

The Bible and the Book of Mormon: A Study in Contrasts

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Bible	Book of Mormon
The Bible is a diverse collection of books of varying genres (historical narratives, songs, proverbs, oracles, biographies, letters, etc.).	All of the books in the Book of Mormon purport to be historical narratives, although there are some letters embedded in the books.
Books of the Bible dating before Christ anticipate his coming in typology and veiled prophecy.	Books in the Book of Mormon dating before Christ refer to him explicitly by name and describe his death and resurrection in anachronistic fashion.
The Jewish and Christian communities that accept the Bible have existed continuously since their origins in biblical times.	The LDS Church that accepts the Book of Mormon began to exist 1400 years after the Book of Mormon was supposedly finished. The Nephites, if they existed, disappeared in the fifth century, and any supposed descendants of the Lamanites (traditionally, the American Indians) have no recollection or tradition of the Book of Mormon.
The Bible was written mainly in Hebrew and Greek, languages spoken and written continuously from biblical times to the present.	The Book of Mormon was supposedly written in Reformed Egyptian, a language otherwise unknown in all history.
The Bible or specific books in the Bible are cited in literature outside itself in every century going back over two thousand years.	There are no references to the Book of Mormon outside itself prior to the late 1820s.
Thousands of manuscript copies of various parts of the Bible or of the whole Bible in the original languages are housed in museums and libraries all over the world. These include manuscripts dating from the second century BC and every century thereafter right up to the invention of the printing press.	The only existing “manuscripts” of the Book of Mormon are those dictated in English by Joseph Smith in 1828-29. (The “Anthon Transcript” is an alleged copy of some characters from the gold plates, not a passage, and no scholar or LDS prophet has deciphered the characters.)
Translations of the Bible have been done by hundreds of scholars whose understanding of the original-language text can be and is checked by scholars of various religious and non-religious perspectives.	The “translation” of the Book of Mormon in English is the work of Joseph Smith, and its reliability cannot be checked by anyone because the supposed original-language texts are not available.
For the reasons stated above, no scholars, even skeptical ones, deny that the Old Testament books were written before the time of Christ or that the New Testament books were written within a hundred years or so of his death.	For the reasons stated above, virtually no scholars outside the LDS religion tradition argue that the Book of Mormon originated as a series of books written in ancient times.

In none of the historical narrative books of the Bible does the author identify himself by name (even if in some cases we can determine his identity). The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are all anonymous. None of the authors of the four Gospels and Acts gives his name.	Each book in the Book of Mormon explicitly names its author and explains how the book came to be part of the whole.
The <i>major</i> physical locations of the Bible—rivers, seas, lands, cities—have always been public knowledge. In some instances, we know the precise spot, within a few feet, of where specific events took place (especially in and around Jerusalem).	Except for references to Old World locations, the major locations of the Book of Mormon remain unknown and are hotly disputed among Mormons. Proposed locations for the main Book of Mormon lands differ by thousands of miles.
The books of the Bible were written directly for God’s people living at the time of writing. The only parts of the Bible not intended to be understood at the time of writing were prophecies about the coming of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12) and apocalyptic visions about the end (Dan. 8:26; 12:4, 9).	The entire Book of Mormon, despite the fact that it is largely a historical narrative with extended quotations from Isaiah, presents itself as having been written wholly for modern times, and it addresses distinctly modern theological and practical questions current in the early nineteenth century.
The Bible points to the miraculous events that prompted the writing of its books as the foundation for faith in what it says.	The Book of Mormon points to itself as a supposedly miraculous book (validated through prayer by a personal revelation) as the foundation for faith in what it says.
The Bible makes no statements excusing any errors or mistakes it might contain.	The Book of Mormon makes several statements excusing any errors or mistakes it might contain (Title Page; 1 Nephi 19:6; Ether 12:23-25; Mormon 8:12, 17; 9:33).

Robert M. Bowman Jr. is the president of the Institute for Religious Research, a Christian ministry defending the Bible and what it teaches about Christ in response to various religions. For more information on the Book of Mormon, see <https://mit.irr.org/category/book-of-mormon>.

