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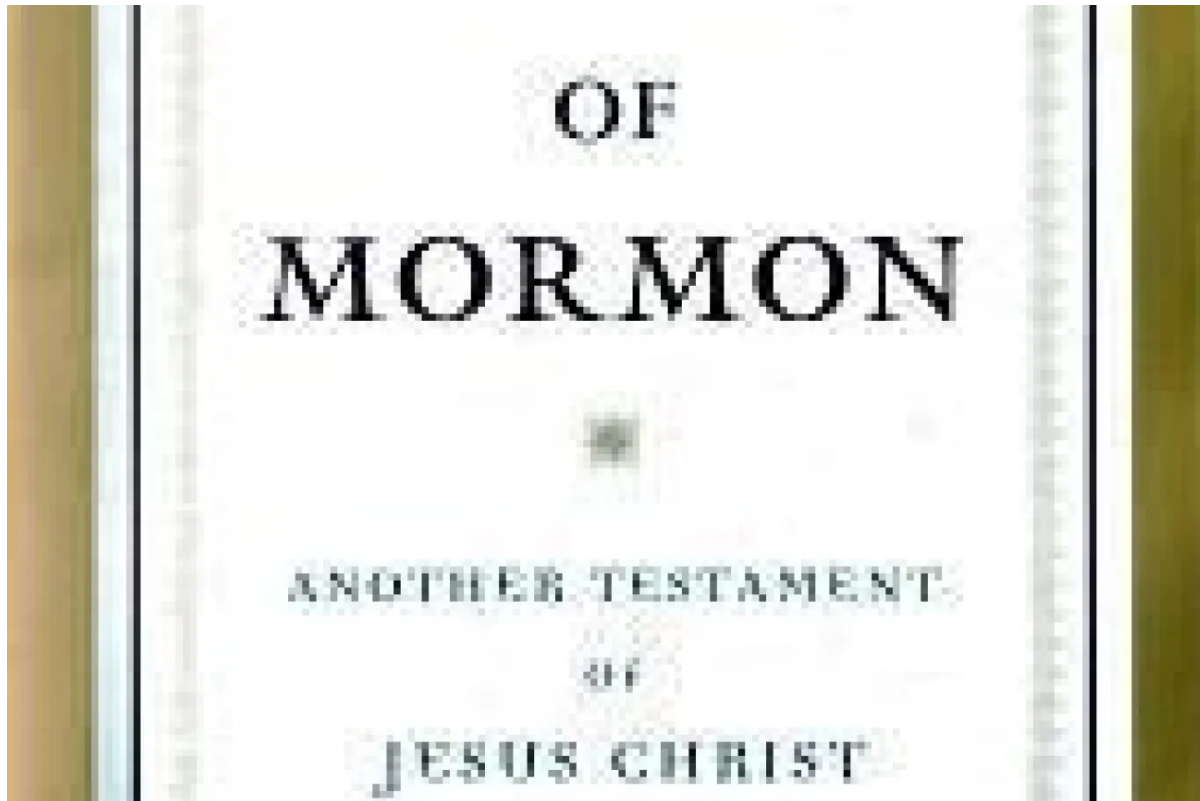
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## **Doubleday Book of Mormon is on the way**

By Deseret News | Nov 11, 2004, 8:58am MDT

*Carrie A. Moore*

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The new gold-colored Book of Mormon cover is reminiscent of the gold plates.

Cast in a partially gold cover reminiscent of the plates from which millions believe it

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of Latter-day Saints will no doubt see as a milestone in the mainstreaming of their faith.

Produced by Doubleday, the 573-page volume is true to the text that, until now, has always been printed and distributed solely by the LDS Church. Latter-day Saints revere the book as scripture on par with the Bible, and tens of thousands of full-time LDS missionaries use it as a foundation for sharing what they believe is the fullness of Christ's original gospel restored to Earth through church founder Joseph Smith.

The hardcover copy is set for release Nov. 16, priced at \$24.95. Doubleday Religion Division Vice President Michelle Rapkin said Wednesday the publisher had originally set its sights on 25,000 copies for the initial print run but has boosted that number to more than 100,000.

"Our sales people have all been very, very receptive," and initial estimates were doubled, then redoubled as orders came in. As far as marketing goes, "to be honest, we're getting a lot of publicity along with" the initial release next week. She said Doubleday plans to place advertising in USA Today and other media "in areas where there are the greatest concentrations of Mormons, just because we do think that a good portion of the first buyers of this edition may well be people giving them as Christmas gifts."

Some Latter-day Saints may wonder who would pay \$25 for a book they know can be had free for the asking from LDS missionaries. Yet both Rapkin and Deseret Book chief Sheri Dew — who served as the agent between the LDS Church and Doubleday — believe there's a market for a hardbound copy that has no strings of proselytism attached.

"Frankly, from a purely commercial standpoint, how many books do you know of that have been around for over 100 years that you can't get in Barnes and Noble or on Amazon?" Rapkin said. "As much as I would like to claim some credit, it just doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that maybe you want to do this."

First published in Palmyra, N.Y., in 1830, more than 100 million copies of the book

contains none of the footnotes that are standard in LDS editions and is typeset at two columns per page, with book and chapter headings and numbering consistent with the current volumes.

The title page, introduction and a brief explanation precede the written text, as do the testimony of the three and eight witnesses to the golden plates from which Smith said he translated the ancient record. Smith's own testimony regarding the book's origin also precedes the text, as does a contents page listing page numbers for its various divisions.

Though terms of the publishing contract and its associated royalties are confidential, Dew said the biggest challenge was the fact that the church, to Doubleday, "was an anomaly. They're used to dealing with authors who have profit as their primary motive, and the church's motive is so different. Just bridging that gap and getting work together was interesting process."

The collaboration to produce it took 18 months, she said, adding "it was really gratifying to me to watch the level of dignity and respect they brought to the project." When first approached about the possibility, Dew said she "told them all the reasons it would never work just to see how serious they were."

She told them the church would have to have complete control over the finished product, a point that was not negotiable, and that they would have to agree to other stipulations. "When it came right down to it, they agreed to all of them."

Dew said there may be "nothing more significant in the world of LDS publishing" since 1830, when E.B. Grandin used a hand press to print the first 5,000 copies of The Book of Mormon. "While it has enjoyed phenomenal worldwide distribution, there has been this major channel of distribution that's been entirely untapped.

"If you're not a member but are curious about it, where do you buy one without risking having the missionaries come? . . . Now anyone, anywhere can go into a commercial bookstore and find The Book of Mormon right next to the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran, you name it. The Lord doesn't need Doubleday's endorsement.

but there are some for whom that imprint on the spine says . . . this is a legitimate book of scripture."

Rapkin said the rising profile of the LDS Church, combined with an explosion in religious book titles in recent years, spurred the publisher to seek publishing rights. Yet she concedes that, had the project been suggested a decade ago, it wouldn't have happened.

"I just don't think there was this kind of awareness 10 years ago of lots of faiths and denominations. This is the fastest-growing denomination in this country — who would guess it? I never would have guessed that until we started discussing this. Frankly, it only makes sense as far as I can tell to publish it. I can't figure out what the downside is. "

S. Kent Brown, professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, said the Doubleday edition "says, in effect, that the book has arrived and is now a serious player on the American literary scene. Hundreds of thousands of people have read it that way for a very long time, but editors and publishers haven't taken much note until now.

"Someone has recognized that Mormon materials are becoming more mainstream and that the size of the church and the seriousness of its scholars now have to be taken account of," Brown said. Doubleday sees this as a segment of publishing that hasn't yet been tapped and will provide a decent profit. But Latter-day Saints see something more, he believes.

Joseph Smith predicted the book and its teachings would eventually "fill the whole Earth," and a secular printing of the book "certainly becomes a part of that," Brown said. "There is just the tiniest sense that this book now will go into places where it has not yet gone, which may well include libraries in foreign countries, libraries in official organizations like embassies and the like."

Named earlier this year by Book Magazine as one of "20 Books That Changed America." many Latter-day Saints believe the book's own merits will eventually result

Even so, Brown said, most church members will "applaud what Doubleday has done and say, 'thank you very kindly.' "

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