

# Book of Mormon Editions

by Royal Skousen

Two major goals of each published edition of the Book of Mormon have been (1) to faithfully reproduce the text; and (2) to make the text accessible to the reader. The goal of textual accuracy has led later editors to earlier editions and, when available, to the original and printer's manuscripts (see [Book of Mormon Manuscripts](#)). The goal of accessibility has led to some modernization and standardization of the text itself and the addition of reader's helps (introductory material, versification, footnotes, chapter summaries, dates, pronunciation guides, and indexes).

Four editions were published during Joseph Smith's lifetime:

1. 1830: 5,000 copies; published by E. B. Grandin in Palmyra, New York. In general, the first edition is a faithful copy of the printer's manuscript (although on one occasion the original manuscript rather than the printer's was used for typesetting). For the most part, this edition reproduces what the compositor, John H. Gilbert, considered grammatical "errors." Gilbert added punctuation and determined the paragraphing for the first edition. In the Preface, Joseph Smith explains the loss of the Book of Lehi—116 pages of manuscript (see Manuscript, Lost 116 Pages). The testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses were placed at the end of the book. In this and all other early editions, there is no versification.
2. 1837: Either 3,000 or 5,000 copies; published by Parley P. Pratt and John Goodson, Kirtland, Ohio. For this edition, hundreds of grammatical changes and a few emendations were made in the text. The 1830 edition and the printer's manuscript were used as the basis for this edition.
3. 1840: 2,000 copies; published for Ebenezer Robinson and Don Carlos Smith (by Shepard and Stearns, Cincinnati, Ohio), Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith compared the printed text with the original manuscript and discovered a number of errors made in copying the printer's manuscript from the original. Thus the 1840 edition restores some of the readings of the original manuscript.
4. 1841: 4,050 copies (5,000 contracted); published for Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Parley P. Pratt (by J. Tompkins, Liverpool, England). This first European edition was printed with the permission of Joseph Smith; it is essentially a reprinting of the 1837 edition with British spellings.

Two additional British editions, one in 1849 (edited by Orson Pratt) and the other in 1852 (edited by Franklin D. Richards), show minor editing of the text. In the 1852 edition, Richards added numbers to the paragraphs to aid in finding passages, thereby creating the first—although primitive—versification for the Book of Mormon.

Three other important LDS editions have involved major changes in format as well as minor editing:

1. 1879: Edited by Orson Pratt. Major changes in the format of the text included division of the long chapters in the original text, a true versification system (which has been followed in all subsequent LDS editions), and footnotes (mostly scriptural references).
2. 1920: Edited by James E. Talmage. Further changes in format included introductory material, double columns, chapter summaries, and new footnotes. Some of the minor editing found in this edition appeared earlier in the 1905 and 1911 editions, also under the editorship of Talmage.
3. 1981: Edited by a committee headed by members of the Quorum of the Twelve. This edition is a major reworking of the 1920 edition: The text appears again in double columns, but new introductory material, chapter summaries, and footnotes are provided. About twenty significant textual errors that had entered the printer's manuscript are corrected by reference to the original manuscript. Other corrections were made from comparison with the printer's manuscript and the 1840 Nauvoo edition.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) also has its own textual tradition. Prior to 1874, the RLDS used an edition of the Book of Mormon published by James O. Wright (1858, New York), basically a reprinting of the 1840 Nauvoo edition. The first and second RLDS editions (1874, Plano, Illinois; and 1892, Lamoni, Iowa) followed the 1840 text and had their own system of versification. Unlike the later LDS editions, all RLDS editions have retained the original longer chapters.

In 1903 the RLDS obtained the printer's manuscript and used it to produce their third edition (1908, Lamoni, Iowa). The text of the 1908 edition restored many of the readings found in that manuscript, but generally did not alter the grammatical changes made in the 1837 Kirtland edition. This edition also included a new versification, which has remained unchanged in all subsequent RLDS editions. In 1966 the RLDS published a thoroughly modernized Book of Mormon text. Both the 1908 (with minor editing) and the 1966 texts are available, but only the 1908 edition is authorized for use in the RLDS Church.

A critical text of the Book of Mormon was published in 1984-1987 by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. This is the first published text of the Book of Mormon to show the precise history of many textual variants. Although this textual study of the editions and manuscripts of the Book of Mormon is incomplete and preliminary, it is helpful for a general overview of the textual history of the Book of Mormon.

(See [Basic Beliefs](#) home page; [Scriptural Writings](#) home page)

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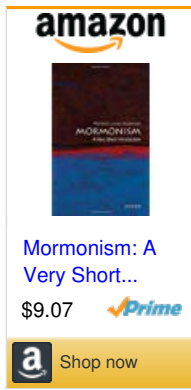
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#### References

*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol. 1, Book of Mormon Editions*

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The Book of Moron Mormon is a kick-ass musical by Trey Parker and Matt Stone. It is also one of the four main holy scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and its offshoots (the other works being Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine and Covenants, alongside the King James Version of the Bible), and by far the easiest one to get hold of due to the LDS church's printing of vast numbers of inexpensive copies for proselytizing purposes. (PoGP and D&C, sources of the LDS church's The book of mormon: a book of mistakes, error, and fraud. by Jon Gary Williams INTRODUCTION The Mormon church promotes the Book of Mormon as an inspired writing. However, after a fair and candid examination of the evidence, many thousands of honest Mormons have discovered that this claim simply is not true. What have they learned that caused them to reject the Book of Mormon? To those who believe the Book of Mormon to be inspired, no doubt the information that follows will be disturbing. errors that gradually have been changed in later editions. These take the form of such things as double. negatives, incorrect adverbs and adjectives, and incorrect tenses.

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