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A Divine Record

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Abstract: This article is a brief summary of David Whitmer's life and testimony of the Book of Mormon.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1895.

A DIVINE RECORD.

WORD comes from Richmond, Missouri, that David J. Whitmer, the son of David Whitmer one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, died on June 16. He received from his father just previous to the latter's death the manuscript from which the type for the first copy of that book was set up. It was a transcript of the original translation and was much valued by its owner. The death of this man revives the memory of incidents connected with the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon, which, although somewhat familiar to many readers of the STAR, will yet bear repetition.

When David Whitmer died in 1888, there were many of the papers in the United States which gave more or less extended accounts of his connection with the Book of Mormon and the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A reporter of the *Richmond Democrat* interviewed him and listened to the story of the old gentleman wherein he told how Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had come to him in his field with the request that he accompany them to the woods near by for the purpose of witnessing a manifestation that should enable him and Oliver to become witnesses to the sacred record.

On January 22, 1888, Mr. Whitmer the elder called his family and some friends to his bedside, and said to the attending physician: "Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind, before giving my dying testimony." The doctor replied: "Yes, you are in your right mind, for I have just had a conversation with you." He then said to all who were present: "Now you must be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, the Bible and the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) is true, so you can say you have heard me bear my testimony on my death-bed. All be faithful in Christ and your reward will be according to your works. God bless you all."

The reporter who listened to the narration of the story of the angel's visit says concerning Mr. Whitmer: "While describing this vision to us, all traces of a severe cold from which he was suffering disappeared for the time being, his form straightened, his countenance assumed almost a beatified expression, and his tones became strangely eloquent. Although evidently no studied effort, the description was a magnificent piece of word-painting, and he carries his hearers with him to that lonely hill by the old farm and they stood there with him awed in the divine presence. Skeptics may laugh and scoff if they will, but no man can listen to Mr.

Whitmer as he talks of his interview with the angels of the Lord without being most forcibly convinced that he has heard an honest man tell what he honestly believes to be true." Such then is the effect of the testimony of a man whom it was said Joseph Smith deceived into saying that he had seen an angel. It might be possible for one man to say he had seen a vision, and he be mistaken, but it is clearly an impossibility for that man to make three others see the same thing at the same time, and force them to testify to it in so positive and solemn a manner as did the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

It must be remembered that all three of these witnesses afterwards turned against Joseph Smith, and if they had been assisting him to perpetrate a deception then was the time when they would surely have tried to make amends. But not one of them ever denied the truth of their statements contained in the Book of Mormon. As above related David Whitmer on his death-bed affirmed it with all the power he could command. Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris both became members of the Church again before their death, thus showing their sincerity and faith in the organization which Joseph Smith established under God's direction. Oliver, in order to be admitted on the latter occasion, had to make a humble acknowledgement of his transgression, and a confession of repentance. He was naturally of a proud disposition, had at one time been the second Elder in the Church, so called by revelation, and for him to beg the privilege of becoming simply a member of the Church after being out of it for several years is a testimony stronger if possible than that which he originally bore.

There are also the eight witnesses who declare that they saw the plates and handled them, that they had the appearance of gold, and the workmanship or engraving on them was very curious and apparently ancient. Not one of these ever wavered in his testimony to the truth of his statements, though, like the three witnesses, some of them for a time opposed Joseph Smith and declared him to be a fallen prophet.

How can the world overcome such an array of proofs that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin? One writer has said that the testimony is unreliable because it was not subscribed before a notary public. If his reasoning were sound it would also sweep away all the written evidences of Christianity that are in existence, for such a course was not pursued by any of the New Testament writers. Paul says he saw a vision of Christ, and the world will accept this without question; but when Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris declare that they saw an angel, the same world heaps all manner of abuse upon them.

It is a startling thing to hear for the first time the story of the Book of Mormon related, but it is much more unreasonable to think that the witnesses would combine in a scheme to deceive people, and that that combination of testimony should remain unbroken even when the witnesses themselves became opposed to the leader, and by affirming their testimony were building up and strengthening him in his position. The history of the world can scarcely furnish another miraculous instance that has so much evidence in favor of it, for if these men had been frauds in

the beginning they would afterwards have done all in their power to counteract the evil they had done. It is by the testimony thus given that the world will be judged, and it is of the utmost importance that all men should find out whether the statements are true or not. The message given to the world by the Latter-day Saints is that these things are true, and they call on all men to investigate for themselves, for there will come a time when many will be astonished to find out that these hated people have been the only ones preaching the true Gospel of Christ. B.

PRESIDENT ANTHON H. LUND left for the Continent on Friday, July 26, to be gone several weeks. Before returning he will visit the conferences of the Netherlands, the Swiss and German, and the Scandinavian Missions. The readers of the STAR will hear from him through its columns while he is away.

RELEASES AND APPOINTMENT.—Elder F. A. Huish has been honorably released from laboring as Traveling Elder in the Turkish Mission, to return home.

Elder Thomas S. Newman has been released from laboring as Traveling Elder in the Cheltenham Conference, and has been appointed to labor as Traveling Elder in the Birmingham Conference.

EARLY MISSIONARY WORK IN IRELAND.

THE following is an extract from a letter written by Elder John D. T. McAllister, President of the Manti Temple, to President Anthon H. Lund.

“Referring to Ireland and your visit to the Irish Conference, I agree with you that it is a good land for our missionaries to work in. While laboring in the South Wiltshire and Land’s End Conferences of England, on October 21, 1854, I received an appointment from President Franklin D. Richards to labor in Ireland under the direction of Elder James Ferguson, President of the Irish Mission. I paid my farewell visit to the Saints among whom I was laboring and arrived in Liverpool November 3, being there kindly received and entertained by the Saints of that place. On the 9th, with Elders Daniel Spencer and John S. Fullmer, I took steamer *Waterloo* for Belfast. I can testify that it is a good place to labor in. We had some opposition from the authorities and others, but this was hardly worth mentioning. On November 12 we held conference in the Philharmonic Rooms, 64 Victoria Street, with Elder Patrick Lynch Presiding. Elder Edward Reid (now of Manti) was clerk of the conference. I was afterwards chosen to succeed Elder Lynch in the presidency of the Belfast Conference. We had a glorious time and the speakers ministered to us by the Holy Ghost. I commenced my labors with all my might, mind, and strength. The conference embraced the province of Ulster taking in the towns and villages between Belfast and Londonderry and on to Crom Castle; also Clontibret, Monaghan, and Armagh. I met Lord Erne, a plain nice gentleman, while walking through his grounds. How the old time comes over me! Brother Edward Reid met me in