
THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1887.

TESTIMONY TO THE BOOK OF MORMON.

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WE are in receipt of a letter from Elder Edward Stevenson, bearing date of January 11th. Elder Stevenson is traveling in Missouri, and relates his third visit to David Whitmer, still living at his old home in Richmond, Missouri.

This David Whitmer is one of the "Three Witnesses" whose testimony to the existence of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and the correctness of the translation, is contained on the fly-leaf of the Book of Mormon. He reports the health of this only one of the "Three Witnesses" now alive, as extremely good for a man who is eighty-two years old. Brother Stevenson says that he still continues to bear a faithful testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon. He bore that testimony first in his youth, and now when his limbs are tottering with age, and there are at best but a few feeble steps between him and his grave, he re-affirms his first statement with all the ardor of conviction. The testimony of the "Three Witnesses" to the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer being one, and Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris being the others, carries with it a peculiar force in view of all the circumstances connected with their experiences in the Church. There are two theories in relation to the origin of the Book of Mormon: One is that it was the work of an eccentric clergyman who intended it for a religious novel, but died before it was published. By some means or other, which have never been explained, it is claimed that this manuscript fell into the hands of Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, and that they connived with Cowdery, Whitmer and Harris to palm off this old religious novel upon the world as a revelation from heaven:—The other theory is that the Book of Mormon is an abridged history of the peoples which anciently inhabited the continent of America, together with an account of Jesus after His resurrection appearing among them and teaching them the Gospel, and organizing His Church in their midst. These historical events and the teachings of inspired men and of Jesus were engraven upon metallic plates in peculiar characters. In the fourth century a Nephite prophet by the name of Mormon, having in his possession a large number of these ancient records, made

an abridgement from them, paying more particular heed to religious information and doctrines, and called it the Book of Mormon. This abridgement, written on plates having the appearance of gold, was entrusted to the care of his son Moroni who, in the early part of the fifth century after Christ, hid them up. These were the plates whose existence was revealed to Joseph, and which were finally given into his possession to translate by means of the Urim and Thummim into the English language.

The first of these theories, if falsehood is capable of refutation, has been more than doubly refuted. Indeed the old manuscript novel, written by Solomon Spaulding, the eccentric preacher, has lately come to light and is now published, and on comparing it with the Book of Mormon it will be found that there is not even the most distant similarity between them, either in incident, language, or spirit; nor can it be that the old manuscript would suggest even to an ingenious mind such a work as the Book of Mormon.

To support the idea that it is a revelation from God is the testimony of these three witnesses. They most solemnly affirm in that testimony that an angel of God appeared unto them, and while standing in their presence showed to them the plates and the characters engraven thereon, and that they heard the voice of God declare that the translation thereof was by the gift and power of God. Such is their testimony. Such is the testimony of David Whitmer to-day.

But these men, like many other good men who have lived before them, were overtaken in evil doing, they transgressed the laws of God, and their course of life was such that the Saints could not fellowship them, and they were promptly excommunicated from the Church for their wickedness. What an opportunity was then presented to them to expose the fraud they had assisted to perpetrate, if fraud it was! Yet filled with bitterness as they were on being expelled from the Church, they gave no intimation that their testimony respecting the Book of Mormon was false! On the contrary, they continued to testify that they did see the angel, and the plates with the engravings on them, and that they did hear the voice of God proclaiming that the translation was by the power and gift of God and therefore true. And throughout their lives—in adversity, as in prosperity; in evil report, as in good report; in ridicule, as when honored; out of the Church, as when in the Church; when men mocked, as when they believed;—these men clung to their first statement, *viz.*, that the Book of Mormon is true, that the plates exist, that they had seen them, that they were translated by the power of God.

The two that are dead, after wandering through life as sheep that had strayed from the fold, and finding no rest, returned and again became connected with the Church. No influence that could be brought against them was ever sufficient to make them swerve from the statement they first made. David Whitmer who still lives, seems very likely to maintain his testimony until his death, though the influences brought to bear upon him, inclining him to renounce his testimony, were more insidious and more difficult to resist than those which the others experienced. Fortune was more kind to him, and brought him wealth and prestige in society. For a number of years was the mayor of Richmond, and filled the position with ability and

honor. This position brought him in contact with an element in society which would forever consider his connection with "Mormonism" as a chief witness of its divinity a humiliation, yet hard as it is to maintain a disagreeable position in the face of the protests of one's friends, and against one's material prosperity and advancement, no influence either open or covert can induce him to turn one hair's breadth from what he first averred. The testimony of these men to the divine origin of the Book of Mormon is rendered stronger from the fact of their becoming disconnected from the Church, since it makes them disinterested witnesses.

MOREOVER, had Joseph Smith conspired with these men to deceive mankind as to the origin of the Book of Mormon, and these three witnesses were suborned to make the statement they did as to the existence of the plates and the visitation of the angel, is it at all likely that he would break with them, expose their wickedness and raise his hand against them—would he dare do such a thing had he been in collusion with them to deceive the people? Would he not at any risk have covered up or excused the acts of these men however wicked they may have been? He would have said in his heart: "It matters not what they may have done, I dare not cast them out of the Church lest they become angry, and by the denial of their testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon expose the deception we have practiced, and engulf me in ruin and disgrace!" That is what he would have said under those circumstances; and men who would be base enough to enter into a compact to deceive people in matters effecting their eternal salvation, would be vile enough to expose the fraud they had assisted to perpetrate so soon as it was no longer to their material interests to keep up the deception. Men who would enter into such a villainous compact as that which the enemies of "Mormonism" have conjured up as having been agreed upon by Joseph Smith and these witnesses, are not of the kind who would go through life forever encountering the opposition and ridicule of their fellow-men in order to sustain as true what they knew to be false. However bold impostors may be in prosperity, or when they have some promise of success, their bravado soon wilts in the blighting breath of adversity. A fraud never inspires men with true heroism such as these three witnesses have manifested, and we repeat, that had these men been in collusion with Joseph Smith to palm off on the world a vile deception, when it was no longer to their interest to give it their support, they would have been base enough to have betrayed their associates; and recognizing that fact, Joseph Smith dared not have angered them by exposing their wickedness and casting them out of the Church. But Joseph Smith knew the work was of God as well as these witnesses knew it. He knew they saw the angel, for he was with them when he appeared. He knew that God could sustain His work even if those witnesses turned against it; and therefore when those men violated the laws of God without hesitation, he boldly proclaimed against their corruption, and when they repented not he had them expelled from the Church, and in a manner bid them do their worst. But those witnesses had received a testimony from God, they were not deceived, and they were responsible for their acts to God

and they dared not deny what had been revealed, therefore they have remained true to their original testimony.

In addition to the testimony of the three witnesses as to the existence of the plates, is that of eight other witnesses. This testimony is also printed on the fly-leaf of the Book of Mormon, and is to the effect that Joseph Smith had exhibited the plates to them, that they had the appearance of gold, and so many as had been translated they had handled with their hands, and had examined the ingravings thereon. During the time that these eight witnesses were examining the plates they were not awed by the presence of an angel, nothing of the supernatural was connected with their seeing the plates, their senses were not dazzled, they could handle the plates with as much unconcern as they could the leaves of a book. There were the plates before them upon which Mormon had engraven his abridgement of the Nephite records, they examined them and could testify of their existence. They did so, and remained true to their testimony just as the three witnesses have done to theirs.

It would seem that if credible human testimony can prove any fact, then the existence of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated is proven beyond question; but God is willing to give even more testimony than that furnished by these witnesses. To the human testimony He is willing to add the divine, provided people will repent of their sins, their pride and unbelief, and with meekness receive the testimony of those who bear witness to the truth, and seek the Lord with full purpose of heart to serve Him and keep His commandments; for God has promised those who will take this course a testimony from Himself that this work is true. R.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LETTER FROM PRESIDENTS TAYLOR AND
CANNON.

Salt Lake City, January 17, 1887.
President Daniel H. Wells.

Dear Brother,—We have received a letter from Elder George Teasdale, in which he advises us of his arrival at Liverpool, and of the arrangements that have been made by you and him for the conduct of the MILLENNIAL STAR and the expedition of other business. All these matters are entirely satisfactory to us, and we sincerely trust that the coming of Brother Teasdale may be a great relief to you and an aid to the restoration of your health, by enabling you to place a portion of the responsibilities of your position upon his shoulders, and thus giving you opportunity for needed rest and recuperation. You have our most sincere prayers that your heart

may be comforted, your body reinvigorated, and that all things may continue well with you and yours.

Two years have passed since the present crusade against the rights and liberties of the people of God was inaugurated, and we can now review the field and observe how little our enemies have effected. They have endeavored to create terror throughout our borders by the most unprecedented, unjustifiable and tyrannous measures. They have packed juries, they have tortured witnesses, they have employed spies, they have trampled upon law and evidence, they have converted courts of justice into dens of infamy, they have sent a number of innocent, God-fearing men to prison, they have filled the ears of the multitude with false accusation against us, they have derided the