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THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS
MILLENNIAL STAR.

“NO WEAPON THAT IS FORMED AGAINST THEE SHALL PROSPER; AND EVERY TONGUE THAT SHALL RISE AGAINST THEE IN JUDGMENT THOU SHALT CONDEMN. THIS IS THE HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD, AND THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OF ME SAITH THE LORD.”—*Isaiah liv, 17.*

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REPORT OF ELDERS ORSON PRATT AND JOSEPH F. SMITH.

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New York City, Sept. 17, 1878.

President John Taylor and Council of the Twelve:

Dear Brethren,—We desire to make the following hastily written report of our mission to the Eastern States, which we would have made from time to time as we journeyed along, but for the hurry and inconvenience of daily travel.

As you are aware, we left home on the morning of September 3rd, in company with Elder W. C. Staines and seven or eight missionaries *en route* for Europe and the States. We parted from these brethren at Council Bluffs, excepting Elder Thomas S. Higham, who accompanied us by the Council Bluffs, St. Joseph and Kansas City Railway to Kansas City, and from thence to Independence by the Missouri Pacific Railway, where we parted from him, he continuing on to St. Louis and the Southern States.

We arrived at Independence on the morning of Friday, Sept. 6th, three

days from home. We put up at the Merchants' Hotel, the only one we saw in the place. After breakfast we visited the "Temple Lot," about three-fourths of a mile west of the Court House, or the centre of the town. (For description of which, see letter of James A. Little, dated Nov. 15th, and published in *Deseret News* of Nov. 23, 1877.)

In 1831, or about 47 years ago, when Elder O. Pratt visited the ground, it was covered with trees, but now there is not a tree nor even a stump standing, except on the portions surrounding the immediate Temple site, which are occupied by dwellings and orchards. The ground, at the time of our visit, was exceedingly dry and dusty, the season having been a very dry one.

Some years ago, Mr. William Eaton purchased a homestead just south of the Temple site, and on a portion of the original Temple grounds, as purchased by Bishop Edward Partridge, (which is said to have been 53 acres).

For this homestead Mr. Eaton paid \$18, including a neat frame cottage then built on the ground.

Mr. Eaton also purchased one or two lots covering the Temple site, for which he paid \$500. These lots, we were informed, he had deeded to the Bishop or Trustee-in-Trust of the "Re-organized Church." Subsequently we learned from Mr. John Scott, of Plano, a member of the "Re-organized Church," that the Whitmers held the tax titles to these lots. We called on Mr. Eaton, of Independence, whom we found in feeble health. He informed us that his present wife was the widow of John E. Page. She was well acquainted formerly with Elder Pratt, and many others about whom she inquired. She treated us kindly, brought us grapes of their own raising, which she remarked were "grown in Zion," and although the "gleanings after the vintage was done," were of very excellent quality and flavor.

We learned from Mr. and Mrs. Eaton that there were some 70 families gathered in and around Independence, who are waiting the "Redemption of Zion," etc. These were all members of the "Re-organized Church," commonly known as the Josephites.

Land in the vicinity of Independence was very low—being worth from \$15 to \$25 or \$30 per acre, and more distant from the town somewhat less, varying according to the improvements, etc.

The number of inhabitants in Independence was estimated at about 3,000, and in Jackson County at about 60,000, some 40,000 or 50,000 of whom were in Kansas City alone. The farms, wherever we passed, had the appearance of being almost deserted, being neglected and overgrown with rank weeds, among which the corn and other crops seemed left to struggle against great odds for their existence. The farm houses, if proper to dignify them by that name, were almost universally small, old and dilapidated, presenting unmistakable evidences of unthrift and decay, the result of indolence.

In and near the small towns, and occasionally on farms, a better class of houses may be seen.

At Independence we met with Wm.

E. McLellin, one of the first Council of the Twelve. He seemed very much pleased to see us, and urged very strongly for us to prolong our visit. He pointed out to us the spot on which stood the fine two story brick printing office, which was demolished by the mob in the summer of 1833; also the dwellings of several families of the followers of "Young Joseph," and of a family named Humphreys, who still claimed to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We called on brother Humphreys at his shop, and found him pleased to meet with us.

Mr. McLellin related many circumstances relative to the early persecutions in Jackson County, referring to some of the mob, among others he mentioned "Sam Owens," "killed by Mexicans." Said Col. Pitcher was still living in Independence, that he was an exception to the rest of the mob, being naturally a good-hearted man, but was acting under *orders* at the time of the persecutions.

McLellin himself was very eccentric and opinionated. He plainly evinced that his spirituality died and his growth ceased at the time of his apostasy in 1836.

While he claimed to hold to his faith in the Book of Mormon, and its inspired translation by the Prophet Joseph, with the pertinacity of absolute knowledge, he denounced, in toto, all the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and the idea of the restoration of the priesthood of Melchisedek or of Aaron to man, but believes in the Apostleship, which he thinks comprises everything, although he had no faith in the ordination of the first Twelve.

With one breath he would extol and reverence the memory of the Prophet, and with the next fling at him some slanderous accusation in the most spiteful manner, as if mentally writhing under some real or fancied wrongs. His contempt for Sidney Rigdon was unfeigned, whom he accused of introducing his own sectarian notions into the Church and of leading Joseph and the Church astray.

He seemed to cling to us with unusual relish, and it was with unmis-

takable regret that he parted from us at the station as we got on board the cars for Richmond.

Coming to Lexington by narrow-gauge railway, we crossed the Missouri River by ferry, and took broad gauge railway from this point to Richmond, eight miles.

At Richmond we put up at the Shaw House, before the cyclone a three story brick building, but has been restored, since the tempest, only two stories, now kept by Mr. Warren Ewing, son-in-law to the original proprietor, Mr. S. Shaw, once a freighter to Utah, now dead. On Saturday morning, Sept. 7th, we met Mr. David Whitmer, the last remaining one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He is a good-sized man, 73 years of age last January, and well preserved. (He was born Jan. 7, 1805), he is close shaven, his hair perfectly white and rather thin, he has a large head and a very pleasant, manly countenance that one would readily perceive to be an index to a conscientious, honest heart. He seemed wonderfully pleased, as well as surprised, at seeing Elder Orson Pratt. Said he would not have known him he had grown so fat and stout, he remembered him as a slender, bashful, timid boy. After a few moments conversation he excused himself, saying he would return again to see us. This meeting was in the bar-room of the hotel. When he called again he was in company with Col. Childs, a middle aged man, and a resident of the place. By invitation we accompanied them to Mr. Whitmer's office, where we were introduced to Mr. David J. Whitmer, (eldest son of David) Mr. Geo. Schweich, (grandson of the old gentleman) Mr. John C. Whitmer, (son of Jacob Whitmer), Col. James W. Black, of Richmond, and several others. A couple of hours were very pleasantly passed in conversation, principally on Utah matters, when we parted for dinner, agreeing to meet Mr. Whitmer again at his office, at 4.30 p.m.

Agreeable to appointment we met Mr. Whitmer and his friends, at his office, but as the place was too public for private conversation and as it seemed impossible to obtain a private personal interview with David Whit-

mer, by himself, we invited him and such of his friends as he saw proper to fetch along, to our room in the hotel. Mr. Whitmer apologized for not inviting us to his house, as it was "wash day," and he and his wife were "worn out" with the extra labor, exposure, etc., etc., consequent on re-building since the cyclone. He accepted our invitation to our room and brought with him James R. B. Vancleave, a fine looking, intelligent young newspaper man, of Chicago, who is paying his addresses to Miss Josephine Schweich (grand-daughter of David Whitmer) George Schweich, (grandson) John C. Whitmer, (son of Jacob), W. W. Warner, and another person whose name we did not learn. In the presence of these the following, in substance, as noticed in Brother Joseph F. Smith's journal, is the account of the interview.

Elder O. Pratt to D. Whitmer. Can you tell the date of the bestowal of the Apostleship upon Joseph, by Peter, James and John?

D. W. I do not know, Joseph never told me. I can only tell you what I know, for I will not testify to anything I do not know.

J. F. S. to D. W. Did Oliver Cowdery die here in Richmond?

D. W. Yes, he lived here, I think, about one year before his death. He died in my father's house, right here, in January, 1849. Phineas Young was here at the time.

Elder O. P. Do you remember what time you saw the plates?

D. W. It was in June, 1829—the latter part of the month, and the eight witnesses saw them, I think, the next day or the day after. (i. e. one or two days after). Joseph showed them the plates himself, but the angel showed us (the three witnesses) the plates, as I suppose to fulfil the words of the book itself. Martin Harris was not with us at this time; he obtained a view of them afterwards, (the same day). Joseph, Oliver and myself were together when I saw them. We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon but also the brass plates, the plates of the Book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people of the world down to the time of their being

engraved, and many other plates. The fact is, it was just as though Joseph, Oliver and I were sitting just here on a log, when we were overshadowed by a light. It was not like the light of the sun nor like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended away round us, I cannot tell how far, but in the midst of this light about as far off as he sits (pointing to John C. Whitmer, sitting a few feet from him), there appeared as it were, a table with many records or plates upon it, besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the Sword of Laban, the directors—i. e., the ball which Lehi had, and the Interpreters. I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life, declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God."

Elder O. P. Did you see the Angel at this time?

D. W. Yes; he stood before us. Our testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon is strictly and absolutely true, just as it is there written. Before I knew Joseph, I had heard about him and the plates from persons who declared they knew he had them, and swore they would get them from him. When Oliver Cowdery went to Pennsylvania, he promised to write me what he should learn about these matters, which he did. He wrote me that Joseph had told him his (Oliver's) secret thoughts, and all he had meditated about going to see him, which no man on earth knew, as he supposed, but himself, and so he stopped to write for Joseph.

Soon after this, Joseph sent for me (D. W.) to come to Harmony to get him and Oliver and bring them to my father's house. I did not know what to do, I was pressed with my work. I had some 20 acres to plow, so I concluded I would finish plowing and then go. I got up one morning to go to work as usual, and on going to the field, found between five and seven acres of my ground had been plowed during the night.

I don't know who did it; but it was done just as I would have done it

myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow.

This enabled me to start sooner. When I arrived at Harmony Joseph and Oliver were coming toward me, and met me some distance from the house. Oliver told me that Joseph had informed him when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night, etc., and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me; all of which was exactly as Joseph had told Oliver, at which I was greatly astonished. When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old-fashioned wooden spring seat and Joseph behind us; while traveling along in a clear open place, a very pleasant, nice-looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, "good morning, it is very warm," at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, "No, I am going to Cumorah." This name was something new to me, I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked around enquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.

J. F. S. Did you notice his appearance?

D. W. I should think I did. He was, I should think, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches tall and heavy set, about such a man as James Vaucleave there, but heavier; his face was as large, he was dressed in a suit of brown woolen clothes, his hair and beard were white, like Brother Pratt's, but his beard was not so heavy. I also remember that he had on his back a sort of knapsack with something in, shaped like a book. It was the messenger who had the plates, who had taken them from Joseph just prior to our starting from Harmony. Soon after our arrival home, I saw something which led me to the belief that the plates were placed or concealed in my father's barn. I frankly asked Joseph if my suppo-

sition was right, and he told me it was. Sometime after this, my mother was going to milk the cows, when she was met out near the yard by the same old man (judging by her description of him) who said to her: "You have been very faithful and diligent in your labors, but you are tired because of the increase of your toil; it is proper therefore that you should receive a witness that your faith may be strengthened." Thereupon he showed her the plates. My father and mother had a large family of their own, the addition to it therefore of Joseph, his wife Emma and Oliver very greatly increased the toil and anxiety of my mother. And although she had never complained she had sometimes felt that her labor was too much, or at least she was perhaps beginning to feel so. This circumstance, however, completely removed all such feelings and nerved her up for her increased responsibilities.

Elder O. P. Have you any idea when the other records will be brought forth?

D. W. When we see things in the spirit and by the power of God they seem to be right here; the present signs of the times indicate the near approach of the coming forth of the other plates, but when it will be I cannot tell. The three Nephites are at work among the lost tribes and elsewhere. John the Revelator is at work, and I believe the time will come suddenly, before we are prepared for it.

Elder O. P. Have you in your possession the original Mss. of the Book of Mormon?

D. W. I have; they are in O. Cowdery's hand writing. He placed them in my care at his death, and charged me to preserve them as long as I lived; they are safe and well preserved.

J. F. S. What will be done with them at your death?

D. W. I will leave them to my nephew, David Whitmer, son of my brother Jacob, and my namesake.

O. P. Would you not part with them to a purchaser?

D. W. No. Oliver charged me to keep them, and Joseph said my father's house should keep the records. I consider these things sacred, and would

not part with nor barter them for money.

J. F. S. We would not offer you money in the light of bartering for the Mss., but we would like to see them preserved in some manner where they would be safe from casualties and from the caprices of men, in some institution that will not die as man does.

D. W. That is all right. While camping around here in a tent, all my effects exposed to the weather, everything in the trunk where the Mss. were kept became mouldy, etc., but they were preserved, not even being discolored, (we supposed his camping in a tent, etc., had reference to his circumstances after the cyclone, in June last), except only, as he and others affirm, the room in which the Mss. were kept. That was the only part of the house which was not demolished, and even the ceiling of that room was but little impaired. "Do you think," said Philander Page, a son of Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses, "that the Almighty cannot take care of his own?"

Next day (Sunday Sept. 8) Mr. Whitmer invited us to his house, where, in the presence of David Whitmer, Esq., (son of Jacob), Philander Page, J. R. B. Vancleave, David J. Whitmer (son of David the witness) George Schweich, (grandson of David) Colonel Childs and others, David Whitmer brought out the Mss. of the Book of Mormon. We examined them closely and those who knew the handwriting pronounced the whole of them, excepting comparatively a few pages, to be in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. It was thought that these few pages were in the handwritings of Emma Smith and John and Christian Whitmer,

We found that the names of the eleven witnesses were, however, subscribed in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. When the question was asked Mr. Whitmer if he and the other witnesses did or did not sign the testimonies themselves, Mr. W. replied "each signed his own name." "Then where are the original signatures?"

D. W. I don't know, I suppose Oliver copied them, but this I know is an exact copy. Some one suggested that he, being the last one left of the 11 witnesses, ought to certify to this copy. Lawyer D. Whitmer (Jacob's son) sug-

gested that he had better reflect about it first and be very cautious.

J. F. S. suggested that perhaps there were *two copies* of the manuscripts, but Mr. Whitmer replied that, according to the best of his knowledge, there never was but the one copy. Herein of course he is evidently uninformed.

Elder O. Pratt again felt closely after the subject of procuring the Mss., but we found that nothing would move him on this point. The whole Whitmer family are deeply impressed with the sacredness of this relic. And so thoroughly imbued are they with the idea and faith that it is under the immediate protection of the Almighty, that, in their estimation, not only are the Mss. themselves safe from all possible contingencies, but that they are a source of protection to the place or house in which they may be kept, and, it may be to those who have possession of them. Another reason why they cling to this relic is that David Whitmer has reorganized the "Church of Christ" with six Elders and two priests, after the pattern of the first organization, the two priests as we suppose representing Joseph and Oliver as holding the Aaronic Priesthood from the hand of John the Baptist. David and John Whitmer were two of these six Elders, four others, viz. John C. Whitmer, W. W. Warner, Philander Page, and John Short, having been ordained by David and John. And as the recent death of John has diminished the number to five Elders it would be interesting to know if, according to their strict construction the vacancy can be filled.

Their creed is to preach nothing but the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Mr. Whitmer and others called on us again in the evening, at the hotel, and conversed, reiterating many things before stated. Upon inquiry, Mr. Whitmer informed us that Oliver Cowdery had told him all about his visiting the Church at Council Bluffs and of his having been rebaptized. He said, "Oliver died the happiest man I ever saw, after shaking hands with the family and kissing his wife and daughter, he said, "Now I lay me down for the last time, I am going to my Savior," and died immediately, with a smile on his face.

In response to some questions, Mr. Whitmer said: "Many things have been revealed which were designed only for the Church, and which the world cannot comprehend, but the Book of Mormon and those testimonies therein given were to go to all the world."

We replied, "Yes, and we have sent that Book to the Danes, the Swedes, the Spanish, the Italians, the French, the German, the Welsh, and to the islands of the Sea, the book even having been translated into Hindoostanee. So you see the Church has not been idle." To this he made no reply. In parting with him, he said "This may be the last time I shall ever see you in the flesh, so farewell."

This ended our interview with the last remaining witness who saw the plates of the Book of Mormon, yet not the last witness of its truth, for now such witnesses are multiplied into tens of thousands.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

CHARITY OF MORMON WOMEN.

Charity is always illustrated by the figure of a woman, and mankind have silently classed this attribute as a womanly characteristic, and called it the sister of Faith and Hope; and in later years, women who spend a great portion of their time in performing deeds of kindness and benevolence, are designated as Sisters of Charity.

So closely associated is charity with the life of the fair sex, that it is considered a positive requisite of true womanly character.

The world talk a great deal of charity, and make a great ado about its loveliness, its excellence, its charm, but though it sits admirably on others many persons are apt to admire the