

NOTES ON "LEHI'S TRAVELS"

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The small book called *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel*, published in 1884 by Elders Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little, contains a statement as follows:

LEHI'S TRAVELS.—Revelation to Joseph the Seer.

The course that Lehi and his company traveled from Jerusalem to the place of their destination:

They traveled nearly a south, southeast direction until they came to the nineteenth degree of north latitude; then, nearly east to the Sea of Arabia, then sailed in a southeast direction, and landed on the continent of South America, in Chile, thirty degrees south latitude.¹

No source is given for this information, beyond the introductory statement that it was a revelation to Joseph the Seer, which of course means Joseph Smith. An intriguing problem for historians is where this statement came from and whether, indeed, it can really be traced to Joseph Smith.

A similar statement is attributed to Frederick G. Williams and seems to be associated in some way with the time of the dedicatory services of the Kirtland Temple in March 1836. This account, presented by Nancy C. Williams in her book, *After One Hundred Years*,² puts forth the same basic information but contains a few variants from that published in the *Compendium* and offers some unique spelling and capitalization:

The course that Lehi traveled from the city of Jerusalem to the place where he and his family took ship, they traveled nearly a south south East direction untill they came to the nineteenth degree of North Lattitude, then nearly east to the Sea of Arabia then sailed in a south east direction and landed on the continent of South America in Chile thirty degrees south Lattitude.³

¹The *Compendium* was first published by Richards and Little in Liverpool, England in 1857. However, the "Lehi" statement was not included in the first edition. A second edition, revised and enlarged, was published in Salt Lake City by George Q. Cannon and Sons Company in 1884, and it is from this edition that the statement is found on page 289.

²Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1951.

³Spelling and capitalization have been preserved as in the original. In Nancy C. Williams's book, *After One Hundred Years*, the text of the statement is offered on pages 101 and 102. Fortunately, however, a photograph of Frederick G. Williams's original ink copy is included facing page 102, and it can be seen that the printed text is not accurate. It is from the photo copy that the text for this article is taken.

Nancy C. Williams indicated that Frederick G. Williams first wrote the account in pencil along with other notes (presumably at the Kirtland Temple dedication), and that after returning home he rewrote the item in ink on another sheet of paper. Both the pencil copy and the ink copy are said to have been loaned to the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City in the 1860s by Frederick's son Ezra.⁴

A footnote on page 102 of the book, *After One Hundred Years*, reports that Nancy Williams and others received "a wonderful manifestation that it was indeed a revelation given to Frederick G. Williams for him and his family." This is a somewhat different emphasis than the declaration of the *Compendium* (cited earlier) that this information was a "revelation to Joseph the Seer."

Interest in this whole matter is increased because of another early source. In the spring of 1845, in Nauvoo, Dr. John M. Bernhisel made a partial copy of the manuscript of Joseph Smith's "new translation" of the Bible. Although the statement about Lehi's travels apparently has nothing to do with the translation of the Bible, the "Lehi" statement is found on the last leaf of the Bernhisel copy. It is on a page by itself without a heading, and there is no comment concerning it. Dr. Bernhisel did not number the pages of his manuscript after page 21, but if they were numbered consecutively, the page containing the Lehi statement would be number 135. The reverse side of the page is blank.

The exact text and spelling of the statement as it appears in the Bernhisel copy is as follows:

The course that Lehi travelled from the city of Jerusalem to the place where he and his family took ship. They travelled nearly a south south East direction until they came to the nineteenth degree of North Latitude then nearly East to the sea of Arabia then sailed in a south east direction and landed on the continent of South America in Chile thirty degrees south latitude.

It will be noted that the Bernhisel copy has the same wording as the Williams account and nearly the same spelling and capitalization, with striking correlation in the spelling of "latitude."

Bernhisel offers no date as to when he recorded this item, but the entire Bernhisel manuscript was made during May and

⁴*After One Hundred Years*, p. 102.

June 1845 and is dated several times in the manuscript. The penmanship of the Lehi entry appears to be consistent with the remainder of the manuscript, having the same style of writing, capitalization, and word-slant. In every respect it seems to be the handwriting of Dr. Bernhisel recorded during the May-June 1845 period. There appears to be no reason to suggest that the entry was not written at the same time as the manuscript which it accompanies.

This matter has importance historically since it suggests that the Bernhisel and the Williams accounts represent the same textual source, while differing somewhat from the account given in the *Compendium*. Even more important is the fact that the Lehi item was considered significant enough to Dr. Bernhisel in 1845 for him to copy it into his records. The Bernhisel copy becomes an earlier source by nearly forty years than the printed *Compendium* of 1884.

Since the "Lehi" information is in no way connected with the "new translation" of the Bible, a question arises as to how Dr. Bernhisel obtained the information in the first place. This of course we do not know, but it is possible that he found it among the sheets of the Bible manuscripts and simply recorded it because it was interesting to him. Whether the Lehi item was ever among the pages of the Bible translation we do not know, but it is certainly not among them today. The original manuscripts of Joseph Smith's "new translation" of the Bible which Dr. Bernhisel used are in the RLDS archives in Independence, Missouri, and the writer knows from personal examination that the Lehi statement is not currently in the collection.

We may someday learn more about the statement of Lehi's travels. In the meantime it is a matter of interest to historians to know that Dr. Bernhisel had access to it in 1845 and included it with his copy of Joseph Smith's new translation of the Bible.

SOLOMON CHAMBERLAIN—EARLY MISSIONARY

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John H. Gilbert, a typesetter for E. B. Grandin, publisher of the Book of Mormon, stated that the first manuscript pages