



John S. and Elizabeth Phillips Davis

INTRODUCTION

“Our thoughts are beginning to lean more toward the Trumpet, since we intend to finish the translation [of the Book of Mormon], if we are alive and well, within about three months.” An overburdened John Davis prints this comment in the 29 November 1851 issue of *Zion’s Trumpet* after having devoted nearly a full year to translating and publishing the entire Doctrine and Covenants and about half the Book of Mormon. In an apparent defense he also declares that the periodical “is not being neglected at present, for in it there are many very interesting things” (*Zion’s Trumpet* 3 [29 November 1851]: 384). He then promises that when he has more time he will “make it more worthy of being received by writing more ourselves.”

Davis’s good intentions to write more for *Zion’s Trumpet* were not realized, however; instead his contributions to the periodical went from 45 pages in 1851 to only 25 pages in 1852. And his reliance on other printed sources such as the *Millennial Star* and the *Deseret News* went from 175 pages to 265 pages, or an increase of 22 percent. Davis acknowledges in his foreword to the 1852 volume of *Zion’s Trumpet*, dated 22 December 1852, that his “observations as Editor have been infrequent,” but he hastens to add that his “publication is filled with the best things under heaven, even the words of the head of the Church.” Furthermore, he declares the 1852 *Zion’s Trumpet* to be “the best volume yet.”

The following table shows the contents of the two volumes in contrast:

Zion's Trumpet

<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Total pages</i>	<i>Pages by Davis</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Pages from other printed sources</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Pages from letters, poems, articles, etc.</i>	<i>%</i>
3	1851	416	45	11	175	42	196	47
4	1852	416	25	6	265	64	126	30

Although Davis had hoped to finish the Welsh translation and publication of the Book of Mormon by about the end of February 1852, the last segment would not come off the press until mid-April. But when the project was nearing completion, the Reverend J. Jones, Llangollen, Dan Jones's brother and Davis's former boss, had begun to lecture in various places in South Wales against Mormonism. Davis decided to use the time he had intended for writing more for *Zion's Trumpet* to instead answer the charges of the Reverend J. Jones. The eventual result was a series of six treatises on miracles that were published apart from the periodical during May, June, and July.

Upon completing the series of treatises, Davis's attention was again diverted from his periodical to translating and publishing the Pearl of Great Price, a task he completed in early September 1852. And then his focus shifted to putting together a definitive Welsh Mormon hymnal—a collection of 575 hymns that would include those from his 1849 hymnal and most of those from Dan Jones's 1846 hymnal. He published this new hymnal one month before the end of 1852. Thus the good intentions he had expressed one year earlier—to write more for *Zion's Trumpet* after completing the Book of Mormon translation—were redirected to three other major and very time-consuming projects.

If John Davis was at the point of exhaustion at the end of such a busy year, he gives no indication of it in his enthusiastic announcement of a weekly appearance of *Zion's Trumpet* for the coming year in the 11 December 1852 issue, p. 400. He pleads with his subscribers to assist him in widening the circulation of the

periodical to enable him to “put much more in the *Trumpet* than it contains at present.”

As he embarked on his final year as editor of *Zion's Trumpet*, John Davis was but thirty years old. He had converted to Mormonism only six years earlier while in the employ of the Reverend J. Jones, Llangollen. The Reverend Jones had permitted his younger brother Dan to print Mormon materials on the press he operated in the small village of Rhydybont, near Llanybydder, Carmarthenshire. As the young John Davis set the type for these publications and as he conversed with Captain Dan Jones, their author, he became convinced of the truth of the Mormon message and accepted baptism on 19 April 1846. This new convert brought with him seven years' training as an apprentice printer, several years' experience working as a printer, expertise in both Welsh and English, a poetic gift, and a growing knowledge and conviction of his new religion. No other Mormon convert in Wales had credentials superior to those of John Davis to step into the shoes of Dan Jones at the outset of 1849 as editor of the Church periodical, as one who could defend the doctrine in polemics, as one who could render a superb translation of the Mormon scriptures, and as one who could assemble a hymnal of 575 hymns, a great many of them of his own composition. John Davis was, indeed, a godsend in this regard.

As with the English translations of the three preceding volumes of *Zion's Trumpet*, this 1852 volume is published in a “facsimile translation” format to provide the reader with something of the appearance and flavor of the original Welsh publication.

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