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The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. I

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Abstract: As a witness who sat in the presence of the prophet Joseph and the Three Witnesses, this author presents his accounts of some of the occasions when testimonies were borne. The author states that he was “deeply inspired” as he heard them many times testify of being in the presence of a heavenly messenger who talked with them and showed them the plates. They were shown the Urim and Thummim and told these seer stones were used by ancient prophets. The first part begins the series.

possibly make them. Then again, in the face of these examples illustrating the different traits in men's conscience, that difference may be further augmented by referring to the leading governing traits that characterize the conscience of the Latter-day Saints, viz.: Fear God and keep His commandments; thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, upon which hinges all the moral law.

Let us be grateful that we are found worthy to stand upon the higher platform of moral education; and let us

be willing to suffer, inasmuch as by our doing so the Lord will sanctify it to the bringing about of the greater degree of liberty and privileges which must eventually be the lot of the Saints of God to enjoy.

The choir sang the anthem:

"Jerusalem, my glorious home."

Adjourned for six months, the place to be hereafter designated.

Benediction by Patriarch John Smith.

JOHN NICHOLSON,

Clerk of Conference.

THE THREE WITNESSES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON.

NO. I

"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.—PAUL."

God has left this generation without excuse, by fulfilling the words of the Apostle: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." Fifty-six years ago, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris were the three favored ones to behold the heavenly vision in open daylight. Having been personally acquainted with all three and held hours of private conversation with two of them, I feel it a pleasure as well as a duty to relate some of the various testimonies and incidents that have come under my observation, more especially as only one of the witnesses is now living.

Fifty-three years ago, in the town of Pontiac, Oakland County and then Territory, but since State of Michigan, when I was but thirteen years of age, I first met with Joseph Smith, the Prophet of this generation and of the nineteenth century. I shall never forget the impression then made upon me by his presence and voice. He was accompanied by the three witnesses before mentioned, and at public meetings all of them in turn bore testimony, and to us it was indeed a day of Pentecost. First the Prophet related how he was alone in the woods in secret prayer, when a bright light began to shine around him (like unto Paul's vision) the brightness of which at first alarmed him, but his fear was soon dispelled by the voice of the

Father introducing His Only Begotten Son to him, who spoke to the young man, and instructed him (see Zech., 2nd chap.) He also described the visit of the angel (three times during one night to his bed-chamber) who instructed him in the fullness of the everlasting Gospel, which was to be established and preached to every nation, kingdom, tongue and people, as spoken of in Rev. xiv., 6, 7 vs.; also quoting Isaiah, 2nd chap. While relating those visions the countenance of the Prophet shone, and the Spirit of the Lord filled the house, and for one I can bear my testimony that I was as one born again, regenerated, converted, for, "there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." (Job xxxii). My mind was so enlightened that I felt to exclaim, as did the prophet Isaiah, "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth: and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted."

Oliver, David, and Martin each related at various meetings the vision as they beheld it, each time being deeply inspired, and they spoke as no man could speak only as they who had stood in the presence of an heavenly messenger. They said that they were in the presence of an angel who talked with them (an example may be

found in Rev. i, chap. 1-3 vs.) and also showed them the plates containing the characters as engraved upon them, stating that the translation of them as found in the Book of Mormon was correct, and that the translation was given by the power of God, and not by the wisdom of man. He also shewed them the Urim and Thummim, which was used by the ancient prophets for the purpose of translating, and was a gift of God to His chosen people. They further said that the voice of the Lord commanded them, as witnesses, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and that their testimony should be had in remembrance and should go forth unto the convincing of the honest in heart in all nations, and no power should stop the progress of this the work of God.

At this time many believed the testimony of these witnesses, and they were told by the Prophet Joseph Smith that the gifts of the Gospel should follow them that believed, and by this they should know him to be a Prophet sent of God. A branch of the Church was raised up, some of my school mates becoming members, believing, repenting of all past sins with a Godly sorrow, and calling upon the Lord for his mercy, as instructed by the Prophet and Elders, for two Elders—Wood, and Carter, had come in advance of the Prophet and the three witnesses, teaching the self-same doctrines, confirmed by the Prophet, that all were required to be baptized by immersion (born of the water and of the spirit: see John iii), and that too for the remission of sins, with a promise that they should receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.

The Prophet further said that although this was not practiced now in our day, he was commanded by the angel to do so, even as were the ancient disciples; and as the signs followed those disciples so they should follow believers now, for the angel had restored the same Gospel and blessings.

Some of my school mates and others of the little Branch of the Church, in the meetings, spoke in the gift of tongues, while others received the gift of interpretation, as was promised by the Prophet Joseph

Smith, and also by the Savior to his former disciples as recorded in Mark 16th chap., 17th and 20th verses: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: ... they shall speak with new tongues ... And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." And my testimony is that Joseph Smith proved himself to be a true Prophet, for I personally heard his words and promises and saw them verified, and before God I lie not. On one occasion a member of the Branch named Elijah Fordham, at a testimony meeting spoke in the gift of tongues as two French travelers came up to the window which was open. One of those strangers asked a lad if he knew what Brother Fordham was saying, and he of course replied, No. The travelers then said that this tongue was for them as he was preaching the Gospel to them in French. When those gifts were given the power of God was manifested, and tears of joy ran down the faces of those youthful members. About this time I saw in a vision all of those who had joined this Branch, arrayed in beautiful white, flowing robes, and I alone was without one. I shall never forget the impression made on my mind by this vision, and I looked up to my guide who stood by my side, and being only a youth I remember how I had to look up to speak to him, asking him how it was that I was deprived of this beautiful robe. In reply, he said: "look, do you see any one with a robe excepting those who have obeyed this everlasting Gospel?" But, said I, I fully believe, I have been deeply impressed by the power of the spirit, and convinced. "But you have not come in at the door, been born of the water and of the Holy Ghost." It was not long before I was baptized, and entitled to the robe. This has been 53 years ago, and I have no regret or doubt, for I have seen the gifts of the Gospel follow; the sick healed by the power of God, and thousands made to rejoice. Since the time I heard the testimonies of those three witnesses, it has fallen to my lot to visit at different times two of them who went out from our

society and had become indifferent to the growth and the increased development of the work of the Lord, but never have they faltered in their faith and testimony as witnesses to the trust committed to them by the angel.

EDWARD STEVENSON.

U T A H N E W S .

(Summarized from Territorial Papers.)

Charles Welch, twelve years old, was accidentally run over and killed by a Utah Central train, at Ogden, on the 7th inst.

The Government has concluded to pay the members of the late Utah legislature after all, and orders to that effect have been sent from Comptroller Durham to Secretary Thomas.

Our first company of emigrants arrived in Ogden on the morning of the 4th inst., after a very pleasant journey. They had a few hours detention at Laramie on account of the strike.

The sexton of Salt Lake City reports a total of 33 deaths for the month of April last, 21 of whom were males and 12 females. This is a falling off of 12 from the total of the preceding month. There were no deaths from diphtheria.

Cabel W. West, the newly appointed Governor of Utah, was the recipient of a grand ovation on his recent arrival in the Territory. Considerable enthusiasm was manifested by all classes, and on the 7th inst. he was tendered a magnificent reception by the municipal authorities of Salt Lake City in the Theatre.

The Temple sawmill in Logan Canyon has been destroyed by fire. Loss \$3,000. The fire is believed to have been the work of incendiaries. The mill derived its well known name from being built to assist in the construction of the Logan Temple, and it was a great success in aiding to furnish material for the building of that noble edifice.

Mrs. Robert Daft of Salt Lake City recently discovered a girl baby, about five or six weeks old, which had been left at her door. The infant was taken in and cared for, and the *Deseret News* says: "Time was in the history of Salt Lake City when such occurrences were unheard of, but the 'civilization' of the age seems to be fairly upon us."

The *Deseret News* says: "A gentleman hailing from Indiana, who was in this city a few days since, stated that there is one sectarian church building at least in the Hoosier State, (Indiana) accessible to Latter-day Saints. His father, he says, who is a non-professor of religion, probably disgusted with the almost universal discrimination against the 'Mormons' and their religion, exercised by other religious people, and the illiberal treatment accorded to their Elders when abroad, determined to do something to offset the same. A proposition being made some four or five years ago to build the Springville church in Perry Township, Noble County, Indiana, he and his partner in business subscribed one-fourth of the means necessary for its erection on condition that the Latter-day Saint Elders were to be allowed to occupy it when they desired to do so.