
The Debt to E. B. Grandin

D&C 19

In 1829 the Prophet Joseph Smith asked Martin Harris to secure the publication of the Book of Mormon. Martin considered the request and accepted the financial burden of the publication cost. On August 25, 1829, he entered into a mortgage agreement with E. B. Grandin, guaranteeing that “at or before the expiration of eighteen months from the date hereof,” he would pay the requisite \$3,000 for the printing of 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon.¹

The printing of some 296,000 pages of Book of Mormon text was slow. One reason was that additional type ordered for the job did not arrive from Albany until late November 1829. Another reason was circulating rumors that Martin Harris would not pay the full cost of printing. E. B. Grandin suspended printing the Book of Mormon in January 1830. It was not until Grandin was convinced that Martin would make good on his payment that the printing began again.

E. B. Grandin announced in the *Wayne Sentinel* on March 26, 1830, “First Public Sale of the Book of Mormon: the above work, containing about 600 pages, large Deuodecimo, is now for sale, wholesale and retail, at the Palmyra Bookstore, by E. B. Grandin.” The price of the book was \$1.25.

Martin turned his attention to selling the Book of Mormon. In late March 1830 Joseph Smith and Joseph Knight saw Martin cross the road ahead of them with “a Bunch of morman Books.” Joseph Knight recalled that Martin greeted them, saying, “‘The Book will not sell for no Body wants them.’ Joseph says, ‘I think they will sell well.’ Says he, ‘I want

¹ The mortgage agreement between Harris and Grandin is recorded in Wayne County Mortgages Book, 3:325–26 in Historian’s Office, Wayne County, NY.

a Commandment.' 'Why,' says Joseph, 'fulfill what you have got.' 'But,' says he, 'I must have a Commandment.'"²

Martin was not pacified until Joseph invited him to spend the night in the Joseph Smith Sr. log home and promised that in the home they would further discuss the matter. Martin spent the night at the Smith home as arranged. The next morning, he awoke complaining of a weight on his chest. Seeking relief, he again asked the Prophet Joseph for a "commandment."

Later that day Joseph Smith received "a commandment of God and not of Man, to Martin Harris, given by him who is Eternal" (D&C 19: Introduction). In the revelation, the Lord commanded Martin to repent:

Wherefore, I command you to repent, and keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., in my name;

And it is by my almighty power that you have received them;

Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. . . .

Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken. . . .

Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy family.

Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage (D&C 19:13–15, 20, 34–35).

Belatedly, Martin did as the Lord commanded. The contractual arrangement, however, was not fully satisfied until January 12, 1832, as certified by Truman Hemingway, the commissioner of deeds for Wayne County, New York.

² Joseph Knight, "Reminiscences," as cited in Dean Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 36–37.