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Book of Mormon Studies

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Abstract: This is a series of articles intended for Relief Society course study. It discusses the importance of the Book of Mormon, its coming forth (i.e., the translation, the witnesses, the publication, Joseph Smith), brief overview of its contents, and explains the text from 1 Nephi 1 through Alma 58. Each article features several questions that are helpful in synthesizing and applying the Book of Mormon to daily life.

has been made for all difficulties, in the wisdom of the Lord, was also set forth.

Parting instructions, an inspiring address by the Mission President and a closing word from each one in attendance occupied the time of the final session on Thursday morning. Fervent, earnest testimonies were borne; interesting experiences were related, and heartfelt expressions of appreciation were voiced for the privilege of attending such a gathering, for the instruction of great worth, and the spiritual nourishment there received, and for the associations enjoyed. The Spirit of the Lord was felt throughout the meetings, and the District Presidents' Conference adjourned with renewed enthusiasm and determination for the work of the Lord in evidence.

BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES*

Mental and Spiritual Harmony: The Prophet now undertook in earnestness the fulfilment of the important mission that had been entrusted to him. The work required the utmost concentration of his faculties as well as the most complete inner spiritual harmony.

Though he was in possession of the sacred instruments of translation he still had to use all his intelligence to translate correctly the engravings. There were times when his mind or his spirit was not in perfect concord with the sacred purpose of his mission, and at those times the power of translation left him completely. Nothing but humble prayer could restore to him this power. When he was spiritually in tune again he could proceed with his work.

Difficulties: "Having obtained the records, Joseph found that a very labourious undertaking was before him—that of translating them. His main difficulty lay, not so much in his lack of knowledge of the language in which they were written—God supplied that deficiency—as in his lack of means to carry on his work. As has before been stated, Joseph was under the necessity of labouring daily for the support of his family, and when he began the translation of the records, not only was this support taken away, but other expenses were necessarily incurred in the performances of the labour. In addition to this, persecution increased, and the Prophet saw that he must remove to another place where he could be practically undisturbed in his work.

"Having made up his mind to move to the home of his wife's parents, he was thinking how he could procure money to accomplish the journey, when Martin Harris, a farmer, advanced

*Lesson 3 of the Relief Society Course of Study—for use on the first lesson night in February.

the means, and Joseph set out for Pennsylvania. Twice on the way his wagon was searched by evil men, endeavouring to find the plates, but they were unsuccessful.

“Joseph now resumed the work of translation, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, which made up the deficiency occasioned by his want of learning.”* Always, however, while the work progressed he had to be in perfect harmony himself in order to surmount the great physical difficulties which beset his path as well as the spiritual dissensions which were at times about him.

The Language of the Translation: Naturally, the language of the translation is that used and understood by the Prophet at the time of the writing. He could not use language with which he was not familiar, even though it were his mother tongue. Elder B. H. Roberts, in *New Witnesses for God* states in regard to this question: “I take occasion at this point to observe that because a writer or speaker claims to be under the inspiration of God it does not follow that in giving expression to what the Lord puts into his heart he will always do so in grammatical terms, any more than the orthography of an inspired writer will always be accurate. We have many illustrations of this fact among the inspired men that we have known in the Church of Jesus Christ in these last days. Those of us who have listened to the utterances of Prophets and Apostles cannot doubt of their inspiration, and at the same time some of those who have been most inspired have been inaccurate in the use of our English language. The same seems true of the ancient Apostles, also. The writer of the Acts at the conclusion of a synopsis of a discourse (Acts 4:13), which he ascribes to Peter, says: “Now when they [the Jews] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled.”†

“Also, the Reverend Joseph Armitage Robinson, D.D., Dean of Westminster and Chaplain of King Edward VII of England, respecting the manner in which the message of the Old Testament was received and communicated to man, as late as 1905, said:

The message of the Old Testament was not written by the divine hand, nor dictated by an outward compulsion; it was planted in the hearts of men, and made to grow in a fruitful soil. And then they were required to express it in their own language, after their natural methods, and in accordance with the stage of knowledge which their time had reached. Their human faculties were purified and quickened by the divine Spirit; but they spoke to their time in the language of their time; they spoke a spiritual message, accommodated to the experience of their age, a message of faith in God, and of righteousness as demanded by a righteous God ‡

*Deseret Sunday School Union Leaflets, December 7th, 1890.

†*New Witnesses for God*, Vol. II., B. H. Roberts, pp. 119-20.

‡*Ibid*, p. 119.

QUESTIONS

1. Was the possession of the Urim and Thummim all that was necessary for the translation of the sacred record? Why?
2. Why did the Prophet have so many difficulties thrown in his way? Enumerate some of them.
3. Tell what you know about the language in which the Book of Mormon is written.
4. In what way is the language of the Bible similar? Tell the source of your information.

FROM THE MISSION FIELD

Release and Appointment: At a meeting of the missionaries of the Liverpool District, held in Blackburn on Sunday morning, January 22nd, the honourable release of Elder David M. Kennedy, President of the Liverpool District, and the appointment to that office of Elder L'Etrenne Andelin, transferred from the Scottish District, was announced by President John A. Widtsoe. The change was publicly announced at the evening sacrament meeting of the Blackburn Branch, and is to take effect at the end of the current month, when President Kennedy will depart from his field of labour.

Doings in the Districts: *Manchester*—At a baptismal service held in the Manchester Chapel on January 14th one person was baptized and confirmed by Elder J. Rulon Doxey.

Nottingham—A large attendance featured the annual entertainment given by the Hucknall Branch Sunday School, on January 14th. More than one hundred persons representing five branches were present. Presentation of prizes to Sunday School children was made and a program of high merit was carried out.

Ulster—A monthly report meeting for the missionaries of the Ulster District was held at Belfast on January 14th, under the direction of President Kendall D. Garff. Reports of an encouraging character were given.

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