

CHAPTER XXI

An Answer to Budvarson's Criticisms of the Book of Mormon (Cont'd)

In the preceding chapter we have seen how Mr. Budvarson has misinterpreted the writings of prominent Mormon leaders relative to the "perfectness" of the First Edition of the Book of Mormon. Now let us see how he has handled other "evidence" in his attempts to "show the fallacy of their sundry claims to the effect that the Book of Mormon was a God-given, angel-protected book." (p. 17)

On page 8 of his brochure Mr. Budvarson gives a photo reproduction of the title page of the First Edition of the Nephite record, taking pains to underline printed statements thereon to the effect that Joseph Smith was "Author and Proprietor" of the work. He even underlines "Printed by E. G. Grandin, for the Author." On page 9 he emphasizes that Joseph Smith is said to be the author and proprietor of the Book of Mormon and reinforces his assertion by showing that the "eight witnesses" also affirm that the prophet was the "author and proprietor of this work." (Photo reproductions of testimony is given on p. 27.) Then Mr. Budvarson shows that in later editions of the Book of Mormon the title page was changed to read, "Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun.," and the testimony of the "eight witnesses" was changed to read, "Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work." It is hard to guess all of Mr. Budvarson's motives in writing the first two paragraphs on page 9, but apparently his intention is to show that in the First and Original Edition of the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith and the "eight witnesses" quite unwittingly betrayed the fact that it was man-made, that God had nothing to do with it, and that the prophet was indeed the "Author and Proprietor." Then in later editions Joseph

Smith and the "eight witnesses" attempt to cover up their mistake by changing the reading of the title page and the "testimony" of the witnesses. And further, if we correctly interpret Mr. Budvarson's intentions, it was a fallacy in logic for the Mormon leaders to change the readings in later editions of the Book of Mormon if it was indeed a "supernaturally translated, angel-protected book."

Now, had Mr. Budvarson known (and he should have) the copyright laws at the time of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon account for Joseph Smith's placing of "Author and Proprietor" on the title page of the work. In the words of B. H. Roberts:

In the first edition, the words "Author and Proprietor" appear instead of the word "translator." The reason for this is obvious. Under the laws then existing the copyright was secured to "authors and proprietors;" and hence on the title page of the first edition, "Joseph Smith, Junior, author and proprietor," takes the place of the line "Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun., in the later editions. The Prophet merely adopted the phraseology of the law. Preceding the preface to the first edition appears the following certificate of copyright [read it carefully, Mr. Budvarson], which is interesting not only as explaining the foregoing point, but also as preserving an important date in church history:

Northern District of New York, to wit: Be It Remembered, That on the eleventh day of June, in the fifty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1829, Joseph Smith, Jun., of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author in the words following, to wit: [Here follows the title page with the words, "By Joseph Smith, Author and Proprietor, Palmyra: Printed by E. G. Grandin, for the Author. 1830."]

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors [notice!] of such copies, during the times therein

mentioned;" and also the act, entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, entitled, 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

R. R. Lansing,
*Clerk of Northern District of New York.*¹

Now, Mr. Budvarson, don't you think, in view of the facts presented, that Joseph Smith was justified in changing the title page of editions of the Book of Mormon following the First Edition? What would you have done under the circumstances? Would you have attempted to secure the copyright to God or to the Angel Moroni? We think your case respecting the title page fails completely.

On pages 12 and 13 of his brochure Mr. Budvarson gives a photo reproduction of the Preface of the first edition of the Book of Mormon (omitted in later editions) which explains how "one hundred and sixteen pages" of the original translation were stolen by "designing persons." Budvarson points out that the loss of the manuscript "afforded a remarkable opportunity for Joseph Smith to have proven to the world that the work was true. All he needed to do was to reproduce an exact copy of the stolen pages, then perhaps even the thieves would have been converted! (The stolen pages were written in long-hand and any alterations could have been easily detected.)

"But Joseph had failed to make a copy of his writings so it was not possible for him to make an exact duplicate. In order to get around this, he says that God Comrmanded him that he 'should not translate the same over again . . .'

"This one incident alone (the above 'Preface' by the Author') furnishes positive proof that the Book of Mor-

mon is not a God-given, angel-protected book!"

Now, there might be some logic to Mr. Budvarson's allegations if Joseph Smith had translated the Book of Mormon in the mechanical fashion suggested by David Whitmer and dealt with in our previous chapter. But Joseph Smith did not simply read off a word-for-word translation dictated by a divine source. If the translation had been effected in that manner, he doubtless could have reproduced an "exact copy of the stolen pages" for the thieves who had purloined the manuscript. Since he did not make a mechanical translation, he was in the position of any translator who would find it impossible to reproduce exactly his original translation, amounting to one hundred and sixteen pages in longhand. Another translation could reproduce the sense of the original but would not duplicate it word for word. The Lord knew this, and therefore instructed the prophet to translate other plates that gave a somewhat parallel but more spiritual account than that contained in the hundred and sixteen pages of stolen material. Thus we see again how Mr. Budvarson's case breaks down because he hasn't been able to prove that responsible Mormon authorities claim that Joseph Smith's translations were dictated word for word by the help of a divine instrument. History does not bear out the gentleman's case. We have already shown that only the prophet could have given us the complete details of how the Urim and Thummim worked, and the force of the words of the Lord to Oliver Cowdery in Section 9 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* has been completely ignored by Mr. Budvarson. When he says that "this one incident alone," referring to the loss of the manuscript of one hundred and sixteen pages, "furnishes positive proof that the Book of Mormon is not a Godgiven, angel-protected book!" he is making woefully extravagant claims. He is whistling in the dark—in the dark cemetery of his alleged "proofs "

Mr. Budvarson may be forgiven for some errors, but on pages 14 to 17 of his brochure he makes mistakes that few scholars would forgive him for. He exhibits photo reproductions of pages 25 and 32 of the First Edition of the Book of Mormon, underlining "doctrinal statements concerning God" which he contends were changed in later editions of the Nephite record. Now we grant that the three statements he underlines were changed in later editions, but let us examine the statements and see what possible significance he is entitled to attach to them. The three statements are as follows:

Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, . . . (Cf. 1 Nephi 11:18, current edition.)

Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father! (Cf. 1 Nephi 11:21, current edition.)

That the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Saviour of the world; . . . (Cf. 1 Nephi 13:40, current edition.)

These three statements were changed in the Second (1837) Edition to read respectively:

Behold, the virgin *whom* thou seest, is the mother of *the son of God*, . . . Italics ours.)

Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the *Son of the* Eternal Father! (Italics ours.)

That the Lamb of God is the *Son of the* eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; . . . Italics ours.)

We have italicized for the reader's convenience the changes that were made in each statement in the Second Edition. Why were these changes made in the text? Mr. Budvarson, of course, would have us believe that the Mormon leaders testified to the "perfectness" of the First Edition, "the God-given supernaturally translated, angel-protected book," (p. 13) and that they could not in good conscience make changes in the text thereafter. But notice what is said in the third paragraph of the Preface of the Second Edition:

Individuals acquainted with book printing, are aware of the numerous typographical errors which always occur in manuscript editions. It is only necessary to say, that the whole [the First Edition] has been carefully reexamined and compared with the original manuscripts, by elder Joseph Smith, Jr., the translator of the book of Mormon, assisted by the present printer, brother O. Cowdery, who formerly wrote the greatest portion of the same, as dictated by brother Smith.

Does this paragraph give the impression that the early leaders of the Church (Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were the two highest) thought the First Edition was perfect in every respect, text and all? Quite the contrary, Mr. Budvarson. They knew that typographical errors had crept into the 1830 edition in the course of printing. So they attempted to correct those errors by comparing the original manuscripts with the 1830 text. The changes they made in the statements underlined by you on pages 14 and 15 of your brochure are simple corrections of errors in the First Edition. They are corrections (including grammar) such as might be made in the second edition of any book. That the italicized words above were, "whom" excepted, accidental omissions in the First Edition is also proved by the fact that the manuscript of the Book of Mormon written by Oliver Cowdery and now in the possession of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints at Independence, Missouri, contains the added words. In the Preface of the 1944 edition (p. vii) of the Reorganized Church edition of the Book of Mormon, we find this statement of the committee that compared their earlier editions with the Oliver Cowdery manuscript:

The committee found errors, including omissions, in the Lamoni [Reorganized] edition; also some matter in the Original Manuscript *omitted in the Palmyra [1830] or the Kirtland [1837] edition*, or in both those editions; *such omissions evidently being overlooked in proof-reading.* (Italics ours.)

This matter is dated at Lamoni, Iowa, July 17, 1908.

We think we have shown that Mr. Budvarson has failed to do his "homework" in connection with the three texts he brings up on pages 14-17 of his brochure. The charges he makes are inexcusable. They were made without the investigation expected of a scholar.

There is one more matter on Mr. Budvarson's page 17 that needs just a word of comment. He notes that the one and one-half page "Preface" in the First Edition of the Book of Mormon is omitted entirely in later editions. Now, no Mormon leaders have ever held that there was anything especially sacrosanct about this Preface. Why shouldn't it be omitted in later editions if the intelligence and judgment of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery so dictated? Joseph Smith never made any claim that either the Lord or the Angel Moroni looked over his shoulder and dictated every word that he should say in the Preface. The prophet wrote it on his own account in order to inform the prospective reader about matters he thought important at the time. But Mr. Budvarson's erroneous interpretation of Mormon views about the First Edition lead him to the preposterous view that "all changes regardless of how minor, are disallowed and unauthorized if the 1830 Original Edition of the Book of Mormon is what leaders of Mormonism claimed it to be!" (pp. 15, 16) But no reasonable person need believe him in view of the facts that we have presented.

Mr. Budvarson gives a photo reproduction (p. 18) of page 52 of the First Edition, showing that at least fifty-three changes were made on it in succeeding editions. Most of these changes are in matters of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and the like. But the word-changes were made to make the text of the Book of Mormon conform to the readings of the original manuscript. So, Mr. Budvarson, what we have said already about the photos on

pages 14 and 15 of your work apply here also. The Mormon leaders did not have in mind what you imply they did, that the First Edition was perfect, or nearly so.

Now let us proceed to page 19 of Mr. Budvarson's brochure. Here he does something that really takes the prize for ingenuity in criticism. He presents a photo reproduction of page 115 of the First Edition of the Nephite record, underlining these words:

And because my words shall hiss forth, many of the Gentiles shall say, A Bible, a Bible, we have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.... Thou fool, that shall say, A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. (Cf. 2 Nephi 29:3, 6.)

Beneath the photo reproduction Mr. Budvarson makes this caustic comment:

The "Author" [the title page of the 1830 edition is still in Budvarson's hypercritical mind] of the Book of Mormon, trying desperately to demand recognition for the book, calls every person who believes the Bible to be a complete revelation from God to man, a fool!

(All true Christians believe the Bible to be a complete revelation from God to man. See Hebrews 1:1, 2—1 Peter 1:23-25—II Peter 1:21—Revelation 22:18,19.)

We think you are guessing when you say the "Author," Joseph Smith, was "trying desperately to demand recognition for the book." You are the one who is desperate. Your extravagant claims betray the fact that you are grasping at straws in your "desperate" attempts to find some real valid reasons for criticizing the Book of Mormon. It is very doubtful that Joseph Smith was "trying desperately," if only for the reason that he completely translated the Book of Mormon (the 1830 edition had 588 pages of text) in about seventy-five working days.² He had precious little time to be "desperate" about anything except to get the translation accomplished. And judging from the thousands

of persons who believed in the Book of Mormon and joined the Church, any desperation he might have had was totally uncalled for.

And now, Mr. Budvarson, do you really believe the Bible to be a "complete revelation from God to man"? We believe in the Bible and the references you quote just as firmly as you do, but frankly, we fail to find anything in your references that suggests that all truth or revelation from God is contained in the Bible. We have examined the original and several modern translations but still fail to find what you say. And don't you realize that when Paul, Peter, and John wrote what they did, the New Testament was not even in existence as such? They had no idea, as far as we are aware, that their writings would be collected into a scripture which you call a "complete revelation from God to man." And if the Bible is such a "complete revelation" why can't you "true Christians" agree on what it says? Why are you divided into so many different sects and churches, bickering over your differences? Didn't Jesus want his disciples to be one even as he and his Father were one? (John 17:11, 21) You have cited Revelation 22:18,19 to help prove your point. It reads:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Now, how can an intelligent person hope to see from this passage that the Bible is a "complete revelation from God to man"? John's words, "the words of the prophecy of this book, ... the plagues that are written in this book," simply refer to the book John was then writing, the Book of Revelation. It has no reference to the Bible what-

ever as a whole. And the New Testament, as already indicated, was not even then in existence. Moreover, if Mr. Budvarson uses the passage as a shot at the Book of Mormon, if the Nephite record is regarded as an addition "unto these things" spoken of by John, let us remind the gentleman that the Revelator only had in mind additions to the Book of Revelation as such.

If the Bible is the "complete revelation" you say it is, Mr. Budvarson, how does it happen that the following works, works known to the ancients and seemingly inspired, since the Bible mentions them, are missing: The Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14), The Book of Jasher (Josh. 10: 13; 2 Sam. 1: 18), a Book of Statutes (1 Sam. 10: 25), The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11: 41), The Book of Nathan the Prophet (1 Chron. 29:29), The Book of Gad the Seer (1 Chron. 29:29), The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chron. 9: 29), The Visions of Iddo the Seer (2 Chron. 9: 29), The Book of Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12:15), The Book of Jehu (2 Chron. 20:34), The Acts of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:22), The Sayings of the Seers (2 Chron. 33:19), not to mention certain missing epistles or prophecies (1 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 3:3; Col. 4:16; Jude 3, 14)? As long as these inspired works or histories are missing from our collection of scriptures, who is to say that our Bible is a "complete revelation from God to man"? Apparently there are still some persons lacking scriptural background in this area that do.

Mr. Budvarson's photo reproduction of page 303 of the First Edition on his page 20 is another example of what he has been trying to drive home, namely, that changes were made in the text of later editions of the Book of Mormon. He notes thirty-two changes (Alma 28: 14; 29: 111) and underlines eight words that were removed in the Second (1837) and succeeding editions. What we have said about his other evidences of change apply here also.

Joseph Smith and his associates noted places where the text of the First Edition was not in accordance with the original manuscript. They corrected these errors and made other changes to make the Book of Mormon a more agreeable literary production. The general sense of the original text was not changed. Here, again, we drive home the point that responsible Mormon leaders never held the view that the First Edition was a perfect production, Mr. Budvarson's apparent understanding to the contrary notwithstanding.

In Mr. Budvarson's photo reproduction (p. 21) of page 200 of the First Edition he takes pains to underline "king Benjamin" and points out that in later editions it was changed to read "king Mosiah." (Cf. Mos. 21: 28) Budvarson is correct in this; the prophet Joseph Smith did change the reading in the Second (1837) Edition despite the fact that the original manuscript reads "king Benjamin," if the manuscript made by Oliver Cowdery and now in possession of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is any criterion. (Cf. "Preface," p. viii of current editions of their Book of Mormon.) The change raises an interesting question, Who was responsible for the reading, "king Benjamin," in the first place? Was it an inadvertent slip of the tongue on the part of Joseph Smith as he dictated his translation to Oliver Cowdery, or did he translate correctly enough an original error on the part of Mormon, the abridger of the Book of Mormon? The last of these suggestions is probably the correct one, for the fact remains that the reading "king Benjamin" is an out-and-out error, because the king had been dead for some time, and his son Mosiah was his successor with a "gift from God." (See Mos. 6:4-5; 8:13.) What we have here, Mr. Budvarson, is an example of another human error that Joseph Smith was glad to correct. (See a similar error on page 546 of the First Edition which the prophet *didn't* catch in the Second Edition. Cf. Ether 4:1.)

¹ *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, I, 58-59. Generally abbreviated as D H.C., *Documentary History of the Church*. In a communication to the writer under date of June 14, 1963 the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress says: "In 1830 copyright claims were governed by the Act of 1790 as supplemented by the Act of 1802, which required that the person claiming copyright state 'in the title page or in the page immediately following' of the work that he was the author or proprietor of that work."

² See Dr. Francis W. Kirkham. *A New Witness for Christ in America*. Enlarged Third Edition p. 227.