

Samuel Smith The First Missionary

Compiled By Glen W. Chapman

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Samuel's Father Joseph Smith Senior received word concerning missionary work in February 1829 before the Book of Mormon was even translated. This revelation said:

D&C 4:

1 NOW behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

2 Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

3 Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;

4 For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

Samuel was not only the first missionary in the Church but also it's first convert. He was at Joseph's farm helping out while much of the record was being translated. He was there when Joseph and Oliver went into the woods to receive the Priesthood from John the Baptist and to baptize each other. He heard Oliver rave about his first spiritual experience of feeling the angel's hands and hearing his voice. Samuel was baptized 10 days later On May 25, 1829 nearly a year before the Church was organized.

Samuel was given the privileged of being one of the Eight Witnesses. He had the privilege of seeing and handling the plates and turning the gold leaves. On the day the Church was organized on April 6, 1830 he was there and was ordained an Elder in the Church and set apart as a missionary by his brother Joseph. In June of 1830 being 22 years of age and after getting the crops planted, he left on his first mission. Five thousand copies of the Book of Mormon had been printed and the Smiths had copies stacked every where in their house. The book was 600 pages long and was bound in leather and was to be sold for \$1.50. Samuel took a knapsack full and started walking along the main road heading east.. The following is a report of his first day's labor:

"On June 30 he started down the Livonia turnpike with a knapsack filled with copies of the Book of Mormon strapped to his back. His first day was discouraging. For twenty-five miles he trudged without a favorable contact. In the evening, tired and discouraged, he stopped at a wayside tavern. Hoping to sell the landlord a copy of the book, he approached him with, "How would you like to purchase a history of the origin of the Indian?" The tavern keeper asked where he had acquired such a book. When Samuel informed him that his brother had translated the history from gold plates found buried in the ground, the man, livid with rage, thrust him through the door with, "Get out! You shan't stay one minute with your books."

Samuel was heartsick as it was the fifth time he had been turned away that day. Traveling an additional five miles, he found an old apple tree and made his bed for the night under its protecting limbs. The next morning he located a small cottage occupied by a poor widow. After informing her of his ill treatment and lack of nourishment, she graciously invited him in for a meal. Samuel explained the history of the Book of Mormon and was moved to leave a copy with her before proceeding on his journey.

He headed northward coming to a town named Lima . . . At Lima, Livingston County, New York, Samuel entered the Tomlinson house and sat down at a table where a Methodist exhorter, Phineas H. Young-was taking his noonday meal. Seating himself across the table, Samuel thrust a book toward Young, saying, "There is a book, sir, I wish you to read." The approach was so unexpected that Phineas Young hesitated. Regaining his composure, he asked, "Pray, sir, what book have you?" "The Book of Mormon, or, as it is called by some, the Golden Bible," came the reply. Young had heard all the rumors circulated about the "Golden Bible." From these rumors he knew the book purported to be a revelation. To his inquiry regarding this claim, Samuel responded, "Yes it is a revelation from God." The preacher took the book, opened it and read the testimony of the witnesses. As Young concluded, Samuel Smith promised him, "If you will read this book with a prayerful heart, and ask God to give you a witness, you will know of the truth of this work." Phineas nodded his head in assent and inquired the missionary's name. "My name is Samuel H. Smith." "Ah," exclaimed the reverend gentleman, "you are one of the witnesses." Samuel humbly replied, "Yes, I know the book to be a revelation from God, translated by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, and that my brother Joseph Smith, Jun., is a Prophet, Seer and Revelator." There was nothing left for the preacher to do but buy a copy of the book, take it home, and prayerfully read it.

He told Samuel of his brother in law living in Bloomfield about ten miles from Lima who also was a

Methodist minister and who might be interested in seeing the book. His name was John Greene

Phineas also had two other brothers, Joseph and John, who were Methodist circuit riding ministers who were living in the communities of Mendon and Victor about ten miles north of Bloomfield. Samuel made his way to the Greene household. John Green was mildly interested and said he would make a list of those interested in his forthcoming preaching circuit and if Samuel would return in two weeks he would give him a report of those interested. Samuel walked the rest of the 30 miles home with a certain amount of hope for success.

Phineas H. Young expected to find errors in the Book of Mormon, which as a "teacher in Israel" he intended to expose "and save the people from the delusion." In the next two weeks he read the book through twice and "felt a conviction that the book was true." The next Sabbath he preached to his congregation at some length, "quoting from the Bible to support my position," he later said, "and finally closed by telling the people that I believed the book." His father, John Young, read the Book of Mormon and declared, "It was the greatest work and clearest of error of anything he had ever seen, the Bible not excepted. His sister, Fanny Murray, mother-in-law of Heber C. Kimball, borrowed the book. She perused it and acknowledged it as a revelation. Many others read this strange volume and openly affirmed it to be the word of God.

When Samuel Smith returned to Bloomfield, Mrs. Greene informed him that her husband had found no one willing to buy the Book of Mormon, nor was he disposed to buy a copy himself. She had read the book and believed its message. The young missionary was impressed to leave the copy with her. Before departing, he joined Mrs. Greene in prayer. Later, she induced her husband to read the book, and he believed its message. She loaned it to her brother, Brigham Young, who studied it prayerfully. After reading the book he called on his brother Phineas and assured him that there was something in Mormonism. "[Brigham's] investigation [had] resulted in a firm conviction that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the living God and the Book of Mormon a divine record."

There were four preachers in the Young family. Brigham's three brothers, Phineas, Joseph, and John, preached the Methodist faith, as did his brother-in-law, John P. Greene. In Canada, Joseph Young was proselytizing for the Methodist church. He invited Phineas to join him in his labors. On a journey to Kingston, Canada, they stopped at Lyons, New York, to visit an old acquaintance, Solomon Chamberlain. Solomon Chamberlain had had a strange vision in the year 1816. He says of this vision: "In the year 1816 the Lord showed me in a vision that there were no people on the earth that were right, and that faith was gone from the earth, excepting a few, and that all churches were corrupt. I further saw in the vision that he would soon raise up a church that would be after the apostolic order, that there would be in it the same powers and gifts that were in the days of Christ, and that I should live to see the day, and that there would [be] a book come forth, like unto the Bible, and the people would be guided by it, as well as the Bible." Samuel Smith had organized a branch of the Church there with over a dozen members, Chamberlain one of its most ardent proponents. For two hours Chamberlain set forth "the wonders of Mormonism." Phineas H. Young "soon became convinced that such an order of things was necessary for the salvation of the world." From this humble effort of Samuel the Lord brought into the Church future Prophets and Apostles and a large number of dedicated and talented converts into the Church. Phineas Young later brought Oliver Cowdery back in the Church after being separated 10 long years.

Daniel Tyler reports concerning Samuel Smith.

In the spring of 1832, Elders Samuel H. Smith and Orson Hyde, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, came to our neighborhood and held a few meetings. Elder Smith read the 29th chapter of Isaiah at the first meeting and delineated the circumstances of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, of which he said he was a witness. He knew his brother Joseph had the plates, for the prophet had shown them to him, and he had handled them and seen the engravings thereon. His speech was more like a narrative than a sermon. Elder Hyde made a few closing remarks and appointed another meeting. At the close of the first meeting my father, as his custom was, sprung his usual question about the spiritual gifts and was quite surprised to hear Elder Smith say, "That is our doctrine, and we have those gifts in our Church."

This meeting was held in the house of Mr. Joseph Hartshorn, one of our neighbors. At the close of the meeting I picked up the Book of Mormon, which they had left lying on the table, and began to read the

preface in relation to Martin Harris losing 116 pages of the original manuscript. When I had read as far as a quotation from a revelation, now found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, my brother, William, took the book out of my hands and closed it, remarking that good people said it carried with it a spirit of witchcraft, which caused those who read it to be bewitched and join the "Mormon" church. I was then over fifteen years of age and my brother, who was next older than myself, was in his eighteenth year. He was wild and sometimes profane, especially when angry, and I was quite taken by surprise to hear him quote what "good people said," as previously I had never heard him speak of them, except in derision. The last words I read were so riveted upon my mind that I sometimes feared there was some truth in the remark about the book being bewitching. The words were, "I will show unto them" (the wicked who had designed to change the manuscript in case Joseph retranslated it) "that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil."

Before leaving the place the Elders baptized three persons.

What can we conclude concerning Samuel Smith ?

1. The Lord had used his dedication and effort to accomplish a great work and accomplish a great harvest.
2. He was unafraid and boldly willing to share the message with anyone whom would listen to him.
3. He never let his own comforts interfere with his mission
4. He had an unshakable testimony that his brother Joseph was true prophet of God and had translated the sacred record from Gold plates.

Bibliography

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Our Miraculous Heritage