How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon

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Modern Church, Critical Text, Joseph Smith, Restoration, Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

Abstract
Details of the translation process Joseph Smith used for translating the Book of Mormon from the plates can be adduced from statements of witnesses and from evidence in the original and printer's manuscripts. According to witnesses, Joseph Smith often translated without the plates being present and used the interpreters to receive the revealed text. Evidence from the manuscripts themselves shows that the original manuscript was written from dictation, that Joseph Smith was working with at least twenty words at a time, that Joseph Smith could see the spelling of names, that the scribe repeated the text to Joseph Smith, and that the word *chapter* and the corresponding chapter numbers were not part of the revealed text. The manuscripts and text show that Joseph Smith apparently received the translation word for word and letter for letter, in what is known as "tight control."

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Joseph Smith could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. (This is the same interview where Emma reports feeling plates "pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb" hidden under a tablecloth.) The Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon, translated by Christopher Nemelka around 1994. Much of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon was irrecoverably damaged by water after being placed into the cornerstone of the Nauvoo temple, but about 30% of it survived. Here is the beginning of 1 Nephi 3, dictated with Oliver Cowdery as scribe Details of the translation process Joseph Smith used for translating the Book of Mormon from the plates can be adduced from statements of witnesses and from evidence in the original and printer's manuscripts. According to witnesses, Joseph Smith often translated without the plates being present and used the interpreters to receive the revealed text. Evidence from the manuscripts themselves shows that the original manuscript was written from dictation, that Joseph Smith was working with at least twenty words at a time, that Joseph Smith could see the spelling of names, that the scribe repeated the text to Joseph Smith, and that the word *chapter* and the corresponding chapter numbers were not part of the revealed text. The manuscripts and text show that Joseph Smith apparently received the translation word for word and letter for letter, in what is known as "tight control."