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Time Occupied in Translating the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Examines the sequence of events during the translation period of the Book of Mormon and concludes that the work must have happened as Joseph Smith claimed. The time it took to translate the book was relatively short because of divine aid and the use of Urim and Thummim.

well, and native superstition has transferred it into the veritable pit into which Jacob's son was cast before he was sold by his brethren. But it really receives its name from Yussef-ebn-Ayoule, whom we call Saladin, who excavated it. Yussef is the Turkish form of our word Joseph. This well is two hundred and seventy feet deep, and consists of two stories, or chambers. The water is raised from the bottom one hundred and twenty feet, thence it is brought to the top of the well by another mechanical process. A winding staircase leads from the top to the bottom. In this same citadel is the court in which the Mamelukes were treacherously massacred by order of Mehemet Ali, in 1811.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

(Continued from page 294).

UP to the latter part of March the organization of the camp was very imperfect. At the time it was decided that the Saints should remove from Nauvoo, about twenty-five men were selected by the general council and called captains of hundreds. It was the business of each one of these to select one hundred families, and to see that they were prepared for a journey across the Rocky Mountains. After the captains of hundreds were chosen, they selected their own captains of fifties and tens, clerks, etc.

At the time appointed, such as were ready, out of these companies, commenced leaving Nauvoo. Brother Charles Shumway was the first who crossed the Mississippi river. That was on the 4th day of February, 1846. Others followed from day to day and night to night, and an encampment was formed on the bank of the river and afterwards at Sugar Creek. After the arrival of President Young and the Apostles there a partial organization was entered into. This was further advanced when the camp reached Richardson's Point. But so many who traveled with the camp for the purpose of rendering assistance for a little season returned to Nauvoo, and the different divisions were so far separated from each other by storms, bad roads and other circumstances, that it was impossible to effect anything like a perfect organization for the first few weeks.

On the 27th of March, at the council called for the purpose of effecting a more perfect organization, the captains of fifties were called for by President Young. He responded to his own call by naming himself as the captain of the first fifty. Elder H. C. Kimball responded as captain of the second fifty. Elder P. P. Pratt of the third fifty. Peter Haws of the fourth fifty. Elder John Taylor of the fifth fifty, and Bishop George Miller of the sixth fifty.

President Young was unanimously elected president over the whole camp of Israel. Brother Ezra T. Benson was elected captain over the first hundred. Brother John Smith captain of the second hundred, and Brother Samuel Bent captain of the third hundred. The captains of fifties chosen were: Albert P. Rockwood, Stephen Markham, John Harvey, Howard Egan, Charles O. Rich and John Crisman. These took the places of the former captains of fifties, who were promoted to presidents over their divisions of fifties, except that of the first hundred, which was laid over for further consideration.

Besides the captains, there was a clerk appointed for the whole camp—Brother William Clayton—and a clerk for each

of the fifties. These were: John D. Lee, John Pack, George Hales, Lorenzo Snow, John Oakley and Asahel A. Lathrop. Elder Willard Richards was sustained as the standing historian for the Church and camp.

There was a contracting commissary appointed for each fifty. The duties of this officer were to counsel with the others, agree on terms, prices, etc., in purchasing corn, fodder, provisions and such articles as might be needed by their respective companies. Their names were: Henry G. Sherwood—who was also the acting commissary general for the camp—David D. Yearsley, William H. Edwards, Peter Haws, Samuel Gully and Joseph Warthen.

A distributing commissary was also appointed for each fifty. Their names were: Charles Kennedy, Jedediah M. Grant, Nathan Tanner, Orson B. Adams, James Allred and Isaac Allred. The duties of these officers were to make a righteous distribution among their fifties of grain, provisions and such articles as were furnished for the use of the camp.

This organization of the camp led to a more systematic method of traveling and attending to other duties. The companies were in a better condition to be controlled. The officers understood their duties, and generally attended to them, and the members of the companies had by this time learned the necessity of obedience and strict attention to order. At a counsel meeting subsequent to this President Young told those present that they were taking a course that would result in salvation, not only to that camp, but to the Saints who were still behind. He said he did not think there ever had been a body of people since the days of Enoch, who had done so little grumbling under such unpleasant circumstances. He was satisfied that the Lord was pleased with the majority of the camp of Israel. But there had been some things done which were wrong.

He sketched also a plan for forming settlements on the road, at which the Saints who came on, who had not the means to proceed on their journey, could stop and recruit their finances and obtain what they needed to continue on their journey to the mountains.

(To be Continued.)

TIME OCCUPIED IN TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF MORMON.

BY G. R.

OBJECTION has been made to the divinity of the Book of Mormon on the ground that the account given in the publications of the Church, of the time occupied in the work of translation is far too short for the accomplishment of such a labor, and consequently it must have been copied or transcribed from some work written in the English language, most probably from Spaulding's "Manuscript Found." But at the outset it must be recollected that the translation was accomplished by no common method, by no ordinary means. It was done by divine aid. There were no delays over obscure passages, no difficulties over the choice of words, no stoppages from the ignorance of the translator; no time was wasted in investigation or argument over the value, intent or meaning of certain characters, and there were no references to authorities. These difficulties to human work were removed. All was as simple as when a clerk writes from dictation. The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummin, sentence

by sentence, and as soon as one was correctly transcribed the next would appear. So the enquiry narrows down to the consideration of this simple question, how much could Oliver Cowdery write in a day? How many of the printed pages of the Book of Mormon could an ordinary clerk transcribe from dictation in a day? When that is determined, divide the total number of pages in the Book of Mormon by that number and you have the answer in days.

It now becomes important to discover when the translation was commenced and when it was finished. This cannot be determined to a day, but enough is known for our purpose.

When Oliver first visited Joseph some little had been translated, exactly how much is not known. The next question is. When did that visit occur? We will let Oliver answer. He writes (*Times and Seasons* Vol. I., page 201): "Near the time of the setting of the sun, Sabbath evening, April 5th 1829, my natural eyes, for the first time, beheld this brother. He then resided in Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. On Monday, the 6th, I assisted him in arranging some business of a temporal nature, and on Tuesday, the 7th, commenced to write the Book of Mormon."

In the History of Joseph Smith, we read: "During the month of April I continued to translate and he (Oliver) to write with little cessation, during which time we received several revelations." And again: "We still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May 1829) we, on a certain day went into the woods to pray." Oliver also states: "These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, 'Interpreters,' the history or record called the Book of Mormon."

Thus we see these two young men bent the whole energy of their souls towards the accomplishment of this most important work. They united their youthful zeal "day after day, uninterrupted" and "with little cessation" to the labor of translation. It requires very little imagination to understand how diligently and earnestly they toiled, how they permitted nothing to interfere with their labor of love, how they devoted every hour, until fatigue overcame them, to the divinely imposed task (and young and vigorous as they were it was not a little that would tire them out), while curiosity and other far worthier feelings would give zest and inspiration to their labors; as they progressed we can well imagine how their interest in the narrative increased until they could scarcely tear themselves away from their inspired labors even when their minds and bodies called for food and rest. The enthusiasm with which Oliver speaks of those days shows plainly that this was the case, and we cannot reasonably think that Joseph was any less interested than he.

Now let us examine when these two brethren commenced their marvelous work. Two series of dates have been given. Oliver's given above, and another in the history of Joseph Smith, which gives the dates as the 15th and 17th of April, or ten days later. Oliver's has this evidence of its correctness, that, as he states, the 5th, 6th and 7th of April, 1829 fell on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, which, of course, those ten days later would not. Again the event being of more importance in his life than in Joseph's, he was more likely to recollect the details, besides, being a better scholar and penman, it is more probable that if any record of the circumstance was made at that time he made it.

But really there is no discrepancy. The dates 15th and 17th in the Pearl of Great Price, in Joseph's history, etc., are unfortunate typographical errors, or mistakes in printing. In the original manuscript in the Historian's Office the dates are the same as those of Oliver Cowdery—the 5th and 7th. But the mistake having once been printed it has been copied out of one journal or book into another until nearly all our works have perpetuated the blunder. Of course it is impossible to tell now whether the mistake was first made by a copyist in the Historian's Office or by a compositor at the printer's.

From Joseph's and Oliver's narrative we learn how far they had progressed in the work of translation at the time of the visit of the angel, John the Baptist, and their baptism. This took place on May 15th of the same year. It was because they found in the teachings of the risen Redeemer to the Nephites certain instructions regarding baptism that they were led to inquire of the Lord regarding this ordinance, and their inquiry led to the angel's visit. Where are these teachings found? In the third book of Nephi; some, probably the very ones that so deeply impressed the minds of these young men, on page five hundred and three of the Book of Mormon (latest edition). Then it is evident that between April 7th and May 15th they had translated as much as makes five hundred and three pages of the printed Book of Mormon. How much is this a day? Between these two dates, including April 7th but not May 15th, there are thirty-eight days, which would make about thirteen pages a day, if we allow nothing for what was previously transcribed. A swift writer copying from dictation could write four such pages in an hour, as we have demonstrated experimentally, an ordinary writer about three. But allowing that Oliver Cowdery might be a very slow writer, and that he only copied at the rate of a page in half an hour, even then they would only have had to work six and one half hours each day to accomplish the task; and if they rested entirely on Sundays about one hour more. So we see, making no allowance for the work already done, allowing Oliver to have been a slow penman for his profession—a schoolmaster—and admitting that they ceased from their labors on the Sabbath, still it was only necessary for them to do a short day's work, especially for two young men in the prime and vigor of life; and yet allow ample time for the reception of revelations (which were given through the Urim and Thummim) and the performance of other duties that possibly occasionally called for their attention.

To show how easy such an effort would be we will state that President George Q. Cannon has informed us that when he translated the Book of Mormon into the language of the Sandwich Islanders, he frequently translated as many as eight or ten pages a day. This was far heavier work to do alone, and without the assistance of the Urim and Thummim, than it was for Joseph and Oliver together to translate from twelve to fifteen pages with the all-important assistance of the "Interpreters."

After the date of their baptism, the brethren appear to have worked more leisurely. Early in June they moved to Mr. Peter Whitmer's, at Fayette, Seneca County, New York, who had kindly offered them a house. Here the work was continued, John Whitmer, one of the sons, assisting them very much by writing. Joseph states: "Meanwhile our translation was drawing to a close, we went to Palmyra, Wayne County, New York, secured the copyright and agreed with Mr. Egbert Grandin to print five thousand copies for the sum of three thousand dollars." The copyright was

secured on June 11th, so it appears that between May 15th and the last-named date, or twenty-six days, they had not quite translated one hundred and twenty pages—not five pages a day—or they would have finished their work. The exact date the translation was entirely completed is not known, at least we have not been able to find it out.

Thus we see between the dates given, Joseph and Oliver had ample time to do the work claimed by and for them, the objection falls to the ground, and the truth is again vindicated.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

BY THE EDITOR.

PERSECUTION.

(Continued.)

THE persecution and massacre of the Albigenses or Protestants of the south of France forms one of the bloodiest pages in religious history. Besides the creed maintained by the Albigenses in opposition to the Roman Catholic doctrines, they denied that marriage was a sacrament, although they did not (as frequently asserted) reject the institution of marriage. After numerous condemnations of their errors by Roman councils in the 12th century, a military crusade was set on foot against the Albigenses, under Simon de Montfort, in A. D. 1208. Their towns were taken, and the people put to the sword without distinction of age or sex, until in a few years the sect was almost wholly exterminated.

The Waldenses, or Vaudois, inhabiting the Alpine valleys of Piedmont in Italy, were persecuted for their religious faith for centuries. In 1184, they were excommunicated by the pope for heresy, but their views spread widely in France, Italy and Bohemia. In the 13th century, a crusade was preached against them, and many were put to death. Again in 1541, Francis I., ordered them to be extirpated, and many were slaughtered and some burnt alive—yet the sect survived. The house of Savoy recovered Piedmont in 1650, and favored the Waldenses at first, but was bullied by the pope and the courts of Spain and France into another crusade against them. Notwithstanding the intercession of Charles I. of England, they continued to be persecuted through the next century. Their property was confiscated and handed over to Catholics. Under Louis XIV., in 1686, after the Huguenot expulsion and massacres, persecution of the Waldenses was renewed, and three thousand were killed, ten thousand imprisoned and many more fled to foreign lands. They continued to be excluded from all offices, civil and military, until 1848, when Sardinia granted them full religious liberty and equal rights with the Roman Catholics. The sect is now flourishing, having its center at Florence, and an active publishing society, schools, journals, theological seminaries, etc. They recognize the Bible as their only rule of faith.

It is a curious fact that the persecutions of the church of England against non-conformists have been returned with interest by the Presbyterians and Independents. During the Commonwealth, "Prebacy" (as the Episcopal worship was termed) was suppressed by law. The English Puritans tried to induce parliament to punish by death those who denied the doctrines of the trinity and the incarnation. They put forth a list of "fundamentals" of Christianity, which made up as

exclusive a test as the thirty-nine articles of the church they had put down. Richard Baxter pronounced the doctrine of toleration to be "soul-murder." The Scotch parliament published a solemn "declaration against toleration of sectaries and liberty of conscience."

The same spirit of intolerance marks with the same inconsistency the history of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England. Fleeing from persecution themselves, and, as is claimed for them, founding a new state on the principle of religious freedom, they were guilty of acts of religious tyranny which must cause even their most zealous defenders to blush. The Puritans opposed freedom of worship for others, although they claimed it with great tenacity for themselves. Roger Williams, that pure patriot and liberal man, was banished from Massachusetts in 1636, for differing from the established creed. Williams declared the doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The magistrates of Massachusetts required the presence of every man at public worship; Roger Williams denounced the law as leading to hypocrisy and a violation of natural right. "No one should be hound to worship," said he, "against his own consent." Magistrates, he insisted, are but the agents of the people, and have no spiritual power. The rights of conscience belong to the individual. "The power of the civil magistrate," he wrote, "extends only to the bodies, and goods, and outward estate of men." Exiled for cherishing and proclaiming these just and admirable opinions, Roger Williams obtained a home among the savages of Narragansett Bay, and founded the colony of Rhode Island on the principle of religious freedom—naming his settlement "Providence," in token of gratitude to God.

In 1636, John Wheelwright, who had dared to preach against spiritual tyranny, was censured by the Massachusetts general court for "sedition." In the same year, Anne Hutchinson and Aspinwall were banished from the territory of Massachusetts because the the Puritans would have uniformity. In 1657, the Quakers were imprisoned, whipped and banished on pain of death. "This penal legislation," says Bancroft, "was fruitful of results. Quakers swarmed where they were feared." In 1659, four Quakers, one of them a woman, were hanged, though they demanded to be tried by the laws of England, where there was no law for the hanging of Quakers. The Anabaptists were tried and whipped for preaching the doctrines of their own faith. The Antinomians, exiled from Massachusetts for their opinions, planted Exeter in New Hampshire in 1639, where they were free from persecution. Connecticut inflicted penalties upon heretics, and upon Catholics. In the language of Chalmers, the historian of the colonies, "Protestants ought to remember that every hardship imposed on men for their conscientious belief is a persecution, and that they adopt the tenet of the Papists by departing from Protestantism, the essence of which is dissent." The following recorded principles of Roger Williams are worthy to be inscribed in letters of gold:

"That human laws upon conscience invade the prerogative of God, and that they are null, and no man is bound to obey them.

"That laws, making men ineligible to office, or making any distinction, because of religion, would be tyrannical and pernicious."

Quite a contrast between these noble sentiments of this worthy man, and the bill introduced by Senator Edmunds into the U. S. Senate and enacted by Congress into a law! And yet the men who compose this body think themselves