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David Whitmer's Last Hours and Testimony

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Abstract: This is a reprint of an article in the *Deseret News* that reprints portions from the *Richmond Democrat* of January 26. David Whitmer, the last of the Three Witnesses, told how he saw the plates and other objects. The article also reprints his last testimony of the Book of Mormon, recorded shortly before his death.

DAVID WHITMER'S LAST HOURS AND TESTIMONY.

THE *Deseret News* gives the following account of the last hours of David Whitmer, one of the Three Special Witnesses to the Book of Mormon:

ON Thursday, January 26th, the dispatches brought the intelligence briefly that David Whitmer, who at the time of his demise was the last living witness to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon whose testimony appears on the certificates on the opening page of the record, had, the day previous, died at his home in Richmond County, Missouri. He was born in Harrisburg, Penn., January 7, 1805, and therefore entered upon his 84th year. He had resided in Richmond half a century, and was much respected by the community of that town. He leaves a wife, two grandchildren and several great grandchildren.

Seeing that Mr. Whitmer's name occupies an exceedingly conspicuous place in connection with the coming forth of the work of God in this last dispensation, the Saints will doubtless be interested in learning the details connected with his demise. A friend has kindly sent us a copy of the *Richmond Democrat*, of Jan. 26th, and we are therefore enabled to present some particulars, so far as they are given by that journal. In connection with the details of Mr. Whitmer's death, the paper named gives the annexed account of the miraculous manifestations witnessed by him in reference to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, as frequently in substance told by himself. The writer seems to have made some omissions, as the name of Martin Harris, another of the witnesses, does not occur in what follows:

When he was twenty-four years of age and worked on his father's farm near Palmyra, New York, all that section of the country was more or less excited over the reported discovery by Joseph Smith of the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Oliver Cowdery, the village school teacher, mentioned the matter to him and announced his determination to visit Smith and investigate the matter for himself, promising Mr. Whitmer, at

the latter's request, to advise him of the result. A few days later he received a letter from Cowdery, urging him to join him, which he did, being received by the 'Prophet' with open arms. After remaining long enough to satisfy himself of the divine inspiration of Smith, the three returned to Whitmer's home, where it was agreed that the work of translation should be prosecuted.

Shortly after his return, and while he was plowing in the field one afternoon, he was visited by Smith and Cowdery, who requested that he should accompany them into the woods on a hill across the road for the purpose of witnessing a manifestation that should qualify him and Cowdery to bear witness to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, Smith explaining that such procedure was in accordance with explicit instructions he had received from an angel of the Lord.

Repairing to the woods they engaged in prayer for a short time, when suddenly a great light shone round about them, far brighter and more dazzling than the brilliancy of the noon day sun, seemingly enveloping the wood for a considerable distance. A spirit of elevation seized him as of joy indescribable and a strange influence stole over him, which so entranced him, that he felt that he was chained to the spot. A moment later and a divine personage, clothed in white raiment, appeared unto them, and immediately in front of the personage stood a table on which lay a number of gold plates, some brass plates, the "urim and thummim" and the "sword of Laban." All of these they were directed to examine carefully, and after their examination they were told that the Lord would demand that they bear witness thereof to all the world.

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 beautified expression and his tones became strangely eloquent. Although evidently no studied effort, the description was a magnificent piece of word painting, and he carried 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 could listen to Mr. Whitmer as he talks of his interview with the angel of the Lord, without being most forcibly convinced that he has heard an honest man tell what he honestly believes to be true.

On the evening of Sunday, Jan. 22nd, at half past five o'clock, Mr. Whitmer called his family and a number of friends to his bedside, and to

them delivered his dying testimony. Addressing his attendant physician he said: "Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind, before I give my last testimony?"

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:

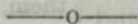
Now you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all that the Bible and the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon), are true, so you can say that you have heard me bear my testimony on my death bed. All be faithful in Christ and your reward will be according to your works. God bless you all. My trust is in Christ forever, worlds without end. Amen.

On Monday last (Jan. 23rd), at 10 o'clock a. m., after awakening from a short slumber, he said he had seen beyond the veil and had seen Christ on the other side. His friends who were constantly at his bedside claim that he had many manifestations of the truths of the great beyond, which confirm their faith beyond all shadow of doubt.

He bore his long illness with great patience and fortitude, his faith never for a moment wavering, and when the summons came, he sank peacefully to rest, with a smile on his countenance, just as if he was being lulled to sleep by sweet music. Just before the breath left the body, he opened his eyes, which glistened with the brightness of his early manhood. He then turned them toward heaven, and a wonderful light came over his countenance, which remained several moments, when the eyes gradually closed and David Whitmer was gone to his rest.

It was Mr. Whitmer's desire that there should be no display at his funeral. The service over his body therefore consisted merely of appropriate remarks, at his late residence, on Friday, January 27th. On that day the remains of the last of the witnesses to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, whose names appear in connection with the record, were laid away in the New Cemetery, at Richmond, Missouri. To that testimony he was true and consistent to the last, which fact alone entitles him to have his memory respectfully cherished.

UTAH NEWS.



(Summarized from Territorial Papers.)

Men who persist in visiting their plural families are continually being fined and imprisoned by the unjust judges of Utah, who are trying to rob wives of their husbands and children of their fathers.

John H. Rumel, jun., has been appointed agent at Salt Lake station, and train dispatcher of the first division of the Utah Central Railway, and Thomas J. Mackintosh chief clerk in the general freight and passenger department of the Utah Central Railway.

Jan. 22, 1888, Beason Lewis, an aged resident of Richmond, Cache Co., died at his home in that place. The deceased had lived in Cache Valley many years, and was highly esteemed by all who knew him. He left a large number of relatives to mourn his departure.

In the Territorial Supreme Court, Salt Lake City, Judges Boreman and Henderson united in denying the application of the defendants in the suits of the government against the P. E. Fund company for a hearing of the case. Chief Justice Zane dissented from the action of the court.

On Monday, Jan. 30th, Marshal Dyer dismissed O. S. L. Brown, who has been warden of the Utah Penitentiary for over a year, from his service, and placed Deputy Marshal Pratt in charge of the Bastile as Warden. Mr.