Youngs and the Kimballs. Brigham doesn't mention either Solomon or his sister in his 1852 account when he relates his Book of Mormon conversion story.
52. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, [169–71], [186–88]. Lucy does not clarify which family she meant by "this whole family."
53. Such autobiographical accounts are essential when weaving a historical narrative. Nevertheless, they were most commonly written decades later, when the writer had been seasoned by events that took place afterwards. For example, although

the following account of Parley P. Pratt occurred when these articles were being printed, it was not written contemporaneously to the events described.

54. Parley P. Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 36–38; emphases in original.
55. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 38.
56. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 39–40; punctuation modernized for readability.
57. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, appendix, i–ii.
58. Ezra Thayre, “Testimony of Brother E. Thayre,” *The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald*, October 1862, 79–83. As with the account of Parley P. Pratt, it is worth noting that this account was recorded thirty-two years after the fact.
59. Thayre, “Testimony,” 80.
60. *Book of Commandments*, chap. XXXV:2; D&C 33:2; see also Steven C. Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine & Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 110–12.
61. See Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55–61; see also Paul C. Gutjahr, *The Book of Mormon: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 114.
62. Abner Cole, *Reflector*, April 19, 1830, 6; emphases in original.
63. *Book of Commandments*, chap. X:10. See also D&C 11:21–22.
64. Abner Cole, “The Marion Monk,” *Reflector*, September 13, 1830, 4.
65. “Information Wanted,” *Reflector*, January 2, 1830, 6.
66. Abner Cole, “AUTO DA FE,” *Reflector*, January 1, 1831, 5; spelling in original.
67. Abner Cole, “Gold Bible,” *Reflector*, January 6, 1831, 4.
68. Nineteenth-century writer John Hayward, known for his gazetteers and descriptive book of religions, described the “prophetess” Joanna Southcott (1750–1814) as one “who made considerable noise in England.” Southcott became famous for her prophecies regarding Christ, Satan, and events described in the book of Revelation. See John Hayward, *The Book of Religions*, 2nd ed. (Boston: John Hayward, 1842), 255–58. In the same book, Hayward published a favorable twelve-page description of the Mormons based on a lengthy letter from Joseph Smith in 1842. Joseph was generous in his praise for the untainted reprinting of his letter.
69. Eber D. Howe established the Ohio-based *Painesville Telegraph* in 1822 and regularly published anti-Mormon articles from 1831 until 1835 before selling the paper to his brother. Some of the vitriol in his editorials may have been a result of his sister joining the Mormons in 1831 and his wife having been baptized by 1834.
70. “The Golden Bible, or The Book of Mormon,” *Ashtabula Journal*, February 5, 1831, 3; spelling in original.
71. Alexander Campbell, “Delusions,” *Millennial Harbinger*, February 7, 1831, 93.
72. *Painesville Telegraph*, March 1, 1831, 3; emphasis in original; see also “Summary,” *Cleveland Herald*, March 10, 1831, 3.

73. See “Delusions. An Analysis of the Book of Mormon,” *Essex Gazette*, September 8, 1832, 1–2; “Delusions. An Analysis of the Book of Mormon,” *Essex Gazette*, September 15, 1832, 1–2.
74. Richard L. Bushman observed that Campbell took the Book of Mormon “seriously.” For his comments on Campbell and Rigdon, see Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 89–90.
75. “Mormonites,” *Vermont Telegraph*, March 22, 1831, 103.
76. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” in Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 76 (hereafter *JSP*, H1); Joseph Smith—History 1:22. Although Joseph was speaking of his adolescence, as many as eighteen years had passed, and his feelings had been seasoned with encounters with those such as Campbell.
77. “The Golden Bible,” *Observer and Telegraph*, February 10, 1831.
78. 2 Nephi 29:6.
79. See “The Golden Bible,” *Connecticut Observer*, February 28, 1831, 36.
80. *Painesville Telegraph*, March 22, 1831; spelling modernized for readability; see also “From the Painesville Telegraph,” *Huron Reflector*, May 16, 1831, 1.
81. For example, a group of Saints migrating from New York to Ohio were called “a company of ‘Golden Bible Pilgrims’” in April 1831. *Ithaca Journal and General Advertiser*, April 27, 1831, 3. Another paper referred to the group as “followers of Jo Smith’s Bible speculation.” “Mormon Emigration,” *Erie Gazette*, May 19, 1831, 3.
82. See, for example, “Correspondence of the Baltimore Sun,” *Sun*, September 20, 1842, 4.
83. “Mormon Bible,” *Brockport Free Press*, April 6, 1831, 1; italics in original.
84. “Mormon,” *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, February 29, 1844, 4.
85. Joseph Smith Jr., “Correspondence,” *Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1843, 2; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Mormon Should Mean ‘More Good,’” *Ensign*, November 1990.
86. “Mormon,” *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 4.
87. A man who assists women in childbirth. Noah Webster, “Accoucheur,” in *American Dictionary of the English Language* (n.p.: n.p., 1828), <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/>.
88. “The Mormon Fanaticism,” *Salem Gazette*, June 24, 1831, 2.
89. It is not inconceivable that Emma’s family, only approximately 128 miles away, would have read a similar article. Although strong feelings existed, a family member hoping to keep abreast of the distrusted sect would not have found it difficult to find information in the papers. Articles in the newspaper exchange traveled hundreds of miles and even as far as Hawaii in the 1830s and 1840s. As for Emma’s feelings, Joseph left for Missouri to dedicate Zion in June 1831 and was probably unaware of the article’s frequency and duration.
90. William Owen, “Communications,” *Free Enquirer*, September 10, 1831, 3.

198 Jeremy J. Chatelain

91. Though beyond the scope of this essay, one of the most highly organized attacks on the Book of Mormon, including a comprehensive list of alleged plagiarisms, is found in "Mormonism," *Zion's Watchman*, February 3, 1838, 2. The editorial is approximately 7,860 words long, the equivalent of about twenty double-spaced pages on 8.5" × 11" paper.
92. Ezra Booth, "Mormonism—No. II," *Ohio Star*, October 20, 1831.
93. See Ambrose Palmer, "Brother O. Cowdery," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, January 1835, 61–62. For more on Ezra Booth's letters, see Dennis Rowley, "The Ezra Booth Letters," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 133–37; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 177–78.
94. "Revelation, 1 December 1831," in *Revelation Book 2* (Kirtland, OH: n.p., n.d.), 11–12.
95. See Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine & Covenants*, 247–49.
96. Smith, "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," 179.
97. Smith, "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," 154.
98. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 177.
99. "The Book of Gold," *Philadelphia Album*, December 18, 1831, 405. The article, nevertheless, was not kind in its appraisal of Joseph, the plates, and the Book of Mormon, and the statement appears to have been given in alarm at the wide dispersion of the book.