

Statements of David Whitmer Concerning The Book of Mormon

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TAKEN From LDS Biographical Encyclopedia

Thomas Marsh's Interview with David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, 1838

Source: "History of Thomas Baldwin Marsh [by himself],"
Millennial Star 26 (1864):406.

Thomas Marsh, "History," MS 26 (1864):406

[page 406] After making preparations I started from Far West [1838] and moved three miles out of town, ostensibly for the purpose of settling, and soon moved off to Clay County, and from thence to Richmond, Ray County, where I saw David, John and Jacob Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, who had all apostatized.

Thomas Marsh, "History," MS 26 (1864):406

I enquired seriously of David if it was true that he had seen the angel, according to his testimony as one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He replied as sure as there is a God in heaven, he saw the angel according to his testimony in that book. I asked him, if so, why he did not stand by Joseph? He answered, in the days when Joseph received the Book of Mormon, and brought it forth, he was a good man and filled with the Holy Ghost, but he considered he had now fallen. I interrogated Oliver Cowdery in the same manner, who answered similarly.

The Chicago Times Interviews David Whitmer August 1875 S.L. Herald, 12 Aug 1875 in Ebbie Richardson, "David Whitmer," pp.158

David Whitmer was married in Seneca County, New York, in 1830, and was for a number of years an elder in the Church of Christ. Today he is the proprietor of a livery stable in Richmond, Missouri, owns some real estate, has a handsome balance in the bank, is universally respected by all who know him, and surrounded by children and grandchildren, is pleasantly gliding toward the gates of sunset, confident that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was also the God of Nephi, whose faithful disciple he has been and is. He does not believe that all believing in the Book of Mormon or all adherents to any other faith will be found among the elect, but that the truly good of every faith will be gathered in fulfillment of prophecy. Neither does he believe that the Book of Mormon is the only record of the lost tribes hidden in the earth, but on the contrary, that the caves hold other records that will not come forth till all is peace and the lion shall eat straw with the lamb. Three times he has been at the Hill Cumorah and seen the casket that contained the tablets and seerstone. Eventually the casket has been washed down to the foot of the hill, but it was to be seen when he last visited the historic place.

David Whitmer Interviewed

by Edward Stevenson, December 1877

Source: Edward Stevenson to Orson Pratt, 23 Dec 1877 in JH, 23 Dec 1877, pp. 3-4.

[page 3]

We asked David Whitmer in regards to his faith in the Book of Mormon. He smiled and his countenance lit up, saying, "As I know the sun shines so I know an angel appeared while Joseph, Oliver and myself sat upon a log in a clearing about 11 o'clock in the morning," a light first appearing which grew brighter until the angel stood before them and placed upon a table before them and placed upon a table before them the plates of gold, also the brass plates, [page 4] the Urim and Thummim (or interpreters) the ball or compass and the sword of Laban. He said there could be nothing to induce him to deny these things. He further stated that he knew that Joseph was a prophet, and did receive revelations and that he organized the Church on the rock of the Twelve Apostles.

Edward Stevenson to John Taylor, 7 January 1878

Source: Edward Stevenson to John Taylor in Journal History, 7 Jan 1878, pp. 2-3.

Edward Stevenson ltr in JH, 7 Jan 1878, p.2

I also desired him to state his present faith in regard to the Book of Mormon and the organization of the Church. He stated in the most prestine times that he saw an angel, golden plates, and the urim and thummim, etc. The plates were opened leaf by leaf, he saw the characters and heard a voice from heaven bearing record, that he also knew that the Prophet Joseph did translate the Book of Mormon by the power of God, that he did receive revelation and that the Church was built on the Rock, and that it was revealed [page 3] that there were to be Twelve Apostles, long before they were chosen and ordained.

Edward Stevenson, Letter to Editor,

Salt Lake Herald, 21 January 1878

In reply to a question by me, as to his present views as a witness to the plates of the Book of Mormon, he said: "I was plowing in my field, when I heard a voice saying, 'Blessed is the name of the Lord and those that keep his commandments.' After I had plowed one more round, the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery came along, and said, 'Come and be one of the witnesses.' We passed through a clearing and sat on a log. While there a light appeared, which grew brighter, until an angel stood before them with the plates and other things. The angel turned the leaves so that we could see the engravings, etc. We then heard a voice saying that those things were true and that the translation was correct. This was about 11 o'clock in the morning."

Dr. P. Wilhelm Poulson Reports

Visit with David Whitmer, 1878

Source: P. W. Poulson to editors of the Deseret News, 13 Aug 1878,

cited from Deseret News, 16 Aug 1878, p. 2.

After a self introduction to David Whitmer and some general conversation, I remarked to him:

I - You are one of the Three Witnesses?

He - I am one of them.

I - And you saw the angel, and he showed you the plates?

He - The Book of Mormon is true, as true as any record can be, I saw the angel, and I saw the sword of Laban, and the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim, and the plates and the director, and the angel stood before us, and he turned the leaves one by one.

I - Did the angel turn all the leaves before you as you looked on it?

He - No, not all, only that part of the book which was not sealed, and what there was sealed appeared as solid to my view as wood.

I - How many of the plates were sealed?

He - About half of the book was sealed. Those leaves which were not sealed, about the half of the first part of the book, were numerous, and the angel turned them over before our eyes. There is yet to be given a translation about Jared's people's doings and of Nephi, and many other records and books, which all has to be done, when the time comes.

I - How large were the plates?

He - About eight inches wide and six or seven inches long, as they appeared a little wider than long, and three rings kept the plates together; one above, one in the middle, and one below, so the angel could turn every leaf entirely over. The thickness was about of a common sheet of tin used by tinsmiths.

I - How did the engravings look?

He - There were characters. We copied some, and if you visit my brother John, one of the Eight Witnesses, who wrote for Joseph, John can show you some of the old manuscript which he borrowed from me. I must have it returned to me again, as it belongs to the Church, in connection with other records.

As we were praying, the angel stood before us in his glory, and all things were before us on a table, and we heard the testimony about the plates, and we were commanded to bear that testimony to the world, and our testimony is true. And when the angel had finished his words, and shown us the plates one by one, which were to be translated, then the vision was closed at once, and exactly as it came even so did the sight disappear.

I - But these things which you saw were material things, how could they come and vanish away again?

He - It is the power of God. He does those things and his angels know how to do it. It was wonderful to us, but it was by the power of God. He had appointed his angels to be the guardians of the plates and other things, and the angel knew how it was done.

I - Did the Eight Witnesses not handle the plates as a material substance?

He - We did not, but they did, because of the faith of Joseph became so great that the angel, the guardian of the plates, gave the plates up to Joseph for a time, that those Eight Witnesses could see and handle them.

I - Did not Joseph, at an earlier period, have the full possession of those plates?

He - Yes, he did do in the commencement, but the persecution grew so hot that the angel took possession of the records, and showed those things, as he did, to Cowdery, Harris and me, and in the presence of Joseph, and afterwards he was allowed to show the plates to the Eight Witnesses.

I - Where are the plates now?

He - In a cave, where the angel has hidden them up till the time arrives when the plates, which are sealed, shall be translated. God will yet raise up a mighty one, who shall do his work till it is finished and Jesus comes again.

I - Where is that cave?

He - In the state of New York.

I - In the Hill Cumorah?

He - No, but not far from that place. I saw the place where the plates were found, and a great many did so, and it awakened an excitement at the time, because the worst enemies of "Mormonism" stirred up the confusion by telling about the plates which Joseph found, and the "gold bible" which he was in possession of, so he was in constant danger of being robbed and killed.

I - How did the place look?

He - It was a stone box, and the stones looked to me as if they were cemented together. That was on the side of the hill, and a little down from the top.

I - How did you know Joseph to be at that time?

He - He was a very humble and meek man, and very simple, indeed. He did the will of the Lord, and an arduous task it was to translate the Book of Mormon.

I - Did Joseph use the Urim and Thummim when he translated?

He - The Urim and Thummim were two white stones, each of them cased in as spectacles are, in a kind of silver casing, but the bow between the stones was more heavy, and longer apart between the stones, than we usually find in spectacles. Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, Emma, and my brother John each at different times wrote for Joseph as he translated.

I - When will the temple be built at Independence?

He - Right after the great tribulation is over.

I - What do you mean by that?

He - A civil war more bloody and cruel than the rebellion. It will be a smashing up of this nation, about which time the second great work has to be done, a work like Joseph did, and the translation of the sealed plates, and peace all over.

I - Will you live and see those things?

He - It was said to us, that the second great work should commence when nearly all the witnesses to the first plates had passed away, so I may live and see those things take place.

Interview with David Whitmer

by Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, September 1878

Source: "Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,

Millennial Star 40 (9 Dec 1878):771-7

Elder O. P. Do you remember what time you saw the plates?

D. It was in June, 1829--the latter part of the month, and the Eight Witnesses saw them, I think, the next day or the day after (i.e. one or two days after). Joseph showed them the plates himself, but the angel showed us (the Three Witnesses) the plates, as I suppose to fulfill the words of the book itself. Martin Harris was not with us at this time; he obtained a view of them afterwards (the same day). Joseph, Oliver and myself were together when I saw them. We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon but also the brass plates, the plates of the Book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people of the world down to the time of their being [page 772] engraved, and many other plates. The fact is, it was just as though Joseph, Oliver and I were sitting just here on a log, when we were overshadowed by a light. It was not like the light of the sun nor like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended away round us, I cannot tell how far, but in the midst of this light about as far off as he sits (pointing to John C. Whitmer, sitting a few feet from him), there appeared as it were, a table with many records or plates upon it, besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the Sword of Laban, the Directors--i.e., the ball which Lehi had--and the Interpreters. I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed beside him with his hand), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life, declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God.

Elder O. P. Did you see the angel at this time?

D. W. Yes; he stood before us. Our testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon is strictly and absolutely true, just as it is there written. Before I knew Joseph, I had heard about him and the plates from persons who declared they knew he had them, and swore they would get them from him. When Oliver Cowdery went to Pennsylvania, he promised to write me what he should learn about these matters, which he did. He wrote me that Joseph had told him his (Oliver's) secret thoughts, and all he had meditated about going to see him, which no man on earth knew, as he supposed, but himself, and so he stopped to write for Joseph.

Soon after this, Joseph sent for me (D. W.) to come to Harmony to get him and Oliver and bring them to my father's house. I did not know what to do, I was pressed with my work. I had some 20 acres to plow, so I concluded I would finish plowing and then go. I got up one morning to go to work as usual and, on going to the field, found between five and seven acres of my ground had been plowed during the night. I don't know who did it; but it was done just as I would have done it myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow.

This enabled me to start sooner. When I arrived at Harmony, Joseph and Oliver were coming toward me, and met me some distance from the house. Oliver told me that Joseph had informed him when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night, etc., and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me; all of which was exactly as Joseph had told Oliver, at which I was greatly astonished. When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old-fashioned, wooden, spring seat and Joseph behind us; while traveling along in a clear open place, a very pleasant, nice-looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, "Good morning, it is very warm," at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, "No, I am going to Cumorah." This name was something new to me, I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked around inquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.

J. F. S. Did you notice his appearance?

D. I should think I did. He was, I should think, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches tall and heavy set, about such a man as James Vancleave there, but heavier; his face was as large, he was dressed in a suit of brown woolen clothes, his hair and beard were white, like Brother Pratt's, but his beard was not so heavy. I also remember that he had on his back a sort of knapsack with something in, shaped like a book. It was the messenger who had the plates, who had taken them from Joseph just prior to our starting from Harmony. Soon after our arrival home, I saw something which led me to the belief that the plates were placed or concealed in my father's barn. I frankly asked Joseph if my [page 773] supposition was right, he told me it was. Some time after this, my mother was going to milk the cows, when she was met out near the yard by the same old man (judging by her description of him) who said to her: "You have been very faithful and diligent in your labors, but you are tired because of the increase in your toil; it is proper therefore that you should receive a witness that your faith may be strengthened." Thereupon he showed her the plates. My father and mother had a large family of their own; the addition to it, therefore, of Joseph, his wife Emma, and Oliver very greatly increased the toil and anxiety of my mother. And although she had never complained, she had sometimes felt that her labor was too much, or at least she was perhaps beginning to feel so. This circumstance, however, completely removed all such feelings and nerved her up for her increased responsibilities.

Elder O. P. Have you any idea when the other record will be brought forth?

D. W. When we see things in the spirit and by the power of God they seem to be right here; the present signs of the times indicate the near approach of the coming forth of the other plates, but when it will be I cannot tell. The Three Nephites are at work among the lost tribes and elsewhere. John the Revelator is at work, and I believe the time will come suddenly, before we are prepared for it.

Upon inquiry, Mr. Whitmer informed us that Oliver Cowdery had told him all about his visiting the Church at Council Bluffs and of his having been rebaptized. He said, "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 died immediately, with a smile on his face.

In response to some questions, Mr. Whitmer said: "Many things have been revealed which were designed only for the Church, and which the world cannot comprehend, but the Book of Mormon and those testimonies therein given were to go to all the world."

We replied, "Yes, and we have sent that book to the Danes, the Swedes, the Spanish, the Italians, the French, the German, the Welsh, and to the islands of the sea, the book even having been translated into

Hindoostanee. So you see the Church has not been idle." To this he made no reply. In parting with him, he said "This may be the last time I shall ever see you in the flesh, so farewell."

Report in Kansas City Journal of Interview with
David Whitmer, June 1881

Source: Kansas City Journal, 5 June 1881 reprinted in "Mormonism,"
Millennial Star 43 (4 July 1881):421-23, 437-39.

The reporter called at the residence of Mr. Whitmer and found the patriarch resting in an invalid's chair, looking very pale and feeble, he having but just recovered from a long and severe illness. In person, he is about medium height, of massive frame though not at all corpulent, his shoulders slightly bent as with the weight of years. His manly, benevolent face was closely shaven, his hair snow-white, and his whole appearance denoted one of nature's noblemen. The education acquired during his boyhood days and his long life devoted to study and thought have stored his mind with a vast fund of information.

After introducing himself, the reporter opened the conversation as follows:

"Mr. Whitmer, knowing that you are the only living witness to the translation of the Book of Mormon and also that you were a resident of Jackson County during the Mormon troubles in 1833, I have been sent to you by the Journal to get from your lips the true statement of facts in regard to these matters. For [page 422] nearly half a century the world has had but one side only, and it is now our desire to present to our readers for the first time the other side."

"Young man, you are right. I am the only living witness to the Book of Mormon, but I have been imposed upon and misrepresented so many times by persons claiming to be honorable newspapermen, that I feel a delicacy in allowing my name to come before the public in newspaper print again."

"I am very sorry to hear that, but I promise you that we shall only give your statement as you make it and will not misrepresent you in any manner."

After a few other remarks of the same tenor the reporter at last induced the patriarch to furnish the desired facts, which he did in the following language:

"I was born near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, January 7, 1805, but when only four years of age my parents removed to the state of New York, settling at a point midway between the northern extremities of Lake Cayuga and Seneca, two miles from Waterloo, seven miles from Geneva, and twenty-seven miles from Palmyra, where I lived until the year 1831. In the year 1830 I was married to Miss Julia A. Jolly who is still living. The fruit of our union was a son, David J. Whitmer, now aged forty-eight, and a daughter, now aged forty-six years, both of whom are now living with me.

"I first heard of what is now termed Mormonism in the year 1828. I made a business trip to Palmyra, New York, and while there stopped with one Oliver Cowdery. A great many people in the neighborhood were talking about the finding of certain golden plates by one Joseph Smith, Jr., a young man of the neighborhood. Cowdery and I, as well as many others, talked about the matter, but at that time I paid but little attention to it, supposing it to be only the idle gossip of the neighborhood. Cowdery said he was acquainted with the Smith family, and believing there must be some truth in the story of the plates, he intended to investigate the matter. I had conversation with several young men who said that Joseph Smith [Jr.] certainly had golden plates, and that before he had attained them he had promised to share with them, but had not done so and they were very much incensed with them. Said I, 'How do you know that Joe Smith has the plates?' They replied, 'We saw the plates [place (not the plates) from which the plates were taken just as he described them to us before he obtained them] in the hill that he took them out of, just as he described it to us before he had obtained them.' These parties were so positive in their statements that I began to believe there must be some foundation for the stories then in circulation all over that part of the country. I had never seen any of the Smith family up to that time, and I began to inquire of the people in regard to them. I learned that one night during the year 1827, Joseph Smith, Jr., had a vision, and an angel of God appeared to him and told him where certain plates were to be found, pointing out the spot to him, and shortly afterward he went to that place and found the plates, which were still in his possession. After thinking over the matter for a long time, and talking with Cowdery, who also gave me a history of the finding of the plates, I went home.

"After several months [Oliver] Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Pennsylvania, whither Joseph Smith, [Jr.] had gone with the plates on account of the persecutions of his neighbors, and see him about the matter. He did go, and on his way he stopped at my father's house and told me that as soon as he found out anything, either truth or untruth, he would let me know. After he got there he became acquainted with Joseph Smith, [Jr.] and shortly after wrote to me telling me that he was convinced that Smith had the records and that he (Smith) had told him that it was the will of heaven that he (Cowdery) should be his

scribe to assist in the translation of the plates. He went on, and Joseph translated from the plates and he wrote it down. Shortly after this, Cowdery wrote me another letter in [page 423] which he gave me a few lines of what they had translated, and he assured me that he knew of a certainty that he had a record of a people that inhabited this continent, and that the plates they were translating gave a complete history of these people. When Cowdery wrote me these things and told me that he had revealed knowledge concerning the truth of them, I showed these letters to my parents, brothers and sisters. Soon after, I received another letter from Cowdery telling me to come down into Pennsylvania and bring him and Joseph to my father's house, giving as a reason therefore that they had received a commandment from God to that effect. I went down to Harmony and found everything just as they had written me. The next day after I got there they packed up the plates [I did not say "packed up the plates"] and we proceeded on our journey to my father's house, where we arrived in due time, and the day after we commenced upon the translation of the remainder of the plates. I, as well as all of my father's family, Smith's wife [Emma], Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, were present during the translation. [I did not wish to be understood as saying that those referred to as being present were all the time in the immediate presence of the translator, but were at the place and saw how the translation was conducted.] The translation was by [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.] and the manner as follows:

"He had two small stones of a chocolate color, nearly egg-shape and perfectly smooth, but not transparent, called interpreters, which were given him with the plates. He did not use the plates in the translation, but would hold the interpreters to his eyes and cover his face with a hat, excluding all light, and before his eyes would appear what seemed to be parchment, on which would appear the characters of the plates in a line at the top and immediately below would appear the translation, in English, which [Joseph] Smith [Jr.] would read to his scribe, who wrote it down exactly as it fell from his lips. The scribe would then read the sentence written, and if any mistake had been made the characters would remain visible to Smith until corrected, when they faded from sight to be replaced by another line. The translation at my father's occupied about one month, that is from June 1 to July 1, 1829."

"Were the plates under the immediate control of Smith all the time?"

"No, they were not. I will explain how that was. When Joseph [Smith, Jr.] first received the plates he translated one hundred sixteen pages of the book of Lehi, with Martin Harris as scribe. When this had been completed they rested for a time, and Harris wanted to take the manuscript home with him to show to his family and friends. To this Joseph demurred, but finally asked the Lord if Harris might be allowed to take it. The answer was 'No.' Harris teased Joseph for a long time and finally persuaded him to ask the Lord a second time, pledging himself to be responsible for its safekeeping. To this second inquiry the Lord told Joseph that Harris might take the manuscript, which he did, showing it to a great many people; but, through some carelessness, he allowed it to be stolen from him. This incurred the Lord's displeasure and he sent an angel to Joseph demanding the plates, and until Joseph had thoroughly repented of his transgressions, would not allow him to have the use of them again. When Joseph was again allowed to resume the translation, the plates were taken care of by a messenger of God, and when Joseph wanted to see the plates, this messenger was always at hand. The one hundred sixteen pages of the book of Lehi which were stolen were never recovered, nor would the Lord permit Joseph to make a second translation of it. [It is my understanding that the seer stone referred to was furnished when he commenced translating again after losing the 116 pages. My statement was and now is that in translating he put the seer stone in his hat and putting his face in his hat so as to exclude the light and that then the light and characters appeared in the hat together with the interpretation which he uttered and was written by, the scribe and which was tested at the time as stated.]

"A few months after the translation was completed, that is in the spring of 1830, Joseph had the book published, and this (showing a well-worn volume) is a copy of the first edition, which I have had in my possession ever since it was printed."

[page 437] "When did you see the plates?"

"It was in the latter part of June, 1829. Joseph [Smith, Jr.], Oliver Cowdery and myself were together, and the angel showed them to us. We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon, but he also showed us the brass plates of the Book of Ether and many others. They were shown to us in this way: Joseph and Oliver and I were sitting on a log when we were overshadowed by a light more glorious than that of the sun. In the midst of this light, but a few feet from us, appeared a table upon which were many golden plates, also the sword of Laban and the directors. I saw them as plain as I see you now and distinctly heard the voice of the Lord declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and the power of God."

"Who else saw the plates at this time?"

"No one. Martin Harris, the other witness, saw them the same day, and the eight witnesses, Christian Whitmer, Hiram Page, Jacob Whitmer, Joseph Smith, Sen., Peter Whitmer, Hyrum Smith, Jno. [John] Whitmer and Samuel H. Smith, saw them next day."

"Did you see the angel?"

"Yes, he stood before us. Our testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon is absolutely true, just as it is written there."

"Can you describe the plates?"

"They appeared to be of gold, about six by nine inches in size, about as thick as parchment, a great many in number, and bound together like the leaves of a book by massive rings passing through the back edges. The engravings upon them were very plain and of very curious appearance. Smith made facsimiles of some of the plates and sent them by Martin Harris to Professors Anthon and Mitchell, of New York City, for examination. They pronounced the characters reformed Egyptian, but were unable to read them."

"Did Joseph Smith ever relate to you the circumstances of his finding the plates?"

"Yes, he told me that he first found the plates in the year 1823; that during the fall of 1823 he had a vision, an angel appearing to him three times in one night and telling him that there was a record of an ancient people deposited in a hill near his father's house, called by the ancients `Cumorah,' situated in the township of Manchester, Ontario County, N. Y. The angel pointed out the exact spot, and, sometime after, he went and found the records or plates deposited in a stone box in the hill, just as had been described to him by the angel. It was some little time, however, before the angel would allow Smith to remove the plates from their place of deposit."

"When was the Church first established?"

"We had preaching during the time the book was being translated, but our Church was not regularly organized until after the book was printed in the winter of 1829-30. The first organization was in Seneca County, New York, under the name of `The Church of Christ.' The first elders were Joseph Smith, [Jr.], Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Hyrum Smith, John Whitmer, Peter Whitmer [page 438] and myself [David Whitmer]. On the 6th of April, 1830, the Church was called together and the elders acknowledged according to the laws of New York. Our instructions from the Lord were to teach nothing except the Old and New Testaments and the Book of Mormon.

"From that time the Church spread abroad and multiplied very rapidly. In the fall of 1830, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, S. [Ziba] Peterson (and Oliver Cowdery) went to Kirtland, Oh., and established a branch of the Church, which also grew very fast, and soon after a fine temple was erected, which is still standing.

"During the winter of 1830, the same parties went to Independence, Missouri, established a church, and purchased very large tracts of land in all parts of Jackson County as well as a large amount of property in the town of Independence, including the site for the temple. The reason for the emigration to Jackson County was that Smith had received a revelation from God designating Independence as the place of the gathering of the Saints together in the latter days. Joseph Smith [Jr.] and Elder Sidney Rigdon, of the Kirtland church, established the Church in Jackson County, but soon after returned to Ohio. The temple has never been built at Independence, but the site still remains vacant and the title deeds are held by the Church. I have no doubt but that at some future day it will be built.

The Chicago Times Interview

Reprinted and Revised, November 1881

Source: Richmond Conservator, 18 Nov 1881,

After speaking of Mr. Whitmer and his surroundings the interviewer says:

"After an hour's interview I gleaned the following valuable information from him--he speaking freely and unreservedly--in regard to the origin and rise of the Mormon Church, as well as to the authenticity of the "Book of Mormon."

THE PLATES

from which the book was translated, supposed to be of gold, were found the latter part of the year 1827 or 28 prior to an acquaintance on Mr. Whitmer's part with Joseph Smith, [Jr.], and he was loath to believe in their actuality, notwithstanding the community in which he lived (Ontario County, New York) was alive with excitement in regards to Smith's finding a great treasure, and they informed him that they knew that Smith had the plates, as they had seen the place he had taken them from, on the Hill Cumorah, about two miles from Palmyra, New York. It was not until June 1829, that he met the future prophet, who visited his father's house, and while there he completed the translation of the Book of Mormon, and thus he became conversant with its history, having witnessed Smith dictate to Oliver Cowdery the translation of the characters that were inscribed on the plates, said by Mr. Anthon, an Egyptian scholar, to resemble the characters of that ancient people. Christian Whitmer, his brother, occasionally assisted Cowdery in writing, as did Mrs. Joseph Smith, [Jr.], who was a Miss Hale before she was married.

[page 189] In regard to finding the plates, he was told by [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], that they were in a stone casket, and the place where it was deposited, in the Hill Cumorah, was pointed out to him by a celestial personage, clad in a dazzling white robe and he was informed by it that it was the history of the Nephites, a nation that had passed away, whose founders belonged to the days of the tower of Babel. The plates, which Mr. Whitmer saw, were in the shape of a tablet, fastened with three rings, about one-third of which appeared to be loose, in plates, the other solid, but with perceptible marks where the plates appeared to be sealed, and the guide that pointed it out to Smith very impressively reminded him that the loose plates alone were to be used; the sealed portion was **NOT TO BE TAMPERED WITH**.

After the plates had been translated, which process required about six months, the same heavenly visitant appeared and reclaimed the gold plates of the ancient people, informing [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], that he would replace them with other records of the lost tribes that had been brought with them during their wanderings in Asia, which would be forthcoming when the world was ready to receive them. At that time Mr. [David] Whitmer saw the tablet, gazed with awe upon the celestial messenger, heard him speak and say: "Blessed is the Lord and he that keeps his commandments;" and then, as he held the plates and turned them over in his hands, so that they could be plainly visible, a voice that seemed to fill all space, musical as the sighing of a wind through the forest, was heard saying, "What you see is true; testify to the same," and Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, standing there, felt, as the white garments of the angel faded from their vision and the heavenly voice still rang in their ears, that it was no delusion--that it was a fact; and they so recorded it. In a day or two after, the same spirit appeared to Martin Harris, while he was in company with [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], and told him also to bear witness to its truth, which he did, as can be seen in the book. Harris described the visitant to Whitmer, who recognized it as the same as he and Cowdery had seen.

The plates or tablets were translated by [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], who used a small oval or kidney-shaped stone, called Urim and Thummim, that seemed endowed with the marvelous power of converting the characters on the plates, when used by Smith, into English, who would then dictate to [Oliver] Cowdery what to write. Frequently one character would make two lines of manuscript, while others made but a word or two words. Mr. [David] Whitmer emphatically asserts, as did [Martin] Harris and Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had **NO MANUSCRIPT, NOTES OR OTHER MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE** save the seerstone and the characters as shown on the plates, he being present and cognizant how it was done.

In regard to the statement that Sidney Rigdon had purloined the work of one Spaulding, a Presbyterian preacher, who had written a romance entitled *The Manuscript Found*, Mr. [David] Whitmer says there is no foundation for such an assertion. The Book of Mormon, was translated in the summer of 1829, and printed that winter in Palmyra, New York, and was in circulation before Sidney Rigdon knew anything concerning the Church of Christ. His attention was especially brought to it by the appearance, near Kirtland, Ohio, in the fall of 1830, of Parley Pratt and Oliver Cowdery, he being at that time a Reformed or Christian preacher, [page 190] they having been sent west by the Church in New York during the summer as evangelists and they then carried the printed book, the first time he knew such a thing was in existence. Upon being appealed to by [Parley] Pratt and Cowdery for the use of his [Sidney Rigdon's] church he informed [them] that as he was endeavoring to establish the rules and get back into the ancient usages of Christianity, and desired all the light he could get that was of benefit to his fellowmen, he would do so, and would like to hear them. Then they gave him a copy of the book [of Mormon] that it had been asserted he was the progenitor of. The result of the meeting was that 101 persons were received into the Church at Kirtland; that Rigdon and [Edward] Partridge, two influential preachers, were sent as delegates to New York to see Joseph Smith, [Jr.], and they were so much impressed with his history of the book and his connection therewith that they became firm believers, and started back home as evangelists, preaching the new religion. In a short time thereafter, Smith, Whitmer, and others, learning of the beautiful country in Ohio, moved west, and the Church increased rapidly and would have so continued, had it not strayed from the true path, to preach only Christ and him crucified, as it had begun. Mr. Whitmer emphatically asserts that he has heard Rigdon, in the pulpit and in private conversations, declare that the Spaulding story, that he had used a book called *The Manuscript Found* for the purpose of preparing the Book of Mormon, "was as false as were many other charges made against the infant church, and he assured me that the story is **UNTRUTHFUL AS IT IS RIDICULOUS**."

In his youth Joseph Smith, [Jr.], was quite illiterate, knew nothing of grammar composition, but obtained quite a good education after he came west; was a man of great magnetism, made friends easily, was liberal and noble in his impulses, tall, finely formed, and full of animal life, but sprung from the most humble circumstances. The first good suit of clothes he had ever worn was presented to him by Christian Whitmer, brother of David.

As evidence of their belief in the divine origin of the book [of Mormon], Martin Harris, one of the witnesses, mortgaged his farm for \$1500 for the purpose of having it printed, and the sale of the book soon

reimbursed him for the outlay. Now millions of copies are being published and sent to the furthestmost ends of the earth. A few years since, I was present at an interview between Mr. [David] Whitmer and Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, who had been sent from Utah to Richmond, [Missouri] to secure the original manuscript from which the Book of Mormon had been printed, and in a conversation with the writer he assured me the archives of the Church at Salt Lake City, [Utah] were incomplete without it; that they would pay Father Whitmer, as he termed him, any reasonable price for it, but that Whitmer would not part with it under any consideration, regarding it as a sacred trust. Mr. Whitmer also has a number of other records of the early Church, ere it had, as he says, "broke loose from the teachings of Christ and acknowledged nothing as divine save as it was taught from the Bible and the Book of Mormon."

Mr. [David] Whitmer's beliefs have UNDERGONE NO CHANGE since his early manhood; he has refused to affiliate with any of the various branches that have sprung up through false teachings, and rests his hopes of the future "in the teachings of Christ, the apostles, and the prophets, and [page 191] the morals and principles inculcated in the scriptures; that the Book of Mormon is but the testimony of another nation concerning the truth and divinity of Christ and the Bible, and that is his rock, his gospel, and his salvation." Seeing with him is believing. He is now as firm in the faith of the divinity of the book that he saw translated as he was when the glory of the celestial visitant almost blinded him with [the] gleam of its glowing presence, fresh from the godhead; and the voice, majestic, ringing out from earth to the mighty dome of space, still lingers in his ears like a chime of silver bells."

Interview with John Hart 23 Aug 1883

Having some business in Richmond, Ray County, [Missouri] I took occasion to call upon Mr. David Whitmer, who was suffering considerably from the intense heat, but had, notwithstanding, a long and pleasant conversation with him and his son David Whitmer, Jr. After mutual introductions, I remarked that although I had no doubt of the truth of his published statement and testimony in the Book of Mormon, I should be pleased to hear the testimony from his own lips. He said, "Persons may attempt to describe the presentation of the plates as shown to himself and other witnesses, but there was a glory attending it that no one could describe, no human tongue could tell the glorious scenes that were presented to them. Joseph Smith, [Jr.], was there and Oliver Cowdery and himself. Martin Harris did not come as expected, but they were shown to him a short time after.

"Did the personage or angel who showed you the plates tell you his name?" I asked.

Mr. Whitmer replied, "No, he did not. The idea has obtained ground that it was Moroni, the last of the Nephite prophets. It may have been Moroni or it may have been one of the three Nephite Apostles who were promised that they should not taste of death. It is not important who he was, but I know that he was a messenger from God." "I have been visited by thousands of people," he remarked, "believers and nonbelievers, amongst them a governor of this state, gentlemen and ladies of all degrees and from many nations, sometimes 15 or 20 in a day, all wanting to know if these things are true. I have been surrounded by hostile mobs, on one occasion numbering four or five hundred, demanding I should deny what is published over my name in the Book of Mormon; but the testimony I gave to that mob made them fear and tremble, and I escaped from them. One gentleman, a doctor, an unbeliever, told me afterwards that the bold and fearless testimony borne on that occasion and the fear that seemed to take hold of the mob had made him a believer in the Book of Mormon." Mr. Whitmer said further, "I heard the voice of the angel, and saw the engravings on the plates, just as stated in the Book of Mormon. And we were demanded to bear record of these things and that the book was translated by the gift and power of God." "You see that small table by the wall," he remarked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Well there was a table about that size, and the heavenly messenger brought the several plates and laid them on the table before our eyes, and we saw them, and bore testimony of them, and our testimony is true. And if these things are not true then there is no truth, and if there is no truth there is no God, and if there is no God there is no existence. But I know there is a God for I have heard his voice and witnessed the manifestations of his power."

He said, moreover, that when they were first commanded to testify of these things they demurred and told the Lord the people would not believe them for the book [Book of Mormon], concerning which they were to bear record, told of a people who were educated and refined, dwelling in large cities; whereas all that was then known of the early inhabitants of this country was the filthy, lazy, degraded and ignorant savages that were roaming over the land.

"The Lord told us in reply that he would make it known to the people that the early inhabitants of this land had been just such a people as they were described in the book [of Mormon] and he would lead them to uncover the ruins of the great cities, and they should have abundant evidence of the truth of that which is written in the book, all of which," said Mr. [David] Whitmer, "has been fulfilled to the very letter."

Mr. David Whitmer, Jun., spoke of the strange and wonderful preservation of the written copy of the book which Oliver Cowdery left in his father's charge, and the hieroglyphics which Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon of New York. In the cyclone that devastated the town of Richmond, [Missouri] a few years ago, the courthouse and many other buildings were swept entirely away. Some books belonging to the courthouse were carried over 40 miles, and the Whitmer house was all destroyed, except the small room in which the said documents were kept, in which not a window was broken. A few minutes after the catastrophe he met an unbelieving scoffer in the street who said, "Well, Dave, how about those records?" "and I told him they were all right, although I had not then had an opportunity to look after them. My father was hurt by the flying timber, for the house on the west side of the road was blown through ours, and thirty-two persons were killed and many badly wounded, but when matters had subsided a little and we had examined the room and the box where the manuscript was kept, we found it to our satisfaction as we had left it, and as it is now, in a good state of preservation."

Interview With George Q. Cannon

George Q. Cannon in *Juvenile Instructor* 19 (1884):107

After some little conversation he inquired of me if I would like to see the manuscript, and gave his son a key and told him to bring it in. I found it wonderfully well preserved, written in different handwritings. He says they are the writings of Oliver Cowdery, Emma Smith, Martin Harris, and perhaps, some of it that of his brother Christian [Whitmer], who assisted the Prophet Joseph [Smith, Jr.]. This is the manuscript, Mr. [David] Whitmer says, from which the printers set the type of the Book of Mormon, and he pointed out to me where it had been cut for conveniences as "copy." I noticed some printer's marks on the manuscript. Still it seemed unusually clean for "copy" that printers had handled. I commented upon the cleanness of the manuscript and he explained that it was in consequence of the care taken of it by Oliver Cowdery in watching it while in the printer's hands. It was fastened together, not as a whole, but a few sheets--probably not more than a dozen--with woolen yarn, which he said was his mother's. I examined this manuscript with great interest and with a feeling of reverence. How many associations cluster around this! What wonderful changes have occurred since the few who were interested in this work labored in its preparation under the direction of the Prophet! Everything connected with the work then was in the future. Their minds were filled with anticipation concerning the greatness of the work, the foundation of which they were assisting to lay. But how little conception after all, probably, these men had, with the exception of Joseph, of the wonderful character of the work to be accomplished. Thoughts like these passed through my mind while looking at this manuscript.

But there was a paper with this, which, if anything, was still more interesting than the manuscript. It was the characters drawn by Joseph [Smith, Jr.] himself from the plates for Martin Harris to take to show the learned professors, so wonderfully predicted in the 29th chapter of Isaiah. There were seven lines of these characters, the first four being about twice as large in size as the last three. In English Joseph had written over the lines the word "characters." He had spelled this word, "caractors." Though these characters had evidently been written for a long time, they were as clear and distinct as though just penned. Here was the very paper which Isaiah saw in vision about 2,600 years before, and which he called "the words of a book." How wonderfully God in his own way brings to pass the fulfillment of the predictions of his servants! To the ordinary person it might seem like a trifling thing to copy these characters and send them "to one that is learned;" but it was of sufficient importance in the mind of the Lord for him to inspire his servant Isaiah to describe exactly the occurrence. This shows how much importance the Lord attached to these details connected with the foundation of this work and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

David Whitmer told me he was plowing when Joseph [Smith, Jr.] and Oliver [Cowdery] came to him to speak about his being one of the witnesses. He already knew that the Lord had promised to show the plates to three witnesses. Joseph then informed him that he was chosen to be one of the three. They went out and sat upon a log, conversing upon the things to be revealed, when they were surrounded by a glorious light which overshadowed them. A glorious personage appeared unto them and exhibited to them the plates, the sword of Laban, the Directors which were given to Lehi (called Liahona), the Urim and Thummim, and other records. Human language cannot, he said, describe what they saw. He had had his hours of darkness and trial and difficulty since that period; but however dark upon other things his mind had been, that vision had ever been a bright and beautiful scene in his memory, and he had never wavered in regard to it. He had fearlessly testified of it always, even when his life was threatened. Martin Harris was not with them at the time Joseph and Oliver and he saw the angel; but he and Joseph afterwards were together, and the angel exhibited the plates to Martin Harris also, and he thus became a witness.

I spent several hours there, and to me they were very interesting. The old gentleman was able to stay in the room only a portion of the time; he had to retire to rest; but I had the company of his son, David J.

Whitmer, and his nephew, John C. Whitmer (who is a son of Jacob Whitmer, one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon), while I remained.

Report of Chicago Tribune
Special Correspondent, December 1885
Source: Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885,

TRANSLATING THE PLATES

[David] Whitmer and [Oliver] Cowdery were greatly impressed by the recital of this strange story, and were conducted to the hill, where they personally viewed the receptacle in which Moroni, at the beginning of the fifth century, had concealed the history of his fathers. [Joseph] Smith [Jr.], also said that he had been commanded to at once begin the translation of the work in the presence of three witnesses. In accordance with this command, Smith, Cowdery, and Whitmer proceeded to the latter's home, accompanied by Smith's wife, and bearing with them the precious plates and spectacles. The house of Senior Whitmer was a primitive and poorly designed structure, but it was deemed the most secure for the carrying out the sacred trust on account of the threats that had been made against Smith by his mercenary neighbors. In order to give privacy to the proceeding a blanket, which served as a portiere was stretched across the family living room to shelter the translators from the eyes of any who might call at the house while the work was in progress. This, Mr. Whitmer says, was the only use made of the blanket, and it was not for the purpose of concealing the plates or the translator from the eyes of the amanuensis. In fact, Smith was at no time concealed from his collaborators, and the translation was performed in the presence of not only the persons mentioned, but of the entire Whitmer household and several of Smith's relatives besides.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," pp.204-5

The work of translating the tablets consumed about eight months, [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], acting as the seer and [Oliver] Cowdery, Smith's wife [Emma Hale], and Christian Whitmer, brother of David, performing the duties of amanuensis in whose handwriting the original manuscript now is. Each time before resuming [page 205] the work all present would kneel down in prayer and invoke the divine blessing on the proceeding. After the prayer, [Joseph] Smith [Jr.], would sit on one side of the table and the amanuensis, in turn as they became tired, on the other. Those present and not actively engaged in the work seated themselves around the room and then the work began. After affixing the magical spectacles to his eyes, Smith would take the plates and translate the characters one at a time. The graven characters would appear in succession to the seer, and directly under the character, when viewed through the glasses, would be the translation in English. Sometimes the character would be a single word, and frequently an entire sentence. In translating the characters, Smith, who was illiterate and but little versed in Biblical lore, was of times compelled to spell the words out, not knowing the correct pronunciation, and Mr. Whitmer recalls the fact that at that time Smith did not even know that Jerusalem was a walled city. Cowdery, however, being a school teacher, rendered invaluable aid in pronouncing hard words and giving them their proper definition. Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.205

MORE MIRACULOUS DEVELOPMENTS

A miracle is related by Mr. [David] Whitmer as occurring while the translation was in progress. It seems that [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], who was puffed up with his great importance as a confidential secretary to the Lord, displeased the Master by entering into some carnal confab in relation to the work. For this offense he was punished by having the celestial visitant, who first commissioned him to inaugurate the work, suddenly appeared and carried off the plates and spectacles. In this connection it might also be mentioned that Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the translation, a farmer in the same county, and a man of simple mind and taste, was sent by Smith with a copy of the characters to Professor Anthon, a professor of languages in Columbia College, and author of several well known works, who pronounced the language inscribed on the plate Reformed Egyptian.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.205

About this time [Martin] Harris, inspired by curiosity and elation, took sixteen of the golden tablets home to show his wife, who is alleged to have stolen them from a bureau drawer and peddled them among her friends. For this offense Harris was severely reprimanded by the Lord, through [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], but the angel afterwards recovered the plates and restored them. Smith's offense of tattling the secrets of the works among his neighbors was less readily condoned, and for a long time the work was suspended, the angel being in possession of the plates and spectacles. Finally when Smith had fully repented of his rash conduct, he was forgiven. The plates, however, were not returned, but instead Smith was given by the angel, a Urim and Thummim of another pattern, it being shaped in oval or kidney form. This seer's stone

[seerstone] he was instructed to place in his hat, and on covering his face with the hat the character and translation would appear on the stone.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," pp.205-6

This worked just as satisfactory as the old method, but at no time thereafter was the backsliding Joseph [Smith, Jr.] intrusted with the precious plates. However, the entire portion of the golden volume, which the angel said might be translated, was reduced by the nimble amanuensis to readable manuscript. The other installment was withheld until the Lord could [page 206] discover what the first had on the Gentiles. That he was not pleased has not yet been revealed to the world.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.206

THE ANGEL IN THE PASTURE

After the translation was completed [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], informed [Oliver] Cowdery, [David] Whitmer, and [Martin] Harris that the Lord had instructed him that the time was at hand when they should testify to all nations, tongues, and people concerning this work. These four Apostles of the Lord as they were designated, accordingly assembled in the public pasture, cleared of underbrush, at a point equally distant between two highways. About the noonday hour they were seated on a log waiting for the promised manifestations, having previously knelt in prayer. All at once the heavens appeared to open and there appeared a dazzling shaft of light beside which the light of the sun appeared dim. Through this cleft in the sky, which seemed to lead away up to the pearly gates beyond, appeared an angel, disguised as a man, bearing the semblance of a table. The angel descended to the earth, landing nearly at their feet. On this table were the plates of gold from which they had just translated the Book of Mormon, and the plates of brass on which were inscribed the commandments written by Moses, and which had been taken from Jerusalem by Nephi 600 years before Christ and afterward transported to America. The four Apostles were then commanded to go forth among men and preach religion as set down in the Book of Mormon.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.206

After this wonderful manifestation Martin Harris mortgaged his farm for \$1,500 in order to obtain funds for printing the Book of Mormon, and all four set about organizing a church, which was called the Church of Christ, as commanded in the Book of Mormon. The four Apostles began preaching and were so successful in securing converts to the new religion that a church was organized April 6, 1830. The Book of Mormon was also given to the world that year. Concerning the converts Mr. [David] Whitmer says that among the first adherents to embrace the new faith were many of the most intellectual and refined men and women in that locality, and the ranks were not recruited from the ignorant and sensuous classes like the Mormons in Utah. The year following the organization of the Church the disciples moved to Ohio, where they had been most successful in proselyting, and a temple was erected at Kirtland. It was at this place that Sidney Rigdon and Brigham Young joined the Church, and it was here that the first dissensions occurred.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.206

Concerning Sidney Rigdon, who was said to have stolen the manuscript of the Book of Mormon, which, it was alleged, had been written by a Presbyterian preacher named Solomon Spaulding, and originally intended as a romance, Mr. [David] Whitmer asserts that nothing could have been more improbable, as neither [Joseph] Smith, [Jr.], himself, nor the other disciples knew Rigdon until they moved to Ohio.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," pp.206-7

HE KEPT THE RECORDS

The original manuscript from which the Book of Mormon was printed is still in Mr. [David] Whitmer's possession, and most of it is in the handwriting of his brother Christian and his brother-in-law, Oliver Cowdery. Mr. Whitmer also has an exhaustive history of the Church, which was [page 207] compiled by his brother, and an accurate copy of several plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. These records he has preserved against all temptations and in the face of death. Several years ago a delegation of Mormons came to Richmond [Missouri] from Salt Lake [City, Utah] and made every overture to Mr. Whitmer in a vain attempt to gain possession of the records, but he stood aloof and declined every offer. As a prominent businessman of the place, at that time engaged in banking, informed your correspondent that he knows of his own knowledge that the Mormon Church would have willingly paid Mr. Whitmer \$100,000 for the documents and that the delegation returned home thoroughly convinced that Mr. Whitmer was proof against all financial temptation so far as concerned his records.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.207

It was while the Church was flourishing at Kirtland, [Ohio], that the name was changed from Church of Christ to Latter-day Saints [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. Mr. [David] Whitmer who always adhered to the teachings of Mormon, left Kirtland and journeyed into the wilds of Missouri in company with one other elder, preaching the truth as he believed it to be and exhorting men and women to Christ.

Many new converts were secured, and he assisted in establishing the settlement of Jackson County, Missouri. It was here that the Ohio Mormons found refuge when driven away from Kirtland after [Joseph] Smith [Jr.], and [Sidney] Rigdon had been tarred and feathered.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," p.207

For a time the Church flourished in Jackson County, with headquarters at Independence, [Missouri] but when the trouble occurred between the Mormons and Missourians, the former were driven from the county into Caldwell County where they founded a settlement and named it Far West. David Whitmer, stripped of his earthly possessions, was warned to flee for his life, and, accompanied by his family, his brothers and their families, and Oliver Cowdery, he journeyed to Ray County, where he settled at Richmond, [Missouri], in 1838. At that time he had nothing left but a single horse and wagon and his precious records. It was then that the Danites were organized, and it is said that their formation was for the purpose of killing the Whitmers and Cowdery, they having been commanded and openly refused to obey, the so-called leaders, right or wrong. The Whitmers and Cowdery then renounced the Church, as conducted, but during the years they have lived in Ray County, [Missouri], they have continued to teach the precepts according to the original Church.

Chicago Tribune, 15 Dec 1885 in Richardson, "David Whitmer," pp.207-8

THE LORD'S ANOINTED

David Whitmer engaged in teaming at his new home, and in the campaign when the militia was ordered to drive the Mormons from the state at the point of the bayonet, he drove one of the military baggage-wagons to Far West. During the melee that followed he was handed a musket by the soldiery and ordered to shoot Joseph Smith, [Jr.], but threw the musket down, declaring he "would not harm the Lord's anointed." After that memorable event, in which Smith was taken prisoner, David returned to Richmond, and has always asserted that Joseph Smith, [Jr.], was called and commanded by God to translate the Book of Mormon, and that Smith, as he knew him, was a righteous, God-fearing man. Mr. Whitmer today clings to the religious belief of his early manhood and has never sanctioned polygamy, which he considers one of the greatest abominations of the earth. The Book of Mormon as originally translated he asserts to be without a moral blemish, [page 208] and says it is eminently fit for the library of the most exacting moral philosopher. It expressly forbids polygamy, and Mr. Whitmer claims that if the population of Salt Lake [City, Utah], would live in accordance with the strict teachings of the book that it would exert a greater influence in crushing out what he calls the "viper polygamy" than any other known agency. Concerning his work in the Church of Christ, he looks upon his commission to apostleship as concurrent with having had a direct message from heaven through an angel of the Lord, and even now, at the threshold of death he "stands by that pure republic established by Christ on earth and given to the world in its original idiom, the Book of Mormon. Through the mediumship of Joseph Smith, [Jr.], he says he received many messages from heaven which convinced him of his divine calling. The text of these divine messages he refused to relate, claiming that the promises of the Lord to his Apostles should be secretly locked in the breast and not blatantly betrayed to carnal minds, but, he says, they were miraculous in their fulfillment and have stood the test of his reasoning through a long life of fact and experience.

Another Interview of David Whitmer

By Edward Stevenson, 1886

Edward Stevenson, "Visit," Instructor 22 (1887):55

He told me that in the beginning of June, 1829, he received a letter from the Prophet asking him to come to Palmyra and convey him to his father's house, that he might there be able to work on the translation of the Book of Mormon. The journey required about three days each way, and it was necessary to put up at inns on the way. David having forgotten the names of the inns and their proprietors, Joseph looked through the seer stone and told him them. Oliver Cowdery made a note of these, and by inquiry on the journey found that the Prophet had stated correctly.

Soon after arriving at his father's, David was baptized in Seneca Lake. This was about the middle of June, and shortly thereafter he was ordained an elder, he being the third in the Church, as he claims, to receive this ordination.

While on the return journey from Palmyra, David noticed a somewhat aged-looking man who approached them on the road. He had a very pleasant face, about which, however, there seemed something peculiar, and he carried a knapsack on his back fastened with straps which crossed his breast. David asked him to take a ride, but he declined, saying: "I am going over to Cumorah," and then disappeared very suddenly, though there was no chance for him to secrete himself in the open country through which the party was then passing. All felt very strange concerning this personage and the Prophet was besought to inquire of

the Lord concerning him. Shortly afterwards, David relates, the Prophet looked very white but with a heavenly appearance and said their visitor was one of the three Nephites to whom the Savior gave the promise of life on earth until He should come in power. After arriving home, David again saw this personage, and mother Whitmer, who was very kind to Joseph Smith, is said to have seen not only this Nephite, but to have also been shown by him the sealed and unsealed portions of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

**David Whitmer's Testimony and
Rebuttal of Murphy's Comments, 1887**

**Source: David Whitmer, Address to All Believers in Christ
(Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887).**

It is recorded in the American Cyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia Britannica, that I, David Whitmer, have denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the divinity of the Book of Mormon; and that the other two witnesses, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, denied their testimony to that book. I will say once more to all mankind, that I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof. I also testify to the world, that neither Oliver Cowdery or Martin Harris ever at any time denied their testimony. They both died reaffirming the truth of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. I was present at the death bed of Oliver Cowdery, and his last words were, "Brother David, be true to your testimony to the Book of Mormon." He died here in Richmond, Mo., on March 3rd, 1850. Many witnesses yet live in Richmond, who will testify to the truth of these facts, as well as to the good character of Oliver Cowdery. The very powers of darkness have combined against the Book of Mormon, to prove that it is not the word of God, and this should go to prove to men of spiritual understanding, that the book is true. To show the reader what I have had to contend with, I give you below a copy of a leaflet which I had printed and distributed in March, 1881.

A PROCLAMATION

Unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, unto whom these presents shall come:

It having been represented by one John Murphy, of Polo, Caldwell County, Missouri, that I, in a conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

To the end, therefore, that he may understand me now, if he did not then; and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing as it were, in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God, once and for all to make this public statement:

That I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof, which has so long since been published with that book, as one of [page 9] the Three Witnesses. Those who know me best will know 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.

"He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear;" it was no delusion! What is written is written, and he that readeth let him understand." . . .

And if any man doubt, should he not carefully and honestly read and understand the same before presuming to sit in judgment and condemning the light which shineth in darkness, and showeth the way to eternal life as pointed out by the unerring hand of God?

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.

My sincere desire is that the world may be benefited by this plain and simple statement of the truth.

And all the honor be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

David Whitmer, Sr.

Richmond, Missouri, March 19th, A.D. 1881.

[Character Voucher] We, the undersigned citizens of Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, where David Whitmer, [Sr.], has resided since the year A.D. 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.

Given at Richmond, Missouri, this March 19th, A.D. 1881.

General Alexander W. Doniphan.

Hon. George W. Dunn, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit.
Thomas D. Woodson, President--Ray County Savings Bank.
J. [Jacob] T. Child, Editor of Conservator.
H. C. Garner, Cashier, Ray County Savings Bank. [Dr. H. C. Garner]
L. C. Cantwell, Postmaster, Richmond, Missouri.
Geo. I. Wassen, Mayor. [George L. Wasson]
Jas. A. Davis, Revenue Collector.
C. J. Hughes, Probate Judge and Presiding Judge, Ray County Court.
Geo. W. Trigg, County Clerk, Ray County.
W. W. Mosby, M.D.
W. A. Holman, County Treasurer.
J. S. Hughes, Banker, Richmond, Missouri.
James Hughes, Banker, Richmond, Missouri.
D. P. Whitmer, Attorney-at-law.
James W. Black, Attorney-at-law.
Thos. McGinnis, late Sheriff, Ray County.
J. P. Quesenberry, Merchant. [John B. Quissenberry]
W. R. Holman, Furniture Merchant
Lewis Slaughter, Recorder of Deeds.
Geo. W. Buchanan, M.D.
A. K. Reyburn.
From the Richmond, (Mo.) Conservator, March 24, 1881.

AN EXPLANATION

"Elsewhere we publish a letter from David Whitmer, [Sen.], an old and well-known citizen of Ray, [County] as well as an endorsement of his standing as a man, signed by a number of the leading citizens of this community, in reply to some unwarranted aspersions made upon him.

There is no doubt that Mr. Whitmer, who was one of the Three Witnesses of the authenticity of the gold plates, from which he asserts that Joseph Smith, [Jr.] translated the Book of Mormon (a facsimile of the characters he now has in his possession with the original records), is firmly convinced of its divine origin; and while he makes no effort to obtrude his views or beliefs, he simply wants the world to know that so far as he is concerned there is no "variableness or shadow of turning." Having resided here for nearly a half century, it is with no little pride that he points to his past record with the consciousness that he has done nothing derogatory to his character, as a citizen and a believer in the Son of Mary, to warrant such an attack on him, come from what source it may; and now, with the lilies of seventy-five winters crowning him like an aureole, and his pilgrimage [on earth] well-nigh ended, he reiterates his former statements, and will leave futurity to solve the problem that he was but a passing witness to its fulfillment. His attacks on the vileness that has sprung up with the Utah Church, must have a salutary effect upon those bigamists who have made adultery the cornerstone in the edifice of their belief.

Besides other false statements that are in the two encyclopedias above mentioned is the old story of the Spaulding manuscript. That is, that one Solomon Spaulding who died in Amity, Penn., in 1816, had written a romance, the scene of which was among the ancient Indians who lived in this country. That Spaulding died before he published his romance, and that Sydney [Sidney] Rigdon got hold of the manuscript in a printing office and copied it; that subsequently the manuscript was returned to Solomon Spaulding; that thirteen years after the death of Spaulding, in 1829, Rigdon became associated with Joseph Smith, who read the Spaulding manuscript from behind a blanket to Oliver Cowdery, his amanuensis, who wrote it down. Hence the origin of the Book of Mormon. This is what is claimed by the enemies of the book: Satan had to concoct some plan to account for the origin of that book. I will say that all who desire to investigate the Spaulding manuscript story will not be obliged to go very far before they will see the entire [page 11] falsity of that claim. I testify to the world that I am an eye-witness to the translation of the greater part of the book of Mormon. Part of it was translated in my father's house in Fayette, Seneca County, New York. Farther on I give a description of the manner in which the book was translated. David Whitmer, Address (1887), p.11

When the Spaulding story was made known to believers in the book, they called for the Spaulding manuscript, but it could not be found; but recently, thanks to the Lord, the original manuscript has been found; but recently, thanks to the Lord, the original manuscript has been found; and identified. It has been placed in the library of Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, for public inspection. All who have doubts about it being the original Spaulding manuscript, can satisfy themselves by visiting Oberlin and examining the proofs. The manuscript is in the hands of those who are not believers in the Book of Mormon. They have

kindly allowed the believers in the book to publish a copy of the manuscript, with the proofs that it is the manuscript of Solomon Spaulding. there is not similarity whatever between it and the Book of Mormon. Anyone who investigates this question will see that the Spaulding manuscript story is a fabrication concocted by the enemies of the Book of Mormon, in order to account for the origin of that book. Neither Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, martin Harris or myself ever met Sydney [Sidney] Rigdon until after the Book of Mormon was in print. I know this of my own personal knowledge, being with Joseph Smith, in Seneca County, New York, in the winter of 1830, when Sydney [Sidney] Rigdon and Edward Partridge came from Kirtland, Ohio, to see Joseph Smith, and where Rigdon and Partridge saw Joseph Smith for the first time in their lives.

The Spaulding manuscript story is a myth; there being no direct testimony on record in regard to Rigdon's connection with the manuscript of Solomon Spaulding.

I have in my possession the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and others, also the original paper containing some of the characters transcribed from one of the golden plates, which paper Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon, of New York, for him to read "the words of a book that is sealed:" but the learned professor, although a great linguist could not read the language of the Nephites. There is some evidence in the American Cyclopedia favorable to the Book of Mormon that I will speak of. It is as follows:

"Martin Harris called upon Prof. Anthon, of New York, with a transcript on paper which Smith had given him of the characters on one of the golden plates. "This paper," Prof. Anthon said, in a letter dated New York, Feb. 17, 1834, "was in fact a singular scroll. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters, disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters, inverted or placed sideways, were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns," etc. The "learned" could not read it, and the book was delivered to him that is not learned. I will quote two verses from the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, which is the prophecy regarding this matter.

"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: and the book is delivered [page 12] to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned." (Verses 11 and 12.) No man could read it, but God gave to an unlearned boy the gift to translate it.

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power man. . . .

Dear Reader:--I want to ask you this question, if you are an unbeliever in the Book of Mormon, and I hope you will study over it prayerfully. The testimony of seven men, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter and Jude, comes down to us eighteen hundred years old; you accept their testimony as true. Today we have the testimony of eleven witnesses who have lived in our generation, one of which (myself) is still living--these eleven men having lived honorable and upright lives--but you reject their testimony and accept the testimony of the seven men who have been dead eighteen hundred years.

If you will not grant a possibility of the Book of Mormon being true, and sit in judgment and hastily condemn it after reading what I have written, you can surely see for yourself that your heart is full of prejudice. Remember that prejudice is not of God. It is the spirit that hastily condemned and stoned the prophets of God in all ages past. So beware, and look well to your own heart, that Satan does not blind your understanding to the truth. If you are open to investigation and conviction, I pray you to read the Book of Mormon with a prayerful heart. All persons who are spiritual, having a fair understanding of the scriptures, how they can read that book and reject it, is very strange indeed. The book carries conviction with it. The wise men of this world could never write a book like it. Anyone without prejudice, who is honestly seeking for truth, can see the finger of God in that book. It makes plain the doctrines which are so obscure in the New Testament, and over which the religious world is divided. For instance, the mode of baptism; the "signs" or spiritual gifts which Christ said in plain words should follow them that believe in Him. All who are not blinded to the understanding of the New Testament scriptures, will admit that the spiritual gifts should be with the believers today; that the reason why the spiritual gifts are not following the believers today, is because they have not that strong and living faith that the ancient church had--down to about 200 years after the death of the apostles: the Book of Mormon explains this matter in full.

Likewise many other questions of vital importance in the doctrine of Christ, which the Christian world has

been contending and disputing about for ages, this book comes forth from God to explain them. In June 1829, the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished. God gave it to us as his Holy Word, and left us as men to work out our own salvation and set in order the Church of Christ according to the written word. . . . When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, more money was needed to finish the printing of it. We were waiting on Martin harris who was doing his best to sell a part of his farm, in order to raise the necessary funds. After a time Hyrum Smith and other began to get impatient, thinking that Martin Harris was too slow and under transgression for not selling his land at once, even if at a great sacrifice. Brother Hyrum thought they should not wait any longer on Martin Harris, and that the money should be raised in some other way. Brother Hyrum was vexed with Brother Martin, and thought they should get the money by some means outside of him, and not let him have anything to do with the publication of the book, or receiving any of the profits thereof if any profits should accrue. He was wrong in thus judging Bro. Martin, because he was doing all he could toward selling his land. . . .

After the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished, early in the spring of 1830, before April 6th, Joseph gave the stone to Oliver Cowdery and told me as well as the rest that he was through with it, and he did not use the stone any more. he said he was through the work that God had given him the gift to perform, except to preach the gospel. He told us that we would all have to depend on the Holy Ghost hereafter to be guided into truth and obtain the will of the Lord. The revelations after this came through Joseph as "mouth piece;" that is, he would enquire of the Lord, pray and ask concerning a matter, and speak out the revelation, which he thought to be a revelation from the Lord; but sometimes he was mistaken about it being the word of the Lord. As we have seen, some revelations are of God and some are not. In this manner, through Brother Joseph as "mouth piece" came every revelation to establish new doctrines and offices which disagree with the New Covenant in the Book of Mormon and New Testament! I would have you to remember this fact.

In June, 1829, the Lord, called Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and myself as the three witnesses, to behold the vision of the angel, as recorded in the fore part of the Book of Mormon, and to bear testimony to the world that the Book of Mormons is true. I was not called to bear testimony to the mission of Brother Joseph Smith any farther than his work of translating the Book of Mormon, as you can see by reading the testimony of us the three witnesses.

In this month I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained an elder in the Church of Christ by Bro. Joseph Smith. Previous to this, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had baptized, confirmed and ordained each other to the office of an elder in the Church of Christ. I was the third person baptized into the church. In August, 1829, we began to preach the gospel of Christ. The following six elders had then been ordained: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Samuel H. Smith, Hyrum Smith and myself. The Book of Mormon was still in the hands of the printer, but my brother, Christian Whitmer, had copied from the manuscript the teachings and doctrine of Christ, being the things which we were commanded to preach. We preached, baptized and confirmed members into the Church of Christ, from August, 1829, until April 6th, 1830, being eight months in which time we had proceeded rightly; the offices in the church being elders, priests and teachers.

Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches of the "Church of Christ," in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, New York; one at Manchester, New York, and one at Colesville, Pennsylvania. It is all a mistake about the church being organized on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully organized--spiritually--before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, New York, on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land; you can see this from Sec. 17 Doctrine and Covenants: the church was organized on April 6th, "agreeable to the laws of our country."

It. The Holy Ghost was with us in more power during the eight months previous to April 6, 1830, than ever at any time thereafter. Almost everyone who was baptized received the Holy Ghost in power, some prophesying, some speaking in tongues, the heavens were opened to some, and all the signs which Christ promised should follow the believers were with us abundantly. We were an humble, happy people, and loved each other as brethren should love. . . .

David Whitmer's Last Hours:
Statement in Richmond Democrat, February 1888

Source: Richmond Democrat, 2 Feb 1888, cit. Andrew Jenson,
"David Whitmer," The Historical Record 7

David Whitmer, the last of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, died at his residence in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, 25 Jan 1888, aged 83 years and 18 days. His last hours are described in an article which appeared in his hometown paper, the Richmond Democrat, under date of 2 February 1888 David Whitmer 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 towards heaven, and a wonderful light came over his countenance, which remained several moments, when the eyes gradually closed and David Whitmer had gone to his rest.

On Monday last (January 23, 1888) at 10 o'clock a.m., after awakening from a short slumber, he said he had seen beyond the veil and saw 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 confirms their faith beyond all shadow of doubt.

On Sunday evening at 5:30 (January 22, 1888) Mr. Whitmer called his family and some friends to his bedside, and addressing himself to the attending physician, said:

"Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind, before I give my dying testimony." The doctor answered: "Yes, you are in your right mind, for I have just had a conversation with you."

David Whitmer then addressed himself to all around his bedside in these words: "Now you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, the Bible and the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) are true, so you can say you have heard me bear my testimony on my deathbed. 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."