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

Author(s): Edward Stevenson

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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 fifth and final part focuses on David Whitmer.

found an invalid sister who had been forty years in the Church, and her husband was aged, poor, and apparently had lost his first love. We were given to understand that they could not entertain the Elders now. We sang to them, talked to them, and their feelings warmed up. They requested that we administer the Sacrament to them, which we did, and we were treated to their best bed, and the following morning earnestly invited to call again. We blessed our kind hostess and returned to Croydon rejoicing. We remained there over Sunday, rebaptized one man, baptized his daughter, organized a little Branch there, and held an out-door meeting which was well attended.

The next day we went to Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire, where I have several relatives living. We had another good open-air meeting, and were entertained by my aunt. Feeling a desire to do a little more in my native town, Eynesbury, Huntingdonshire, we went there, notified hundreds of people that we would hold an out-door meeting, but, excepting about 150 little children, no one came to hear us, and we might have spent another night out had we not known of a brother residing about four miles off, where we were received with that warmth and hospitality for which true Latter-day Saints are noted.

On the 24th we walked about twenty miles to Boxworth, Cambridge-shire, and put up with an acquaintance of mine. We purposed holding a meeting there, but he persuaded us not to do so, as the place belongs to one man who employs the people and dictates to them in politics and religion as well as in labor, hence our host

was afraid that he might be brought into trouble. With a sigh for liberty and independence we yielded to his persuasion.

The following day we returned to Ely, held meeting in the same place and with the same people who had previously heard us. We distributed more tracts, and again had the privilege of traveling in the cool of the night to reach the home of some much derided but hospitable Latter-day Saints.

We held another out-door meeting at Southery last Sunday, had a good attendance and invitations to come again, but a letter having reached us stating that Brother Osmond would spend a day in this place, caused us to hurry home to meet him.

While we cannot say that we have demonstrated anything in particular during our two weeks' trip, we do say that we enjoyed ourselves, felt blessed in our efforts, and did some good we trust. If other Elders would write their experience and set forth through the STAR the wisest course to pursue, it would probably be beneficial to some who desire to do their duty, but feel their weakness in attempting to leave beaten tracks. It is evident that thousands of people are living in this land who have heard little or nothing of the Gospel, and if we do not preach it to them will they not, in the great hereafter, rise up in judgment against us?

With kind regards to all at "42," and an earnest desire for the spread of the Gospel, in which the other brethren here join,

I remain yours, fraternally,

JAMES J. CHANDLER.

THE THREE WITNESSES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON.

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NO. V.

DAVID Whitmer, the only surviving witness of the three, residing now in Richmond, Ray Co., Missouri, is in the 82nd year of his age. My first acquaintance with him was fifty-three years ago in Michigan, where he with the others related the vision of the angel and the showing of the plates,

the Urim and Thummim, and the ball or compass used in the wilderness by the Nephites, as they journeyed from Jerusalem, to guide them through the wilderness to the great waters where they were commanded of the Lord and directed by Him to build barges or ships of a curious

workmanship to carry the company over the great waters as they called them—the ocean—by which they were taken over to America. Hence the American Indians are a remnant of that people, who had dwindled in unbelief and were afterwards discovered by Christopher Columbus. Brother Whitmer said to see these things, and to hear the voice of heavenly Beings testify to the correct translation of the plates, and commanding them as witnesses to testify of these things to the world, was marvelous to them. Nevertheless he knew that he did see and hear in open daylight.

I felt then, although only 13 years of age, (and I do more particularly now in my riper years, for I am past 66,) that I was very much favored and blessed of the Lord to see and hear those men, and to have been favored so much since that time by being in their company, so often.

In 1836 I met David Whitmer in Far West, Caldwell Co., Mo., and his testimony was still unchanged. Soon after this Brother David, like many others in those days of trial in the infantile days of the Church, (when only a mere handful struggling like youth for manhood, with but few friends and many enemies, but with a noble and fearless Prophet to lead, who was always cheerful) turned cold. It was in those dark and cloudy days when Brother David's presence ceased to be known in the front ranks of the Latter-day Saints in their onward march through Illinois and Iowa, and in their pilgrimage onward over the trackless desert plains, then only inhabited by wild Indians and wolves. This becomes the more interesting when we know that this was predicted and seen by prophets of old and spoken of: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah ii, 2); just as they are doing now, and have been doing since 1847. David Whitmer and many others do not see it in this light, nevertheless the work goes on. At the time of the Missouri troubles Brother David located where he lives now, and,

thank God, he never has faltered in the trust reposed in him. During the intervening time I have visited him twice, once nearly nine years ago, when I spent ten hours with him in three sittings, and again last February, when I remained from early breakfast until two p.m., having dinner with him. In those interviews I was pleased to know of the fidelity of the three witnesses, and also to gain many items of their experience, more especially as they were in some respects so favored above their fellows in the present day. It was remarked by them that the masses of the people were instructed by the ministers of the many different churches, that there was no necessity in this enlightened age of the world for any further vision, or angels, or new revelation—that they had the good old Bible, the word of God, and anything else was an imposition; that prophets were a delusion; and, further, they said that the people were so steeped in this belief as to imagine all they had to do, nowadays, was to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and they were saved—so much so that the people were led to disbelieve the testimony of the three witnesses, although the Bible was so plain on those points. They quoted to me in proof very many passages of Scripture, as also passages in support of their claim that they had been called of God by the angel which brought back the long lost Gospel to Joseph Smith, with power to organize Twelve Apostles and Seventies and Elders, just as they existed when Jesus Christ left the Church and ascended on high: "First apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings," etc. (1 Cor. xii, 28). And also in the same chapter, where Paul writes: "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body (only one church), whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." The three witnesses only claimed to be witnesses whom the Lord raised up in support of the restored Gospel to Joseph Smith, that this generation might be left without excuse.

David Whitmer's experience in the outset as a witness was somewhat

different from that of the other two. On the morning of the Sunday that he was called to be one of the witnesses, he went into his field to plow, and while so doing he heard a voice and saw a personage who said, "Blessed is the name of the Lord, and they who keep his commandments." Soon after this the Prophet Joseph came to him, calling him to go with him and Oliver Cowdery to be one of the three witnesses. He fastened his team to a fence, and they proceeded through a clearing to the edge of the woods and then sat upon a log. They were speaking regarding the great work of the Lord, when a bright light shone around them which increased in lustre until an angel stood before them. Then David said the angel took the book of plates and turned over leaf after leaf, except a portion which was sealed by rings of gold *not* yet translated, but to yet be translated in the due time of the Lord. The angel, he said, proclaimed that the translation from those plates into the Book of Mormon was correct, and had been done by the power of God, and that they were chosen to be especial witnesses of the same, and of the vision to all the world as found recorded in the fore part of the Book of Mormon.

I have not known of the testimony of either of these three witnesses being impeached, but on the contrary, their word in a business transaction would pass anywhere. David Whitmer was elected and served as Mayor of Richmond, where he resides, and

is esteemed as a fine old gentlemen to this day, and during his severe sickness last winter, which was near unto death's door, his fellow townsmen often called to hear of his condition. Notwithstanding the fact that all of these men have been indifferent to the advanced work, and after putting their hand to the plow have looked back, they never have ceased to bear this testimony and always have stood by their word; and, as they have said, never have they doubted. Two out of the three have returned to the Church acknowledging the continuation of the work, and have died in full faith and hope of the thorough accomplishment of the work of God, until, as wise Daniel has proclaimed, it will universally cover the whole earth, and until Jesus shall reign as King of kings on this earth, and that they, with all who obey this Gospel, will reign on the earth 1,000 years, and that the closing of the 6,000 years is near, even at our doors. To my knowledge they have testified to this, and in my last conversation with David he said the time and hour of God's judgment was now begun, and would progress until the Savior would come.

My last visit with David was enjoyed exceedingly. Although he was very feeble, yet he was strong in his testimony, and is delighted to exhibit the manuscript copy of the Book of Mormon, and the copy of characters exhibited to Professor Anthon.

EDWARD STEVENSON.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

THE reputed discoverer of a new fact or idea is probably never the first to have made the discovery, or even to have formulated it. In the world of ideas, as in that of material, a continuity can be perceived by which new ideas are evolved from old ones, as new forms of life are the children of ancient forms. Hence it is not surprising to hear that to M. Pasteur does not belong the credit of discovering that zymotic diseases are due to germs. It appears that more than a century and a half ago Dr. Goiffon wrote a work on the origin of the Plague, in which he

advanced the theory that the disease was dependent on minute insects or worms, which had none the less a real existence, though they were then beyond the powers of the microscope to reveal. Dr. Goiffon also had something to say on the process of infection, which he likewise considered to be the work of minute living creatures that conveyed infection in a latent condition from one place to break out afresh in another. Did not Goiffon get the idea from some still more ancient master?—*Lancet*.