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Publication of the Record

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CHAPTER VIII.

PUBLICATION OF THE RECORD.

The exact time when the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed cannot be ascertained. According to the history of the Prophet it was early in June, 1829, when David Whitmer, took Joseph and his wife and Oliver Cowdery to his father's home near Waterloo, at the north end of Seneca Lake, to the neighborhood called Fayette.^a There the Prophet remained until the translation was completed and the copyright secured. Since David Whitmer arrived at Harmony "in the beginning of June," to take the Prophet and his wife and Oliver Cowdery to his father's home, and as Mr. John S. Gilbert (the chief compositor on the Book of Mormon), says in a signed statement^b that he commenced the work of setting type for the Book of Mormon in August, 1829, the translation was completed between those dates, that is, between the early part of June, 1829, and

^aHistory of the Church, Vol. I., pp. 48, 49.

^bThe Statement referred to was given to Elder Francis M. Lyman, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, who called upon Mr. Gilbert at Palmyra on October 23rd, 1897. Mr. Gilbert wrote with his own hand in Elder Lyman's Journal, and signed the following:

Palmyra, N. Y., Oct. 23, 1897.

At the request of Elder F. M. Lyman of Utah, I make the following certificate: I was born in the town of Richmond, Ontario county, April 13th, 1802. I assisted E. B. Grandin in estimating the expense of printing 5,000 copies of the Mormon Bible, and the price agreed upon—\$3,000. I was the principal compositor of said Bible, commencing on the same in August, 1829, and finishing the same in March, 1830.

(Signed)

JOHN H. GILBERT

I am indebted to Elder Lyman for access to his Journal for the above statement.

August of the same year, as the work of translation was completed before the work of printing began.

The contract for printing was made with Mr. Egbert B. Grandin, of Palmyra, the edition to be five thousand copies, and the price \$3,000.00, Martin Harris guaranteeing the payment of that sum to the publisher.

As soon as arrangements were completed for publishing the Book of Mormon, the Prophet Joseph started for Harmony, Pennsylvania, but before his departure he left the following directions to be followed respecting the work of printing:

First, that Oliver Cowdery should transcribe the whole manuscript.

Second, that he should take but one copy at a time to the office, so that if one copy should get destroyed there would be a copy remaining.

Third, that in going to and from the [printing] office, he should always have a guard to attend him, for the purpose of protecting the manuscript.

Fourth, that a guard should be kept constantly on the watch, both night and day, about the house to protect the manuscript from malicious persons who would infest the house for the purpose of destroying the manuscript. All these things were strictly attended to as the Lord had commanded Joseph.^c

These precautions, at first glance, may seem excessive, and under ordinary circumstances would be totally unnecessary; yet the following communication to the "Signs of the Times," by J. N. T. Tucker, who was employed in the printing establishment of the "Wayne Sentinel," in the establishment at which the Book of Mormon was printed, in Palmyra, will demonstrate that the precaution in this case was necessary; and incidentally tends to prove true the statement of the revelation in which the Prophet Joseph is

^cHistory of the Prophet Joseph, by his mother, Chap. xxxi.

warned that the 116 pages of manuscript stolen from Martin Harris were changed by those into whose hands they had fallen, with the intention to make them conflict with the reproduction of them should the Prophet again translate that part of the work. With these preliminary remarks the following letter will be self-explanatory:

MORMONISM—SOME CURIOUS FACTS.

Messrs. Editors:

Having noticed in a late number of the "Signs of the Times," a notice of a work, entitled "Mormon Delusions and Monstrosities," it occurred to me that it might, perhaps, be a service to the cause of truth, to state one circumstance in relation to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, which occurred during its publication, at which time I was a practical printer and engaged in the office where it was printed, and became familiar with the men and their principles, through whose agency it was "got up."

The circumstances alluded to was as follows: We had heard much said by Martin Harris, the man who paid for the printing; and the only one in the concern worth any property, about the wonderful wisdom of the translators of the mysterious plates, and resolved to test their wisdom. Accordingly, after putting one sheet in type, we laid it aside, and told Martin Harris it was lost, and there would be serious defection in the book in consequence, unless another sheet like the original could be produced. The announcement threw the old gentleman into quite an excitement. But after a few moments' reflection, he said he would try to obtain another. After two or three weeks, another sheet was produced, but no more like the original than any other sheet of paper would have been, written over by a common school-boy, after having read, as they did, the manuscript preceding and succeeding the lost sheet.

As might be expected, the disclosure of the plan greatly annoyed the authors, and caused no little merriment among those who were acquainted with the circumstances. As we were none of us Christians, and only labored for the "gold that perisheth,"

we did not care for the delusion, only so far as to be careful to avoid it ourselves, and enjoy the hoax. Not one of the hands in the office where the wonderful book was printed ever became a convert to the system, although the writer of this was often assured by Martin Harris, if he did not he would be destroyed in 1832.

Yours in the gospel of Christ,

J. N. TUCKER.

“Gorton, May 23, 1842.”

“Signs of the Times, June 8, 1842.”

The description in this letter of Martin Harris's excitement from the loss of the sheet mentioned, and the claim that the reproduced manuscript did not fill the blank created through their hiding that one sheet of type set matter, will appear at once as a fabrication when it is remembered that Martin Harris must have known that the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon had never left the hands of those having the work in charge, and they were by that precaution prepared against just such emergencies as this whether practiced playfully or in dead earnest to bring the work into disrepute.^c

These several precautions relative to the manuscript of the Book of Mormon stated by Lucy Smith in the work quoted, account for several circumstances regarded as peculiar in connection with the publication of the Book of Mormon: The almost entire absence of Joseph Smith the prophet from the printing establishment of Mr. Grandin while the book was being set up and printed; the presence of two persons always when a portion of manuscript was carried to the printers, one of whom was always Hyrum Smith; the guard constantly upon the watch at the Smith

^cTucker's letter is produced in Bennett's "Mormonis: Exposed," (1842), pages 112, 123.

homestead; and the existence of two manuscript copies of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery during the time that the type setting and printing was going on made a copy from the original manuscript for the use of the printer; carefully keeping the original (which, too, in the main, he had written as the prophet Joseph translated from the Nephite plates) in his possession at the home of the Smiths, that if peradventure the copy sent to the printer should be destroyed or stolen it could be copied again from the original.

It is said by Mr. Gilbert that the manuscript as sent to him was neither capitalized nor punctuated, and that the capitalization and punctuation in the first edition was done by him. This statement, however, can only be true in part, as an examination of the printer's manuscript will prove; for that manuscript is very well capitalized and in the main in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. Mr. Gilbert may have capitalized and punctuated to some extent, but it is clear that he did not do all of it, or even the main part of it.^d The printer's manuscript, after it had served its purpose, was evidently taken possession of by Oliver Cowdery, while the original manuscript remained in the possession of the prophet Joseph.

In 1850 Oliver Cowdery, a little before his death, which occurred at Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, on the 3rd of March of that year—gave into the possession of David Whitmer, his brother-in-law and fellow witness of the truth of the Book of Mormon, his printer's manuscript of that book, and the descendants of David Whitmer have it in their possession to this day (1903); regarding it, though in that

^dThe writer saw and examined the printer's manuscript in the possession of David Whitmer in 1884, and speaks from personal knowledge on this point in the text.

they are mistaken, as the original manuscript.^e The original manuscript having been preserved by the Prophet Joseph, it was, on the 2nd of October, 1841, in the presence of a number of Elders, deposited by him in the northwest cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, with a number of coins, papers and books, in a cavity made in the corner stone for that purpose. Among those who were present at the time the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon was thus deposited in the corner stone of the Nauvoo House, was Elder Warren Foote, of Glendale, Kane county, Utah, who quotes from his journal as follows:

October 2, 1841. The semi-annual conference commenced today. After meeting was dismissed a deposit was made in the southeast corner of the Nauvoo house. A square hole had been chiseled in the large corner stone like a box. An invitation was given for any who wished to put in any little memento they desired to. I was standing very near the corner stone, when Joseph Smith came up with the manuscript of the Book of Mormon, and said he wanted to put that in there, as he had had trouble enough with it. It appeared to be written on fools' cap paper, and was about three inches in thickness. There was also deposited a Book of Doctrine and Covenants, five cents, ten cents, twenty-five cents, fifty cents, and one dollar pieces of American coin, besides other articles. A close fitting stone cover was laid n cement, and the wall built over it. I was standing within three feet of the Prophet when he handed in the manuscript and saw it very plainly. He intimated in his remarks, that in after generations the walls might be thrown down, and these things discovered, from which the people could learn the doctrines and principles and faith of the Latter-day Saints.^f

^eIt has since been deposited with the President of the "Re-organized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," son of the Prophet Joseph, by the grand son of David Whitmer, George Schwiech.

^fThe above excerpt from Elder Foote's Journal is published by George Reynolds in a series of articles under the title "History of the Book of Mormon," in the "Contributor," for 1884.

In a rather curious manner a portion of this original manuscript came into the possession of Joseph F. Smith, late President of the Church, and nephew of the Prophet Joseph. The Nauvoo House, begun in the days of the Prophet, was never completed. Mr. Lewis C. Bidamon, who married Emma Smith, widow of the Prophet, came into possession of the unfinished Nauvoo House, and tore down the walls and took up the extensive foundations of the house in order to sell the building stone in them. In the course of tearing out the foundations the southeast corner stone was taken out and the treasures it contained discovered and taken in charge by Mr. Bidamon. Some years later, namely, in the summer of 1884, Mrs. Sarah M. Kimball visited Nauvoo, and among other landmarks went to the site of the Nauvoo House, the walls and foundation of which were not yet all taken away. She called upon Mr. Bidamon, then living in a temporary four-roomed building erected on the southwest corner of the foundation laid for the Nauvoo House. And now Mrs. Kimball's story, as related in her letter to Elder George Reynolds, dated 19th July, 1884:

I asked why the heavy and extensive foundations around him were being torn up, he [Mr. Bidamon] replied that he had bought the premises, and the rock was torn up to sell, as he was poor and otherwise would not have been able to build. I said, I am interested in this foundation, because I remember there were treasures deposited under the chief corner stone. He said, yes, I took up the stone box and sold it to Mr. — (I do not remember the name.) It had been so long exposed to the wet and weather that its contents were nearly ruined, I gave the coin to Joe [Joseph]^g and told him he could have the pile of paper. He said it was the manuscript of the Book of Mormon; but it was so much injured that he did not care for it. While we were talking, Mr. Bidamon's wife brought a large pasteboard

^gi. e. Joseph Smith, son of the Prophet.

box and placed it on my lap. It contained a stack of faded and fast decaying paper, the bottom layers for several inches were uniform in size, they seemed to me larger than common fools' cap, the paper was coarse in texture and had the appearance of having lain a long time in water, as the ink seemed almost entirely soaked into the paper. When I handled it, it would fall to pieces. I could only read a few words here and there, just enough to learn that it was the language of the Book of Mormon. Above this were some sheets of finer texture folded and sewed together, this was better preserved and more easily read. I held it up, and said: "Mr. B., how much for this relic?" He said: "Nothing from you, you are welcome to anything you like from the box." I appreciated the kindness, took the leaves that were folded and sewed together, also took two fragments of the Times and Seasons, published by Don Carlos Smith.^h I send with this a fragment dated January, 1840, for your acceptance, containing the prophetic lamentation of P. P. Pratt, while chained in prison.

Very respectfully,
(Signed) SARAH M. KIMBALL.ⁱ

This fragment of the manuscript, now in the possession of President Joseph F. Smith, is thus described by Elder George Reynolds, in his History of the Book of Mormon:

It consists of twenty-two pages of somewhat rough, unruled writing paper, more resembling narrow bill-cap than any other size of paper now made, being a little less than fifteen and a half inches long and full six and a half inches wide. The paper is now tinged brown or yellow by time and damp, and the writing in some places is undecipherable. The pages are numbered 3 to 22, pages 1 and 2 having been lost. The manuscript commences at the second verse of the second chapter of the First Book of Nephi, and continues to the thirty-fifth verse of the thirteenth chapter of the same book. * * * * The manuscript is in

^hThe Prophet's brother and for a time editor of the "Times and Seasons."

ⁱMrs. Kimball's letter is published by Elder Geo. Reynolds in his articles on the "History of the Book of Mormon," Contributor, Vol. V., No. 10.

two, if not three, handwritings. Pages 7 to 18, inclusive, appear to have been written by Oliver Cowdery. Pages 3 to 6 are written in what looks like a woman's hand, possibly that of Emma Smith; while the handwriting on pages 19 to 22, if not the same, very much resembles that of pages 3 to 6. The only division made in the manuscript is into chapters; the sentences are not divided by punctuation marks and are seldom commenced with capital letters.

It may be thought that the care of the manuscript during the process of printing was not only extraordinary but unnecessary. The experiences of the prophet, however, in the matter of keeping possession of the plates of the Book of Mormon, and the efforts that were made to take them from him, together with the loss of the one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript he had for a short time entrusted to the care of Martin Harris, taught him caution. It is well it did, for having failed in their efforts to wrest the plates from him, several conspiracies were formed by his enemies to obtain the manuscript of the book and prevent its publication. And notwithstanding all the precautions taken an enemy nearly succeeded in publishing the Book of Mormon in garbled form before the printing of the book was completed. An ex-justice of the peace by the name of Cole started to publish a weekly periodical which he called "Dogberry Paper on Winter Hill." In his prospectus he promised his subscribers to publish one form of "Joe Smith's Gold Bible" each week, and thus furnish them with the principal part of the book without their being obliged to purchase it from the Smiths. The "Dogberry Paper" was printed at Mr. Grandin's establishment, where the Book of Mormon was being printed, and as the press was employed all the time except

ⁱHistory of the Prophet Joseph, by Lucy Smith, Chaps. xxxii. and xxxiii.

at night and on Sundays, Mr. Cole printed his paper at those times. The arrangement also enabled him to keep what he was doing from the knowledge of the Prophet and his associates; and it is said that several numbers of his paper containing portions from the Book of Mormon which he had pilfered, were published before his rascality was found out. Joseph, who was at Harmony, in Pennsylvania, was sent for, and on arriving at Palmyra quietly but firmly asserted his copyrights which he had been careful to secure, and Mr. Cole gave up his attempt to publish the book or any portion of it. After settling this difficulty Joseph again returned to Pennsylvania, only to be again summoned to Palmyra to quiet the fears of his publisher, Mr. Grandin, who had been made fearful that the Prophet would not be able to meet his obligations for printing the book. The people in the vicinity of Palmyra had held public meetings and passed resolutions not to purchase the Book of Mormon if it ever issued from the press. They appointed a committee to wait upon Mr. Grandin and explain to him the evil consequences which would result to him because of the resolutions they had passed not to buy the books when published, which would render it impossible for the "Smiths" to meet their obligations to him. They persuaded him to stop printing and Joseph was again sent for. On the Prophet's arrival he called upon Mr. Grandin in company with Martin Harris, and together they gave the frightened publisher such assurance of their ability to meet their obligation to him that printing was resumed,^k and finally, in the spring of 1830, the book issued from the press.

Thus, from start to finish, difficulty and danger beset the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. But at last every obstacle was surmounted; every difficulty overcome; every

^kHistory of the Prophet Joseph, by Lucy Smith, Chap. xxxiii.

device of the enemy thwarted; every danger to the record of the Nephites past. It was published—a five thousand edition of it. Henceforth, thanks to the great art preservative—printing—it would be indestructible. To the world was given the testimony of sleeping nations that the Lord is God; that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world; that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The fervent prayers of the prophets and other righteous men among the ancient inhabitants of America were answered. The Gentile nations which, by the spirit of prophecy, they knew would at some time occupy their land, would become informed as to them; of their origin; of the promises of God to the remnant of their seed, which the Gentiles would find upon the land. So, too, would the Jews know of the ancient inhabitants of the land; and would know of the decrees of God respecting the land and the inhabitants thereof; and would have the testimony of these ancient nations of Israelites in America that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had crucified, was indeed the Messiah, the hope of Israel, and the world's Savior. But what was of more immediate interest to these ancient worthies of the western hemisphere, their descendants remaining in the land would, through their record, be brought to a knowledge of their forefathers, and of the goodness and favor and severity of God towards them. They would be brought to a knowledge of how their fathers had departed from the ways of the Lord; why this disfavor of God was upon them; and how they might return into His favor through obedience to that Gospel which their fathers had rejected. For these several things righteous men among the Nephites earnestly prayed; and obtained a promise from the Lord that He would preserve their records and at the last bring them to the remnant of their seed, to the Jews and to the Gentiles that their testimonies to the truth of God might

not be lost to the world.' And now the hopes and promises were fulfilled. Their record was published and was destined to be read in all the languages spoken by the children of men, and stand as a Witness for God to all the world.

¹See Book of Mormon, Book of Enos, Chap. i; 12-18; Mormon viii; 24-26; and ix; 36, 37, and v; 9-24; I. Nephi xiii; 30-42.