



Type: Magazine Article

Urim and Thummim

Author(s): Alma Sonne

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (April 1949)

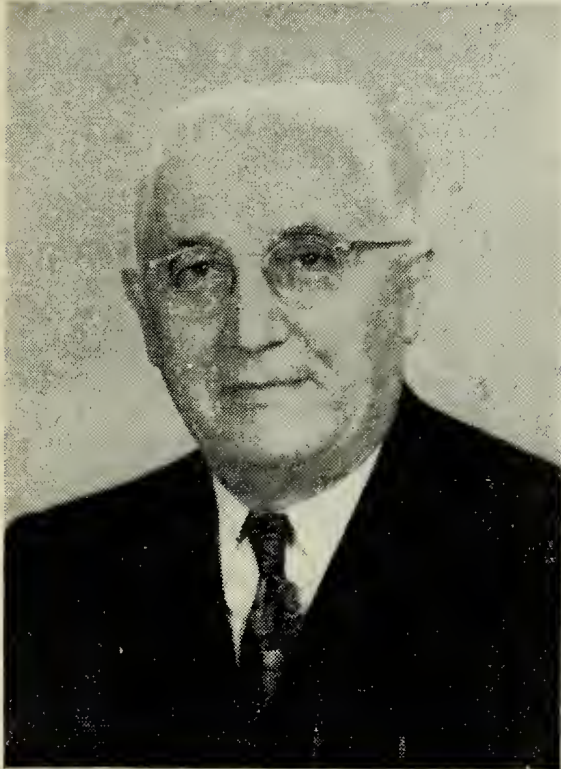
Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 101, 127

Abstract: This article states that prophets of old used the Urim and Thummim. The claims made by Joseph Smith were not illogical. King Saul used the devices as well as Moses and others. Joseph Smith's account of using them is not out of harmony with these accounts. They are defined as "lights" and "perfections."

URIM AND THUMMIM

By Alma Sonne



Alma Sonne

European Mission President and
Assistant to the Council of the
Twelve

THE Urim and Thummim have always been associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Many questions concerning these sacred instruments are presented to the missionaries in the field. It is known that they were aids to the Prophet Joseph Smith in his work of translation and in receiving revelations from God. It was not until the Prophet announced his possession of them, however, that their real purpose and use became generally known. While their spiritual significance and the manner in which they functioned have not been fully explained, it can be truthfully said that the claims made for them by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, were neither unscriptural, illogical nor without precedent. The Prophets of the past who acted as oracles of God had access to them and were divinely prompted and directed by them in

their prophetic callings.

When Israel was face to face with one of her great crises, Saul, the King of Israel, had tried every legitimate means to obtain divine knowledge and guidance: "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets." (I Sam. 28: 6) The Urim and Thummim, ordinarily consulted by the prophets, would yield no information to Saul because he had departed from the Lord. He had lost divine guidance through disobedience. It is important to know, however, that at this stage in the history of Israel one of the mediums through which God communicated His mind and will was the Urim and Thummim.

From the tribe of Levi were chosen the priests upon whom sacred, religious responsibilities rested. It is interesting to observe that Moses in blessing this tribe said, "Let thy Urim and Thummim be with thy holy one." (I Sam. 28: 5) Again, when Moses put the breastplate upon Aaron, the Levite Priest, he used the following significant words, "put in the breastplate the Urim and Thummim." (Leviticus 8: 8) In the instructions of the Lord to Aaron through the Prophet Moses we read, "And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the Children of Israel upon his head before the Lord continually." (Exodus 28: 30) The last reference in the Old Testament to these holy symbols is found in the account of Israel's return from their Babylonian captivity, "And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim." (Nehemiah 7: 65) The above references clearly indicate that

—continued on page 127

URIM AND THUMMIM

By Alma Sonne

—continued from page 101

the Urim and Thummim were in use among the Israelites during the period when they were led and directed by revelations through the prophets.

It is not unreasonable to believe that a modern prophet should be similarly favoured and aided in his interpretation of the Lord's will to humanity. Nor is it reasonable to assume that these instruments had served their full purpose with the passing of the prophets to whom they had been entrusted. Joseph Smith received the Urim and Thummim from the Angel Moroni. They were given to him in connection with the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and were described by him as "two stones in silver bows—fastened to a breastplate." This description, together with his explanation of their use, is not out of harmony with the meagre information given in the Bible concerning them. Is it not additional evidence to support the divinity of his prophetic calling?

Hebrew scholars have defined Urim and Thummim to mean "lights" and "perfections" respectively. In July,

1838, in the Elder's Journal published in Far West, Missouri, the Prophet said: "Moroni, the person who deposited the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead, and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were; and gave me directions how to obtain them. I obtained them and the Urim and Thummim with them, by the means of which I translated the plates and thus came the Book of Mormon."

President Brigham Young, his successor, and for many years his friend and associate, said, "this earth will become a celestial body—like a sea of glass, or like a Urim and Thummim." Further information concerning these ancient symbols is contained in the Book of Mormon where reference is made to Mosiah's work of translation: "And now he translated them by the means of those two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow. Now these things were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages; and they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord." (Mosiah 28: 13-15)

TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE

—continued from page 105

principally by the members of the stake, who are well organised, and who donate their morning and evening leisure hours as they are called upon by their Bishops to help. This Welfare Farm, like many other Welfare Farms, is succeeding because of the loyalty and devotion of the Church members who are labouring with love and unselfishness that the project may accomplish its purpose.

Grains, wheat, barley, and oats are being raised in quantity; twelve cows are the nucleus of a dairy herd, 100 pigs are always being cared for, the carrot crop of 1948 was abundant, other row crops are being grown successfully, alfalfa is to be planted as a forerunner

of the sugar beets that will follow, and parts of the farm are being reseeded to raise grass to supply feed for livestock. Corn is being grown for silage. Sixty to a hundred does produce the 2,000 pounds of dressed rabbits that the budget calls for, and there are a few beef stock on the farm.

The Welfare Plan was organised under the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord. Since its organisation, thousands of persons have received direct assistance. In no year have fewer than 17,000 persons been helped directly with the necessities of life. One year 55,469 persons were helped. During 1948, 25,000 persons were assisted in the stakes of Zion, and it is estimated that from twenty to twenty-five thousand more were helped in the missions, chiefly in Europe.