

Background

On January 28, 1842 Joseph Smith received the following:

A Revelation to the twelve concerning the Times and Seasons. Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph. go and say unto the Twelve That it is my will to have them take in hand the Editorial department of the Times and Seasons according to that manifestation which shall be given unto them by the Power of my Holy Spirit in the midst of their counsel Saith the Lord. Amen¹

Wilford Woodruff wrote under February 3, 1842: "After consulting upon the subject the quorum appointed Elders J[ohn]. Taylor & W[ilford] Woodruff of the Twelve to Edit the Times & Seasons & take charge of the whole establishment under the direction of Joseph the Seer."² For February 23 it was recorded that Joseph Smith "visited the printing office. & gave R. Hadlock [*sic*; Hedlock] instructions concerning the cut for the altar & gods in the Records of Abraham. as designed for the Times and Seasons"³

The next month the March 1 issue printed "A FAC-SIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM. NO. I." and the text of the opening portion of the "Book of Abraham" (paragraphs 1-13; currently LDS Abraham 1:1-2:18). On March 2 Joseph Smith: "Read the Proof of the 'Times and Seasons' as Editor for the First time, No. 9 Vol 3^d in which is the commencement of the Book of Abraham."⁴ According to Wilford Woodruff the March 1 issue was in the mail for those subscribers residing outside of Nauvoo on March 4.

Editorial

Joseph Smith composed an editorial with the assistance of Willard Richards. The cursive handwriting of Richards is at times missing a letter or two in a word. What is presented below follows his intended words. Periods are omitted for easier reading.

Times & Seasons

A considerable quantity of the matter in the last paper was in type befor[e] the establishment came into my hands. – Some of which went to press without my [illegible] or knowledge and a multiplicity of business = while entering on the

¹ "The Book of the Law of the Lord," MS 22507, 67, Church History Library, Salt Lake City. See Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841-April 1843* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 38.

² Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, typescript, 1833-1898, 9 vols., 1983-85 (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books), 2:153, entry of February 3, 1842, original in the Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

³ "The Book of the Law of the Lord," 61; Hedges, *Journals, Volume 2*:36.

⁴ "The Book of the Law of the Lord," 88; Hedges, *Journals, Volume 2*:39.

additional care of the editorial department of the Times & Seasons must be my apology for what is past. –

In the future I design to furnish much original matter, which will be found of enestimable advantage to the saints, & to all who desire a knowledge of the kingdom of God, - and as it is not practicable to bring forth the new translation of the Scriptures & various records of ancient date & great worth to this generation in ~~book~~ the usual form by books. I shall present specimens of the Same in the Times & Seasons as fast as time & space will admit, so that the honest in heart may be cheer[e]d & comforted and go on their way rejoicing – as their Souls become exposed & their unde[r]standing enlightened by a knowledg[e] of ~~what~~ God[']s work through the athers in former days, as well as what He is about to do in Latter Days To fulfil the words of the fathers.

In the present no. [number] will be found the commencement of the Records discovered in Egypt Some time since as penned by the hand of Father Abraham which I shall continue to translate & publish as fast as possible till the whole is completed – and the Saints have long been anxious to obtain a copy of these records. those [who] are now taking the times & Seasons will confer a special favor on their brethren who do not take the paper, by informing them that they can now obtain their hearts [The draft of the Editorial ends at this point.]⁵

The first portion of Smith’s editorial to subscribers was shortened since the majority of the content of the paper was already typeset.

TO SUBSCRIBERS.

This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the publication or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision.

JOSEPH SMITH.

Willard Richards recorded the activity of Joseph Smith for March 1 in the Book of the Law of the Lord: “During the fore-noon. at his office. & the printing office correcting the first plate or cut. of the Records of father Abraham. prepared by Reuben Hadlock for the Times and Season[s].”⁶ “On March 4 Joseph Smith started working on the next issue of the paper, “Friday Exhibiting [*sic*] the Book of Abraham. in the original. To Bro Reuben Hadlock [Hedlock]. so that he might take the size of the several plates or cuts. & prepare the blocks for the Times &

⁵ “Times & Seasons,” Joseph Smith Collection, MS 155, Box 5, folder 17, Church History Library.

⁶ “The Book of the Law of the Lord,” 39; Hedges, *Journals*, Volume 2:39.

Seasons. & also gave instruction concerning the arrangement of the writing on the Large cut. illustrating the principles of Astronomy. (in his office) with other general business.”⁷

The large cut refers to “A FAC-SIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, NO. 2.” printed as a foldout between pages 720 and 721. The March 15 issue was mailed about the nineteenth. The arrangement mentioned on the large cut refers to portions that were filled in where the original was damaged. The Egyptian hieratic writing that was used to continued from Smith work on his Kirtland “translating.” This included the Egyptian characters for sen-sen meaning breathing.

To summarize the editorial activity of Joseph Smith with the *Times and Seasons* it appears that he was involved considerable at first and the actual time given to this responsibility became less over time. Smith had assistance in the printing office by others including Apostles John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. In November 1842 the editorial chair was turned over to John Taylor.

“Book of Abraham”

Times and Seasons 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842):703-706, including facsimile No. 1 on page 703

Times and Seasons 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842):719-722, including facsimile No. 2

Times and Seasons 3, no. 9 (May 16, 1842):783-784, including facsimile No. 3

“Church History” known as the Wentworth letter

Times and Seasons 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842):706-710

“To Subscribers”

Times and Seasons 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842):710

“Correspondence” Joseph Smith to John C. Bennett, Editor’s Office, March 7, 1842

Times and Seasons 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842):724

History of Joseph Smith

Times and Seasons issues from March 15, 1842 through May 16, 1842 covered Joseph Smith’s birth in December 1805 to his first written revelation in July 1828. This was the beginning of the history series.

Joseph Smith expressed his appreciation of the church periodical, “Many of the articles which appear in the *Times and Seasons*, are extracts of revelation, translations, or are the united voice of conferences, which like ‘apples of gold in baskets of silver,’ are treasures more than meet for the called, chosen, and faithful among the saints; and should be more than *drink* to those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.”⁸

⁷ “The Book of the Law of the Lord,” 89; Hedges, *Journals, Volume 2*:40.

⁸ Joseph Smith “To the Saints,” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 24 (November 1, 1843):377.