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The Witnesses—Nature and Credibility of Their Testimony—Biographical Notes

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CHAPTER THREE

THE WITNESSES—NATURE AND CREDIBILITY OF THEIR TESTIMONY—BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BEFORE examining the historical data presented in the Book of Mormon, we naturally turn our attention to the witnesses who solemnly declare that the Prophet Joseph, to their knowledge, had the plates in his possession.

Three of these witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, affirm that they *saw the plates*; that an angel came down from heaven and laid the volume before them, and showed them the engravings; also that they *heard* a voice say that the translation was made by "the gift and power of God," and that they were commanded by the Lord to bear record of it.¹

Eight witnesses, Christian, Jacob, Peter, and John Whitmer, Hiram Page, Joseph Smith, Sr., and Hyrum and Samuel Smith testify that Joseph Smith, Jr., showed them the plates, and that they handled them and examined the engravings.²

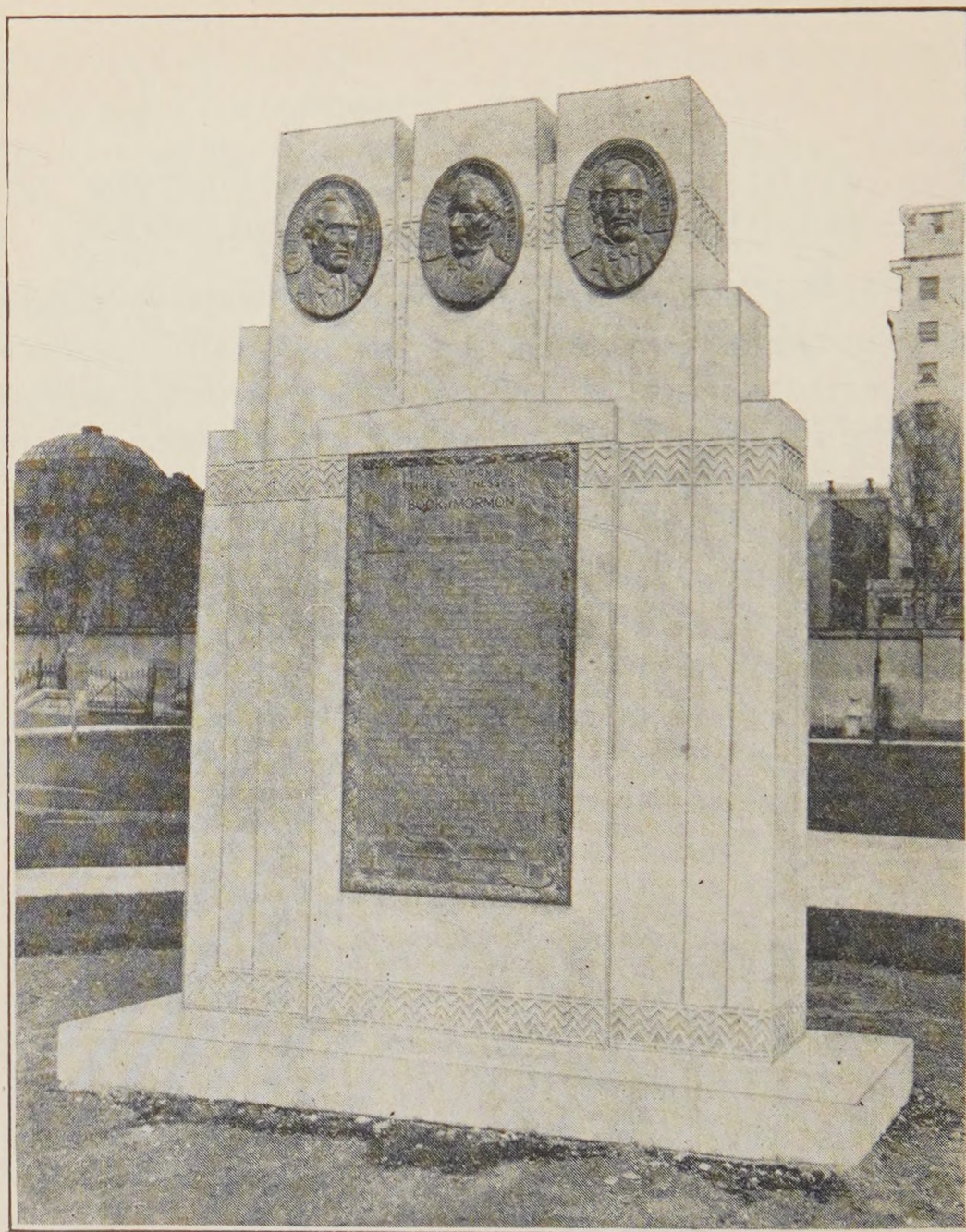
Who were these witnesses? Were they competent? Were they truthful?

1. OLIVER COWDERY

Becomes Acquainted With Joseph. Oliver Cowdery, like Joseph Smith, was a native of Vermont. He

¹This great event took place one day in the latter part of June, 1829.

²This happened one day, or perhaps two days, after the three witnesses had seen the plates.



—Courtesy of National Monument Co., Builders.

Monument to the Three Witnesses on Temple Square,
Salt Lake City.

"In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."—Doc. and Cov. 6:28;

"And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."—1 John 5:6.

was born January 7, 1805, the same year as the prophet, but the two had not met before the 5th of April, 1829, when Cowdery visited him at his home near Harmony, Pa. Shortly before that time young Oliver had taught school at Manchester, N. Y., and while thus engaged, he had become acquainted with the Smith family and heard of the golden plates. Being deeply impressed by the story, as related to him, he made it a subject of private prayer, and then decided to visit the prophet and investigate for himself. Two days after his first interview with Joseph Smith, he became his scribe.

Cowdery as a Church Member. In the Church, Oliver Cowdery held important positions. He preached the first public sermon in this dispensation; he was one of the first missionaries to the Lamanites; he was an editor and publisher; he was a member of the High Council at Kirtland, and served in that body, first as a clerk and then as its president, and when the Prophet Joseph went with Zion's Camp to Missouri, he and Sidney Rigdon had charge of the affairs of the Church. In 1835 he assisted in the selection of twelve men for the Apostleship, and was one of those who set them apart for that high and holy calling. He was one of the trustees of the school in Kirtland, and a student of the Hebrew and other languages. In 1837 he was assistant counselor to the First Presidency. After the year 1838 he practiced law in Michigan and was quite successful in that profession. Such was Oliver Cowdery in life.

Death of Oliver Cowdery. Oliver Cowdery passed away in the home of David Whitmer, at Rich-

mond, Mo., March 3, 1850. In the year 1878 Mr. Whitmer said to Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith concerning his departure:

“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 he died immediately, with a smile on his face.” *Mil. Star.* Vol. 40, p. 774.

When the life and death of this remarkable character are considered, his competence as a witness to any fact that had come under his observation, must stand unchallenged.

2. DAVID WHITMER

When Born. David Whitmer was born January 7, 1805, the same year as the prophet and Oliver Cowdery. His father was one of the sturdy veterans of the Revolutionary War, and a member of the Presbyterian church.

David and Oliver. In 1828, David Whitmer, on a business trip to Palmyra, met Oliver Cowdery. At that time the golden plates were frequently discussed, and David naturally heard the story. Shortly afterwards, Oliver Cowdery came to Fayette, where the Whitmers lived, on a visit. He was then on his way to Harmony, to see the prophet. David made him promise that, when he had investigated the matter, to let him (David) know whether the story was true or false. Oliver kept this promise, and the outcome was that the prophet was invited to come to Fayette, and the translation of the plates was finished there.

David was baptized in 1829, and became one of the original members of the Church, April 6, 1830.

As a Church Member. David Whitmer held many important positions in the Church. In 1838, however, he became disaffected, and his membership was taken from him. The complaint against him stated that he had failed to keep the Word of Wisdom; that he had neglected his meetings and other religious duties; that he had affiliated with "dissenters," and especially that he had arrogated to himself the title of President of the Church of Christ.

Reputation of David Whitmer. After his separation from the Church, David Whitmer located at Richmond, Mo., where he resided until he passed away, January 25, 1888. In that place he was honored and respected, as a citizen and a Christian gentleman. This is evident from the following statement, which appeared in the *Richmond Conservator* of March 25, 1881:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Richmond, Ray Co., Mo., where David Whitmer, Sr., has resided since the year 1838, certify that we have been long and intimately acquainted with him and know him to be a man of the highest integrity and of undoubted truth and veracity."

This public acknowledgment of the trustworthiness of Mr. Whitmer was signed by twenty-one prominent business and professional men of Richmond. Among them were judges, lawyers, a bank president, the postmaster, a doctor, and many other prominent citizens. Such was his reputation in a place where he had lived for half a century.

3. MARTIN HARRIS

Martin Harris was somewhat older than Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer. He was born May 18, 1783, at East Town, N. Y. At the time he became acquainted with the prophet, he was about 44 years of age. His judgment was that of a mature man.

Harris Assists Joseph. Martin Harris, who lived in Palmyra, met Joseph Smith in 1827, shortly after the latter had received the plates. There was considerable excitement among the people, and violence seemed imminent. Harris promptly came to the aid of the prophet, and by an advance of money enabled him to settle his affairs in Manchester, and move to Harmony, Pa., where he found peace and time to devote to the work in hand.

Harris Visits Joseph. In February, 1828, Martin Harris visited Joseph in Harmony, and the specimens of Book of Mormon letters, or characters, as they are commonly called, which he submitted to the inspection of Prof. Anthon, was then given to him.

Martin Harris, evidently, was anxious to learn the truth. At the same time he was cautious. There was in him a great deal of the disposition of Thomas, who said, "Except I shall see * * * I will not believe." (John 20:25.) But it was owing to this disposition that the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah³ was fulfilled.

Drifts Away but Returns. Martin Harris seems

³"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed." (Isa. 29:11.)

to have remained with the Church until, by the persecution in Missouri, the Saints were scattered. On Sept. 3, 1837, he was released from his position as a member of the Kirtland High Council. Later, he approached the so-called Shakers, but found no peace in their peculiar creed. At one time he fell in with the Strangites, and in 1846 he accompanied two of their missionaries to England,⁴ probably not knowing that they represented an apostate organization. At least he publicly denied that he was a Strangite, or that he was in any way connected with Mr. Strang. In 1870 Martin Harris came to Utah. He died at Clarkston, Cache Co., July 10, 1875, a little over 92 years of age.

Would an Impartial Jury Believe These Three Witnesses? As previously stated, these witnesses declare that they saw the plates and the engravings; that they heard a voice say that the translation was correct, and that they were commanded to bear record of it. Now, let us suppose that they have made these statements under oath in court, before an American, impartial jury, as witnesses for the defense in a case, involving, in some way, property rights, for instance. What facts or circumstances would an intelligent jury consider in determining the credibility of their testimony? Judge Charles H. Hart answers that question as follows:⁵

“What are jurors instructed to do when they are considering the weight to be attached to testimony? * * * they are charged that they may consider the demeanor of the witness, his

⁴*Mill. Star*, Vol. 8, pp. 124, 128, 137.

⁵*Conference Report*, April 6, 1920, p. 141.

means of information, the opportunities he has had for knowing the truth of which he testifies; the interest, if any, which he has in the case; his intelligence; and from all the circumstances appearing upon the trial, determine what credence should be given to his testimony, and to give weight accordingly."

A jury that should follow such instructions as those here indicated, would find, unquestionably, that these witnesses were responsible, intelligent men, having a standing in the communities in which they lived; that their word was as good in business dealings as that of any other citizen with an irreproachable character, and that they gave their testimony at a time when to do so was to risk all worldly prospects, and life itself, instead of expecting any advantages from a worldly point of view. The jury would, therefore, be bound to accept their testimony, by the very rules by which all testimony is tested.

The Eight Witnesses. The eight witnesses, whose names have been given in a previous paragraph, testify that the Prophet Joseph showed them the plates, and that they handled as many of the leaves as he had translated, and saw the engravings thereon.

According to the biography of Joseph by Lucy Smith, his mother, it appears that after the three witnesses had seen the plates, Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and some of the Whitmers⁶ came to visit Joseph's parents at Manchester. They were about to make arrangements for the printing of the Book of Mormon at the near-by town of Palmyra. Soon after their

⁶Hiram Page, the brother-in-law of the Whitmer boys, was reasonably one of the Whitmers, and was not specially mentioned by Mrs. Lucy Smith.

arrival, the men, together with Joseph Smith, Sr., Samuel and Hyrum Smith, retired to a place where the Smith family often met for prayer. The Spirit had, it seems, indicated to the prophet that the plates would be brought to this place by "one of the ancient Nephites." And here the plates were shown to the eight witnesses.

The character of these men was irreproachable, barring human weaknesses. They had a standing among business men and in the communities generally in which they lived. They were good mechanics, or successful farmers and stock raisers. Jacob Whitmer became a prominent lawyer and mayor of the city of Richmond, Mo. Hiram Page was a medical student. The testimony of any of these men would of necessity have been accepted in any American court.

No Collusion. When the Book of Mormon first appeared, some superficial critics endeavored to account for its existence by assuming that Joseph Smith, the witnesses, Sidney Rigdon, and others, had entered into a conspiracy to foist a literary fraud upon the world. But this theory does not satisfy—it never did—the serious thinker.

Judge Hart, in the conference sermon just quoted, read what an eminent jurist has to say on the question of conspiracy to deceive, as follows:

"Where several persons conspire to commit perjury, there must be concert; they must first be persons so depraved that they are willing to join in the commission of high crime and so lost to all sense of shame as to be willing to confess their infamy one to another; they must likewise agree not only upon the

main body of their story, but upon its details and upon the order in which they occurred, and if, while they are undergoing the ordeal of cross-examination, defects in their story are exposed, they will not dare to change it, for if they do, they will run the risk of being contradicted by their associates, and if they adhere to it, they know they will incur the hazard of detection together with all its dangerous consequences."

In the light of these self-evident truths the theory of conspiracy is seen to be untenable.

Dr. Prideaux, in his *Letter to the Deists*⁷ in defense of the Bible, discusses the question from a theological point of view, and argues:

"There never was an imposture in the world that had not the following characteristics: (1) It must always have for its end some *carnal interest*. (2) It can have none but *wicked men* for its authors. (3) Both of these must necessarily appear in the very contexture of the imposture itself. (4) It can never be so framed that it will not contain some *palpable falsities*, which will discover the falsity of all the rest. (5) Wherever it is first propagated, it must be done by craft and fraud. (6) When entrusted to many persons it can not be long concealed."

By this test the Book of Mormon can, no more than the Bible, be the product of imposture.

Not Hallucination. But, is it not possible that both the prophet and the witnesses were mistaken?

No!

In the first place, according to their testimony, they *saw* and also *handled* the plates; they not only saw the angel, but they also *heard* his voice. On this testimony there could have been no hallucination. Orson Pratt's argument on that point is:

⁷Quoted by Dr. Clarke, Com. Vol. 1, p. 394.

“It would be impossible for four men to be together and all of them deceived in seeing an angel descend from heaven, and in regard to the brightness of his countenance and the glory of his person, hearing his voice and seeing him lay his hands upon one of them, namely David Whitmer, and speaking these words, ‘Blessed be the Lord and they who keep his commandments.’ * * * If it were to be maintained that in their case it was hallucination of the brain, * * * then with the same propriety it might be asserted that all other men, in every age, who profess to have seen angels, were deceived.” *Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 4, p. 158.

In the second place,—and this argument will appeal to all who believe in the promises of God regarding prayer—these men were earnestly praying to God for light and guidance. They were converted in answer to prayer. Would God deceive them? Does our heavenly Father ever give his children a stone, when they ask for bread?

The Witnesses Never Denied the Truth of Their Testimony. It is well known that some of the witnesses were not always faithful to the Church or loyal to the Prophet Joseph. Did they not repudiate their first testimony?

No, never!

The fact is, that none of them ever denied that Joseph was an inspired messenger from God when he received and translated the plates.

Oliver Cowdery’s Testimony. Oliver Cowdery was severed from the Church in 1838. While outside the Church, he was practicing law in Michigan. At that time:

“A gentleman in Michigan said to him, when he was pleading a case, Mr. Cowdery, I see your name attached to this book.⁸

⁸The Book of Mormon.

If you believe it to be true why are you in Michigan?' The gentleman read the names of the witnesses, and said, 'Mr. Cowdery, do you believe this book?'

"'No sir,' replied Oliver Cowdery.

"'That is very well, but your name is attached to it, and you say here that you saw an angel and the plates from which this book is said to have been translated, and now you say that you do not believe it; which time were you right?'

"Mr. Cowdery replied, 'There is my name attached to that book, and what I have there said that I saw, I know that I saw, and belief has nothing to do with it, for knowledge has swallowed up the belief I had in the work, since I know it is true'."⁹

Another Testimony by Cowdery. Before a special conference at Kanesville, Oct. 21, 1848, where Oliver Cowdery applied for re-instatement in the Church, after an absence of about ten years, he said, in part:

"I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the holy interpreters. That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself, as it fell from the lips of the Prophet."

This was, we may say, Oliver Cowdery's last testimony, his Farewell Address, to the Saints and the world, for on March 3, 1850, he passed away in peace, at Richmond, Mo., in the home of the Whitmers.¹⁰

Last Testimonies of Martin Harris. Martin

⁹Brigham Young, *Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 2, p. 258. Judge C. M. Nielsen, of Salt Lake City, while laboring as a missionary in Michigan, met a gentleman who was present in the court room when this incident happened, and he related it to Elder Nielsen substantially as President Young told it.

¹⁰Joseph Fielding Smith's *Essentials of Church History*, p. 490.

Harris passed the last five years of his earthly career at Clarkston, Cache Co., Utah. While he lived there, visitors came from far and near to see and hear him, and he was never happier than when he had an opportunity to bear his testimony.

Among his visitors was Elder Ole Jensen, then a resident of Clarkston, but later of Fairview, Wyoming. One day in the month of July, 1875, he and others heard the venerable witness relate his wonderful story. After having stated the circumstances attending the appearance of the angel with the plates, he said:

“The angel stood before me and said, ‘Look!’ When I gazed upon him, I fell to the earth, but I rose to my feet again and saw the angel turn the golden leaves over and over, and I said, ‘That is enough, my Lord and my God.’ Then I heard the voice of God say, ‘The book translated from those plates is true and translated correctly’.”

Martin Harris added solemnly:

“As sure as you are standing here and see me, just as sure did I see the angel with the gold plates in his hand as he showed them to me. I have promised that I will bear witness of this both here and hereafter.”

In a letter to President George A. Smith, dated July 9, 1875, the day before the death of Martin Harris, the writer, Martin Harris, Jr., says of his father:

“He was taken ill a week ago yesterday with some kind of a stroke. * * * He has continued to talk about and testify to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and was in his happiest mood when he could get somebody to listen to his testimony.

* * * The last audible words he has spoken were something about the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon."

Among those who heard Martin Harris bear his testimony was Elder William Waddoups, second counselor in the Benson Stake Presidency. He was introduced to Martin Harris in Salt Lake City. To him Harris said:

"Young man, I had the privilege of being with the Prophet Joseph Smith, and with these eyes of mine, (pointing to his eyes) I saw the angel of the Lord, and I saw the plates and the urim and thummim and the sword of Laban, and with these ears (pointing to his ears), I heard the voice of the angel, and with these hands (holding out his hands), I handled the plates containing the record of the Book of Mormon, and I assisted the prophet in the translation thereof. I bear witness that this testimony is true."¹¹

Testimony of David Whitmer. David Whitmer, in 1881, as reported in the *Richmond Conservator*, of March 25, that year, made this statement:

"Those who know me best know well that I have always adhered to that testimony. And that no man may be misled or doubt my present views in regard to the same, I do again affirm the truth of all my statements as then made and published."

* * * *

"In the spirit of Christ, who hath said, 'Follow thou me, for I am the Life, the Light, and the Way,' I submit this statement to the world; God in whom I trust being my judge as to the sincerity of my motives and the faith and hope that is in me of eternal life."

On Sept. 7, 1878, David Whitmer, in the pres-

¹¹See *The Improvement Era*, Vol. 26, Part 2, p. 980.

ence of Elder Joseph F. Smith, Elder Orson Pratt, and a number of other persons, including his eldest son, a grandson, and a son, Jacob Whitmer, bore this testimony:

“He (the angel) stood before us. Our testimony, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, is strictly and absolutely true.”

In 1886, David Whitmer said to Elder Edward Stevenson:

“As sure as the sun shines and I live, just so sure did the angel appear unto me and Joseph Smith and I heard his voice and did see the angel standing before us.”¹²

Elder James H. Moyle's Interview. On April 24, 1927, the author had the privilege of listening to Elder James H. Moyle speaking in 12-13th Ward about an interview he had with David Whitmer. Elder Moyle was then a young law student. He went to Richmond, for the express purpose of hearing what the gentleman had to say in regard to his testimony. He found David Whitmer a kind gentleman, well thought of in the community. David Whitmer reiterated to Elder Moyle what he had stated on many occasions, that his testimony is true. He and Oliver Cowdery, in company with Joseph Smith saw the plates as described. The angel stood before them and exhibited the plates. There was no supernatural background to the vision. The air appeared a little hazy, but the angel was clearly seen, and so were the plates. There was, he said, a fallen tree be-

¹²Letter by Edward Stevenson to Pres. Daniel H. Wells, dated Feb. 16, 1886.

tween them and the heavenly messenger. Martin Harris had left his companions and was engaged in prayer at a little distance from the rest.

His Last Testimony. David Whitmer passed away Jan. 25, 1888. The day following, the Richmond *Democrat* published, in its obituary, the following interesting details:

“On the evening of Sunday, Jan. 22, at 5:30, Mr. Whitmer called his family and a number of friends to his bed side, and to them delivered his dying testimony. Addressing his attending physician, he said, ‘Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind.’ The doctor answered, ‘Yes, you are in your right mind, for I have just had a conversation with you.’ He then directed his words to all who surrounded him, saying:

“‘Now, you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all that the Bible and the Record of the Nephites [The Book of Mormon] are true, so you can say that you have heard me bear my testimony on my death bed * * * My trust is in Christ for ever, worlds without end. Amen.’”¹³

The Eight Witnesses Never Retracted. The eight witnesses, as well as the three, maintained their testimonies to the last. Joseph Smith, Sr., who was the first to receive the message of his chosen son as from God, passed away Sept. 18, 1840, after having endured faithfully all trials and hardships for the sake of the gospel. He was, at the time of his death, the Patriarch to the Church.

Hyrum Smith sealed his faithful testimony with his blood, June 27, 1844, the day of the martyrdom of the prophet, his brother, and the two, united in life, were not separated in death.

¹³Mill. Star, Vol. 50, p. 139.

In December, 1839, the Patriarch wrote: "I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith and the testimony of Jesus Christ. However, I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life." (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 1, p. 23.)

Samuel Smith also passed away in 1844, faithful to the last.

Of the Whitmers, Christian died in 1835, and Peter, Jr., in 1836, both in full fellowship with the Church. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were separated from the Church in 1838, but neither retracted his testimony at any time. The latter died forty years later at Far West, maintaining to the last the truth of his testimony.

Hiram Page was one of the prominent men of the Church, who fell by the wayside in 1838. In the early days of the work he sought to obtain revelations by means of a "seer stone," and even Oliver Cowdery, as well as others, came very near being deceived by him. The error was corrected by revelation.¹⁴ But, it seems that, in the case of Hiram Page, the spirit of apostasy prevailed. But he never denied what he had testified to. He died in 1852, rejoicing that he had been privileged to see the plates of the Book of Mormon.

¹⁴*Doc. and Cov. Sec. 28: 11-14.*

Importance of this Testimony. Our Lord himself emphasizes the importance of testimony, when he says that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16), and Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews (10:28) says: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." It appears from what has been related in this chapter that if ever a cause can be established by the testimony of witnesses, the Book of Mormon must be accepted for what it claims to be—a message from former ages to the present generation, divinely inspired, preserved and brought forth, for the salvation of men.

The Real Objection. Some refuse to believe in anything miraculous, and especially the appearance of angels, because they have never seen any. They refuse to believe that there can be any tangible connection between the world of spirit and matter, because *they* have not come in conscious contact with the former.

But that is not good reasoning. Who has ever seen an atom, or an electron? And yet, scientists are now talking about their construction, their size, and their weight or density. They tell us of the simple construction of a hydrogen atom, as compared to an atom of some other substance. People do not doubt or deny such representations. They accept them on authoritative testimony. Why should anyone take a different course, when the question is of a spiritual world? We can not be too careful how we accept the statements of deceivers. But it is just as import-

ant not to reject the testimony of true witnesses. In either case we are in error.

There is after all no unbridgeable gulf between spirit and matter. In fact, "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine and pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes."¹⁵ President Brigham Young tells us¹⁶ that the spirit world is incorporated within this celestial system. It cannot, he says, ordinarily be seen by our natural eyes, but if God should touch our eyes, which is equivalent to saying that if our vision should by some divine means be enlarged sufficiently, then we should be able to see spirits as plainly as we see each other.

There is nothing improbable in this. For, just as there are light waves beyond our range of vision, and sound waves which we do not ordinarily hear, so there must be matter, or spirit, beyond that which we generally recognize as such, since there are natural phenomena that cannot otherwise be accounted for. It is just as easy to believe in a spiritual world as it is to assume the existence of the ether of space, as a medium in which everything lives, moves, and has its being; and much more satisfactory.

Where is the Spirit World? On this question President Brigham Young has this to say:

"Spirits, when they leave the bodies, do not pass out of the organization of this earth on which we live."

* * * *

'Where is the spirit world? It is right here. Do the good and evil spirits go together? Yes, they do. * * * Do they

¹⁵Doc. and Cov. 131: 7.

¹⁶Jour. of Dis., Vol. 3, p. 368.

go to the sun? No. Do they go beyond the boundaries of this organized earth? No, they do not. They are brought forth upon this earth, for the express purpose of inhabiting it to all eternity. Where else are you going? Nowhere else, only as you are permitted." (*Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 3, p. 368.)¹⁷

¹⁷After the previous pages had been set in type, the author had the pleasure of receiving a communication on David Whitmer by Hon. James H. Moyle, former Assistant U. S. Treasurer, in which he says in part:

I visited David Whitmer early in July, 1885, at his home. In our conversation he said that he had not left the Church; that he believed as firmly as ever that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet of God; that the revelations he published to the world down to 1835, were of God, that he believed implicitly in the first principles of the Gospel and he said had always adhered to them.

I said to him, that like my mother, I was born in the Church; that my father had joined it in his early teens; that I had grown up altogether in that atmosphere and probably inherited my belief in the Book of Mormon; that I had just graduated from college and was on my way home to commence life's duties, as he was approaching the time when he would give them up; that I did not want to be in the dark on a subject of such vital importance; that if there was any delusion or deception in the matter, I wanted to know it; that I had gone very much out of my way to see him, in order to get the truth first-handed, and earnestly importuned him to tell me the whole truth and not allow me to go through life in ignorance, which he could dispel.

He was frank and unreserved in saying that his testimony as published was true; that he did see and handle the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and that he saw the angel and heard him say that they were translated correctly.

In reply to my questions, he said that they were in the timber or forest, that a fallen log was lying between them and the Angel and nothing else; the Angel who visited them and the witnesses were clearly visible; that they were surrounded by an unusual atmosphere.