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DAVID WHITMER

A WITNESS TO THE DIVINE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Division of Religion

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Ebbie L V Richardson

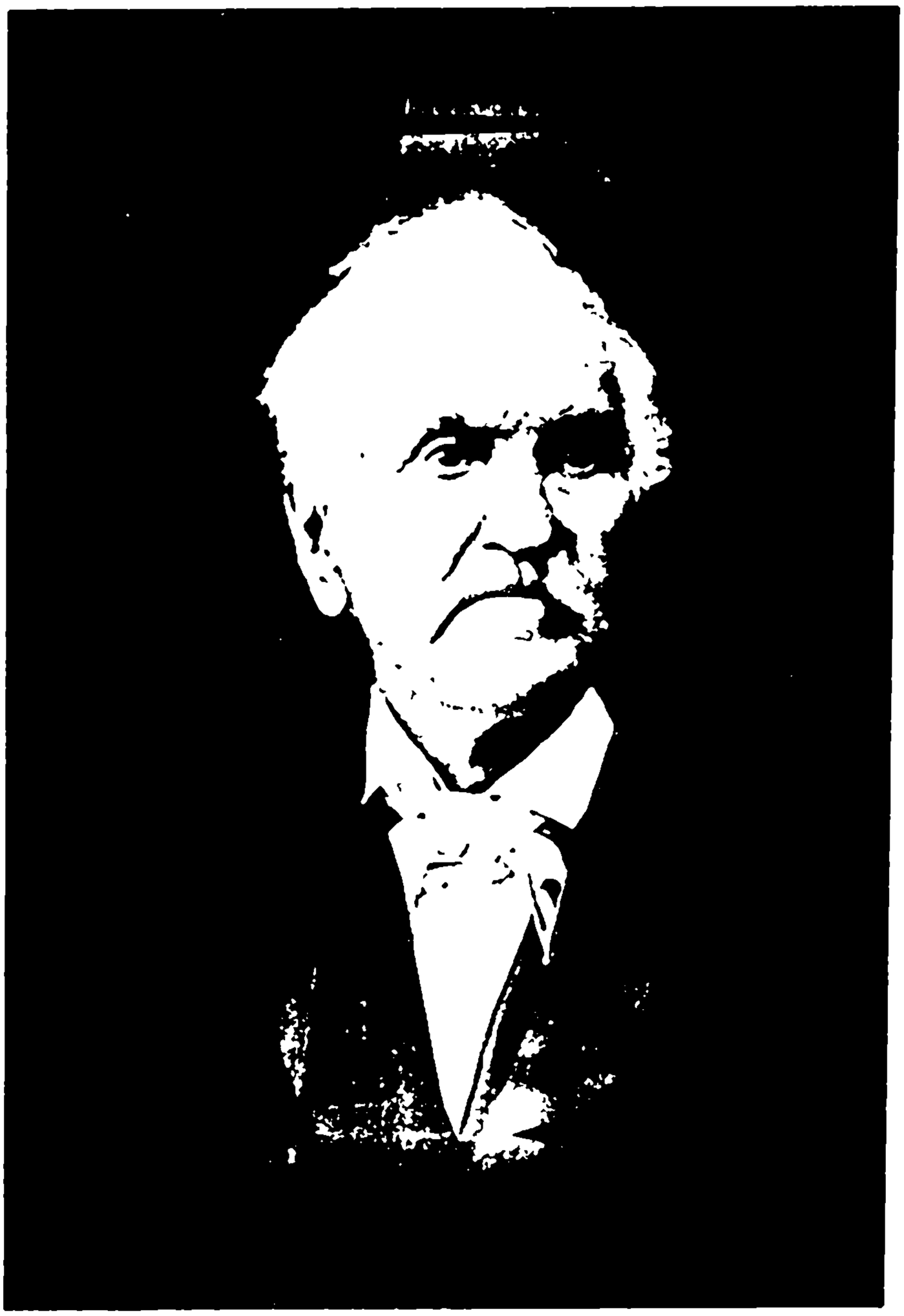
August 1952

This thesis by Ebbie L V Richardson is accepted in its present form by the Division of Religion of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

Major Professor

Thesis Committee



PREFACE

This thesis, DAVID WHITMER, A WITNESS TO THE DIVINE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON, is an attempt to give an unbiased history of the life and religious activities of a man who spent fifty years apart from the Church he was so much an instrument in establishing. His testimony has been a considerable factor in promoting its growth and success. The title of this work was suggested by a text Mr. Whitmer wrote in the year previous to his demise; the subject, by A. William Lund, assistant Latter-day Saint Church Historian.

Particular emphasis has been placed upon that phase of David Whitmer's life that touched the Church, both for good and bad, and is not an attempt to elaborate upon his life prior to the year 1829 or to give a comprehensive account of his progenitors and posterity. Nearly all those who knew him in life have long since joined him in death. My thanks to those few who yet live; their contributions have become a part of this work.

Collecting materials and information for this thesis has not been without its difficulties. To those individuals and institutions who rendered assistance in making the task less arduous, I here wish to express my sincere appreciation; especially to Drs. Hugh Nibley and Sidney B. Sperry of the Division of Religion of the Brigham Young University, who gave help and encouragement when it was most needed, and to President

Joseph Fielding Smith, Church Historian and his staff who made available to me the materials found in the Church library. Alvin F. Smith, librarian was most helpful. Neither would I slight the help rendered by those members of the Brigham Young University library staff; they were quite cooperative.

Citizens and officials of the city of Richmond, Missouri, long time home of David Whitmer, rendered invaluable aid. Mr. Tom McCluskey, acting as my guide, saved me many hours of searching because of his excellent knowledge of that vicinity and its history; he and his wife were very kind to me during my stay there.

For the courtesies shown me by Dr. Ray Cheville, of Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa, and officials and members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in allowing me access to materials in their archives at Independence, Missouri, to citizens in the "Far West" vicinity and at other old Mormon sites, and to officials and members of other churches of the "Restoration," I extend my humble thanks.

Without the help received from the staff of the library of the University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo., which houses the newspapers, documents, records, etc., of the State Historical Society of Missouri, the chronology and coherence of David Whitmer's life story would be considerably less than is now possible. The consideration shown me during my weeks there is cordially appreciated.

There are many others, too numerous to mention here, to whom my thanks are due; please know that I am grateful to any and all who made this thesis possible.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B. of C.	Book of Commandments
B. of M.	Book of Mormon
D. & C.	Doctrine and Covenants
Imp. Era	Improvement Era
J. H.	Journal History of the Church
Mil. Star	Millennial Star

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The greatest accomplishment of America," writes Sweet, "is the conquest of the continent, and the greatest achievement of American churches has been the extension of their work westward across the vast stretches of the continent, keeping abreast with the restless and ever moving population."[1]

One could hardly overlook the importance of the religious pioneers associated with some of the glorious yet, at times, harrowing experiences of this movement which kept them in almost constant contact with frontier conditions and needs. It is this fact, perhaps, that has caused America to produce a Christianity peculiar to itself. Political and religious radicalism often went hand in hand; old political faiths and ecclesiastical establishments coming under attack from most every quarter.

While it would be most difficult to establish the actual percentage of church membership among American citizens of the early eighteenth century, it has been estimated that not more than one in twenty were Church members. If this is a reliable estimate, America had more unchurched people, in proportion to the population than any other country in Christendom.[2] This is, however, not necessarily indicative of a lack of interest in things

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[1]William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939), pp. 4, 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 7.

religious so much as lack of contact with organized religious bodies on the frontiers. As missionaries or ministers of the various denominations pushed into these areas, there was considerable rivalry among them for membership in their respective churches for these "unchurched."

> From the beginning of the century to 1845 was a period of revivalistic emphasis throughout the country, but if there was one section where the rivalry was stronger than anywhere else and excitability of the people greater, it was in central-western New York, which came to be known as the "burnt-over district" because of the repeated revival waves which swept over this region. These counties had been settled by New Englanders. . . . In this territory originated. . . the Millerite craze; here lived the Fox sisters who were responsible for the beginnings of the spiritualistic movement; while greatest of all, in its permanent influence, Mormonism, likewise originated in this region.[1]

Associated with Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in establishing "Mormonism," standing out in bold relief, is the name of David Whitmer; not only because of his part in establishing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but for the subsequent role he plays in bearing testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon long after terminating his relationship with that organization.

A legitimate reason for writing this story of David Whitmer's life is to preserve him as a man apart from the Church as well as a part of it. Not that he is unknown, but because so much emphasis has been placed upon his association with the Book of Mormon, at the expense of his private life activities. While there have been a number of short biographies presented in various publications (at least one of them quite erroneous[2]), and numerous interviews quoted, there has been no concerted attempt to

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[1] Ibid., p. 396.

[2] The Saints' Herald, (Official paper of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of L. D. S., Weekly, originally published at Lamoni, Iowa, but more recently at Independence, Missouri), Vol. 96, Oct. 17, 1949, pp. 8, 9.

collect what is known about the man into a single volume. With this in mind I have undertaken the task of writing and assembling, for preservation, this material.

Though Mr. Whitmer's life was long and varied and spent mostly outside the Church of the Latter Day Saints, it is so closely allied with the rise and development of the various branches of the restoration movements as to make the writing of any of their histories quite incomplete unless his contributions are made a part of them. It is quite natural that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should pay little attention to the personal activities of David Whitmer, except where his life touched, for good or bad, their churches; for he was quite outspoken in his opposition to both of them. Yet his testimony to the Book of Mormon was vital in establishing the claims of Joseph Smith concerning the "Restored Church." There must be qualities of character in such an individual that would be useful in other fields, as they had been in his position to the Church as one of its highly respected leaders. Exploring these possibilities should reveal a more complete picture of his total life.

A dearth of available information concerning his home and community life made it necessary for the writer to go to Richmond, Missouri, the town in which Whitmer made his home for the last fifty years of his life. Many others had gone before in this trek, but that was for the purpose of having the old man verify his testimony or to visit the "Mormon" cemetery where are located the remains of several of the Whitmers, (including the witness Jacob), and of Oliver Cowdery, as well as the memorial erected to Oliver Cowdery and the other witnesses, David Whitmer and Martin Harris.

Fig. 1
The four sides of the Oliver Cowdery Memorial at Old Mormon Cemetery.

I stayed at the Richmond Hotel which has replaced the "Shaw House" served by David's livery stable for so many years. One can stand on the corner in front of this building and see the location both of his home (on Main Street one block east), and of his business--about a half block south and across the street west. Following this street north takes one to the old cemetery mentioned above.

While not many now live who knew Mr. Whitmer personally, I was able to speak with a few who remembered him and the respect in which he was held in their community. Izora Dear, daughter of John C. Whitmer (son of Jacob, one of the eight witnesses, for many years a presiding Elder of the Church of Christ in Richmond), and her Sister Mamie Koontz, were in 1950 the only living members of the church reorganized in Richmond under the direction of David. Mrs. Dear had in her possession an 1833 edition of the "Book of Commandments" and prized it very highly. She complained of some of her neighbors calling her church dead. She declared, "the Church of Christ is not dead as long as I live."[1]

Julia A. Page (wife of Marvin who was a grandson of Hiram Page, brother-in-law of David, and also one of the eight witnesses), also remembered David Whitmer, but was very old and had to be prompted occasionally by her son, though she remembered rather clearly little incidents of the last years of her renowned relative, imparting a little more information about the remarkable personality of this man.

I was graciously received by Miss Fannie Bernard, who was a Richmond school teacher from 1882 until her retirement a few years ago. She was a remarkably well preserved individual, with eye as clear and mind as

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[1]Statement by Izora Dear, personal interview, July 4, 1950.

Fig. 2
Site of D. Whitmer & Son's Livery Stable.

Fig. 3
Site of David Whitmer residence, long since removed.

keen as a woman of half her years, and a sense of humor that made her conversation sparkling and delightful. She recalled with pleasure the "kingly bearing and clear eye" of her father's friend, as well as the wisdom and human insight she received in the classroom of his granddaughter "Josie" Schweich.[1]

There was James Nading, who drove "hack" for the Whitmers, and while he knew the son David J. much more intimately, he still had information that added a bit to our knowledge of the last of the Three Witnesses.

Many others volunteered information, but most of it was of a traditional nature and not safe for use as actual experiences and incidents in the life of our subject.

Of the eighty-three years David Whitmer lived, only nine were spent in the Church founded at his father's home in New York State. Of the many with whom he was associated during that nine years, only a few were his associates during the fifty years he was away from the "Saints," and these were primarily members of the Whitmer family or their spouses. The others, including the Prophet Joseph, he rejected as fallen from the truth as he interpreted it. He made his home among the enemies of the Mormons for half a century, yet made them respect and honor him in many ways. During all these years he remained steadfast to the testimony he bore concerning the heavenly manifestation declaring that the Book of Mormon had been "translated by the gift and power of God."

How this testimony effected his life apart from the Church is relatively unknown. It is my purpose in the following pages to present David Whitmer the MAN as well as David Whitmer, the WITNESS.

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[1] Statements of Fannie Bernard, personal interview, July 4, 1950.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY AND GENERAL HISTORY OF DAVID WHITMER

Little interest has been shown in the genealogy of the Whitmer family, since none of the immediate members migrated to Utah with the Church; therefore little is available concerning the ancestry of the family except as it has been preserved in the interest of David Whitmer through the wide publicity and attention he received as a witness to the Book of Mormon. David was the fourth of eight children born to Peter Whitmer, Sr., and Mary Musselman Whitmer. The birth place of the father is not definitely known, but was in Pennsylvania on the 14th of April, the year unknown.[1] The mother was born in Strasburg, probably in Pennsylvania, August 27, 1778. The brothers of David (Christian, Jacob, John, and Peter, Jr.) were all witnesses to the plates from which the Book of Mormon was a translation. Only Peter, Jr., was younger than David. The girls, Catherine and Elizabeth Ann, were married to Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery respectively (two more witnesses to the Book of Mormon), and Nancy died in infancy.[2]

> While yet an infant his [David's] father, who served his country through the Revolutionary War, removed with his family to western New York and settled on a farm in Ontario County, near Watkins

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[1]The date of his death given in the History of Ray County (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Co., 1881), p. 30, is Aug. 13, 1865, at the age of 82. This would place his nativity in 1783. If the death date is accepted as August 12, 1854,[2] and the age 82 years, his birth year would be 1772, making his history somewhat more reliable.

[2]Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine (Salt Lake City: L. D. S. Church), Vol. 26, pp. 106-7.

> Glenn. [David was four years old.[1]] The father, who was a hard-working God-fearing man, was a strict Presbyterian and brought his children up with rigid sectarian discipline. . . . There were four sons . . . who helped their father till his farm until they had arrived at the age of manhood.[2]

In the "History of Ray County," published several years before David Whitmer's death, apparently with his knowledge and approval, an account is given of a nephew which states the following:

> His [David P.] grandparents, having moved from Hamburg, Pennsylvania, about 1809, settled near Waterloo, New York. All of them were farmers, and of German descent.[3]

The "Hamburg" mentioned is probably Harrisburg, as it was near here that David was born, January 7th, 1805.[4]

It was shortly after Joseph Smith started translating the Book of Mormon that he became acquainted with the Whitmer family. David, in the month of June, 1829, went to Harmony, Pa., and brought Joseph to his father's home in Fayette, Seneca County, New York, where he remained until the task was completed. Some of the Whitmers at times acted as scribes in place of Oliver Cowdery. During this same month the Prophet baptized David, along with Hyrum Smith, in Seneca Lake.[5] It was also here that David had the glorious experience of beholding an angel of God and the golden plates containing a record of the peoples of the American Continent, and of hearing

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[1] Salt Lake Herald (Utah), August 7, 1875.

[2] Deseret News (Salt Lake City, Utah), December 24, 1885. A reprint of an interview appearing in the "Chicago Tribune," Dec. 15, 1885.

[3] History of Ray County (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Co., 1881), p. 529.

[4] "Journal History of the Church" (Salt Lake: Day by day MS account of the History of the L. D. S. Church), Introduction.

[5] Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake: Deseret Book Co. 1902), Period I, Vol. I, p. 51.

the voice of God declare that these plates were being displayed by the power of God.[1]

On the 6th of April, 1830, David was one of the six members who organized the Church of Christ. Shortly thereafter, June 9th, the first conference of the Church was held at which David, along with others, was licensed as an Elder of the Church. Soon after this conference he baptized several converts, one of whom, Julia Ann Jolly, he married on January 9th, 1831.[2] He cooperated with the Prophet Joseph and others, in this vicinity until the departure of his family to Jackson County, Missouri, in 1831. There they settled on the Big Blue River where two years later they shared in the persecutions of the Saints in that locality.[2]

In the fall of 1833 he and his family were driven out of that county by the

> mob together with the rest of the Saints. Next he located in Clay County, where he, July 3, 1834, was appointed President of the High Council, organized there by the Prophet. For nearly four years after this he acted as one of the leading Elders of the Church in Missouri, the greater portion of this time being spent in Ohio. And after the location at Far West, in Caldwell County, he was sustained as president of the Saints there; but falling into transgression, he was rejected as such. . . . Shortly after . . . David Whitmer left Far West and removed to Clay County, and in the latter part of 1838 located in Richmond, Ray County. . . .[3]

The first years after his arrival in Richmond are shrouded in considerable darkness. Appearing in the Chicago "Tribune" is a reported interview in which David indicates that he arrived in Richmond with nothing of his former possessions but a single horse and wagon.[4] From this meager

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[1] Ibid., pp. 53-55. [2] Kansas City Journal, June 5, 1881.

[3] Andrew Jensen, Historical Record (Salt Lake: Andrew Jensen 1889--) Vol. 6, pp. 206.

[4] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885 (Reprint of interview).

asset he seems to have established a business that provided for him, his son David P., and then his grandson George W. Schweich, for nearly three-quarters of a century. Apparently his livery stable was begun almost at once. And in "the campaign when the militia was ordered to drive the Mormons from the state . . . he drove one of the military wagons to Far West."[1]

> During the melee that followed he was handed a musket by the soldiery and ordered to shoot Joseph Smith, but threw the musket down, declaring he "would not harm the Lord's anointed."[2]

From a journal kept by Don C. Smith, while on a mission with George A. Smith:

> On the twenty-sixth of September, 1838, we took leave of our friends and started on our mission . . . . When we got to the landing [Richmond] we found the river very low, and but one boat up, which was the "Kansas." Whilst waiting for the boat, we had an interview with David Whitmer. . . . He had become our enemy; yet he shook hands with us quite cordially, and wished us success.[3]

Pertaining to this same experience, George A. Smith wrote to David Whitmer in 1859. To expedite recognition, he wrote:

> You will recollect me when I tell you that our last interview was at Richmond Landing, when Don Carlos Smith and myself helped you load 3,800 lbs. of merchandise into your wagon, and aided you in crossing a strip of land by lifting at the wheels while your little span of horses pulled it through nobley.[4]

From such beginnings in Richmond, David Whitmer gradually became a man highly respected in his community. No newspapers were printed in Richmond to chronicle the affairs of the citizenry prior to 1852, and the only

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[1] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885 (Quoting "Chicago Tribune," Dec. 15, 1885.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Improvement Era (Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Church), Vol. 6, Nov., 1902.

[4] J. H., February 22, 1822.

accounts in the court records of the county shed but little light. Such were:

> Tuesday Morning, June 15th, 1841.
> State of Missouri vs. David Whitmer for Sabbath breaking--tried before a jury and found guilty as charged. Fined $5.00 and Costs.[1]
>
> Tues. Sept. 4th term, 1849
> Be it remembered that this day Thomas Hamilton and Philip L. Edwards produced before the court here an instrument of writing subscribed and sealed by David Whitmer and by them attested, willingly the said David Whitmer emancipated a certain negroe man slave named Carter, alias Carter Thornton, and the said Thomas Hamilton and Philip L. Edwards being personally known to the court here to be the same persons whose names are subscribed to the said instrument as witnesses thereto and said instrument being approved to the court here by the said witnesses under oath to be the act and deed of the said David Whitmer, it is ordered the same to be certified accordingly.[2]

There was no indication as to what Mr. Whitmer had done to break the Sabbath, but it is worthy of note that in all the Circuit Court records of Ray County, which are continuous from the time of statehood to the present, this was the only instance where a charge was brought against him by the state. Only one other time was he brought to trial and that was concerning the adjustment of some property (a bay stallion valued at $400) in connection with his business.[3] Considering the number of years he was in business, this seems rather remarkable.

The emancipation of a man slave, valued at from one to two thousand dollars, seems quite a sacrifice in terms of the probable service such a person could have rendered in a livery and stable business engaged in drayage and the handling and selling of feeds; a free laborer should have been something of an asset. This action could well have indicated David's

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[1] "Circuit Court Records" (Ray County, Mo.), Book "B", p. 58.

[2] Ibid., Book "C", pp. 166-7.

[3] Ibid., Book "F" in Vaction March 8th, 1862.

convictions concerning human servitude as being abolitionist, inasmuch as he freed the slave fourteen years prior to the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln's administration.

The acceptance of David Whitmer as a worthy citizen is emphasized by the honors shown him by his neighbors. His service on the Richmond Fair board, and his election to the offices of city councilman and mayor are indicative of this. Those who would do him a disservice are reprimanded by the local press, and those who would do him honor are reminded of achievements they have overlooked.

It is to be remembered that all the living members of the Whitmer family were settled in this area, and that without exception they are recognized as good citizens. Christian and Peter, Jr., had passed away before difficulties arose in the Church; John had settled in Far West and was prospering as a farmer. The parents had both passed away by 1856, but were respected citizens of Richmond to the end. Jacob died in Richmond, leaving a posterity that is still an influence to be reckoned with--his son John C. was active in the leadership of the Church of Christ for years, and David P., name-sake of David the witness, educated himself as a lawyer and practiced as attorney and judge in Richmond for many years. He also served as captain in the Union army and as mayor of the city several times. It was to him that the precious manuscripts were to be entrusted at the death of David, but he preceeded him in death by some five years. (They went to David's son David J. and then to a grandson, George W. Schweich).

David's own family was small, having but two children, David J. and Julia Ann. David J., who was called "Dave" in the community, married

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Note--Source of statements not made in this portion of the thesis where they are to be referred to again at a later time.

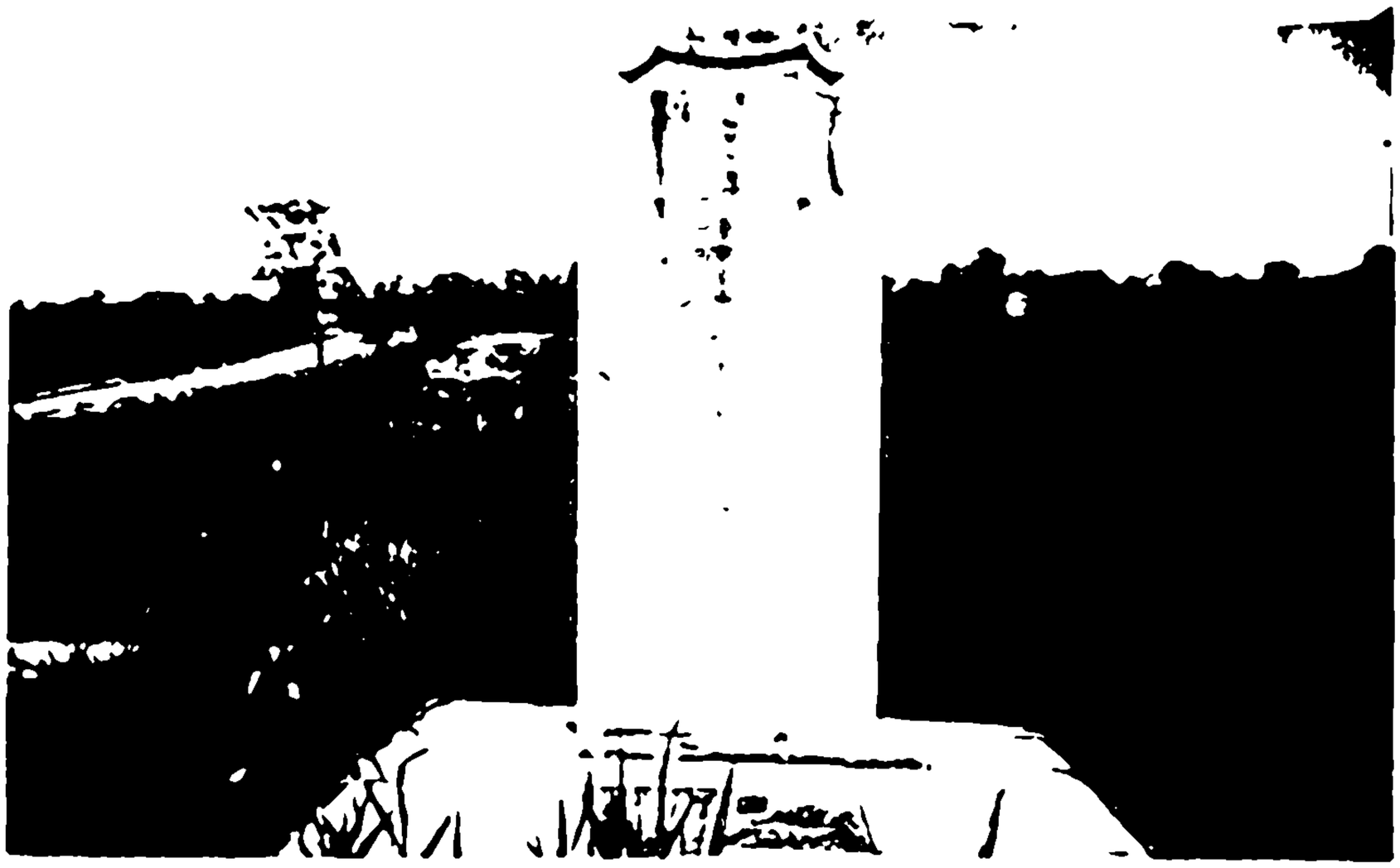

Fig. 4
Jacob Whitmer grave—Old Mormon Cemetery, Richmond, Mo.

Fig. 5
Former home of George W. Schweich, grandson of David Whitmer and successor to the D. Whitmer & Son's Livery Stable.

Sylvia R. Stockweel on the 6th day of November, 1861. Because of some misunderstanding they were divorced March 18, 1864--both being granted permission to remarry.[1] They remained apart for nearly thirty years, then remarried on the 7th of July, 1892; David accepting her four children by an interim marriage. He had no children of his own. Dave was born in Clay County, Mo., the 27th of November, 1833, and was associated with his father in the livery stable business as soon as he was old enough to be of any help. He was widely known as a showman of horses, especially a trotting mare that won him many a premium in the county fairs.[2] He lost his life in the Whitmer sand-bank when it caved in on him while loading alone. Something of the esteem in which he was held can be seen from the following press report:

> Everybody in Richmond and vicinity knew David J. Whitmer, and everyone was his friend, and nothing has occured in our city for many a day that caused such profound sorrow and regret as his sudden taking away . . . . We have never heard him say a harmful word of anyone, and we never heard anyone say a harmful thing against him concerning his personal honor or integrity. He was an unusually even tempered man, courteous and kind to all alike, and if he experienced troubles, they were not detailed to the public. . . .[3]

Julia Ann was born in Kirtland, Ohio, July 28, 1835. Little was found concerning her, but she was early widowed and she and her two children made their home with David. Her son, George W. Schweich, worked in the livery business with his uncle, David J. for many years and then took it over. He was considered a shrewd business man.[4] It was he who received the manuscript of the Book of Mormon from David J. and sold it to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, much to the disgust

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[1] Ibid., Book "O".

[2] Richmond Conservator, Sept. 19, Oct. 10, 1868.

[3] Ibid., June 20, 1895.

[4] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885.

of his mother and other members of the Whitmer family who felt it belonged to the Church of Christ.[1]

Josephine Schweich was a talented young lady, and a popular young school teacher.[2] At the time of her marriage the following news items appeared in the local press concerning her and her husband:

> Col. James R. B. Vancleve is a splendid gentleman . . . a Chesterfied in bearing to which he adds a mind stored with much knowledge gained from long patient study in early life . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . Those who know her best, speak of her as a lady of great personal beauty, possessing rare mental powers to which are added all the accomplishments in both music and literature that the best instructors could give . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The happy couple will make their future home in Chicago, where the groom holds a situation in the Custom House.[3]

In the list of many gifts, some rare and costly, was a fine driving horse from Mr. David Whitmer, Sr., David, Jr., and George W. L. Schweich. The training that Miss Josephine received is mute evidence that David spared no expense in her education and care, as mother and children had made their home with him since Julia had been widowed.[4]

In general appearance, we have considerable information of the later years of David Whitmer, but little of his youth. As a personality of public interest, his interviewers described him in detail for their readers. Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, Apostles of the Utah Church, wrote, in 1878,

> He is a good-sized man, 73 years of age last January, and well preserved. He is close shaven, his hair perfectly white and rather thin,

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[1]Statement of Izora Dear, personal interview.

[2]Statement of Fannie Bernard, personal interview.

[3]Richmond Conservator, November 3, 1881.

[4]Statement of Izora Dear, personal interview; Statement of James Nading, personal interview.

> he has a large head and a very pleasant, manly countenance that one would readily perceive to be an index to a conscientious, honest heart.[1]

Three years earlier he was described as "hale and hearty as most men at fifty. In person he is above the medium height, stoutly built though not corpulant, his shoulders inclining to stoop as if from long supporting his massive head rather than from the weight of years. The rudiments of an education he learned in school and a life-time of thought and research have served to expand and store his mind with vast funds of information."[2] At about the same time as the Orson Pratt interview, E. Stevenson wrote: "David looks pretty well preserved, and weighs a little heavier than ever before, 152 lbs; and stands 5 feet 10, fair and prominent features."[3] At 73 he was thus described by Dr. P. William Poulson:

> He . . . is tall and erect as a pine, well proportioned, with a military bearing, roman nose and dark eyes of fire and expression. His forehead is broad and large, and his head nearly bald, but well balanced.

To the question, "You are in good health? he answered:

> "I am very well in deed for my age. I am not troubled with anything except a little rheumatism or what it is in my hips. I was thrown from a buggy, and feel ever since some weakness over my hips."[4]

These portrayals of the appearance of Mr. Whitmer would seem to justify the comment of Miss Fannie Bernard, "A man with the bearing and pride of a king. A man of striking stature, and one very highly respected

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[1] Millennial Star (Liverpool: L.D.S. Church publication), Vol. 40, p. 771.

[2] Salt Lake Herald, August 7, 1875.

[3] J. H., Dec. 23, 1877.

[4] Deseret News, August 16, 1878.

by the citizenry--no one ever doubted what David Whitmer had to say."[1]

The Richmond of citizen Whitmer's time is described by the "History of Ray County" as,

> Simply a fine old town, whose people are remarkable for urbanity, kindness, and genuine, old-fashioned hospitality; and in which a stranger, no matter whence he comes, so long he conducts himself as a gentleman, is soon made to feel himself at home, and in the midst of friends.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The main or central portion of Richmond stands upon the crown of a graceful swell, and the suburban portions are located upon the slopes of a succession of beautiful wooded hills that nearly surround the central town. . . . It has scores of fine cottages, villas and dignified old mansion homes, representing the hospitable southern style of architecture so common in the south. . . . There is everywhere in this little, half-rural city an air of aptitude, ease, freedom and home comfort. . . . The business town expresses solidity and permanency, rather than an effort at architectural display, being built in the plain fashion of the old time.[2]

E. Stevenson adds, "The city now contains about 2,000 inhabitants. A large courthouse stands in the same square on the spot where the old stood about 40 years ago [where many of the early Church leaders were tried]. . . . The old log jail is substituted by a blacksmith and wagon shop."[3]

David's home was "a pleasant two-story white frame residence near the center of town."[4]

A calamity of major proportions struck at the little town of Richmond, June 1, 1878. It

> was visited by one of the most violent and distructive cyclones that ever passed over this section of the country. Nearly everything in its pathway was utterly demolished. Huge trees were torn up by the roots, buildings swept away, and human and animal life destroyed.

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[1]Statement of Fannie Bernard, personal interview.

[2]<u>History of Ray County</u>, pp. 384-5.

[3]<u>J. H.</u>, Dec. 23, 1877.

[4]<u>Salt Lake Herald</u>, August 7, 1875.

. . . . . .

Our description has brought us to South Main Street. In the two blocks of buildings on this street, extending to the northern limits of the city, were about twenty-five houses, all of which were utterly demolished. Among the number we may mention the residence of David Whitmer. . . .

The above were all one and two-story buildings and were a total loss.[1]

The Presbyterian and Baptist churches are a complete wreck, as well as the Shaw House, Whitmer's Livery Stable and the stone calaboose.[2]

David's home was gone and his business building a wreck. Not only that, but among the many injured was David Whitmer himself; eighteen had lost their lives. It was estimated that the loss to David amounted to $3000.[3] Six days after the cyclone, the local press commented, "the Whitmer family are getting along well and will soon be out."[4]

There are some interesting accounts still circulating in Richmond about the cyclone and the Whitmer family. Some of them have become traditional and the years have undoubtedly added a bit to the original stories. Mrs. Izora Dear claimed that the wind was so severe that a ring was blown off the finger of George Schweich and imbedded into a wall of the livery stable. He found it there sometime after the disaster.[5] To this Mrs. Julia Page added a story of Philander Page (son of Hiram), stating that he was caught in the "big wind" in the street in front of the livery stable. He couldn't move foreward at all so dropped on his knees and prayed for protection. All kinds of debris was blown on top of him so that when the storm was over, David, though injured, was obliged to dig him out.

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[1]History of Ray County, pp. 389-392.

[2]Richmond Conservator, June 7, 1878.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid.

[5]Statement of Izora Dear, personal interview.

Fig. 6
Ray County Courthouse in David Whitmer's time.

Fig. 8
Plaque on General Doniphan's statue.

Fig. 7
Present Ray County Courthouse. General Doniphan's statue in foreground.

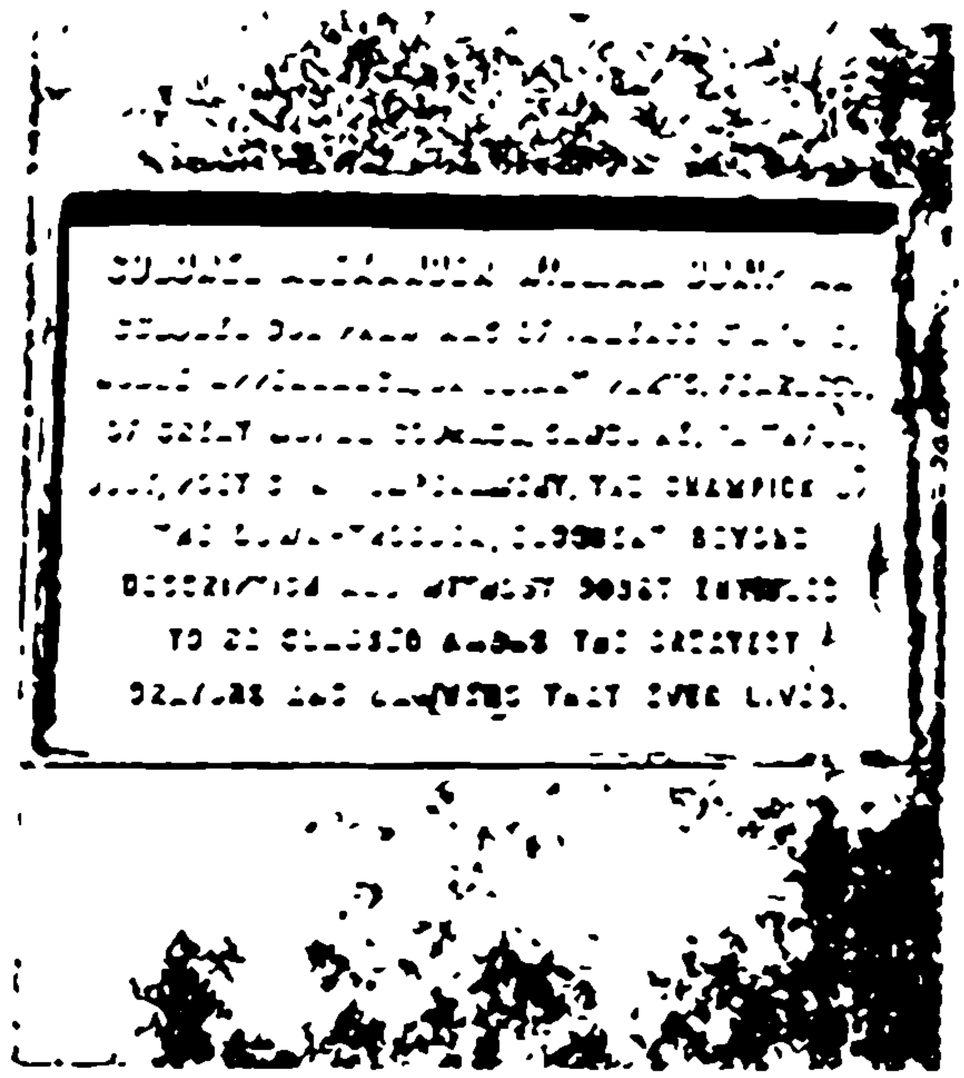

Fig. 9.
Plaque on reverse side of statue.

He was uninjured; nota scratch upon him.[1]

When the Whitmer home was rebuilt, it was made into "a story-and-a-half wooden frame residence on East Main Street near the (present) William Manly garage and the colored Baptist church."[2] It was in this rebuilt home that David lived out his remaining days.

In his later years, Mr. Whitmer gradually turned the business over to his son and grandson, though he still spent many hours around the livery talking to his many friends and the curious who came to consult him about his "testimony." His wife Julia Ann was still enjoying fairly good health, and their daughter, Mrs. Schweich, was where she could look after them when it was necessary.

David was not wealthy, but he had sufficient for his needs. Mr. James Nading, from whom part of this information was received, tells of a visit he made to David Whitmer's home at a time when the latter was not feeling so well. The visitor found David home alone, propped up in bed.

"I never saw so much money in my life," Mr. Nading says. "It covered the whole bed, and there he was counting it, all in gold." He continued, "He sure was lonely when he couldn't get out of the house. Yes sir, the Whitmers were sure fine folks, the finest around here. There were many 'sporting houses' in Richmond in those days and many of the men were wont to spend hours there, but not the Whitmers; they were clean livers and no drinkers. They were people who knew how to tend their own business and let other people do likewise."[3]

Mrs. Julia A. Page (name-sake of Julia Ann, David's wife) related

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[1]Statement of Julia A Page, personal interview.

[2]J. H., October 8, 1927.

[3]Statement of James Nading, personal interview.

that he would spend hours at the livery whittling. He would have neighborhood boys bring him blocks of sugar maple, a very hard wood, and he would cut items from this wood for his friends--butter paddles, spoons, etc.[1]

Mr. Whitmer reached his eightieth birthday in apparent good health; at any rate the local press felt that his chances for longevity were excellent.

> David Whitmer, Esq., reached his 80th birthday Wednesday last, and is still hale and vigorous bidding fair to celebrate his centennial anniversary. He remains firm in the faith of his youth, he has passed beyond the years of man's ambition, he feels that he is lingering in the gleam of the sunset of his pilgrimage, he has seen the pronunciamento of Joe Smith the accepted belief of near one million people as of divine origin, he holds in his possession the manuscript from which the Book of Mormon was published, he reiterates that he saw the glory of the angel, blinding him by its radiance, heard it proclaim "you have testified to the truth," and with no regrets for the past and no fears for the future he calmly awaits the summons universal that says "come" to the sons of Adam. We wish him many more such anniversaries.[2]

It becomes more and more apparent that as David became older his mind turned more and more to the experiences of his association with the Church and Joseph Smith. This may have been due to the many who were now visiting him as the last of the Three Witnesses to Joseph Smith's work. The last two years of his life were devoted to writing and reestablishing what he considered to be the true Church of Christ, his attention being turned to both believers and non-believers in the Book of Mormon.

On January 25, 1888, David Whitmer died. The "Richmond Democrat" announced his passing as a front page feature:

THE LAST WITNESS IS DEAD!

(Picture)

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[1]Statement of Julia A. Page, personal interview.

[2]Richmond Conservator, January 9, 1885.

DAVID WHITMER, THE AGED PATRIARCH, GONE TO HIS REST

His Parting Injunctions to His Family and Friends. He Departs in Peace.

For many days past our aged fellow citizen David Whitmer, lingered on the very brink of the grave waiting for the summons, but it did not come until yesterday evening at 5 o'clock, when spirit winged its way into the infinite.

. . . . . .

It is well known that he was a firm believer in the Bible, in the divinity of Christ and in the authenticity and divine character of the record of the Nephites, better known as the Book of Mormon.

He was the last to go of the three witnesses to "the divine authenticity of the record of the Nephites. . . ."

HIS LAST ILLNESS

He bore his long illness with great patience and fortitude his faith never 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 his body he opened his eyes which glistened with the brightness of his early manhood. He then turned them toward heaven, and a wonderful light came over his countenance, which remained several moments, when the eyes gradually closed and David Whitmer was gone to rest.

His remains will be laid to rest tomorrow at the new cemetery in Richmond. Mr. Whitmer was a very plain man and it was his desire that no display of any kind be made at his burial, hence the only ceremony will be a few appropriate remarks at his residence.

LAID AT REST

On Friday morning last at 10:30, a number of the friends of the deceased assembled at his late residence, to pay a last tribute of respect to the worthy dead. Mr. John Snyder arose and read the first fourteen verses of the 22nd chapter of Revelations, and stated that the deceased had selected the fourteenth verse to be read at the funeral service over his remains. It reads as followes:

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

After the reading, an appropriate eulogy was pronounced by Mr. John C. Whitmer, a relative and intimate associate of the deceased.[1]

Some of Richmond's foremost citizens acted as pallbearers.

Notwithstanding the cold, damp weather, a large number of friends and acquaintances followed the hearse and mourning family to the cemetery, west of the city, where the body was laid to rest and all that was mortal of one of the most remarkable men, ever connected with the history of Ray County, was forever hidden from view.[2]

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[1] Richmond Democrat, Jan. 26, 1888; Feb. 2, 1888. [2] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

A SPECIAL WITNESS TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

There was great excitement in and around the vicinity in which Joseph Smith had received the Book of Mormon plates from the Angel Moroni, September 22, 1827. It had not taken long for many of the curious to believe! "The most strenuous exertions were used to get them. . . . Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose." So great was the excitement that the Prophet Joseph Smith and his wife Emma left Manchester, New York, going to Susquehanna County, in the state of Pennsylvania.[1]

> Oliver [Cowdery] had become a fast friend of Mr. David Whitmer of Fayette, Seneca County, New York, while the latter was on a business trip to Palmyra in 1828. The two men had conversed a great deal upon the subject of the "Book of Mormon" that was then being translated, and they also talked of the discovery of the plates. Talk upon the subject had been so free that there is little doubt but that David Whitmer was led into the discussions at first by mere idle curiosity. . . . Since Oliver was determined to visit Joseph at Harmony, the journey was purposely routed to take him through the town of Fayette in order that he might call upon the Whitmer family. David, on hearing of Oliver's purpose, obtained a promise from him (Oliver) that after he had visited the Prophet, he would write the Whitmers in regards to his impression of the truth or untruth of Joseph Smith's having the authentic ancient records. The members of the Whitmer family evidently held Oliver in high regard in as much as his opinion upon this subject meant so much to them. This was a friendship that was to endure the entirety of both David's and Oliver's life.[2]

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 18.

[2]Stanley Gunn, "Oliver Cowdery, Second Elder" (An Unpublished thesis at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1942), p. 20.

Substantially the same information is given by David Whitmer years later when he was interviewed by a reporter of the "Chicago Tribune." Oliver found the community [Moncuesrel] teeming with excitement and heard several threats made upon Joseph's life unless he divided his wealth with some of his townsmen.

> When asked how they knew such a treasure had been found, several asserted that they had seen the recepticle from which it had been taken by Smith. Cowdery . . . pushed on to the home of Smith Harmony . . . . At first he found Smith to be uncommunicative, but was finally permitted to view the treasure [facsimiles] and was greatly impressed by the sight.[1]

A number of unvarifiable statements are made in the total report of the "Tribune," but Mr. Whitmer seems to have been more accurately reported by the Kansas City "Journal" of June 5, 1881.

> I first heard of what is now termed Mormonism, in the year 1828. I made a business trip to Palmyra, N. Y., and while there stopped with one Oliver Cowdery. A great many people . . . were talking about finding certain golden plates by one Joseph Smith . . . . I paid but little attention to it, supposing it to be only idle gosspi of the neighborhood. Mr. Cowdery said he was acquainted with the Smith family, and he believed there must be some truth in the story . . . . I had conversation with several young men, who said Joseph Smith had certainly golden plates, and that before he had attained them he had promised to share with them . . . . Said I, "How do you know that Joe Smith has the plates?" They replied, "We saw the place in the hill that he took them out of, just as he described it to us before he obtained them." I had never seen any of the Smith family up to that time . . . . After thinking over the matter for a long time, and talking with Cowdery . . . I went home, and after several months, Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Penn., whither Joseph Smith had gone with the plates . . . and see about the matter . . . . On the way he stopped at my father's house and told me that as soon as he found out anything . . . he would let me know . . . . Shortly after he wrote me, telling me 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 . . . . Shortly after this, Mr. Cowdery wrote me another letter in which he gave me a few lines of what had been translated, and he assured me that he knew of a certainty that he had the record of a people that inhabited this continent . . . . When Cowdery showed me these things . . . I showed these letters to my parents, and 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

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[1]Deseret News, December 24, 1885.

reason therefore that they had received a commandment from God to that effect.[1]

The Prophet Joseph Smith's mother's narration substantially agrees with the above account.

> Near this time Joseph was translating by means of the Urim and Thummim, he received instead of the words of the book, a commandment to write a letter to a man by the name of David Whitmer, who lived in Waterloo [Fayette], requesting him to come immediately with his team and convey himself and Oliver to his residence as an evil designing people were seeking to take away his (Joseph's) life in order to prevent the work of God from going forth in the world.[2]

The Prophet does not indicate in his own history whether he wrote or not. He merely indicates that:

> In the beginning of the month of June . . . David Whitmer came to the place where we were residing, and brought with him a two-horse wagon, for the purpose of having us accompany him to his father's place, and there remain until we should finish the work. It was arranged that we should have our board free of charge, and the assistance of one of his brothers to write for me, and also his own assistance when convenient. Having much need of such timely aid in an undertaking so arduous, and being informed that the people of the neighborhood . . . were anxiously awaiting the opportunity to inquire into these things, we accepted the invitation . . . and there resided until the translation was finished. . . . We found Mr. Whitmer's family very anxious concerning the work, and very friendly to ourselves. They continued so, boarded and lodged us according to arrangements; and John Whitmer, in particular, assisted us very much in writing during the remainder of the work.[3]

Lucy Mack declared that the only acquaintance which existed between the Smiths and the Whitmer families

> was formed by Mr. Smith [Joseph Senior] and myself when on our way from Manchester to Pennsylvania to visit Joseph, at which time we stopped with David over night and gave him a brief history of the record.[4]

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[1]Andrew Jensen, op. cit., pp. 203-5.

[2]Lucy Mack Smith, Biographical Sketches of the Prophet and His Progenitors (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized L. D. S. Church, 1912), p. 160.

[3]Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

[4]Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 161.

There are numerous accounts relating to experiences associated with David's going to Pennsylvania after the Prophet Joseph. Some of them are quite unsubstantiated, but a few seem certainly to have been based upon factual experiences. A few are here given as a possible source of many that are rather widely related.

Mrs. Smith writes (after David has received the letter requesting him to come for Joseph Smith)

> His [David's] father reminded him that he had as much wheat sown upon the ground as he could harrow in two days, at least; besides this he had a quantity of plaster of paris to spread, which must be done immediately, consequently he could not go unless he could get a witness from God that it was necessary.
>
> This suggestion pleased David, and he asked the Lord for a testimony concerning his going for Joseph, and was told by the voice of the spirit to go as soon as his wheat was harrowed in. The next morning David went to the field and found that he had two heavy days' work before him. He then said to himself that if he should be enabled, by any means to do this work sooner than the same had ever been done on the farm before, he would receive it as evidence that it was the will of God that he should do all in his power to assist Joseph Smith in the work in which he was engaged. He then fastened his horses to the harrow, and instead of dividing the field into what is usually termed lands, he drove around the whole of it, continuing this till noon, when, on stopping, he looked around and discovered to his surprise that he had harrowed in full half the wheat. After dinner he went on as before, and by evening he finished the whole two day's work.
>
> His father, on going into the field the same evening, saw what had been done, and he exclaimed, "There must be an overruling hand in this, and I think you had better go down to Pennsylvania as soon as your plaster of paris is spread."
>
> The next morning David took a wooden measure under his arm, and went out to spread the plaster which he had left two days previous in heaps near his sister's house, but, in coming to the place, he discovered that it was gone! He then ran to his sister and inquired of her if she knew what had become of it. Being surprised she said, "Why do you ask me? Was it not all spread yesterday?"
>
> "Not to my knowledge," answered David.
>
> "I am astounded at that," replied his sister; "for the children came to me in the afternoon, and begged of me to go out and see the men sow plaster in the field, saying that they never saw anybody sow plaster so fast in their lives. I accordingly went out and saw three men at work in the field, as the children had said, but supposing that you had hired some help on account of your hurry, I went immediately into the house and gave the subject no further attention."[1]

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[1] Ibid. pp. 160-62.

David made inquiry among his neighbors, writes Mrs. Smith, but no one knew anything of the matter. During the many interviews of Mr. David Whitmer in later life, he makes no mention of this experience that is recorded, except in the Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith conversation in which he indicates that on going to the field one morning, he found between six and seven acres of the 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."[1]

Mrs. Smith also writes that David was able to drive the distance, one hundred and thirty-five miles, in two days without injury to his horses. "When he arrived he was under the necessity of introducing himself to Joseph, as that was the first time they had ever met."[2]

In David Whitmer's own account he makes no mention of the rapid journey, even indicating that it took some time to make the trip, though he relates much of a miraculous nature that transpired, that might have influenced him a great deal in recognizing Joseph Smith as a prophet.

> 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 had 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 for dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me; all of which was exactly as Joseph had told Oliver. . . . Returning to Fayette . . . 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 space, 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

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[1] Mil. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 769-74.

[2] Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 162.

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other, and as I looked around inquiringly at Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.[1]

Mrs. Smith wrote that the plates had been committed into the hands of an angel before leaving Harmony, and were to be returned to Joseph Smith upon his arrival in Fayette. Joseph and Oliver started on this trip without delay and Joseph received the records according to promise; the next day he and Oliver resumed the work of translating.[2] Emma Smith had made the trip with them.[3]

David, in the Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt interview, declared the old man (whom they had met on their journey to Fayette, New York) to be the angel in charge of the Book of Mormon plates. This angel delivered the plates to Joseph after his arrival at the Whitmer home in Fayette. Mr. Whitmer's account stated further that Mr. Smith acknowledged that the ancient records had been concealed in the Whitmer barn by this same heavenly messenger.[4]

Mrs. Whitmer, David's mother, was also a witness of the plates as well as of the angel, if we are to give credence to Mr. Whitmer's statement. She was shown the plates by the heavenly messenger so that she might better bear the added burdens caused by the additional people in her household.[5]

The Prophet Joseph Smith, at a conference in Orange, Ohio, held late in October, 1831, was asked to relate how the Book of Mormon came forth, but informed the assembled that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and that it

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[1] Mil. Star., Vol. 40, pp. 769-74. [2] Ibid.

[3] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885 (Quoting the Chicago "Tribune."). Lucy Mack Smith's account says Emma Smith remained in charge of affairs in Harmony in her husband's absence.

[4] Mil. Star., Vol. 40, pp. 769-74.

[5] Ibid.

was not expedient for him to relate them.[1] In spite of this, David Whitmer attempts to tell exactly how it was accomplished. The fact that his various accounts are so much in antipathy with each other would indicate that much of what he says must be the result of many years of speculation upon how it might have been accomplished rather than from actual knowledge. It is to be remembered that the bulk of the work as emanuensis was done by Oliver Cowdery. Therefore, it is doubtful that the statements of Mr. Whitmer are reliable when those who were more closely associated with the actual translation differ with him, or are silent. Usually we find only that this work was accomplished "by the gift and power of God." In his own booklet of 1887 ~~1837~~, David wrote:

> 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 on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principle 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 with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.[2]

In a statement to the Kansas City "Journal", as that newspaper reports Mr. Whitmer in 1881, David does not refer to a seer stone, but to "two small stones of a chocolate color, nearly egg shape, and perfectly smooth, but not transparent, called interpreters, which were given him [Joseph] with the plates." Mr. Whitmer said that the translation at his father's took

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[1] "Far West Record" (Unpublished conference minutes and records of Christ's Church of the Latter Day Saints. In L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah), p. 13.

[2] David Whitmer, An Address to all Believers in Christ (Richmond, Missouri: The Church of Christ. A Reprint, 1942.), pp. 17, 18.

about a month, "from June 1 to July 1, 1829."[1] It is to be remembered that much of the translation was accomplished before the arrival at Fayette. In the Chicago "Tribune" account of 1885, David Whitmer says the translation "consumed about eight months."

> In order to give privacy to the proceedings, a blanket, which served as a portier 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. . . . It was not for the purpose of concealing the plates or the translator from the eyes of the emanuensis. In fact, Smith was at no time concealed from his collaborator, 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. . . . Each time before resuming the work all present would kneel down in prayer. . . . After the prayer Smith would sit on one side of the table and the emanuensis, in turn as they became tired, on the other. . . . After fixing the magical spectacles to his eyes, Smith would take the plates and translate. . . . Sometimes the character would be a single word, and frequently an entire sentence. . . . Smith who was illiterate and but little versed in Biblical lore, was oftimes compelled to spell the words out, not knowing the correct pronunciation . . . 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.[2]

If this account were accurate, there would have been no need for the eight witnesses, whose only purpose was to testify to the existence of the plates. It may be that characters were copied from the plates and then in the presence of the family, translated as indicated in the above account.

The confusion between the Urim and Thummim (interpreters) and the seer stone, as well as the color mix-up, could well be the inaccuracy or dishonesty of the reporters; for David Whitmer refers to dishonest accounts being given in the papers before. "I have been imposed upon and misrepresented so many times by persons claiming to be honorable newspaper men, that I feel a delicacy in allowing my name to come before the public in newspaper

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[1] Andrew Jensen, op. cit., pp. 203-5.

[2] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885.

print again."[1] However, this was in 1881 and most of the known interviews were given after that time.

In the Chicago "Tribune" interview, Mr. Whitmer said the Prophet Joseph lost the plates due to certain offenses, and they were not returned to him. In their place he received the seer stone which he used as previously explained. "This worked just as satisfactory as the old method, but at no time thereafter was . . . Joseph intrusted with the precious plates."[2]

This account is altered in the Kansas City "Journal" interview, to

> When Joseph was 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 116 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.[3]

The instance here refered to concerned Martin Harris and the loss of certain pages of translation. This happened sometime before David's acquaintance with Joseph, so at best is "second-hand" material in so far as Whitmer is concerned. It is quite evident that the "Tribune" has confused the expression "plates" and "pages of the book of Lehi."

In the matter of method of translation refered to by Whitmer, it would seem that any individual might have used the "seer stone" to accomplish any such purely mechanical technique. However, when Oliver Cowdery attempted to translate it was not such an easy procedure—certainly not as mechanical as David Whitmer would have us believe.[4]

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[1] Kansas City Journal, January 5, 1881.

[2] Deseret News, December 24, 1885.

[3] Kansas City Journal, Jan. 5, 1881.

[4] Doctrine and Covenants, (Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Church, 1926), Sec. 9.

Martin Harris, another of the Three Witnesses, cleared up much of the confusion existing in these accounts between the "interpreters" or Urim and Thummim, and the "seer stone." His evidence should be quite reliable as he served as one of the Prophet's scribes for some time. He said that Joseph Smith found a stone while digging a well for a Mr. Clark Chase, near Palmyra. This stone, he adds, was sometimes used in place of the Urim and Thummim.[1]

As early as March, 1829, Joseph Smith knew there were to be special witnesses. He received a revelation at the time that

> this generation shall have my word through you; and in addition to your testimony, the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show these things. . . . Yea, they shall know of a surety that these things are true, for from heaven will I declare it unto them.[2]

"In the course of the work of translation," writes the Prophet,

> We ascertained that three special witnesses were to be provided by the Lord to whom he would grant that they should see the plates from which this work (the Book of Mormon) should be translated; and that these witnesses should bear record of the same as will be found recorded.[3]

> And behold, ye may be privileged that they may show the plates unto those who shall assist to bring forth this work; and unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true. And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established; and the testimony of the three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God . . . .[4]

And again,

> And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him [the Savior] as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to

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[1]Brigham H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Salt Lake City: by the Church, 1930), Vol. I, pp. 28, 29.

[2]D. & C., Sec. 5, vss. 10-12.

[3]Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 52.

[4]Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Church, 1942 edition), Ether, chap. V, vss. 2-4.

> prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word.[1]

Almost immediately after the discovery that there should be three special witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris requested Joseph to inquire of the Lord, that they might be the witnesses spoken of.[2] After some urging, the Prophet approached the Lord through the Urim and Thummim in June, 1829 and received the word that should they rely upon the word of the Lord, they would view the plates, breastplate, sword of Laban, Urim and Thummim, and the miraculous directors given Lehi in the wilderness.[3]

The Prophet's mother writes of the experience, saying that as soon as the translation was completed, Joseph sent for his father and mother, who told Martin Harris, and they all came to Fayette together. That evening they read the manuscript together.

> The next morning, after attending to the usual service, namely reading, singing, and praying, Joseph arose from his knees and approaching Martin Harris with a solemnity that thrills through my veins to this day, when it occurs to my recollection, said, "Martin Harris, you have got to humble yourself before your God this day, that you may obtain forgiveness of your sins. If you do, it is the will of God that you should look upon the plates, in company with Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer."
>
> In a few minutes after this, Joseph, Martin, Oliver, and David, repaired to a grove, a short distance from the house, where they commenced calling upon the Lord. . . .[4]

Of the solemnity of the occasion, David Whitmer told James H. Hart in 1883,

> Persons may attempt to describe the presentation of the plates as shown to myself and the other witnesses, but there was a glory attending it that no one could describe. . . .

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[1] Ibid., II Nephi, chap. XI, vs. 3.

[2] Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 52, 53.

[3] D. & C., Section 17.

[4] Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 164.

"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 [sic] 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 heard the voice of the angel, and saw the engravings on the plates. . . just as stated in the Book of Mormon. And we were commanded to bear record of these things and that the book was translated by the gift and power of God. "You see that 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 our testimony is true. . . . I know there is a God, for I heard his voice and witnessed the manifestation of his power."[1]

On this occasion Whitmer also said that they had demurred and told the Lord that the people of the world wouldn't believe them for the people spoken of in the record were educated and refined while the Indians of the present America were "filthy, lazy, degraded and ignorant savages that were roaming over the land." They were informed by the Lord that evidence would be forthcoming that would prove they had been just such a people as described in the Book of Mormon.[2]

Joseph Smith's own account details two fruitless attempts at calling upon the Lord, and then Martin Harris withdrew from the others and their next attempt was successful. No details are given other than that the Angel turned "the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly." He then turned himself to David Whitmer, and said, "David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments."[3] Martin Harris experienced a similar visitation a little later during the day with Joseph Smith.

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[1] Deseret News, August 23, 1883.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 54.

It will be noted that Joseph Smith refers to the Angel speaking directly to David. Mr. Whitmer refers to the same statement made by the Angel, but does not indicate that it was directed to him.[1] It becomes quite apparent that Joseph Smith is not attempting to give a complete account of what took place as he mentions few of the experiences predicted in the revelation previously given.[2]

It is Lucy Smith who indicates the extreme relief felt by the Prophet when others were called to share the responsibility of actual knowledge of the plates.

> When they returned to the house, it was between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs. Whitmer, Mr. Smith, and myself were sitting in the bedroom at the time. On coming in, Joseph threw himself down beside me, and exclaimed, "Father, Mother, you do not know how happy I am; the Lord has caused the plates to be shown three more besides myself. They have seen an angel, who has testified to them and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear, and it rejoices my soul, that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world."

The witnesses soon followed Joseph into the house and added their own feelings to this happy occasion:

> Upon this Martin Harris came in: he seemed almost overcome with joy, and testified boldly to what he had both seen and heard. And so did David and Oliver, adding that no tongue could express the joy of their hearts, and the greatness of the things which they had both seen and heard.[3]

Thereafter, as commanded, the Three Witnesses bore solemn testimony to having received a divine declaration of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Each copy of this book bears their signed statement.[4] Thus the

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[1] Richmond Conservator, November 18, 1881.

[2] D. & C., sec. 17.

[3] Lucy Smith, Op. cit., pp. 164-165.

[4] Appendix N, this Thesis.

prophecy of the "Doctrine and Covenants,"[1] and those of the "Book of Mormon" were fulfilled.

Joseph Smith was permitted to show the plates to eight other men who also bore record in signed testimonials to the existence of the plates. They did not hear or see the Angel, but they were shown the ancient records by the Prophet Joseph, and they allowed their testimonies to be added to that of the three special witnesses in each copy of the "Book of Mormon."[2]

The testimony of such witnesses, if their lives were honorable and upright, would, in most courts of the land, have an almost irrefutable validity; yet there have been numerous attempts to invalidate the sworn statements of these eleven men, all of whom died still bearing testimony, without alteration, to what they had seen and heard and with their characters still unimpugned.

Not the least among these attempts is the "family of witnesses" criticism. Of the Three Witnesses, David and Oliver were brothers-in-law; Martin Harris, an older man, was unrelated. In the case of the Eight Witnesses, four of them were brothers of David: Christian, Jacob, Peter, Jr., and John Whitmer. A fifth witness, Hiram Page, was a brother-in-law, having married the Whitmers' sister, Catherine, in 1852. The other three, Joseph Smith, Sr., Hyrum and Samuel H. Smith, were respectively father and brothers of Joseph, the Prophet.

In view of the unusual circumstances which followed the organization of the Church, there can be little made of the charge of collusion, as can be seen from the Whitmer family: Peter and Christian both died in good

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[1] D. & C., sec. 17.

[2] Appendix N, this Thesis.

standing in the original Church; David, Jacob and John, apart from it--yet none of them ever denied or in any way indicated a doubt as to their respective testimonies; and this in spite of the rather strong feelings of animosity that ultimately developed between them and Joseph Smith.

As to the brothers-in-law, Oliver Cowdery--once excommunicated from the Church, and then rejoining it--and Hiram Page who remained out of the Church after 1838, both remained staunch and vigorous defenders of their sworn statements to their deaths; never in way leaving an impression that anything was other than their written and signed testimonies sent forth to all the world with the "Book of Mormon."[1]

It would seem that there is little need for speculation as to the nature of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, as they have been rather adequately pictured for us by David Whitmer on numerous occasions. Furthermore, he describes the place wherein they were first viewed by the Prophet Joseph himself.

> Whitmer and Cowdery . . . were conducted to the hill, where they personally viewed the recepticle in which Moroni, at the beginning of the fifth century, had concealed the history of his fathers.[2]

The recepticle was a stone box, the stones appearing as though they were cemented together, located "on the side of the hill [Cumorah] and a little down from the top."[3] Continuing his statement to Dr. Poulson, David describes the plates as being about six or seven inches by eight inches, and

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[1]Preston Nibley, Witnesses to the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1946), pp. 33-169.

[2]Deseret News, December 24, 1885.

[3]Ibid., August 16, 1878.

> 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 common tin used by tinsmiths.[1]
>
> 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.[2]
>
> . . . And what there was sealed appeared as solid to my view as wood.[3]

There have been many doubters, many would-be maligners, a few apparently malicious prevaricators who have attempted to undermine the veracity of this man, but any time he was given an opportunity, David Whitmer to the very end repeated and defended with vigor his testimony. Later chapters will clearly demonstrate this.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

David Whitmer was not long in asking of the Lord, through Joseph Smith, what his work was to be now that the "Book of Mormon" had been translated and the copyright secured; and so the Prophet Joseph obtained for his zealous friend and assistant the word of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim.[1] The fact that the first five verses of this revelation to David are identical to the word of the Lord to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in Section Six of the "Doctrine and Covenants" may have had something to do with the feeling eventually evidenced by David that he was a president equal in authority to the Prophet Joseph. He (David) is admonished in this revelation to "seek to bring forth and establish my Zion." He is also instructed to keep the commandments of the Lord and endure to the end that he might have eternal life, the greatest of the gifts of God. This statement is closely analogous to that made by the Angel to David at the time he was shown the plates and has been thought by some to be a warning to him of a possible apostacy from the work. In this communication from the Lord he is further informed that he is to assist in bringing forth the fulness of the gospel from the Gentiles unto the House of Israel, with a promise of spiritual and temporal blessings if he is faithful.

It was during the month of June, 1829, that David was baptized by Joseph Smith, along with Hyrum Smith, in Seneca Lake, thus becoming a

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[1] D. & C., sec. 14.

participant of the restoration movement in a very real sense. Not long thereafter David tells of having the glorious experience of seeing the heavenly messenger and receiving instructions to bear testimony to that which he had seen and heard, in consequence of which the Three Witnesses drew up and subscribed the document known as "The Testimony of the Three Witnesses."

Sometime during the same month (June, 1829) the voice of the Lord came to Joseph and Oliver, in response to their prayers, commanding them to ordain each other Elders in the Church of Jesus Christ. But this was to be done only when it was practicable to have their brethren together who had been or who were to be baptized, that they might have their sanction also. Though this revelation is not recorded, it undoubtedly had much to do with the understanding that there should be such a church organized.[1] Section Eighteen of the "Doctrine and Covenants" also speaks of Oliver and David. In it they are reminded of the worth of souls and that they are called even with the same calling as was Paul who was to cry repentance unto the people. The Lord then spoke to them of the "Twelve" who were to take upon themselves His name with full purpose of heart. Their instructions to search out the Twelve (Apostles) would seem to indicate something of the structure of the church yet to be organized.

While the unrecorded revelation was given in response to a request of Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith, it is quite apparent that David Whitmer was aware of their request and was told his responsibility in the then imminent organization of the church.

"Whilst the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer," wrote the Prophet, "we still continued to bear testimony and give information,

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

as far as we had opportunity; and also made known to our brethren that we had received a commandment to organize the Church; and accordingly we met together for that purpose, at the house of Peter Whitmer, Sen."[1]

This meeting was held April 6th, 1830. After a prayer those present were asked if they were agreeable to organizing a church in accordance with the commandment which had been received (note Section 20 of D. & C.) and if they would accept Joseph and Oliver as their teachers. Both propositions were unanimously accepted. The number present at this meeting is not definitely known, due to some confused and contradictory statements; however the New York State statutes required only six signatures to the articles of incorporation. There is also some doubt as to who these first six members of the Church were. In a document signed by Joseph Knight, quoting Oliver Cowdery, the following are listed: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer,Jun., David Whitmer and Samuel H. Smith.[2] However at the request of Edward Stevenson during a personal interview with Mr. Whitmer, David listed the first six members as including John and Christian Whitmer in place of Peter Whitmer, Jun. and Samuel H. Smith.[3]

It is not to be assumed that the six members listed represent all who had been baptized up to the time of the formal organization of the Church. David Whitmer says there were about seventy who had been baptized up to this time.[4] However he makes this statement at a time he is attempting to establish a point that is quite at variance to the teachings of the larger established churches of the restoration movement, so need not be

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 74-76.

[2]J. H., April 6, 1830. [3]Ibid., December 23, 1877.

[4]David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887, Reprint 1942), p. 43.

considered as too reliable, especially so since the notes of the conference held in 1830 would indicate about twenty-seven as a more acceptable number.[1]

Mr. Whitmer worked rather intimately with Joseph Smith in furthering the work of the Church in and around Fayette, New York. During the last week in May (1830), Newel Knight visited the Prophet and others of the Church and was baptized by David Whitmer.[2]

The first conference of the Church was held June 9th, during which David, along with several others, received his licence as an Elder.[3] It was shortly after this conference that Mr. Whitmer baptized several people in Seneca Lake. Among these was Julia Anne Jolly who subsequently became Mrs. David Whitmer. Immediately after this conference the Prophet Joseph returned to his home in Harmony, Pa., and from there, accompanied by his wife with Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and his brother John, Joseph went to visit Mr. Knight of Colesville, Broome County, New York. They had some success doing missionary work among the people of that area, several expressing a desire for baptism. A dam was constructed across a stream of water for that purpose, but a mob, anticipating their wishes, destroyed it during the night so that the baptisms were delayed until the following Monday. During that Sunday's meetings, the men associated with the Prophet Joseph had opportunity to bear their testimonies to some of the members of the mob, though many of the mobbers were not dissuaded from their purpose and caused considerable trouble before the baptisms were completed. This resulted in Joseph Smith's arrest, subsequent trial, and acquittal.[4]

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 77 footnote.

[2]Ibid., p. 84.

[3]J. H., June 9, 1830.

[4]Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 86-96.

Late in August, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and David and John Whitmer returned to hostile Colesville to fill an appointment previously made to confirm those who had been baptized by them in June. Being aware of the feelings of their enemies in this vicinity, they called upon the Lord to blind the eyes of those who might do them harm. Although Joseph's party passed through the midst of many who knew them, they went unrecognized and the object of their visit was accomplished without molestation.[1]

The second conference of the Church was held in September 1830, at Fayette. At this time David was selected to keep the records of the newly organized church. It was at this place, just prior to the conference, Hiram Page had caused some dissent among the membership through claims of revelations (which he purportedly had obtained through a stone that had come into his possession) concerning the government of the Church. It seems that Oliver Cowdery as well as members of the Whitmer family had been impressed by some of the teachings of Page, though the teachings themselves apparently contradicted those found in the New Testament.[2] The Prophet Joseph Smith, having moved from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Fayette, New York, was alarmed at the state of affairs he found there. With Cowdery, he inquired of the Lord as to what course of action to take. Joseph received revelation directed to Oliver Cowdery[3] in which advice was given that resulted in the renunciation of the stone and all things connected with it.[4] That David Whitmer was also among those who gave ear to the purported

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[1] J. H., August 29, 1830, statement of Newel Knight.

[2] Ibid., August 29, 1830; Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 109.

[3] D. & C., sec. 28.

[4] Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 109-115.

revelations of Hiram Page is indicated by this revelation calling David, Peter, and John Whitmer to labor as missionaries.

> Behold, I say unto you David, that you have feared man and have not relied on me for strength as you ought. But your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of me, your maker, and the ministry whereunto you have been called; and you have not given heed unto my Spirit, and to those who were set over you, but have been persuaded by those whom I have not commanded. Wherefore you are left to inquire for yourself at my hand, and ponder upon the things which you have received. And your home shall be at your father's house until I give unto you further commandments. And you shall attend to the ministry in the church, and before the world, and in the regions round about.[1]

The final conference of the Church before moving west to Kirtland, Ohio, was held January 2, 1831. The work of the missionaries who had been called at the previous conference to preach among the Indians had resulted in such success around Kirtland, Geanga County, that a commandment was given for Joseph Smith to move to that state.

The Elders from the various parts of the country were called to a conference in Kirtland held from the third to the sixth of June. It was at this assemblage that the first distinct ordinations to the office of High Priest were made, though there seems to be ample evidence that knowledge of the office was known prior to this time in the Church. Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer had been previously told that theirs was the same calling as Paul's, the Lord's Apostle.[2] However, Andrew Jenson, an assistant Church Historian, says that David was ordained a High Priest at Orange, Ohio, October 25, 1831, by Oliver Cowdery.[3]

A number of the Elders were called by revelation this June conference, to go to Missouri and labor as missionaries among that people. David

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[1] D. & C., sec. 30.

[2] Ibid., sec. 18, vs. 9. (The calling could have been the same though the office need not have been.)

[3] Preston Nibley, op. cit., p. 63.

was to be accompanied by Harvey Whitlock.[1] There was apparently little delay in beginning this mission, for John Murdock, who had been called at the same time, chronicles an account of his and Hyrum Smith's meeting David Whitmer and Harvey Whitlock at Chariton, Missouri, June 14, 1831. All four of these Elders pooled their money in order to purchase a pony which Murdock rode to Lexington, some fifty miles distant.[2] These men seem to have worked here for some time since Elders Reynolds Cahoon and Samuel H. Smith, traveling from Independence, met all four of them still laboring in Chariton the thirteenth of August.[3]

On the third day of August, 1831, Joseph Smith dedicated a temple site a little west of the city of Independence, Missouri. The first conference in this land of "Zion" was held the next day in Kaw township, in the presence of the Colesville (New York) branch of the Church which had moved here en masse a short time before. Many of the Elders were still on their missions, which probably accounts for the absence of David Whitmer and a number of the other more prominent men from this important event.[4] After the Prophet's return to Ohio, another conference was held in Kaw township, September 2nd, at which a number of the Missouri missionaries were present. They were exhorted by David to acts of righteousness and sacrifice.[5]

Some time after the September conference in Missouri, Mr. Whitmer and his companion Reynolds Cahoon, returned to Ohio where, while attending

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[1] D. & C., sec. 52, vs. 25.

[2] J. H., June 14, 1831.

[3] Ibid., August 13, 1831.

[4] Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 199-206.

[5] J. H., September 2, 1831.

a conference at Hiram, Portage County, they received a commission to instruct the several branches of the Church. They were also to make known the financial condition of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon so that these men might receive the necessary means to continue the work of revising the King James version of the Bible.[1] Another Ohio conference was called for Orange, Cayahoga County, in October. At this conference many of the Elders expressed gratitude at having been in "Zion" (Missouri), the land consecrated as an inheritance of the "Saints." David Whitmer declared that he had consecrated all that was his to the Lord, and was desirous to do all for the glory of God.[2]

The next Ohio conference was in Hiram. The printing of ten thousand copies of the "Book of Commandments" was authorized at this time. David being present, it can be assumed that he was not opposed to this action since the Prophet makes no mention of any opposition except in the matter of language--William E. M'Lellin feeling that he could improve upon it. However, his attempt to do so failed, and he then signified a willingness to testify to the truthfulness of these commandments to all the world.[3] David Whitmer, years later, denied the propriety of publishing these commandments,[4] but on the second day of this conference he bore testimony to the truth of the "Book of Commandments."[5]

David spent that winter and spring in Ohio laboring there among the branches of the Church as he had been commissioned to do. But all was

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 219. [2]J. H., October 25, 1831.

[3]Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 226. [4]David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 68.

[5]"Far West Record", (Unpublished conference minutes and record book of Christ's Church of the Latter Day Saints. L.D.S. Church Historian's Library, Salt Lake City), p. 16.

not peaceful, however, for a number had left the Church and were making considerable trouble for the Prophet and those associated with him in this work. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were severely beaten and otherwise abused at Hiram during the night of March 24th. There was great confusion and during the milling about, John Poorman ran into "Father" Johnson. Thinking he was one of the mob Poorman struck Johnson a blow on the left shoulder, only then recognizing him.[1] Luke Johnson, his son, said the blow broke his collar bone but it was immediately healed when David Whitmer laid his hands upon him.[2]

> In the Spring of 1832, David Whitmer, with his own and with members of his father's family, migrated again to the west and settled near Independence, in Jackson County, Missouri. Here they hoped to remain and become permanently identified with the upbuilding of the Church.[3]

The exact nature of David's responsibilities at this time is not known, but on the eleventh of September, 1832, reference is made to another council of the High Priests being held in Zion.

> Bishop Edward Partridge was acknowledged to be the head of the Church in Zion for the time being, and by virtue of his office was acknowledged as the moderator or president of the councils or conferences.[4]

Ten of the High Priests were appointed to preside or watch over the several branches of the Church in Zion. David was assigned Branch number three.[5]

It was during the year 1833 that the Saints began having trouble with the natives of Jackson County. Mr. Whitmer writes:

> What first occasioned these difficulties I am unable to say, except that the Church was composed principally of Eastern and Northern

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[1] Joseph Smith, op. cit., pp. 261-65.

[2] Mill. Star, Vol. 26, p. 835.

[3] Nibley, op. cit., p. 63.

[4] "Far West Record", p. 36.

[5] Ibid.

> people who were opposed to slavery, and that there were among us a few ignorant and simple-minded persons who were continually making boasts to the Jackson County people that they intended to possess the entire country, erect a temple, etc. This of course occasioned hard feelings and excited the bitter jealousy of the other religious denominations.
>
> The Church at Independence had a newspaper called the "Morning and Evening Star", which published the revelations and prophecies of Joseph Smith and the doctrines of the Church, and which also caused a great deal of hard feelings among the citizens.[1]

Monday, November 4, 1833, a mob took over the ferry belonging to the Church and threatened the lives of a number of the members. David Whitmer continues the account:

> I was at this time living three miles east of Westport, and the first intimation I ever had that the people intended driving us out of the county was an afray between the organized mob of about eighty citizens and about eighteen Mormons, which occured at Wilson's store, near Big Blue. . . . The mob destroyed a number of our dwellings and fired upon the little party of Mormons, killing one man and wounding several others. The Mormons returned the fire, killing the leader of the mob, a Campbellite preacher named Lovett.[2]

It is difficult to correlate the various accounts of the battles which took place between the native Missourians and the Mormons who had settled in their county. Whether the following is another account of the same skirmish or a different one is not clear. Philo Dibble had settled in the Whitmer Settlement. He said that in the fall of 1833 a sectarian minister came among the Mormons for the purpose of buying guns to be used against the Indians. It was not long after this that threats were heard concerning the driving out of the Mormons. A couple of men came to the settlement ostensibly for the purpose of securing workers, but they were recognized as members of the mob and were detained over night.

The next day firing was heard at Whitmer's Settlement and seventeen Mormons went there to render assistance; some of them were taken prisoner

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[1] Kansas City Journal (Mo.), June 5, 1881.

[2] Ibid.

by the mob. David Whitmer brought news of the attack and said, "Every man go and every man take a man!"

"We all responded and met the mob in battle, in which I was wounded. . . ." Philo Dibble, whose narrative this is, stopped at "Father" Whitmer's to rest, but was informed that he couldn't stay as it would jeopardize the members of the family. Dibble was then taken some distance off the road and concealed from the mob.

> I bled inwardly until my body was filled with blood, remained in this condition until next day at five p.m. I was then examined by a surgeon who was in the Black Hawk War, and he said that he had seen a great many men wounded, but never saw one wounded as I was that ever lived. [A one ounce ball and two buck-shot had entered his body just at the right of the naval.] He pronounced me a dead man.
>
> David Whitmer, however, sent me word that I should live and not die, but I could see no possible chance for recovery.

Dibble continues the account by saying Newel Knight came to him, placed hands upon his head but said nothing, though he could feel the influence enter his body that resulted in his complete recovery. Later he was ordained a Teacher by David Whitmer at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri.[1]

Henry A. Cleveland, one of the men wounded in the November 4th skirmish tells the story as follows:

> On the 4th of this month occured the battle above the Blue. The mob had commenced their depredations the previous July at Independence, here they tarred and feathered Bishop Partridge and some others, and threatned the Saints with destruction; the latter entered into a treaty with the mob, agreeing to leave the county in October. Before the expiration of the time, however, the mob were [sic] busy forming leagues, by which they bound themselves by their property, their honor and their lives, to expel the Saints from the county. Consequently they again commenced hostilities by breaking open Gilbert and Whitney's store at Independence; forming themselves into companies they also went from house to house, tearing down buildings, driving women and children into the wilderness and beating the men near unto death. An express came to the Colesville branch informing us that the mob threatened men, women and children with death. Consequently the branch sent up a commission of nineteen men to reconnoiter and watch the proceedings of the

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[1] Early Scenes in Church History, 8th Book of the Faith Promoting Series, (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), pp. 82-86.

> mob. Our company was met by the mob between the Timber branch and the Big Blue and obliged to scatter in every direction in order to save their lives. David Whitmer and Newel Knight returned as express messengers to our settlement and raised a company under the command of David Whitmer and Caleb Baldwin with a view of disbursing the mob. At the time the alarm was given Philo Dibble and myself were standing on the picket guard, and we immediately started for the Timber branch; but before arriving there we waited till the company came up, when we found that they had raised nearly thirty men with 18 or 20 guns and one pistol. David Whitmer divided the company, David Caleb taking command of one part of the same and himself of the other. The Mob, about 80 in number, were first discovered about sunset tearing down Christian Whitmer's house. David Whitmer's company, to which I was attached, marched down the street toward the house, while Caleb Baldwin's men took across the lots. When we arrived within gun shot, one of the mobbers, Captain Brazeale, rallied his forces and shouted: "The Mormons are for fight; give them hell." Two or three guns were then discharged. The mob again fired, when I received a ball in my left shoulder, which disabled me from action; but our company immediately rushed upon and dispersed the enemy, which left their wounded and arms. They were pursued about a quarter of a mile, when the brethren returned and gathered up their wounded, namely, Philo Dibble, Jacob Whitmer, William Whiting and myself. Andrew Barber, who had a pistol, had rushed upon the mobbers who, loading their guns while running, shot Andrew before he got within pistol shot, fatally wounding him; he died next morning between 5 and 6 o'clock.[1]

Cleveland was also taken to "Father" Whitmer's house and was refused admittance on the same grounds given Philo Dibble. He was then taken to Norman West's where his wound was dressed, but the shot was left in him and so it remained until his death. A few days later, a Baptist missionary came to the house with about eighty men seeking Cleveland, but he was secreted beyond their ability to find him. After threatening the family with death if they were not gone within three days, the mob left. Cleveland was taken to Clay County where he recovered sufficiently to build a house the following winter.[2] April 15, 1861, Philo Dibble gave a partial list of those participating in this battle, including in it Cleveland (severely wounded), Jacob Whitmer (wounded in the wrist), William Whiting (wounded in the foot),

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[1] J. H., November 4, 1833.

[2] Ibid.

Andrew Barber (killed--first known actual martyr in the Church), and himself (wounded as previously related). Dibble claimed that "Father" Brace, a Revolutionary War veteran, used his ability as a ventriloquist to make the mob think there were Mormons all through the woods.[1]

Due to the difficulties that the members of the Church were having in Jackson County, Missouri, a delegation was sent to Kirtland, Ohio to acquaint the Church there, with their situation. Governor Daniel Dunklin had promised the Missouri Saints assistance if they could do something to assist the state in restoring them to their lands. Consequently "Zion's Camp" had been organized in Ohio and marched to Missouri for that purpose. However, when the Governor withdrew his support the Camp was disbanded. While in Missouri, David Whitmer and others were called to receive certain endowments in Kirtland. But before going to Ohio, David accompanied Joseph Smith on a tour of Clay County and the Prophet relates the following experience:

> While traveling, we called at the house of a Mr. Moss for a drink of water. The woman of the house shouted from the door, that they had "no water for Mormons," that they were "afraid of the cholera," etc., at the same time throwing out her arms as if defending herself from the cholera in the form of a personage. . . . Before a week had passed, the cholera entered that house, and that woman and three others of the family were dead.[2]

On July 3, 1834, the High Priests gathered at the home of Lyman Wight and organized the High Council according to the pattern that had been established in Kirtland. Its purpose was to settle such difficulties and business as could not be settled by the Bishop and his council. David Whitmer was chosen as president and he selected William W. Phelps and John Whitmer

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 115.

as assistant presidents. The councilmen were Christian Whitmer, Newel Knight, Lyman Wight, Calvin Beebe, William E. M'Lellin, Solomon Hancock, Thomas B. Marsh, Simeon Carter, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Murdock, and Levi Jackman.[1] July 7th saw the High Council gathered again at the home of Lyman Wight where they were confirmed in their appointments and set apart by the Prophet Joseph. "Father" Peter Whitmer came forward and gave his three sons, David, John, and Christian, a father's blessing. It was decided that William W. Phelps should leave his family in Missouri and go to Kirtland to assist with the printing of Church publications. David Whitmer was also requested to go east to Kirtland, and "assist in promoting the cause of Christ." He was told to decide for himself whether or not he should take his family. At this time he had a son David J., born in Clay County, Missouri, November 27, 1833; his decision was to take his family with him to Kirtland.[2] The High Priests, Elders, Teachers, Deacons, and members present, then covenanted with uplifted hands, that they would uphold David and his assistants as presidents of the Church in Zion in the absence of Joseph Smith.[3] The Prophet left for Kirtland on the ninth of July.

On the 12th the Council assembled in Clay County and appointed a number of men to visit the scattered and afflicted brethren in that region, though they were to hold no public meetings. The 31st of the same month the Council met again to hear the reports of these visits. David instructed

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[1] J. H., July 3, 1834.

[2] That David Whitmer took his family with him is indicated by the birth of a daughter, Julia Ann, in Kirtland, July 28, 1835. (Conservator, June 20, 1895.)

[3] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 125-126.

them as to their duties in transacting the business of the meetings and in preaching the Gospel, indicating that it was not pleasing to the Lord for them to do so unless they could set forth its principles in plainness. They should also be informed as to the rules and regulations of the Church. At this meeting it was also decided to appoint a number of Elders to instruct the members as to how to escape the indignation of their enemies. It was agreed that it would not be wisdom for them to vote in the approaching election.[1] In addition this session saw charges prefered against Samuel Brown for certain of his actions and expressions of counsel which were contrary to the practice of the Church. Brown confessed the charges giving up his license, but retaining his membership. "Therefore Brother Brown stands as a private member of this Church--all this by the voice of the councilors."[2] On the recommendation of David Whitmer, William Batton also gave up his license because of his lack of discretion and understanding--the council voting unanimously (August 7, 1834).

Sometime between August and October, David moved to Kirtland, Ohio, with his family. The Prophet speaks of David's accompanying him on a mission to Michigan to visit members of the Church. There, they preached and taught as long as their time would allow, returning to Kirtland "greatly refreshed from our journey, and much pleased with our friends in that section of the Lord's vineyard."[3] Another account says they originally planned going to Canada.[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 126-137.

[2] "Far West Record," op. cit., p. 57.

[3] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 168.

[4] J. H., October 16, 1834.

A meeting was called February 14, 1835 to which all were called who had made the journey to Zion (Jackson County, Missouri) "for the purpose of laying the foundation of its redemption," along with as many others who would care to attend. The first business of the meeting concerned the choosing of twelve apostles (previously made known to the Prophet, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer as early as 1829[1]).

> The Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, to pray, each one, and then to proceed to choose twelve men from the Church, as Apostles, to go to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.
>
> The Three Witnesses, viz., Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, united in prayer.
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> These Three Witnesses then, according to a former commandment, proceeded to make choice of the Twelve. Their names are as follows: 1. Lyman E. Johnson, 2. Brigham Young, 3. Heber C. Kimball, 4. Orson Hyde, 5. David W. Patten, 6. Luke S. Johnson, 7. William E. M'Lellin, 8. John F. Boynton, 9. Orson Pratt, 10. William Smith[2], 11. Thomas B. Marsh, 12. Parley P. Pratt.[3]

The men called then came forward and the Witnesses "laid hands on each one's head and prayed separately."[4] Not all the men called were ordained at this time for mention is made of Parley P. Pratt being ordained February 21, 1835.[5]

Frequent mention is made of David being in attendance at various meetings and conferences during the spring and summer. On September 16th, he and Samuel H. Smith were appointed by the Presidency of the Church "to act in the name of and for, the "Literary Firm"."[6] On the 19th of the same month David sat in on the trial of Elder Jared Carter who was being tried

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[1] D. & C., sec. 18, vs. 37.

[2] In a letter written by Oliver Cowdery to Brigham Young, he says that he and David Whitmer selected Phineas H. Young, brother of Brigham Young as an apostle in place of William Smith, but Oliver and David were persuaded by Joseph Smith to select William. J. H., February 27, 1848.

[3] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 186-187.

[4] Ibid. [5] Ibid., p. 191. [6] Ibid., p. 273.

for certain remarks made which were thought contrary to the teachings of the Church. Exactly what David's capacity at this meeting was, isn't clear. The Ohio councilors decided the issue, although the Presidency of the Church in Ohio, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams were present, as were David Whitmer and W. W. Phelps of the Missouri Presidency. David and his assistant W. W. Phelps were both given an opportunity to express themselves in the matter--David declaring himself against the actions of Carter.[1] It would seem more than an act of courtesy in inviting David to this meeting; it is a possible indication of official recognition as a Church leader with definite responsibilities and authority over the membership in Ohio as well as in Missouri. On the 23rd of September some of the brethren were starting for Missouri, "Zion, or the Saints' gathering place." On this occasion it was David who acted as spokesman in a prayer offered in their behalf. "He prayed in the spirit, and a glorious time succeeded his prayer; joy filled our hearts. . . ."[2]

The High Council met at the home of the Prophet and it was decided that they petition the Governor of Missouri that those driven from their lands should be allowed to go back in the spring. "We truly had a good time, and covenanted to struggle for this thing, until death shall dissolve the union. . . ."[3] John Whitmer, Church Historian at that time, adds:

> And it came to pass on the 24th day of September, 1835, on which day we met in council at the home of Joseph Smith, Jun., the Seer, where we according to a previous commandment given, appointed David Whitmer captain of the Lord's host, and Brother[s] F. G. Williams and Sidney Rigdon his assistants. And President W. W. Phelps, myself and John Corrill as an assistant quorum; and Joseph Smith, Jun., the Seer,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 277-280.

[2] Ibid., p. 281.

[3] Ibid., pp. 281-282.

> to stand at the head to be assisted by Hyrum Smith and Oliver Cowdery. This much for the war department by revelation.[1]

In spite of this account of John Whitmer's, subsequent history gives no indication that this organization was intended to be militant. Its sole purpose seems to have been the restoration of the Saints to their properties in Missouri.

Previous mention has been made of David's powers of prophecy and discernment where the sick are concerned. On the 11th of October the Prophet Joseph writes that he had been greatly concerned over the health of his father, Joseph, Sen., and had made it a matter of prayer, feeling that he needed his council and mature experience. The Prophet writes:

> At evening Brother David Whitmer came in. We called on the Lord in mighty prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, and laid our hands on him, and rebuked the disease. And God heard and answered our pravers--to the great joy and satisfaction of our souls. Our aged father arose and dressed himself, shouted, and praised the Lord.[2]

Another act of healing in company with the Prophet is related on the 10th day of December. Angeline Works was very ill and "so much deranged that she did not recognize her friends and intimate acquaintances." The Prophet Joseph and David commanded her to receive her senses and be restored to health. Her condition was immediately so much better that she was herself able to acknowledge the improvement.[3]

From time to time it became necessary to fill vacancies as they occured in the High Council of Zion. With David Whitmer and W. W. Phelps of the Zion Presidency now residing in Ohio, it appears that they (David

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[1]John Whitmer, "The Book of John Whitmer," a typewritten, unpublished book (Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Church Historian Library, n.d.) chap. 17, p. 104.

[2]Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 289.

[3]Ibid., p. 328.

Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, Joseph Smith, and perhaps others) filled these vacancies while still residing in Ohio. The appointments not being binding upon the council in Zion until they had had an opportunity of voting their acceptance. It is also possible that the High Council of Ohio was recognized as having precedent over the Council in Missouri, for on January 6, 1836, the High Council assembled in Kirtland to fill the vacancies in the Zion High Council, necessitated by the death of Christian Whitmer and the promotion of four of the councilors to Apostles. On the 13th of the same month, two more councilors for Missouri were called.[1]

At this time the Prophet Joseph met with the presidency of Kirtland (Joseph Smith, Jun., Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith) and of Zion (David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and W. W. Phelps, also the Twelve Apostles, High Councils of Kirtland and of Zion, Bishops of Zion and Kirtland, the Presidency of the Seventies, and many others for the purpose of transacting the business of the Church. Joseph Smith, Jun., Sidney Rigdon, W. W. Phelps, David Whitmer, and Hyrum Smith were appointed to draft rules and regulations governing the "House of the Lord." Sidney Rigdon had been suffering from a face affliction and requested David Whitmer and Hyrum Smith to give him a blessing, which they did.[2]

The Presidencies and High Councils of Kirtland and Zion were again invited to meet with the prophet. Each member was annointed and reported

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[1] Ibid., pp. 256, 357, 367. (It is also quite possible that all the remaining councilors of the Church in Zion were visiting Kirtland because of the Temple and that they were meeting with the Kirtland High Council, yet filling the vacancies of their own High Council from the men whose homes were now in Missouri.)

[2] Ibid., pp. 364-367.

remarkable manifestations and visions, some of them saying they saw the face of the Savior.[1] This was a time of intellectual development (School of the Prophets) and frequent manifestations of a spiritual nature for many of the leaders of the Church.

At the time the Saints were being driven from their homes in Jackson County, Missouri, the corner stones for a temple were being laid in Kirtland. After years of sacrifice, toil, and opposition on the part of those who would prevent the growth of this religious movement, the Saints saw the temple finally reach a stage of completion that would allow for its dedication. If the arrangement of the respective bodies of the priesthood, councils, etc., is any indication of the respective authority of these bodies, then certainly David Whitmer would have had difficulty in thinking of himself as having the same right to preside over the entire Church as did Joseph Smith.[2] On March 27, 1836, manifestations of a heavenly nature were reported. David Whitmer, along with Frederick G. Williams, spoke of seeing angels.[3]

On the 28th, many of the Church leaders met in the temple for the purpose of participating in the ancient rite of "foot washing." David Whitmer's feet were washed by Hyrum Smith and David in turn washing the feet of William W. Phelps.[4]

W. W. Phelps returned to Missouri after the dedication of the temple and became the acting head of the Council in Clay County where the Mormons had settled after leaving Jackson County. Here, the Mormons were also having some difficulties with the citizens; they had been asked to

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[1] Ibid., p. 282.

[2] Ibid., pp. 411, 418.

[3] Ibid., p. 427.

[4] Ibid., p. 430.

leave. David was still assuming the responsibilities of furthering the work of Christ in the east as he had been instructed in that first High Council meeting held in Missouri.

On the 2nd of November, articles of agreement were drawn for the purpose of establishing the "Kirtland Safety Society Bank." The 2nd of January found two-thirds of the members of this Society meeting again, working on the articles of agreement and in other ways promoting its welfare. Included among the articles of agreement of this banking society was the stipulation that all individual members bind themselves for the payment of notes issued and signed by the treasurer and secretary; David being one of the thirty-four signing this agreement.[1] This later resulted in considerable dissatisfaction on the part of some since this organization was supposedly the result of revelation. Wilford Woodruff declared that he had visited the office of the "Society" on the 6th of November (1836), where Joseph told him (David Whitmer and others being present) that he had that morning received word from the Lord upon the subject of the Kirtland Safety Society. Joseph said that he had been alone and "not only heard the voice of the spirit, but it was also an audible voice."[2] The subsequent failure of this "society" brought the cry "fallen prophet" from those seeking to recoupe their losses from this venture.

David was very much a part of the various activities of the Church in Ohio even though he was being given every consideration as the leader of the Church in Missouri. A High Council meeting was held in Far West, the principal center of activity of the Church's new activities in Missouri, in which the Presidency of Zion--viz., David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and W.

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[1] J. H., January 2, 1837. [2] Ibid., January 6, 1837.

W. Phelps--were designated as "superintendents" for the building of the Lord's House in that place and entitled to receive revelations, visions, etc. "concerning said House."[1]

Not long after this, David returned to Missouri, but not before he and others had had some difficulties with certain members of the Church in Kirtland where charges were brought against them by Frederick G. Williams and others, because they felt "their course for some time past has been injurious to the Church of God, in which they are high officers. . . . " However, it was decided that the Council in Ohio had no jurisdiction over them.[2] This affair seems to indicate the Church was also having its troubles in Ohio. At the same time the other members of the Zion Presidency were having their troubles in Missouri.[3]

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[1] Ibid., April 7, 1837.

[2] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 483-484.

[3] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

"THEREBY WITHDRAW FROM YOUR FELLOWSHIP"

Zion was to be established in Missouri. Kirtland was never thought of as a permanent headquarters of the Church, but the majority of the membership was there and the Zion building process was a slow one, wrought with many obstacles and difficulties. David Whitmer was one of the earliest of the Church members to consecrate himself to the building of the "new Jerusalem;" although he was the president of the Zion High Council and spent the greater portion of his time with the Church leaders in Kirtland, Ohio. Still Mr. Whitmer had never given up the hope of reestablishing the Saints in Jackson County, and he claimed one of the first "inheritances" in that area. John Whitmer, soon after the expulsion from Jackson, lists sixty-three whom the Lord had designated as heirs of Zion. David is given as number four, following Martin Harris, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery.[1]

What David's feelings toward the leadership of the Church were when he returned to Missouri during the summer of 1837, is not known, but subsequent incidents would indicate that all was not as harmonious among the brethren as it had once been. The financial panic of 1837 had caught the improperly managed "Kirtland Safety Society" in its meshes along with hundreds of other financial institutions, although this was not the only cause of financial stress felt by the Saints. The expense incurred in erecting

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[1]John Whitmer, op. cit., chap. 15, pp. 93-94.

the Kirtland Temple, the poor and destitute who had joined the Church and migrated to Ohio seeking assistance and necessary homes, large contracts for land entered into for the benefit of the poor, etc., all these had a part in bringing about a condition of dissatisfaction among many who now turned against the leaders of the Church and placed the responsibility for their losses squarely upon them. As a result apostacy became rampant and "enemies abroad, aided by apostates within, united in various schemes to overthrow the Prophet as if had been the sole cause of all evils, not only in the communities of the Church, but throughout the entire land."[1]

The Prophet writes, "of the Twelve Apostles chosen in Kirtland. . . there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me--namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball."[2] This condition is verified to some extent in the "History of Brigham Young."

> On a certain occasion several of the Twelve, the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and others of the authorities of the Church, held a council in the upper room of the temple. The question before them was to ascertain how the Prophet Joseph could be deposed and David Whitmer appointed the President of the Church. Father John Smith, Heber C. Kimball and others were present, who were opposed to such measures. I rose up, and in plain and forcible manner told them that Joseph was a Prophet and I knew it, and that they might rail and slander him as much as they pleased, they could not destroy the appointment of the Prophet of God, they could only destroy their own authority, cut the thread that bound them to the Prophet of God, and sink themselves to hell. . . . This meeting was broken up without the apostates being able to unite on any decided measure of opposition.[3]

Ebenezer Robinson, prominent in the early church as an editor, printer, publisher, and clerk of many councils held in Missouri, wrote:

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[1]Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History, (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, Seventh Edition, 1940), pp. 197-198.

[2]Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 412.

[3]Mill. Star, Vol. 25, August 1, 1863, p. 487.

> During the winter and spring of 1837, a great split occured between a number of the leading Elders of the church. Frederick G. Williams, one of the first presidency, Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Luke and Lyman Johnson, Parley P. Pratt, Wm. E. McLellin, John F. Boynton, (the last five named were of the quorum of twelve apostles) Roger Orton, one of the seventy, and a number of others including S. Wilbur Denton, printer and high priest, who testified of having seen a great vision, during the time of the washings and anointings the preceeding March; these all objected to the course being persued by Brother Joseph, jr. [sic] and the church.
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> . . . . . .
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> We felt confirmed in our desire to remain with the work for the church, not withstanding our better judgement taught us the city lot speculation and bank business was contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Darkness and confusion followed these transactions. . . .[1]

The above indicates that divisions existed and that feelings were running high when David Whitmer delivered a "timely lecture on union and brotherly love" before the Seventies in the loft of the "Lord's House" in Kirtland, January 17, of the year he left Ohio.[2] Furthermore, in a letter to the "Brethren" of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Mr. Whitmer writes:

> As to the spirit in which I left Kirtland to go to Missouri, I will tell you of a revelation received through Joseph at Kirtland, which was the cause of my leaving Kirtland to come to Missouri. It was received in the presence of Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and others. It was not printed, as many others were never printed; so I give you a part of it from memory: "That my servant Sydney must go sooner or later to Pittsburg; that I Joseph, must remain here in Kirtland, for this is my appointed place; and the brethren must not keep my servant David here any longer, for he is needed in Missouri, for that is his appointed place." I parted from the brethren in Kirtland in the spirit of love.[3]

This suggests that all differences which might have existed prior to David's leaving Kirtland had been at least temporarily settled.

The Church in Missouri was becoming firmly established at its new

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[1] Ebenezer Robinson, "Items of Personal History of the Editor," The Return, (Davis City, Iowa: Church of Christ), Vol. I, no. 8, August, 1889.

[2] J. H., January 17, 1837.

[3] The Saints' Herald, (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Vol. 34, no. 6, February 5, 1887.

location, Far West, Caldwell County, and a temple of the Lord was in prospect for this area. August 5th, the Presidency, High Council, and the authorities of the Church in Missouri, assembled in council at Far West where it was decided to proceed moderately in the construction of this "house." A secretary was appointed to receive donations and subscriptions; the building committee was to stand as it was until such time as David Whitmer should make a round trip to Kirtland.[1] He apparently did not make this trip, and must thereafter have been accused of some activity not in sympathy with the Prophet, for on September 4th, Joseph Smith--as President of the Church--wrote to John Corrill and the "whole Church in Zion." Since David was still the president of the Church in Zion, it would seem that he should have been the recipient of such a communication, particularly so when the Prophet wrote:

> that you [John Corrill] may know how to proceed to set in order and regulate the affairs of the Church in Zion whenever they become disorganized.[2]

In this communication is also an announcement concerning transgressions of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and others. But why should such a letter be addressed to a councilman rather than to a member of the presidency? John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps must have also been considered transgressors.

Joseph Smith left for Far West soon after this and met with the High Council there on the 6th of November. At this meeting, presided over by W. W. Phelps, several topics concerning the Church in Missouri were discussed. On the following day a conference was held during which the authorities were presented for sustaining votes. There was some objection to President Frederick G. Williams and David spoke in his behalf as did Bishop Edward Part-

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 505.

[2]Ibid., pp. 508-511.

ridge, who had seconded Williams. By a vote of those present, President Williams was rejected and Hyrum Smith sustained unanimously in his place.

When David Whitmer's name was presented for a sustaining vote as President of the Church in Zion, there were a number who objected to him, though several spoke in his behalf. He requested Elder M'Lellin to speak for him; his remarks "gave general satisfaction." The Prophet Joseph also expressed himself (no details of the nature of his remarks are given) after which he called for the vote "which carried by almost a unanimous vote in favor of President Whitmer." John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps, after confessing certain errors, were unanimously sustained as assistant presidents in Missouri. Thomas B. Marsh was the apparent leader of the opposition to the Missouri Presidency.[1]

A few days later the Prophet returned to Kirtland and the affairs of the Church in Missouri were left in the hands of the Presidency and High Council. David was authorized for the signing of Elder's licenses as late as December 6th, 1837.[2]

> At a social gathering held at the home of Thomas B. Marsh. . . we [the council] took into consideration the proceedings of the presidents of this place, viz: David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, John Whitmer, and Oliver Cowdery and, we being grieved at their doings, after various discussions appointed a committee to visit them and inquire into their feelings and determinations.[3]

Why this activity should have been a function of a "social gathering" rather than in a formal council meeting is not clear, yet it does indicate that the High Council was not in sympathy with some of the activities of the Missouri Presidency and Oliver Cowdery. This "social gathering" was on the 20th of January, 1838. On the 26th another meeting was held at the home of John

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[1] Ibid., pp. 521-525. [2] Ibid., p. 527.

[3] "Far West Record," p. 92.

Anderson where a report of the previously assigned committee was given as follows:

> Respecting their selling their lands in Jackson County, they, the presidents, declared that they had not broken revelation or Law of God in so doing and further if they were deprived of the privilege they would sell their possessions in Far West and move out of the place and W. W. Phelps said he would move out of the accursed place and further they declared they would not be controlled by any ecclesiastical power or revelation whatever in their temporal concerns sic . And respecting the word of wisdom sic , W. W. Phelps said he had not broken it but had kept it. O. Cowdery said he had drunk tea three times a day this winter on account of his ill health. David and John Whitmer said they did use tea and coffee but they did not consider them to come under the head of hot drinks.[1]
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> The Council resolved as follows:
> (1) That under existing circumstances we no longer receive them as Presidents.
> (2) That the case be laid before the Church at different meetings held for that purpose by [at least] seven of the High Councilors. . . .
> (3) That Elias Higbee and G. M. Hinkle write to the several neighborhoods and give notice of the time and places of holding meetings.
> (4) That Thomas B. Marsh give written notice to David Whitmer and W. W. Phelps and John Whitmer of the proceedings of the meeting. . . .[2]

It was at about this time that the Prophet was preparing to move to Missouri, but he was not as yet in Far West. There is no apparent evidence that he took any part in the trials of the Presidents, though he did give assent to their propriety. The minutes of the proceedings are rather complete and cover the meetings held in the various places at which branches of the Church were established. At Far West the meeting was on the 5th of February, 1838, Thomas B. Marsh acting as moderator and John Cleminson, clerk. Elder John Murdock took the stand and explained why the High Council was proceeding as it was (so "that the Church might have a voice in the matter"); and that it was "perfectly legal according to instructions from Joseph Smith, Jr." John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps were accused of various transgressions including the sale of their properties in Jackson County;

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[1] Ibid., pp. 92-93. [2] Ibid.

this was considered tantamount to a denial of the faith.

Elder G. M. Hinkle, a member of the committee that had been selected to "wait" upon the members of the Presidency at a previous meeting, read a list of accusations against them, but nothing specific is mentioned against David in the minutes of the meeting. There were a number, Bishop Partridge, John Corrill, Simeon Carter, Titus Billings, and others, who felt that the meeting was hasty and illegal.[1] The majority, however, felt the procedure lawful and "the vote against David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and W. W. Phelps was unanimous, excepting eight or ten. . . . " Similar meetings were called for Simeon Carter's settlement (February 6th), Edmund Durfee's (the 7th) Nahum Curtis' (the 8th), Haun's Mill (the 9th), and in each instance the Presidents were unanimously rejected by those assembled.

A further meeting for the Council and the Bishop (Partridge) and his Council was called for February 10th. No action was taken concerning David, but the right to issue and record licenses was denied Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. Thomas B. Marsh and David W. Patten were selected as "Presidents pro. tempor, of the Church of the Latter-day Saints in Missouri."[2]

That David Whitmer had little respect for the authority and actions of the Council at this time is shown by a letter written to Thomas B. Marsh:

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[1]There seems to have been considerable doubt as to just what was the authority of the Presidents of the Church in Missouri. Some members of the Council apparently felt that they were entitled to the same council trial as the President of the whole Church (D. & C. sec. 107, vss. 81-83, 91, 92). In terms of the subsequent history of the Church, it would appear that the presidency of Missouri was that of a "Stake" and not of the Church. In other words, the Missouri Presidency's authority was restricted to that geographical area (Missouri) and to recognize it as being equal to the Presidency of the whole Church indicates a misconception of the relative positions.

[2]"Far West Record," pp. 93-96.

Far West, March 10th, 1838

Sir: It is contrary to the principles of the revelations of Jesus Christ, and His gospel, and the laws of the land, to try a person for an offence, by an illegal tribunal, or by men prejudiced against him or by the authority that has given an opinion, or decision beforehand or in his absence.

Very respectfully, we have the honor to be,
David Whitmer
W. W. Phelps
John Whitmer
Presidents of the Church in Missouri.

To T. B. Marsh
One of the Traveling Councilors.

Attest: Oliver Cowdery,
Clerk of the High Council of the Church of Christ in Mo.
I certify the foregoing to be a true copy from the original.

Oliver Cowdery, Clerk
of the High Council.[1]

The evening of the day this letter was written, previous to giving it to its rightful owner, the High Council met and heard this letter read by Marcellus Cowdery. It only tended to convince the Council that these were wicked men palming themselves off upon the Church as her Presidents after they had been removed as such by the voice of that Church. John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps, for iniquitous practices, were declared to be "no longer members of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints, and. . . given over to the buffetings of Satan, until they learn to blaspheme no more against the authorities of God, nor fleece the flock of Christ." The voting to excommunicate them was unanimous.[2] (Because Marcellus Cowdery considered the tribunal illegal, he refused to vote and was disfellowshipped for speaking against the authorities of the Church.)

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[1] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[2] Ibid., pp. 100-103.

In a letter the Prophet wrote to the presidency of the Church in Kirtland, dated March 29, 1838, he informed them that John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps had been "cut off from the Church, David Whitmer remaining as yet."[1] While David's membership is recognized, he is no longer thought of as associated with the leadership of the Church. At a meeting held in Far West, April 6th, to commemorate the anniversary of the Church, the minutes show Thomas B. Marsh to be President pro tempore of the Church in Zion, and Brigham Young and David W. Patten, his assistant Presidents."[2]

In a High Council meeting at Far West, April 13th, 1838,

> a charge was prefered against David Whitmer by Alanson Ripley as Follows:
>
> "To the High Council of the Church of the Latter-day Saints in Missouri.
>
> I prefer the following charges before your honorable body against David Whitmer.
>
> 1st. For not observing the word of wisdom, for unchristian-like conduct in neglecting to attend meetings, in uniting with, and possessing the same spirit with the dissenters, in writing letters to the dissenters in Kirtland unfavorable to the cause and to Brother Joseph Smith, Jr.
>
> 2nd. For neglecting the duties of his calling.
>
> 3rd. For separating himself from the cause and the Church while he has a name among us.
>
> 4th. For signing himself President of the Church of Christ in an insulting letter to the High Council.
>
> A. Ripley."

After which a letter was read from David Whitmer as follows:

> "Far West, Missouri, April 13, 1838.
>
> John Murdock,
>
> Sir: I received a line from you bearing date the 9th inst. requesting me as a High Priest to appear before the High Council and answer to for several charges on this day at 12 o'clock.
>
> You Sir, with a majority of this Church have decided that certain councils were legal by which it is said I have been deprived of my office as one of the Presidents of this Church. I have thought and

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[1] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 11.

[2] Ibid., p. 14.

> still think they were not agreeable to the revelations of God, which I believe; and by now attending this Council, and answering the charges as a High Priest, should be acknowledging the correctness and legality of those former assumed councils, which I shall not do.
>
> Believing as I verily do, that you and the leaders of the councils have a determination to persue your unlawful course at all hazards, and bring others to your standard in violation of the revelations, to spare you any further trouble I hereby withdraw from your fellowship and communion--choosing to seek a place among the meek and the humble, where the revelations of heaven will be observed and the rights of men regarded.
>
> David Whitmer."[1]

After members of the Council had read the letter from David they no longer thought it necessary to investigate the charges made against him. The feeling created by the letter caused the Councilors to consider him no longer "a member of the Church of Christ of the Latter-day Saints," though there is no indication that his membership was ever voted upon.[2] Ebenezer Robinson was the clerk signing these minutes and refers to them years later in a publication defending David. He says,

> "The council considered the charges sustained, and consequently considered him (David Whitmer) no longer a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." There is no account that we can find, of the church ever lifting their hands against him, which is required to be done by the law. . . . Thus we are fully convinced, from a careful examination of the records, and our personal knowledge of the proceedings, that David Whitmer never was legally expelled from the church.[3]

Some of the historians of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also doubt the legality of the excommunication, and while David at times refers to the "Church leaving him," yet he declared in his own book, "I left the body [Church] in June, 1838. . . ."[4]

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[1] "Far West Record," pp. 123-125.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Robinson, op. cit., no. 9, September 1889, pp. 134-135.

[4] Whitmer, op. cit., p. 8.

CHAPTER VI

"BALAAM'S ASS" (ASSOCIATED WITH M'LELLINISM)

After the meeting of April 13, 1838, at which David's letter to John Murdock was read, Mr. Whitmer was no longer considered a member of the Church. About the same time Lyman E. Johnson, one of the Twelve Apostles was also dropped from the Church, adding to the number of former Church leaders that were now "outsiders." Many thought these men would assume new positions of leadership over those large numbers who had already disassociated themselves from the body of the Saints. Vexatious, though apparently legal, lawsuits were instituted against the leaders of the Church as part of a seemingly systematic effort to undermine the influence of its Presidency. The Prophet Joseph writes that on Sunday, May 6th, 1838

> I preached to the Saints, setting forth the evils that existed, and that would exist, by reason of hasty judgment, or decisions upon any subject given by any people, or in judging before they had heard both sides of a question. I also cautioned the Saints against men who came amongst them whining and growling about their money, because they had kept the Saints, and borne some of the burden with others, and thus thinking that others, who are still poorer, and have borne greater burdens than they themselves, ought to make up their losses. I cautioned the Saints to beware of such, for they were throwing out insinuations here and there, to level a dart at the best interests of the Church, and if possible to destroy the character of its Presidency.[1]

Within a fortnight, Joseph Smith left Far West for the purpose of selecting lands in Caldwell and Daviess Counties for settlement, his time being much occupied with this activity. However, the other members of the

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 27.

Church Presidency (Sidney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith) were unable to accept the conditions alluded to by the Prophet Joseph, as magnanimously as he did; they did something about them. Sidney Rigdon seems to have lost something of the humility necessary for a position as commanding as his in the Presidency of the Church. He apparently ignored the warning just given by the Prophet and assumed a spirit of vituperation; ostensibly inducing others of the Church leaders to participate in this spirit with him. Mr. Rigdon is said to have been responsible for the following communication,[1] although Hyrum Smith's signature is found among the eighty-four citizens who signed it. In part it reads:

> Far West, June, 1838.
>
> To Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, William W. Phelps and Lyman E. Johnson.
>
> Greeting: Whereas the citizens of Caldwell County have borne with the abuses received from you at different times and on different occasions until it is no longer to be endured, neither will they endure it any longer, having exhausted all the patience they have. We have borne long and suffered incredibly, but we will bear nor suffer any longer, and the decree has gone forth from our hearts and shall not return unto us void. Neither think, gentlemen, in so doing we are trifling with either you or ourselves for we are not.
>
> There are no threats from you, no fear of losing our lives by you, or any thing you can say or do will restrain us, for out of the county you shall go and no power shall save you, and you shall have three days after you receive this our communication to you, including twenty-four hours in each day for you to depart with your families peaceably, which you may do undisturbed by any person. But in that time, if you do not depart, we will use the means in our power to cause you to depart, for go you shall.
>
> We will have no more promises to reform as you have already made, and in every instance violated your promise and regarded not the covenant which you have made, but put both it and us at defiance.
>
> We have solemnly warned you, and that in the most determined manner, that if you did not cease that course of wanton abuse of the citizens of this county, that vengeance would overtake you sooner or later, and that when it did come it would be as furious as the mountain torrent and as terrible as the beating tempest. But you have affected to despise our warnings and to pass them off with a sneer a grin or a threat, and still persued your former course.

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[1]Roberts, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 438.

> Vengeance sleeps not neither does it slumber; and unless you heed us this time, and attend to our request, it will overtake you at an hour when you do not expect it and at a day when you do not look for it, and for you there shall be no escape; for there is but one decree for you which is, depart, depart, or else a more fatal calamity shall befall you. . . .[1]

No differentiation is made in the foregoing communication between individuals; the action of any one of them seems to have been the same as the collective act of all concerned. Only the men recently excommunicated from the Church bear the brunt of Mr. Rigdon's letter. There appears to be a cloaked inference that the activities of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and Lyman E. Johnson, are within the law, and that the only recourse left to their accusers (those signing the letter) is that same tactic which they themselves have so long endured at the hands of their enemies.

The dissenters had no choice but to leave, which they did late one afternoon in June. Ebenezer Robinson, quoting an old copy of a M'Lellin publication, "Ensign of Liberty," March, 1847, gives the following:

> All things seemed to admonish them [sic] they only could have safety in flight; consequently near sunset, David, Oliver, John and Lyman, bid farewell to their youthful wives, and their little children, their homes and their firesides, and with heavy hearts and solemn step they left that people who had been enlightened and bro't together, to a great extent, by their labors and "testimony," but alas! who had now fallen, and become their bitterest enemies, and high handed persecutors. After these men . . . had taken an affectionate leave of their innocent families, resigning them into the hands of the Father of light, they left "the city of their homes" and began to wend their way across those extensive prairies lying south of Far West.
>
> But the darkness of night soon coming on, and being comparative strangers to the way, they directly lost their path. Pensive, mournful and solemn, see them wander they know not where.
>
> . . . . . .

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[1]Robinson, op. cit., no. 10, Oct. 1889, pp. 146-7. (The full text of this document is found in "Documents, Correspondence, Orders, etc., in relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons", published by order of the Missouri legislature, 1841, p. 103 et. seq.)

> But onward see those men wander until the light of a new day broke in upon that part of the earth, and meeting a stranger he points them to an old friend's who lived about twenty-five miles from Far West. With joy mixed with sorrow, he received them. . . . Here they found a home from the "pitiless storm," and remained and refreshed themselves for some days, until their friends had succeeded in bringing them their families.[1]

It is doubtful that these men could have been so easily induced to leave their homes had there not been some power at the disposal of the signers of the communication to cause them some anxiety. Robinson refers to a military organization whose purpose was to accomplish just such measures as removing dissenters from the County. Article eight under which the "Daughters of Zion, afterward called Danites" was organized, gave any officer considerable power in issuing orders to subordinates;[2] thus they wouldn't know whether the order was from the leaders of the Church or not. Thomas B. Marsh and Orson Hyde both signed affidavits acknowledging the existence of such an organization; but it was apparently without the Prophet Joseph's knowledge, for when it became known to him, the instigator of the movement, a Dr. Sampson Avard, was excommunicated and the organization disbanded.[3]

That these banished men were made to appear the vilest of characters, thus facilitating the ease with which their removal was made possible, is shown by the unsubstantiated report included in the documents published by the Missouri State legislature.

> . . . Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson, united with a gang of counterfieters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat and defraud the Saints out of their property, by every art and stratagem which wickedness could invent; using the influence of the vilest persecutions to bring vexatious lawsuits, villainess prosecution, and even stealing not excepted. . . . During the full career of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer's bogus money business,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[3] Joseph Fielding Smith, op. cit., pp. 226, 227.

> it got abroad into the world that they were engaged in it, and several gentlemen were preparing to commence a prosecution against Cowdery.[1]

Had this statement been true, there would have been no reason for expelling them under threats since the law would have taken care of them in a much more satisfactory manner; their subsequent lives would indicate there was very little truth in these vilifying statements.

The matter of vexatious lawsuits was not all one-sided if we put any credence in the statements of John Whitmer, former church historian.

> They commenced suing at the law of the land by attachment for debts which they knew were paid. . . . Joseph Smith, Jun., S. Rigdon and Hyrum Smith* were the instigators, and George W. Robinson was the prosecutor against David Whitmer, Lyman E. Johnson, Oliver Cowdery, F. G. Williams, W. W. Phelps and myself. . . . After they had instituted the foregoing suits Oliver Cowdery, D. Whitmer, L. E. Johnson and myself went to Clay County to obtain legal council, to prepare to overthrow these attachments which they had caused to be issued against us, which we were abundantly able to do by good and substantial witnesses. . . . When we were on our way home from Liberty, Clay County, we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L. E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes, and robbed them of their goods save clothing, bedding, etc.[2]

William E. M'Lellin, another of the Apostles, was cut off from the Church in May of 1838, and became an active enemy of his former colleagues. Parley P. Pratt writes that while he was confined as a prisoner (in Ray County, Missouri) during the expulsion of the Saints from Far West, M'Lellin came to him with weapon in hand, inquiring as to how he felt in the course his religion had taken him. Pratt refers to him as a "Judas."[3]

M'Lellin didn't stop his church activities when excluded from the

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[1]Wm. Alex. Linn, The Story of the Mormons, (London: the MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1923) p. 103.

[2]John Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 109-10.

[3]Parley P. Pratt, The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, (Chicago: Law, King and Law, 1888), p. 206.

*Probably acting as a Presidency for the Church and not as individuals.

Mormons; he soon attempted the organization of another religious group, as is shown in a letter the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote to the Church during his confinement in the jail at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. He refers to a number of the dissenters, comparing them to Balaam, who "being greedy for reward, sold us into the hands of those who love them, for the world loves his own." He then refers to M'Lellin as one of Job's comforters, a man who professes to be a prophet, but

> has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer, to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel; and this ass not being of the same kind as Balaam's, therefore, the angel notwithstanding appeared unto him, yet he could not penetrate his understanding sufficiently, but that he brays out cursings instead of blessings. Poor ass![1]

Little is known of what took place between 1838 and the winter of 1847 among the dissenters. Hiram Page, representing David Whitmer to I. N. Aldrich in Kirtland, wrote:

> It is well known by many, that since we were driven from Far West by the Mormons (at which time we were obliged to go into an adjoining county where we could get the protection of the civil law) we have been lying dormant. . . .[2]

However, M'Lellin has left us an account of his activities in Kirtland and in Missouri as he chronicled them in his publication "Ensign of Liberty."

"THINGS IN KIRTLAND"

> The church here at present numbers forty-two. . . . At a conference of the church held here on the 23rd of January, 1847. . . it was motioned by William E. McLellin and seconded by Martin Harris, that this church take upon them the name of the Church of Christ. . . . .
>
> On the 10th of February . . . we freely talked over our present standing before the Lord. We were settled in our own minds that the time had come for the church to come forth the second time. . . .

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[1] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 228.

[2] Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, (Lamoni, Iowa: published by the Church, 1897), p. 90.

> The church had in the years 1833 and 1834 changed its character. . . . A few of the men by council action had taken for the church the false name of Latter Day Saints. Joseph had been commanded of the Lord, and had ordained David to be his successor. . . . That the people had become driven and divided into parties and clans. . . .
>
> But is Kirtland where the character of the church was first changed . . . we by voluntary act had taken upon us the true name.[1]

M'Lellin indicated that he had written a long letter to David Whitmer in December, 1846.[2] At the above mentioned meeting of February 10th, David was officially acknowledged as President of the church, the statement being made "that we by our faith and prayers were determined to uphold him in his high and holy calling, provided he still maintained his integrity before God."[3]

Being greatly concerned over the validity of their previous baptisms, they inquired of the Lord and were instructed that they were to be done over. "On Saturday, 13th of February, Martin Harris, William E. McLellin, Leonard Rich and Aaron Smith, were immersed, confirmed, and ordained to the same authority which they had held in the church before Latter Day Saintism was known."[4]

The March and April issues of "Ensign of Liberty," containing the report of the activities of the "Church of Christ" to that time, were sent to David Whitmer and his friends along with a letter which had been written to David by Oliver Cowdery (following a visit from M'Lellin on the 1st of July in Wisconsin). This was done so that David might be fully acquainted with his role in the M'Lellin church activities. Having thus prepared the way, M'Lellin went to Richmond, Missouri, home of David, September 4th, and spent the evening in pleasant conversation concerning the great latter-day

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[1] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[2] Ibid., p. 82.

[3] Ibid., p. 80.

[4] Ibid., p. 81.

work. The following evening Jacob Whitmer joined them and the Whitmers gave a succinct history of the Lord's dealing with them since the Saints' expulsion from Far West. The next day Hiram Page joined them and they journeyed to Far West, scene of their expulsion from the Church, where they were met by John Whitmer. During family prayer David was seized by some power divesting him of his strength, and he cried for the others to "lay hands on me that I may have strength to do my duty." He received strength and concluded the prayer, according to M'Lellin's report.

After this experience they engaged in a free discussion on the restoration of the church in Kirtland. M'Lellin related to them the revelation that had been received on the 10th of February bringing about the present organization. It gave instructions for rebaptizing and ordaining members (some of whom were designated to be ordained high priests, while others were called to labor for the cause) and finally:

> And now concerning the authority of my servant David, I would say unto you that no man being directed by my spirit will ever condemn what my spirit now teaches you. Go foreward then, that my designs in the work of the last days may prosper in your hands. And now I say unto you to always trust in me, and you shall never be confounded, worlds without end; amen.[1]

The revelation was heard and approved by those gathered in the home of John Whitmer, at Far West, Missouri, September 7th, 1847.

It was decided to call upon the Lord to know His mind concerning those present. David requested them to gather around the table, where, after a "solemn secret prayer," he spoke forth a revelation purportedly from "above" and written down by M'Lellin, the scribe. It forgave them their sins and indicated the priesthood had been preserved by them in this Zion

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[1] Ibid., p. 85.

land. David was to remain on his inheritance in this holy land, and the Church must acknowledge that all, except the few in the new "Church of Christ," have turned away from the Lord and built up themselves. M'Lellin was marvelously blessed. The spirit of the Lord was poured out upon him; and he was to continue the work in the land where his family resided (Kirtland). "Thou shalt build up my church . . . and set forth all things pertaining to my kingdom." David was informed that he was not "to leave this land, Missouri and those of thy brethren who have remained with thee, or you shall forfiet your right to make the word of God non effect."[1]

M'Lellin had come to Missouri in the hope that David would return to Kirtland and take up the leadership of the church there. In this he was disappointed. But he was satisfied with the explanation given in the revelation, though realizing the increased burdens he was to have in assuming the leadership in building up the kingdom in that area.[2]

The following morning, in accordance with the revelation received by M'Lellin in February:

> I [M'Lellin] then led those four men into the water and administered to them in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . . And we all partook of the bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. I then confirmed those who were now new born into the Church of Christ, anew. And then (as directed) I ordained H. Page to the office of a high priest. . . . And we two ordained Jacob Whitmer to the same office. Then we all laid hands on John Whitmer and reordained him to the priesthood, and to be a councilor to David in the First Presidency of the Church. And then . . . we all stepped foreward and all laid hands upon David and reordained him to all the gifts and callings to which he had been appointed through Joseph Smith.[3]

Of this trip to Missouri, M'Lellin writes:

> We have had the very delightful privilege during the fall of visiting the Lord's Seer; and he too with his friends have been born anew

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[1] Ibid., p. 85.

[2] Ibid., pp. 83-89.

[3] Ibid., p. 88.

> into the true Church of Christ, as we were in the beginning, and then they have been reordained each to his station; and now in order for the work to prosper we want to see more faithful laborers in the field.[1]

The success of this organization seems to have been short lived. "It soon lost its identity, and none of its former adherents remained true to it."[2] Sometime in 1849, a number of interested people wrote David inquiring as to his relationship with the church (M'Lellin's). They received a letter from Hiram Page, in behalf of David. The following is an extract of that letter, written June 24, 1849, from Richmond, Missouri:

> We have been frequently solicited by the brethren to know what they must do. To all inquiring brethren we say, we are not your master to usurp authority over you, but we are your servants in Christ; and as we cannot justify wrong in ourselves or in others, we fell to acknowledge our errors, and say to all others, 'Go and do likewise.'
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In 1847 Brother William [M'Lellin] commenced vindicating our characters as honest men. In that he did well. In September, 1848, he made us a visit and professed to have been moved upon by the same Spirit of God that led him to do us justice by vindicating our characters, moved upon him to come here and have us organize ourselves in a church capacity; but it must have come through him, which would give a sanction to all that he had done, which would give a more speedy rise to the cause than anything else could; and by our holding him up, he could build up the church according to its true order, which would be a source of consolation to us. But we had not as yet come to an understanding, but consented to the organization after three days successive entreaties. Now we acknoledge that the organization was not in accordance with the order of the gospel church.[3]

This letter seems to indicate that William E. M'Lellin had been somewhat over enthusiastic about the support he was to receive from the Whitmers. At the same time it sheds considerable doubt upon the validity of the reported experiences of M'Lellin's visit to the Whitmers, as well as the purported

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[1] Ibid., p. 81. [2] Ibid., p. 89.

[3] Olive Branch, or, Herald of Peace and Truth to All Saints, a monthly periodical, (Kirtland: Hazen Aldrich, publisher), Aug. 1849, pp. 27, 28.

revelation received by David during the time of that visit. However there is no denial from David Whitmer of his association with M'Lellin in this move to reestablish a church. Years later a publication of the church organized by the Whitmers and associates of theirs, referred to this experience:

> Neither do we believe the brief connection he [David] had with Wm. E. McLellin in September, 1847, affected his standing before the Lord, as in 1848 and 1849 the Lord saw fit to open their [the Whitmers and Hiram Page] eyes to see the errors.[1]

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[1]Robinson, op. cit., Vol. I, January 1889, "Elder David Whitmer."

CHAPTER VII

BUSINESSMAN AND CITIZEN WITHOUT A STAIN

What Mr. Whitmer's civic and business activities in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri may have been from the time he made his home there in the year 1838, until 1852 can not be ascertained, except from brief inferences already given in Chapter Two. The city's earliest newspaper, the "Richmond Herald," appeared in 1852. This newspaper was replaced the following year by the "Richmond Weekly Mirror." Mr. Whitmer apparently did nothing that attracted the attention of the press until the year 1858 when mention was made of his missing being elected city councilman from the Seventh Ward by a 48 to 49 vote. "All the old members with the exception of one had run for reelection and had won again."[1]

The "North-West Conservator" (Richmond, Missouri Newspaper) carried a professional card for the Whitmer business establishment, starting in 1861. It was on the first page and read:

D. Whitmer & Son's
L I V E R Y S T A B L E
Main Street, Richmond, Mo.
A supply of the best horses,
comfortable Hacks, Buggies, &c.,
constantly kept on hand.[2]

It seems that business was prospering and that recognition was being

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[1] Richmond Weekly Mirror, April 9, 1858.

[2] The North-West Conservator, (Richmond, Mo.), Vol. 1, April 5, 1861.

given to David Whitmer, for at this time city elections were held,

> which passed off orderly and quietly. We congratulate our citizens upon the selection of such an excellent corps of officers. They will perform their duty to the best of their ability at all times, we are assured, and good order, peace and quiet . . . is vouchsafed to the next year in the election of these gentlemen.[1]

It was during the Civil War. The people of Richmond held a mass meeting, May 3, 1861, and decided that no militia would be raised to march against any state that chose to secede from the Union.[2] Many such meetings were held but David Whitmer's name does not appear among those listed at such meetings. However, in 1863 he signed a statement as a Conservative Democrat, which declared:

> The time having arrived in the estimation of the undersigned, when all lovers of constitutional liberty should combine their efforts . . . and labor for the restoration of our country on the basis of the Constitution . . . . We invite the cooperation of all who take the Constitution for their platform, the star spangled banner for their flag, [sic] and are willing to keep step to the music of the Union.[3]

From the above, there seems to be no doubt as to where the loyalty of David Whitmer was. The paper, commenting upon this action said it was "the right move at the right time in the right direction."[4]

During the time of these difficulties, David P. Whitmer, nephew of David, was the mayor of Richmond, and also a captain of the Northern forces in a local capacity. He was not popular with the local press at this time. Running on the "Loyalist" ticket, he lost an election for Fifth judicial circuit judge by an almost 2 to 1 vote.

In March, 1866, David Whitmer supported a move to have a General James Shields speak to the people in support of President Johnson's veto

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., May 3, 1861.

[3] Ibid., February 19, 1863.

[4] Ibid.

of the Freedman's Bureau Bill, in an "effort to protect, defend and preserve the charter of our liberties and of the Union."[1]

Whether David Whitmer was a supporter of President Johnson or not is not definitely stated, the press opposed the administration and those supporting it, (chiefly David P. Whitmer, the mayor) but it frequently praised movements David Whitmer seems to have been associated with. A statement of 300 men in favor of Johnson's reconstruction policies (Richmond Johnson and the Liberty Club), is not signed by David.[2]

The seventh annual fair of the "Ray Co. Ag. & Mech. Society," an event to last four days, was to be held in late September; David Whitmer was selected as one of the directors.[3] The date was subsequently changed to October 16th-19th.[4] The press commended the fair board for providing an amphitheater to replace the one destroyed by the army during the war.[5] Mrs. David Whitmer was a premium winner in the rag carpet division; she also received a certificate for a woolen quilt. "Friend Whitmer's (David J.) horse was beaten out by Georg S. Story's (finest gelding) but to be loser to such an animal is no discredit to his fine animal."[6]

Late in May the Hughes and Wasson bank was robbed. During the robbery, Mayor John B. Shaw, a deputy sheriff, and a jailor were killed while attempting to drive off the desperados (about 14 men).[7]

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[1] Ibid., March 24, 1866. [2] Ibid., May 26, 1866.

[3] Ibid., July 21, 1866. [4] Ibid., August 18, 1866.

[5] Ibid., Sept. 29, 1866. [6] Ibid., Oct. 20, 1866.

[7] Ibid. (Became the Richmond Conservator, 1867), May 25, 1867.

A public meeting was called for the purpose of paying a tribute of respect to the citizens who had lost their lives in attempting to prevent the bank robbery. The meeting was called to order by J. F. Houston, on whose motion Mr. David Whitmer was called to the chair. . . . Certain gentlemen were selected to form resolutions of respect and the meeting was adjourned to the following Tuesday.

The day was not a good one, but many citizens appeared and David Whitmer, esq. presided at the meeting where a number of resolutions in behalf of the dead were passed. . . . The citizens assembled pledged themselves and signed their names to the effect that they would render all possible assistance to the sheriff of the county, a copy of the resolutions to be sent to the Gov. of the state.[1]

The death of the mayor necessitated the election of someone to finish the unexpired term of John B. Shaw. The election was to be held in the City Council room on the 17th day of June, 1867. Details for this election were signed by C. S. W. Taylor, President of the City Council pro tem.[2]

There were certain attacks made upon the character of Mr. David Whitmer, the successful candidate for Richmond mayor; the nature of which are not mentioned, but the probability is that it dealt with his association with Mormonism. In an editorial comment we read:

> We have refrained heretofore from alluding to allusions made by soreheads hereabouts, but the attack on David Whitmer, Esq. a few days since by the courthouse clique, was so gratuitous as to call forth unqualified condemnation from every man who had not forgotten his self respect in the greed of the spoils. Mr. Whitmer is a gentleman, and as such represented the views of our people when they cast for him their votes for mayor. All the slime and filth that may be thrown at him only adds to the many items that will be forthcoming at the proper time to convict before the people certain parties who consider themselves invulnerable.[3]

The editorial was written by Jacob T. Child, publisher and editor, who eventually became the United States minister to Siam.[4]

While others were concerned with political troubles of the time

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[1] Ibid., June 1, 1867.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., June 22, 1867.

[4] Ibid., Mar. 4, 1886.

(minister being killed for not taking the loyalty oath;[1] the admission of full-blooded negroes to the practice of law;[2] etc.), Mayor Whitmer was looking after the health and well-being of his citizens:

> As the "heated term" is now upon us, I would recommend for the health of our citizens that they adopt strict sanitary rules; see that their yards, cellars, sinks, &c., are kept in good condition, by the use of disinfectants such as lime and copperas. It should be the pride as well as the duty of all to thus put their homes in order so as to prevent any contagious disease or pestilence from visiting our city. I hope the citizens will heed these remarks, for by so doing, they may save themselves trouble and preserve our people from disease and danger. Mr. Little is now burning lime, and it can be obtained from him.
>
> David Whitmer, Mayor.[3]

Even as mayor he was not too busy to participate in a county fair. This year he showed a premium winning three year old harness filly and his firm received a certificate for the best three year old harness mare at the Clinton Fair.[4] The family was also rather successful at their own county fair, the mayor winning premiums for blue grass seed and peppers, and Mrs. Whitmer for soft soap, rag carpet, worsted quilt, and the best pair of pants.[5]

During the winter, the mayor was taken ill but the press kept the people informed as to his recovery. His administration started a project of laying plank sidewalks, which was hailed as the most progressive move in the past two years.[6] But the activities of running a business and a city were a bit arduous for a man of his years, so he declined to run for re-election, expressing a desire that a younger, more energetic man be selected to fill the office.[7] The local paper commended the present council for its

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[1] Ibid., Aug. 11, 1866.

[2] Ibid., Nov. 3, 1866.

[3] Ibid., Aug. 10, 1867.

[4] Ibid., Sept. 21, 1867.

[5] Ibid., Oct. 12, 1867.

[6] Ibid., Feb. 29, 1868.

[7] Ibid., Mar. 21, 1868.

achievements. David's nephew and name-sake was again elected mayor, much to the disgust of the press. The newspaper explained this reverse (it had backed George I. Wasson) by indicating that there were but 57 registered voters in a population of twelve hundred, "so many have been disfranchised."[1]

David Whitmer, once more able to settle down to the simple life of his livery business. devoted his time to providing the best possible service to his patrons. A number of times others were brought into the business, but they were always bought out eventually, with the firm remaining in the hands of the Whitmers. They had no monopoly on the livery business as there were always others offering competition.

Mr. Whitmer had long since expressed his attitude concerning slavery, but he showed no inclination to favor the negro. One was caught stealing from a drawer in his stable; the negro confessed the theft and was sent to jail, the same as any other thief would have been.[2]

The interest shown by the local newspaper in David Whitmer seems to indicate that he was a well known figure in and around Ray County, though he remained aloof from the local "Literary Society," "Bible Society," etc. Nor is he ever mentioned as a member of the board of education. Mr. Whitmer played no apparent part in the rivalry existing between the "Rebels" (Republicans) and the Conservatives; he seemingly chose to remain aloof from that type of politics. His name never appeared among the delinquent tax notices or sheriff's sales.

It seems that every event relating to the Whitmer business was "news" to the readers of the "Conservator." Such as

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[1] Ibid., April 11, 1878.

[2] Ibid., Vol. 16, no. 21.

Some skunk has stolen old Gray Eagle from Messrs. Whitmer and Son, and came the confidence game over them as follows: The fellow, Saturday last, went to the stable, informed Dave [David J.] he wanted a horse to ride to Millville, that he had been at work there, and that he would return in the evening, stating that his name was Scott. Dave did not like to let him have the horse without some reference, but the fellow talked so plausible that he let him have old Gray Eagle, and now offers $25 to get him back, or $50 for man and horse. We are in hopes that he may get them.[1]

Whitmer and Son have been adding to their livery stock, and now have some of the best rigs in this section, and it gives them pleasure to furnish a stylish turnout to parties that know what a good horse is. We have tried the "Old Reliable," for a number of years and have always found Uncle Davy with a team that never fails to give satisfaction.[2]

"Uncle Davy" seemed quick to take advantage of a bit of fine publicity. Almost immediately his firm's advertisements in the paper contained the caption, "Old Reliable."

He suffered a serious illness during the winter of 1873. An attack of pneumonia gave the populace some concern, but he recovered nicely and continued to improve his business, placing a "hack on the road between the city and R. & L. Junction.* They will make all connections with the N. M. Road, both morning and evening."[3] And still further improvements were made:

A fine Turnout.— Whitmer and Son have added to their establishment one of the finest buggies that we have seen for some time, of Richmond manufacture, and it runs as smooth as a bird on the wing, behind their spanking bays it fairly flies. We have tried it and know whereof we speak.[4]

Whitmer & Son, of the "Old Reliable" stable are having their office enlarged and fixed up, and when completed it will be a neat place. They have also very recently added a couple of new buggies to their establishment. When you want an airing drop down and take a ride behind their bay or sorrel team.[5]

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[1] Ibid., Aug. 27, 1870. [2] Ibid., July 19, 1873.

[3] Ibid., Dec. 27, 1873; Jan. 24, 1874.

[4] Ibid., June 27, 1874. [5] Ibid., July 11, 1874.

*Richmond and Lexington Junction.

> The Messrs Whitmer have had their office in the "Old Reliable Livery Stable" refitted and fixed in handsome style, and it is now a cosy retreat for parties that desire to call to see them.[1]

Their business also dispensed corn, hay,, and grain to the public.[2]

With the office fixed up as a cozy retreat, and the business safely in the hands of the son (David J.), and grandson (George W. Schweich), David had ample time on his hands to talk about the old days and his experiences with Joseph Smith and the Mormons. People came to his door enquiring about his testimony as found in each copy of the "Book of Mormon." In 1875 the "Chicago Times" sent a reporter to verify David Whitmer's story; this gave rise to other interviews, for it was reprinted rather widely.

Edward Stevenson, from the "Utah" Church called on him in 1877, thus beginning an experience that apparently consumed his time from then until the time of his death. This attention coming to David Whitmer also shed considerable publicity upon Richmond and he found staunch supporters among his long-time friends and associates. When Apostles Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith called on him in 1878, the local press gave the event much publicity, even detailing a part of the story concerning the manuscript from which the "Book of Mormon" was printed.[3]

During the summer of 1880, a John Murphy, of Polo, Caldwell County, Missouri, purportedly interviewed David Whitmer, and made statements which David felt had impugned his character. Mr. Murphy declared that Whitmer had denied his testimony; this was quite emphatically not the case. As a result he (David) had a pamphlet published containing a proclamation in which he declared to all the world that he had not denied his testimony

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[1] Ibid., Aug. 29, 1874. [2] Ibid., Mar. 27, 1875.

[3] Ibid., Sept., 13, 1878; Sept. 27, 1878.

at any time, though he did not indorse polygamy or "spiritual wifeism. It is a great evil, shocking to the moral sense, and the more so because it is practiced in the name of religion." Along with this proclamation was a statement signed by the most influential men of the community of Richmond.

> We the undersigned citizens of Richmond, Ray County, Mo., where David Whitmer 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 undoubted truth and veracity.[1]

While this was first brought out by David Whitmer as a pamphlet, March 19, 1881, within a week it appeared in full in the "Conservator," along with an explanation.

> There is no doubt that Mr. Whitmer . . . is firmly convinced of its [Book of Mormon] divine origin; and while he makes no effort to obtrude his views or beliefs, he simply wants the world to know that as far as he is concerned there is no "variableness or shadow of turning." Having resided here for near half a 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 believer in the son of Mary, to warrant such an attack on him, come from what source it may. . . .[2]

The "American Cyclopaedia" and the "Encyclopedia Britanica" each printed an article stating that the "Three Witnesses" had renounced their testimony. This seems to have awakened some people to a real interest in David Whitmer, as a witness, and the "Book of Mormon."[3]

July, 1884 the "Conservator" reporting an article from another source ("The Republican," another Richmond newspaper) observed that a group of Mormons were going to compare the respective editions of the "Book of Mormon" with the manuscript that was then in the possession of David Whitmer.

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[1] Ibid., March 24, 1881.

[2] Ibid.; (See Appendix E for the purported interview of John Murphy. The complete "Proclamation" and the character statement are found in Appendix F).

[3] Encyclopaedia Britanica, (New York, N. Y.: Charles Scribner' Sons, 1883), Ninth Edition, "Mormons."

A Mr. Braden then declared that in a debate between himself and E. L. Kelley (Braden-Kelley Debate), of the Reorganized Latter Day Saint Church, he (Braden) had proven innumerable errors to be found in the "Book of Mormon." Mr. Braden then established certain conditions under which he would prove to the populace that the book was untrue; the meeting of Mr. Braden and group of Mormons who were to compare the various editions of the "Book of Mormon" to be in the form of a "challenge." There then followed a statement that Mr. Braden would shortly be in the city (Richmond) to lecture on Mormonism.[1] The lectures were set for two nights, to be held in the Christian Church, the subjects: "History of Mormonism," and "Expose' of Mormonism."

The next issue of the paper contained the following:

> . . . The forty six years of private citizenship on the part of David Whitmer, in Richmond, without stain or blemish, is a monument of his personal standing too strong and enduring to be toppled over by the anathemas of the reported Mormon prophet, who denounced him when he found that he could no longer use Mr. W. [Whitmer] as a tool, and to have the unsupported charges hurled at him now grosser far than the original, as he stands on the confines of the spirit land is, to say the least, uncharitable, and comes with but poor grace from the reputed follower of the son of Mary, whose mission was peace and good will to man. As regards Mr. Whitmer's religious belief, that is between him and his God, and if Elder Braden, at the advanced age of Mr. Whitmer, can show as clear a private record as does the subject of his animadversion, then he can safely fold his hands, close his eyes, and take the leap in the dark with but few misgivings in regard to the future. As regards his war on Mormons, we have not a word to say, that is his province, but we can see no good in his peddling around a book, a debate between himself and one Kelly, on Mormonism, thus placing the vexed question on a higher plane, than it belongs and adding if anything, to its pernicious growth. It should be left to stiffle itself to death.
>
> If a life of probity, of unobtrusive benevolence and well nigh half a century, marks a man as a good citizen, then David Whitmer should enjoy the confidence and esteem of his fellow men. In no instance has he ever endeavored to enforce his beliefs on others and on every occasion, when the subject was brought up and heralded through the press it has been against his wishes, hence the feeling of indignation that was manifest on the part of many present when Elder Braden announced that he could, by Mormon evidence, convict Mr. Whitmer of

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[1]Conservator, July 18, 1884.

being in league with "murders and horse thieves," which he did not do.[1]

It becomes abundantly evident that, regardless of David's personal religious convictions, he is never the less highly regarded as a man and a citizen of Richmond. In 1886 Honorable W. A. Wood, of Kingston, Missouri, wrote an article for the "Magazine of American History", concerning Far West, the Mormon city. In writing of David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery (both of whom had made their home in Richmond), he said that David had been a lawyer and a judge of Richmond; that he died in 1885, "a leading and respected citizen of his county and state . . . ." This portion of the article is an indication that Mr. Wood had David Whitmer and David P. Whitmer (his nephew) confused for it was the nephew who had been the lawyer and judge, and was now dead. Mr. Wood then added,

> He [David Whitmer] was a most excellent man, and his administration of the city affairs was a very popular one and redounded to the prosperity and honor of Richmond. Mr. David Whitmer had everything that should accompany old age, "as honor, love, obedience, troops of friends . . . ."

The paper quoting this article ("Conservator") called attention to Mr. Whitmer's being still very much alive and "in as good condition as any one could be in his 81st year." "We trust he will be with us many years and that his old age will continue serene and bright and lovely as a Lapland night."

> In making this correction of Judge Woods' statement in regard to David Whitmer, we have done it from a desire to have the truth presented to the public when the history of a grand old man is given in so important a publication as the "Magazine of American History."[2]

In 1886 David reorganized the Church of Christ, "with six Elders and two priests, after the pattern of the first organization."[3]

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[1] Ibid., Aug. 22, 1884. [2] Ibid., July 29, 1886.

[3] Mil. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 73-74.

And in his 82nd year he authored the booklet, "An Address to All Believers in Christ."

During his life he was permitted to read eulogies that to most come, at best, after death. Besides the praises of his own neighbors and associates, he frequently read notices such as:

> As a citizen of Richmond he stands deservedly high. . . . Upright in his dealings with men and just toward all, he has progressed gradually with the country until he and his children have secured good business standing and are regarded among the best citizens of Ray County.[1]

From Apostles of the Church that turned him out, he was able to read: "He has a . . . very pleasant, manly countenance that one would readily perceive to be an index to a conscientious, honest heart."[2]

As David Whitmer lay cold in death, his fellow-townsmen wrote:

> We can say that no man ever lived here, who had among our people, more friends and fewer enemies. Honest, conscientious and upright in all his dealings, just in his estimate of men, and open, manly and frank in his treatment of all, he made lasting friends who loved him to the end.[3]

A town willing to name one of its important streets in honor of a respected citizen is not apt to forget him too soon.

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[1] Chicago Tribune, Dec. 15, 1885.

[2] Mil. Star, op. cit., p. 769.

[3] Richmond Democrat, Jan. 26, 1888.

CHAPTER VIII

A WITNESS IN DEFENSE OF A TESTIMONY

One of the earliest accounts printed against David Whitmer as a witness to the divinity of the "Book of Mormon," contains little more than vague generalities:

> David Whitmer is a very inconsiderable person, but is in high standing, as a leader, among the Mormons. We know but little about him, only that he has been known as a man of small capacity, an anxious dupe to the marvelous, and a firm believer in witches. Whether he was suborned or deceived by the imposter we are unable to determine.[1]

The time came however, when David Whitmer found it necessary to defend his testimony before large numbers of people. In his own words as quoted by James H. Hart, he says:

> I have been visited by thousands of people . . . believers and non-believers, 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.[2]

With the death of Martin Harris,[3] at Clarkston, Cache County, Utah, July 10, 1875, new attention was focused upon David Whitmer for he was then

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[1] E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, (Painesvill, Ohio: Published by the Author, 1834), p. 97.

[2] J. H., August 23, 1883.

[3] For many years Harris had been out of the Church. He returned to it in 1870.

the last surviving witness to the heavenly manifestation associated with the "Book of Mormon." Not only was Mr. Whitmer the last of the "Three Witnesses," but he had not been associated with the Church for over thirty-five years; what his feelings now were concerning this movement would make interesting reading for the newspapers' subscribers. David's views created interest in turn among the curious as well as among those honestly seeking the truth.

Within a month Mr. Whitmer was being interviewed by one of the large city newspapers, the "Chicago Times;" this interview was thereafter reprinted by other papers, as were many subsequent interviews with David.

DAVID WHITMER

The Only Living Witness to the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon

The Old Man Interviewed on What He Saw and Heard.

The Past, Present and Future.[1]

The article, which follows the above caption, begins with a brief history of Mr. Whitmer. The reporter tells of being accompanied to the Whitmer residence by J. T. Child, editor of the Richmond "Conservator," a local newspaper. They were there informed by David Whitmer that the original of the manuscript from which the "Book of Mormon" was written, was in his possession. The article concludes with a denunciation of the Latter Day Saints in Utah, and a protest against the "Book of Covenants."

> David Whitmer believes in the Bible as implicitly as any devotee alive; and he believes in the Book of Mormon as much as he does in the Bible. The one is but a suppliment to the other according to his idea, and neither would be complete were the other lacking. And no man can look at David Whitmer' face for half an hour, while he charily and modestly speaks of what he has seen, and boldly and earnestly confesses the faith that is in him, and say that he is a bigot or an enthusiast.

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[1]Salt Lake Herald, (Utah) August 7, 1875.

> . . . he would not hesitate, in emergency, to STAKE HIS HONOR AND EVEN HIS LIFE upon its reliability.[1]

The "Salt Lake Herald," in reprinting this interview, requested direct verification from David Whitmer as to the accuracy of the reporting of the statements he had made to the "Chicago Times" and as reprinted in the "Herald;" the "Herald" received word that the accounts were "substantially correct. There may be a few minor errors, but they do not interfere at all with what I gave in substance."[2]

Elder Edward Stevenson, prominent Mormon missionary of pioneer days, wrote a letter to Orson Pratt from Richmond, Missouri, home of David Whitmer, informing Pratt of a visit Stevenson had just completed with the aged witness. He (Stevenson) was permitted to view the manuscript of the "Book of Mormon," and was given a list of the first six members of the Church. David describing the experience of his first viewing of the plates at the hands of the angel, declared:

> "As I know the sunshines 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 the plates of gold, also the brass plates, the Urim and Thummim (or interpreters) the ball or compass and the sword of Laban. He said that there could be nothing to induce him to deny these things.[3]

In 1878 a Dr. P. Poulson of Ogden, Utah, also visited Mr. Whitmer and gave a rather detailed account of their conversation. To him David declared:

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[1] Ibid. (For a fuller account of this interview see Appendix A.)

[2] Ibid.

[3] J. H., December 23, 1877. (See Appendix B). The other items viewed at tha time they saw the plates are indicated in D. & C., sec. 17, vs. 1; here brass plates instead of breast plate is given, which could be an understandable error.

> Our testimony which we [the Three Witnesses] give to the world, is true exactly as you read it, we saw by the gift and power of God. As we were praying, the angel stood before us in 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.[1]

It was during the year 1878 that a destructive cyclone made a shambles of many of the residences of Richmond, Missouri; Mr. Whitmer's included.

> 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 . . . 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 . . . 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.[2]

This account, related to James H. Hart nearly seventy years ago, was repeated to the writer in more detail by a Richmond resident, a relative of Mr. Whitmer's, during the summer of 1950. She was old enough to remember other details which I was however unable to verify.[3]

The visit of Apostles Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith from Salt Lake City created quite a sensation. The interview was had during the 7th and 8th of September, 1878, and in the presences of several members of Mr. Whitmer's own family and other important personages in the community. The details of the heavenly manifestation as given to these Apostles, are substantially the same as those David gave to Elder Stevenson. He is again as emphatic in declaring the truthfulness of this experience as before.

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[1] Deseret News, August 13, 1878. (Appendix C).

[2] J. H., August 13, 1883.

[3] Statement of Izora Dear, personal interview.

> I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (striking the bed besides 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.[1]

It was during this interview that Orson Pratt inquired after the possibility of acquiring the manuscript for the Church.

Commenting upon this visit, the local newspaper, under the caption:

> A VALUABLE MANUSCRIPT
>
> Last Saturday Elders Orson Pratt and J. F. Smith, two of the leading members of the church of the Latter Day Saints, paid a visit to our city, and after taking in the ruins of the devistated district, inquired for David Whitmer, Esq., the only living witness to the translation of the Book of Mormon and custodian of the original manuscript, as taken down by Oliver Cowdery . . . . Elder Pratt . . . made an earnest request of Mr. Whitmer to surrender it to him . . . . But Mr. Whitmer, who had held it for near half a century, "the proper custodian," refused to part with it on any terms. . . . They appeared to be very intelligent gentlemen, and seemed somewhat grieved that they did not succeed in the object of their mission, the possession of the original Book of Mormon, as taken down from the lips of the prophet. The work is in a splendid state of preservation, the ink is bright as if written yesterday, and it is inscribed on large paper, unruled, in a small hand, clearly written, close to the edges top and bottom, making over 500 pages. . . . It is certainly a very valuable manuscript, and in the hands of Mr. Whitmer, who is one of our most respected citizens, it will be carefully preserved.[2]

The "Kansas City Journal of Commerce" thought that the manuscript should be "deposited in Independence," as the "future city of the faith." There were a number of papers that reprinted the Richmond "Conservator" article on the manuscript of the Book of Mormon "with the request that more light be thrown upon the subject."[3]

The interview that seemed most disturbing to David Whitmer was that related by John Murphy of Polo, Caldwell County, Missouri, discussed else-

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[1] Mil. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 769-74. (For more detailed account see Appendix D).

[2] Conservator, Sept. 13, 1878. [3] Ibid., Sept. 27, 1878.

where.[1] In the pamphlet he had prepared and circulated defending himself, David Whitmer's "proclamation," in part, read:

> Unto all Nations, Kindred, Tongues and People, unto whom these presents shall come:
>
> It having been represented by one John Murphy . . . 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 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 the three witnesses. Those who know me best, well 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 dilution! What is written is written, and he that readeth let him understand.[2]

After the "Murphy" incident, Mr. Whitmer was a bit more reticent about giving statements for the press, but three months after publishing his pamphlet defending himself he was interviewed by the Kansas City "Journal;" the reporter promised that "we shall only give your statement as you make it and will not misrepresent you in any manner." The story is then given in quotation marks as though it were a verbatim account. This seems to be one of the more reliably reported interviews, giving a rather complete description of 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.

The information David Whitmer gave on the history of the Church in Missouri is much more complete in this interview than in many of his

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[1]Chap. VII, pp. 86, 87; Also Appendicis E and F.

[2]David Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 13, 14.

others.[1]

By the end of the year, much of his reticence to speak was gone. The reporter from the Chicago "Times" writes, "I gleaned the following information from him—he speaking freely and unreservedly—in regard to the origin and rise of the Mormon church, as well as the authenticity of the Book of Mormon."[2] This article gives a rather comprehensive account of his association with the Mormon movement and of his experience in receiving the heavenly testimony regarding the records. "As Mr. 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 of the same.'

. . . . Mr. Whitmer's beliefs have UNDERGONE NO CHANGE since his early manhood; he . . . rests his hopes of the future

> 'in the teachings of Christ, the apostles, and the prophets, and 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, sic 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."[3]

Toward the last of June, Elders W. M. Palmer, D. F. Davis and M. W. Pratt, missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints heard

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[1] Mil. Star., Vol. 43, pp. 421-23, 437-39; Appendix G.

[2] Conservator, Nov. 18, 1881.

[3] Ibid.; Appendix H.

Mr. Whitmer declare that his testimony as recorded in the Book of Mormon was "absolutely true just as it is given there." He further stated that,

> if that is not truth there is no truth: if there is no truth then there is no God and if there is no God there is nothing.[1]

Later the same year Elder James H. Hart visited a David Whitmer suffering considerably from the intense heat, but willing to tell again the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.[2] Hart later composed a poem "The Last Witness," submitted it to Mr. Whitmer for his approval, and had it printed in one of his Church's publications.[3]

In the Spring of 1884, the "Journal and Courier" of New Haven, Connecticut, carried a story indicating that the Three Witnesses had denied their testimonies. This same Mr. James H. Hart wrote the following:

> To the Editors of the Journal and Courier:
>
> Whilst in New Haven a few days ago a friend called my attention to a statement made in your issue of the 17th of March, namely, that the three witnesses who declared that they saw an angel of God come down with the golden book which Joseph Smith interpreted had subsequently renounced Mormonism and declared their testimony false.
>
> Having visited Mr. David Whitmer on the 19th of March, and being familiar with his feelings and history, I could give you some items that would be interesting to many of your readers. . . .
>
> Mr. Whitmer, refering to the statement which had appeared in some other journals, felt very indignant, and declared to me, in the presences of his son and others, that his statement was true, that he had never denied it, and that he was with Oliver Cowdery on his death bed, that he [Oliver] then and there bore the same testimony he had always borne through life.[4]

In 1878, the Appleton and Company "Encyclopedia," announced that all Three Witnesses had "Avowed the falsity of their testimony."[5] In 1883,

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[1] Bear Lake Democrat (Utah), July 14, 1883; J. H., July 19, 1883; Appendix, I.

[2] J. H., Aug. 23, 1883; Appendix, J.

[3] Imp. Era, Vol. 12, October, 1909; Appendix, J.

[4] Deseret News, April 4, 1884; J. H., April 4, 1884.

[5] Ibid., Jan. 21, 1878.

the "Encyclopedia Britanica," also came forth with the statement that the Book of Mormon

> was printed and published in 1830 under the title of "The Book of Mormon," and accompanied by the sworn statement of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris that an angel of God had shown them the plates of which the book was a translation. This testimony all three, on renouncing Mormonism some years later, denounced as false. . . .[1]

The individual writing the article for the Encyclopedia, overlooked the fact that Mr. Whitmer was still living, and in a position to defend himself--which he ably did in his own booklet.

> It is recorded in the American Cyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia Britanica, 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 of the Book of Mormon." He died here in Richmond, Mo., on March 3d, 1850. Many witnesses yet live in Richmond, who will testify to the truth of these facts, as well as the good character of Oliver Cowdery.[2]

In 1884, Ben E. Rich requested a statement so "as to have something to look at, and for his children to look at when all the three witnesses have passed away." "The Ogden Daily Herald," under the caption,

"IT IS TRUTH"

wrote:

> We are ever so much pleased to inform our friends that Elder Rich's desire has been gratified. We have seen for ourselves an autographed declaration by David Whitmer, to the effect:

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[1] Encyclopedia Britanica (New York: Charles Scribner' Sons, 1883).

[2] David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 13.

"My Testimony In The Book Of Mormon Is Truth.
David Whitmer
Aged 79 years, 3 months
Richmond, Mo. Apr. 6th, 1884.[1]

Early in July, 1885, Elder James H. Moyle, later president of the Eastern States Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, visited Mr. Whitmer on his way home from an Eastern college. As a young college graduate, maybe he was desirous of a first-hand account of David Whitmer's testimony. He said to him:

> I was born and reared in the Church and I do pray of you to let me know if there is any possibility of your having been deceived. I am just commencing life as you are preparing to lay it down, and I beg of you to tell me if there is anything connected with the testimony which you have borne to the world that could possibly have been deceptive or misunderstood.[2]

Mr. Whitmer then related to him the details of the manifestation of the angel and the records; telling him "that he did hear the angel declare that they had been translated correctly."

When Elder Moyle asked him why he left the Church, he "endeavored to answer frankly. . . .

> His mind seemed clear and his mentality above rather than below the average. He said he had never left the Church, that they had maintained a branch of the Church in Richmond, and that he had always been active in it.[2]

One of the most lengthy reports is that of the Chicago "Tribune," December 15, 1885. It was thought by this paper that David Whitmer was near death, and as they were desirous of getting a final statement from him, they sent a special correspondent who found him in "the bed-chamber where Father Whitmer was calmly awaiting the final summons."

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[1] One Hundredth Annual Conference Report (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1910), published semi-annually by the L.D.S. Church, April, 1930, pp. 121, 122; Appendix, L.

[2] Ibid.

> When told of the visitor's mission and that he had journeyed from Chicago for an historical sketch of one who had played so important a part in translating the Mormon Bible and proselyting for the Mormon Church, the request for information met with a cheerful response. Fearing, however, that the task would be too great, the family deputed a member of the household to relate the history in the presence of Father Whitmer, the narration being closely followed by him and subjected to frequent corrections and interpolations.[1]

There then follows in this article a history, from the family's first moving to New York State, to David Whitmer's present standing as a citizen of Richmond. While this is the most extensive report given as an interview, it seems full of vindictive where the Prophet Joseph is mentioned. This would indicate that the family of Mr. Whitmer (responsible for much of the content and, perhaps its errors and spirit) were not nearly as kindly disposed toward Joseph Smith and those early associated with him in the movement, as was David Whitmer himself.

Appearing in the Omaha "Herald," October 10, 1886, and the week later in the Chicago, "Inter-Ocean," was a comment concerning the recent activities of unscrupulous reporters.

> David Whitmer, the only living witness to "the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon," is not dying. His recent extraordinary feebleness was brought on by the intense heat, which very naturally affects one at his advanced age rather severely. . . . Newspaper reporters are not admitted to his presence, and it is no wonder when one recalls the shameful misrepresentations which have been sent out as "interviews." The last of these was written by an unprincipled penny-a-liner who, when he was told emphatically that he could not see Mr. Whitmer, sent off to his paper the sensational announcement that the "White-haired Hero of Hill Cumorah" had just been stilled in death, and that with his latest breath he gurgled: "The Book of Mormon is a fraud."[2]

The testimony of the Three Witnesses is then given, and also a brief account of Oliver Cowdery and his death in Richmond. Mr. Whitmer is credited with

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[1] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885; Appendix, M.

[2] The Saints' Herald, No. 45, November 13, 1886.

the statement:

> Harris [Martin] became estranged from the church at about the same time and from the same causes' also, but long after he had become feeble in both body and mind he was persuaded by persistent importuning to join his destinies with the Utah Mormons. . . .
>
> Mr. Whitmer entertains no doubt whatever that this singular action upon the part of Harris was wholy chargeable to the enfeebled condition of his mind, which had begun to manifest certain positive symptoms of imbecillity even before he entertained the overtures from the Rocky Mountain saints. His step in this direction was greatly deplored by his old-time associates.[1]

While the article defends Mr. Whitmer against those who would malign him, admitting that he could not receive reporters because of his ill health, it, never-the-less, quotes him as making unsupported, condemning statements against a former associate and one of the Three Witnesses. This must have been another interview where the reporter (a special correspondent of the Omaha Herald) relied upon testimonials of embittered and apparently vitriolic members of his family.

More will be said concerning David Whitmer as a witness, but the emphasis with which he declares his testimony, as this chapter indicates, is not something of infrequent mention, but a repeated declaration, such as, "I do again affirm the truth of all my statements. . . . He that hath ear to hear, let him hear; it was no delusion; what is written is written, and he that readeth let him understand."[2]

In this year (1886) in his illness, he begins the rebuilding of his church.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 14.

CHAPTER IX

THE MANUSCRIPT CONTROVERSY

No attempt is being made at settling this problem, except as it touches the life of David Whitmer. That he was in possession of a manuscript copy of the Book of Mormon is attested by large numbers of eyewitnesses. Among them some from the several churches of the "Restoration," as well as others who are not interested in the manuscript as a sacred relic, but only as an historical document that has given rise to numerous religious movements. As late as 1927, the Richmond, "Missourian" in an article by Jewell Mayes says, "You ask, 'Was the Book of Mormon really kept for many years here in Richmond?'

> Yes!
> David Whitmer lived here. . . for many years. The Book of Mormon manuscript he owned and treasured like the key to a diamond mine.[1]

In the Prophet Joseph Smith's own history of the Church, he makes no comment about the difficulties that arose while the Book of Mormon was being printed by the Grandin printing establishment. However, his mother writes that the whole of the Book of Mormon manuscript was transcribed by Oliver Cowdery at the behest of Joseph Smith, for use as a printer's copy; this translation was to be taken in small quantities, usually enough for a day's work, to the printer.[2] This would account for two copies of the manuscript being in existence, one of which would of necessity be primarily in the handwriting of one person, Oliver Cowdery, while the other would be the work of the several scribes of the Prophet Joseph.

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[1] J. H., Oct. 8, 1927.

[2] Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., chap. 31.

The conversation that took place between Apostles Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith and David Whitmer, was in the presence of a number of people. They were informed by Mr. Whitmer that the manuscript had been given to him by Oliver Cowdery, in whose handwriting it was, with the charge that he should keep it as long as he lived. He added, "Joseph said my father's house should keep the records. I consider these things sacred, and would not . . . part with them. . . ."[1] "These things," apparently referred to another article kept along with the Book of Mormon manuscript. In the Chicago "Tribune" interview, David said he "also has an exhaustive history of the Church, which was compiled by his brother, and an accurate copy of several plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated."[2]

John Whitmer, Brother of David, was appointed historian of the Church by revelation, March 8th, 1831.[3] He still claimed this position at the time of his excommunication in 1838, and refused to give up the records in his possession at that time, probably because of the spirit of the letter requesting them, which referred to his "incompetency as a historian."[4] This history was given to David Whitmer by his brother to keep along with the manuscript. The copies of several of the Book of Mormon plates are supposed to have been those taken to New York and presented to Professor Anthon for criticism as to the accuracy of their translation.[5]

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[1] Mil. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 769-74.

[2] Deseret News, Dec. 24, 1885; David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 17.

[3] D. & C., Section 47.

[4] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 15, 16.

[5] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 20.

During the visit of Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, they inquired as to his willingness to sell the manuscript. They received the answer that he (David Whitmer) would not part, nor barter with them for money. Joseph F. Smith, continued:

> We would not offer you money in the light of bartering for the manuscript, but we would like to see them preserved in some manner where they would be safe from casualties and from the caprices of men, in some institution that will not die as man does.
>
> D. W. That is all right. While camping around here in a tent, all my effects exposed to the weather, everything in the trunk where the manuscripts were kept became moldy, etc., but they were preserved, not even being discolored, (we supposed his camping in a tent, etc., had reference to his circumstances after the cyclone, in June last). . . the room in which the manuscripts were kept . . . was the only part of the house that was not demolished . . . . Do you think, said Philander Page, son of Hiram Page . . . that the Almighty cannot take care of his own?[1]

Elder Pratt again "felt closely after the subject of procuring the manuscript, but we found that nothing would move him on this point."

> The whole Whitmer family are deeply impressed with the sacredness of the relic. And so thoroughly imbued are they with the idea and faith that it is under the immediate protection of the Almighty, that, in their estimation, not only are the manuscripts themselves safe from all possible contingencies, but that they are a source of protection to the place or house in which they are kept*, and, it may be to those who have possession of them.[2]

This conversation took place on the 7th and 8th of September. On the 13th, Col. J. T. Child, editor of the "Conservator," who had been present at the above interview, commented in his newspaper:

> Elder Pratt . . . made an earnest request of Mr. Whitmer to surrender it [the MS] to him, as he had been appointed to take charge of the archives of the Church, and that should he do so that he would be rewarded for his care of to any amount that he should name. But Mr. Whitmer . . . refused to part with it on any terms, and after a pleasant conversation of about an hour [they departed] with the request that he keep it safe.[3]

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[1] Mil. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 769-74.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

*Izora Dear claimed that Julia Schweich sat on the box containing the MSS during the destruction in Richmond, 1878.

This conversation, concerning the request for the manuscript has been quoted and misquoted widely. It will be observed in Col. Child's account, given five days after the visit, that no sum is mentioned as having been offered, only "that he would be rewarded for his care of it to any amount that he should name."

Three years later, David Whitmer refers to this visit in an interview given the Chicago "Times." His statement seems to be an honest effort to give the story as he remembered it. It fits in rather closely with the report of Col. Childs, who seems to have collaborated on this article.

> A few years since I was present at an interview between Mr. Whitmer and Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, who had been sent from Utah to Richmond 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 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.[1]

By December 15, 1885, this "offer" had grown to larger propertions:

> Several years ago a delegation of Mormons came to Richmond from Salt Lake 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.
> A prominent business man of the place, at that time engaged in banking informed your correspondent that he knew 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.[2]

In a publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this conversation of 1878, is made to read somewhat differently.

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[1] Conservator, November 18, 1881.

[2] Deseret News, December 24, 1885.

Apostle Pratt said:

"Father Whitmer, we desire to purchase the manuscript, and we are authorized to say that you may name your price, and (with a patronizing air) be sure you put the price high enough, for the church has plenty of money in the treasury, you know."

It was a brilliant overture; but how dismally it failed. Old Mr. Whitmer replied with quiet emphasis: "Elder Pratt, there isn't gold enough in the world to buy it."[1]

The sources of this interview isn't given, but it may have been an attempt at reproducing an interview reported for 1884, when two Elders of the Reorganized Church visited Mr. Whitmer, and viewed the manuscript in his possession. Mr. E. C. Briggs gives, in part, the following account of that visit, supposedly quoting Mr. Whitmer:

I was present when Joseph gave these manuscripts to Oliver. O, it was such a solomn charge. He (Joseph) said, "I feel it in my bones that there will be a division in the Church, like it was with the Nephites and Lamanites, and if these manuscripts are not preserved, I fear that the church may be injured, and when you deliver them up to others, be sure they are left in good hands." I now see why they should be preserved. A delegation once waited on me from Utah, Orson Pratt headed it, to secure them. And he said:

"Set your price on them. There is [sic] millions in the treasury and we are authorized to draw any amount for them, so you may not be particular, ask any price."

I replied, "They are not for sale."

He said: "Why not?"

I answered, "I know, that is enough. There is not enough gold in the world to purchase them."

Pratt urged the matter saying: "You are not very well off, and it will do your children good."

I then told him, "You have not got enough money in Utah to purchase them."[2]

If the "Briggs" account is no more accurate than the reproduction of it in the "Herald," little validity can be given to it. The original interview was too well witnessed for Mr. Whitmer, widely acclaimed for his

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[1] Saints' Herald, No. 45, Nov. 13, 1886, p. 705.

[2] Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Lamoni, Iowa: Pub. by the Board of Pub. of the Church, 1897), Vol. 4, pp. 446-47.

honesty and integrity, to have added such details. It would appear that the men making this report must have had an ulterior motive, as they make statements for Mr. Whitmer that are not substantiated in any other account reporting him. The quotations used in the "Herald" account, if taken from Briggs, might have been an attempt at facetiousness; even so, this is hardly justifiable where a desire for accuracy is the aim.

By the year 1899, the press had made the $100,000 a bona fide offer. The St. Louis "Republic" writing,

> The Elders of the "Mormon" Church in Utah, made different attempts, in the past years to get possession of it [the Ms], but failed. Once they offered $100,000 in cash for the old yellow manuscript, but its keeper, David Whitmer, one of the founders of the Church refused the offer because he believed the Utah branch of the Church wished to get hold of the manuscript to insert into it, by forgery, a clause that would authorize and sanction the practice of polygamy.[1]

Here a reason has been added for Mr. Whitmer's refusal to sell, though the reason is not new. In an account making a premature announcement of David Whitmer's death, the San Francisco "Chronicle," in 1885, wrote:

> The death of David Whitmer . . . may lead to the revelations of some of the secrets of the origin of the Mormon Church. . . . He is also credited with the possession of the original manuscript of the Mormon Bible, but if his heirs are offered a liberal sum no doubt they will sell it to the Church, whose interest it would be to suppress it.[2]

No reason is given as to why the Church would desire to suppress a manuscript that has already been used to publish a book with an annual sale running into thousands of copies.

Elder Pratt's "earnest request of Mr. Whitmer to surrender the manuscript to him," made in the presence of Col. Childs--editor of the "Conservator"--and others, grew out of all proportions in the years that followed.

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[1] Deseret News, Sept. 27, 1899; Imp. Era, Vol. 3, Nov. 1899.

[2] Deseret News, Dec. 28, 1885; J. H., Dec. 28, 1885.

Joseph F. Smith, later president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, made the unembellished statement in 1887, that neither he nor Orson Pratt had any authority to offer any amount for the purchase of the manuscript in the possession of David Whitmer.[1]

While all the accounts written in the various publications referring to the manuscript in the possession of David Whitmer, call it the "original," it didn't take those knowing the two copies long to determine that at least most of the manuscript that Mr. Whitmer had was the copy made by Oliver Cowdery. That Mr. Whitmer was not aware of this is further indication that he wasn't as much a part of the actual publication of the Book of Mormon as were some of the other members of the Whitmer family. It is the original only in the sense that the present "Book of Mormon" is a printed copy of that particular manuscript.

When Orson Pratt, Joseph F. Smith et al. examined the manuscript in Mr. Whitmer's home, they said:

> we examined them closely and those who knew the handwriting pronounced the whole of them, excepting comparatively a few pages, to be the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. It was thought that these few pages were in the handwriting of Emma Smith and John and Christian Whitmer.
>
> We found that the names of the eleven witnesses were, however, subscribed in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. When the question was asked Mr. Whitmer if he and the other witnesses did or did not sign the testimonies themselves, Mr. W. replied "each signed his own name." "Then where are the original signatures?"
>
> D.W. I don't know, I suppose Oliver copied them, but this I know is an exact copy.[2]

It was then suggested by one of the party that he, as the last of the witnesses ought to certify to this copy. Lawyer David P. Whitmer, son of Jacob and name-sake of David, demurred stating that "he had better

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[1]The Contributor, (Salt Lake City: Junius F. Wells for the Mutual Improvement Associations of the L.D.S. Church), Vol. 8, pp. 157-60.

[2]Mill. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 769-774.

reflect about it first and be very cautious." Joseph F. Smith then suggested that perhaps there were two copies of the manuscript, but David said that to the best of his knowledge, there never was but one.[1]

The significance of there being an original Manuscript made as the words fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph, as well as an available but unoriginal copy, did not impress some of those present at this conference, as it did Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith; the article printed by Colonel Child, present at this meeting, still referred to David's manuscript as the original.

> After repairing to his residence, at their request the manuscript was produced and Elder Pratt, who was familiar with the handwriting of Mr. Cowdery, at once pronounced the manuscript, as spread out on the table, the original copy.[2]

Undoubtedly Elder Pratt did recognize the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, since it was so apparent in a manuscript almost entirely in his handwriting. Had it been the original manuscript taken from the plates, it would have been necessary to read down considerably below the top page to have found Oliver Cowdery's handwriting; he was not the first to act as the Prophet's scribe. There was no doubt in the mind of Orson Pratt but what this manuscript was in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery--it was not a forgery.

After the visit of the Apostles to Mr. Whitmer, there were many references made in numerous papers about the "original manuscripts;" but

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[1] Ibid.; That there was another, apparently the original, copy of the "Book of Mormon" manuscript, is evident from a number of sources. Elder Warren Foote notes in his journal that he witnessed the original deposited in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House October 2, 1841: "Joseph Smith came up with the manuscript of the "Book of Mormon" and said he wanted to put that in there, as he had had trouble enough with it." Roberts, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 159, footnote no. 7. Substantially the same information is given by Evenezer Robinson; the description of the manuscript being very much like that given by Elder Foote. Robinson, The Return, Vol. III, pp. 314-315.

[2] Conservator, September 13, 1878.

there were others who had reason to know better. Some of them came forth and expressed themselves. Such an one was Bishop Kesler of the Salt Lake 16th Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Appearing in the "News" of June 3rd, 1882, the following is an excerpt:

> No one, I presume, doubts but what Mr. Whitmer has in his possession the copy of said original manuscript, which passed through the hands of the printers. However, it makes but very little difference where it is, as the Book of Mormon has been translated and published in several different languages and is widespread over the civilized world.
>
> But as to the original manuscript, which was written from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith as he translated it from the plates by the Urim and Thummim, Mr. D. Whitmer has not got it in his possession.
>
> Now, be it known to the whole world, that I was present and was an eye witness to the hiding up unto the Lord, by the Prophet Joseph Smith, of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, as taken direct from the plates, unto which I bear my humble testimony.
>
> Frederick Kesler, Sen.
> Salt Lake City, May 29, 1882.[1]

Elder Edward Stevenson, in his letter to Orson Pratt, December 23, 1877, referred to the manuscript he had just seen at Whitmer's as "the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon written by four persons, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, Emma Smith, and Christian Whitmer. It was clean and well cared for, written on foolscap, and about 2 inches thick."[2] Whether Elder Stevenson is referring here to the manuscript as being the original (the one deposited in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House), or the original in the sense that Orson Pratt meant (in the original handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and others), isn't clear until a later statement of Mr. Stevenson's is read. Andrew Jensen, assistant Church Historian, quoted Edward Stevenson as saying that he and others examined the manuscript at David Whitmer's and found it to be a copy of the original; the one which was taken to the editor

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[1] Deseret News, June 3, 1882.

[2] J. H., Dec. 23, 1877.

for publication (the bulk of which was in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery).[1]

This controversial manuscript passed into the hands of David J. Whitmer at the death of his father, David, the witness. He was to be the custodian of the manuscript as well as the other items that his father had so long preserved (Facsimilies of characters of "Book of Mormon" supposedly taken to Professor Anthon by Martin Harris, John Whitmer's history of the Church). David J. Whitmer met an untimely death when the gravel pit, in which he was working, caved in on him. George W. Schweich, grandson of David was the heir and received the "treasures;" and later sold them to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These things are now in that church's possession and may be found resting in a bank vault in Independence, Missouri.

A careful study of the available evidence would indicate that the original manuscripts of the "Book of Mormon" is not that which was so long in the possession of David Whitmer, though the copy which he possessed was the one from which the major portion of the book was printed. This printer's manuscript, "after it had served its purpose, was evidently taken possession of by Oliver Cowdery, while the original manuscript remained in the possession of the Prophet, and by him, on the 2nd of October, 1841, in the presence of a number of elders, deposited in the northwest cornerstone of the Nauvoo House. . . ."[2]

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[1]Andrew Jensen, compiler, "Apostate Organization", (An Unpublished Compilation of Apostate Organizations of the L.D.S., found in Church Historian's Library, Salt Lake City), "Whitmerites."

[2]Roberts, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 159.

CHAPTER X

CONTROVERSY WITH THE "JOSEPHITES"

It can be readily seen why any aspersion cast upon the name of Joseph Smith, Jun., was bound to have repercussions in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; Joseph Smith III, the son of the Mormon Prophet, was presiding over that faction. The Reorganized Church had already found itself in a precarious position having presumed to deny the existence of certain revelations purportedly received by Joseph Smith, only to have the old "Witness", David Whitmer, bring to light again, that (polygamy) which they were already having so much trouble keeping suppressed. Certain individuals, therefore, apparently attempted to keep unsullied the name of the Prophet Joseph by attacking the integrity of one who would presume to accuse him of being responsible for any practice or belief which they themselves found untenable. There is no available evidence that the President, Joseph Smith III, of this Church entered into any of these attacks. On the contrary, letters to him from the "defendent," David Whitmer, were printed in the Church's periodical, "Saints' Herald", without presidential comment.

It seems that during the month of June, 1886, missionaries of the newly reactivated "Church of Christ," held a meeting in Independence, Missouri, and made certain statements that gave offense to certain of the brethren of the Reorganized Church. The signer of an open letter appearing in the "Saints' Herald," to these missionaries, is James J. Stafford; he is

otherwise unmentioned in the history of the Reorganized Church. The following excerpts are used only because of the part they play in later developments of the controversy:

> I have since hearing your claims to be the "true Church of Christ," been led to think very seriously upon the matter; and as result of a prayerful and careful examination of your claims, I would submit to your notice the following episode in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. You may eliminate all the above title except the words "Church of Christ," if you wish, for the laying of such stress upon the mere name is simply a case of tweedledum and tweedledee. . . . And now to the episode.[1]

At this point the story of Hiram Page and the revelations he supposedly received from the use of a stone is related as it appears in the Prophet's History.[2] Stafford then gives the story as it is written by the Prophet's mother:

> At this time a certain young woman, who was living at David Whitmer's, uttered a prophecy, which she said was given her by looking through a black stone that she had found. This prophecy gave some altogether a new idea of things. She said, the reason why one-third of the church would turn away from Joseph was because he was in transgression himself; that he would fall from his office on account of the same; that David Whitmer or Martin Harris would fill Joseph's place; and that the one who did not succeed him would be the counselor to the one that did. This girl soon became an object of great attention among those who were disaffected. . . . They held their secret meetings at David Whitmer's, and when the young woman, who was their instructress, was through giving what revelations she intended to for the evening, she would jump out of her chair and dance over the floor boasting of her power, until she was perfectly exhausted. Her proselytes would also, in the most vehement manner, proclaim their purity and holiness and the mighty power which they were going to have.[3]
>
> Gentlemen, is this the source from whence David Whitmer derives his authority. Martin Harris having failed to obtain the presidency, does David Whitmer still hold to the ravings, or revelations as the "pure church" called them . . . or does he claim his office and presidency from the revelation coming through the stone which "Brother Hiram

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[1] Saints' Herald, June 19, 1886, pp. 371, 372.

[2] Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 109-10.

[3] Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 261-62.

> Page had got in his possession?". . . The fact remains that he did believe in an sic uphold the girl soothesayer. . . .
>
> If you reply that he has received revelations from God . . . what guarantee can he give that those revelations are of God? Having been once--perhaps twice--decieved [sic], is it not very probable that he is again in error. . . . Only fancy a girl soothesayer and her "peepstone" recognized as the fountain and head of the "Pure Church of Christ,"--a plain usurpation and one through which David Whitmer et al attempted to elevate themselves to the chief rule of the church, and it does seems as if the leaven was still working after laying forty years dormant, and David Whitmer is still under the bondage of the girl soothesayer. . . . You explain much against secrecy and secret meetings, yet here we have an account of "secret meetings" being held at David Whitmer's house. . . . How comes it that when David and his "pure church" went down to Missouri it "became necessary to keep a strict guard over the houses of those who were the chief objects--Joseph and Hyrum Smith--of their vengeance!"[1]

Whether or not the "Church of Christ" missionaries made any reply directly to the "Saints' Herald", concerning the charges of this open letter, is not clearly indicated. However, frequent charges brought against the Church of Christ by representatives of the "Reorganized Church", seems to have necessitated some sort of answer or rebuttal; David Whitmer himself accomplishing much of this through an interview he gave the "Omaha Herald", whose printed account was reprinted in a Chicago newspaper, the "Inter-Oceanic".

This article quotes Mr. Whitmer as testifying that he knew Joseph Smith was called of God, and yet as pointing out some of the errors he felt that the Mormon Prophet (Smith) had led the Church into. The "Saints' Herald" takes David Whitmer to task for some of these charges.

> He admits and advocates the calling and authority of Joseph, but assumes that he "fell." Who made him the judge of these matters? What and whence are his credentials for correcting and reproving the Seer? . . . If he is called and has authority and capability to do such a work, ... what . . . had he done for the church since 1836, except in bearing testimony to the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and the difinity of the Book of Mormon? . . . . His work, appointed by God, was to bear witness to the Book of Mormon. We honor him in that; but we

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[1] Saints' Herald, June 19, 1886, pp. 371-372.

reject him as an interpreter of the Scripture. . . .

. . . . . .

We honor and revere David Whitmer in his proper calling. . . . When in one moment he testifies to the divine mission of Joseph Smith. . . and in the next rejects the prophetic work of Joseph as set forth in that Book . . . then we think Mr. Whitmer is sadly out of his place, and we trust him accordingly. Joseph Smith never claimed personal perfection. His revelations represent him as being imperfect, and in this respect similar to many others whom God has called to be his prophets and seers.

. . . . . .

If additions were made to some of these revelations (which we do not admit), that would not necessarily corrupt and invalidate them. For the same power that gave them had authority to add to them. Jeremiah reproduced and added to revelations given him.[1]

Mr. Whitmer wrote to the editor of the "Saints' Herald", on the matter of the interview to the Omaha "Herald," but refused to allow his letter to be printed; therefore its contents are not known to us.

After reading the above criticism of David Whitmer, the source of the inspiritation for much of the material for his "To All Believers in the Book of Mormon," becomes rather apparent. In the following issue of the "Saints' Herald," the editor makes a point by point refutation of the Omaha "Herald" interview. Concerning the revelation (1829 or 30) sending Elders to Canada to sell the copyright of the "Book of Mormon," the editor writes: "This has the merit of being news, even if it is false. For it is the first time we ever read or heard of such a transaction."[2] The editor places the blame for the mobbings and persecutions in Missouri, upon the message of the "Book of Mormon" and the preaching of the restored Gospel and not upon the aggressive announcement of many revelations as suggested by Mr. Whitmer.

> He [Whitmer] does not entertain a doubt that Joseph Smith was a practical polygamist, and has no sympathy whatever with Joseph Smith, Jr. who is at the head of the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, and who avers that his father (the prophet) never adopted or advocated polygamy.

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[1] Ibid., November 13, 1886, pp. 705-708.

[2] Ibid., November 20, 1886, p. 721.

Editor: "When Mr. Whitmer parades his opinion on this matter of polygamy, especially in view of the fact that he had nothing to do with the church after 1838, and therefore knew nothing of Joseph's private life, he only gives further evidence of his recklessness of other people's reputation, and of his seeming readiness to cast a cloud over the fame of that seer. . . . This smacks of prejudice, envy, disappointed ambition, retaliation for supposed wrongs. . . . And as he was not with the church after 1838, he is not a competent witness to prove that Joseph the Seer "was a practical polygamist," and his volunteering such an opinion reflects no credit upon either his head or heart. Joseph [III]does not admit or confess what he does not know of in respect to his father's life and teachings.[1]

David Whitmer said the Reorganized faction, like the one that followed Brigham Young, was a withered branch, "without the vitality of divine approval;" but he "insists that there are lots of good, honest people among them all."

In answer to this the editor of the "Saints' Herald" accuses him of testifying to what he does not know, and "he thereby exhibits a lack of prudence and wisdom, and Christian love and light that is truly lamentable. . . ."

David Whitmer is now an old man (over eighty-three), worn and weakened in mind and body, and all should look with forbearance and compassion on his real or seeming errors and misstatements, also upon what appears to be his prejudices against the Seer and the Church, and attribute them to human weaknesses, rather than intentional wrong.[2]

The editor places part of the blame upon the reporters for dressing up the misstatements, exaggerating and adding to them. "Mr. Whitmer should either reject all interviews, or correct at once the errors they publish." He then suggests that the "key to David Whitmer's attitude toward the church . . . may be found in a revelation . . . which says:

Behold, I say unto you, David, that you have feared man and have not relied on me for strength as you ought. . . etc.,[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 722. [2]Ibid., p. 723.

[3]Ibid. (See D. & C., 30:1-4.)

having reference to the revelation given at the time the Whitmer's were being influenced by the "peep-stone" of Hiram Page.

The comments of the "Saints' Herald" editor didn't go unnoticed. Within a fortnight a brief defence of Mr. Whitmer's integrity was printed in the "Herald," in the form of a letter from a nephew of the aged witness:

> Richmond, Mo., Dec. 9th, 1886
>
> Dear Brethren- I regret that one of the editors of the Herald has seen fit to cast a shadow over the honor and integrity of Bro. David Whitmer, the last witness to the divinity of the Book of Mormon--a man whose past record is beyond reproach. I can account for it only in the light: that he began to fear lest some of the Saints should leave the Reorganized Church and come into the Church of Christ; so he has been tempted to do all he could toward destroying the good influence of Bro. David. I desire to show the brethren what Brothers Joseph and Alexander Smith think of the honesty and integrity of David Whitmer. When they were here a few weeks ago, Bro. Joseph told Bro. David Whitmer that he believed in the integrity of his heart, and believed that he loved his father (Joseph). Bro. Alexander said to Brother David Whitmer's wife as follows: "Before mother died, she told us to visit the Whitmers, that they were good people; and when we saw David Whitmer we would see an honest man." [Then is included the leaflet with the signatures of the many Richmond citizens in defense of Whitmer's integrity.[1]]
>
> Your brother in the faith of Christ,
> John C. Whitmer.[2]

If the statements of Joseph and Alexander Smith are to be relied on--and they should be as they were given for publication in the periodical of the church over which Joseph III (quoted in the letter of John C. Whitmer) was presiding--then it can be assumed that the Prophet and members of his family were not responsible for many of the rancorous feelings occasionally expressed against David Whitmer.[3]

Written at the same time and appearing in the same issue of the paper as did the letter of John C. Whitmer, is a letter from David to Joseph

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[1]Appendix, F.

[2]Saints' Herald, February 5, 1887, p. 89.

[3]Linn, op. cit.; Conservator, July 18, 1884.

Smith III, President of the Reorganized Church. In it he comments favorably upon the attitude of Bro. Joseph, indicating that he believes him to have "a good honest spirit," which "differs widely from most of the writings of the Herald of late." He prays that the time will soon come when all may "see and understand his word alike and all be 'one' even as Christ prayed that his desciples 'might be one. . . .'" David Whitmer acknowledges that there have been some misstatements, but:

> I had the brethren write to some of the papers correcting the mistakes in them, and in time I will have all misstatements that have gone forth corrected to the public mind, and publish to the world abroad the truth concerning all of these matters. God knows that I, as well as yourself love the truth and desire to have all mistakes corrected, and to have the truth established.[1]

The expression "publish to the world abroad" must have reference to his pamphlet "To All Believers in Christ," because, though it wasn't published until April 1st, the first installment of it appears in this issue of the "Herald." Mr. Whitmer continues his letter:

> I want to ask you this question: If you knew that your father had introduced doctrines of error into the Church of Christ, would you want to uphold him in his errors? Of course you would not! I understand fully that you believe these doctrines (about which we differ) to be of God, while . . . I know that they were introduced by the wisdom of men. I do not mean to persecute your father nor destroy his "good works." I loved your father; upheld him as far as he taught the doctrine of Christ; yea, I loved him so much and had so much confidence in him that I followed him into many errors before I was aware that I was trusting too much in "an arm of flesh."[2]

Mr. Whitmer reminds Joseph Smith III that he knew his father much better than he did and "much better than any man now living."

> Now God has made it known to me, that before I go hence, I must send forth my testimony to the world, stating many truths which have never been published, which is necessary in order to show how they have

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[1] Saints' Herald, February 5, 1887, p. 89ff.

[2] Ibid.

> trusted in man. . . and have been led into error by following the teachings of men. . . . Oh, Joseph, you can not understand by this letter how my soul is stirred up with love of God for you, and for all the Latter Day Saints who are in error. But you may not see and understand me by what spirit I speak, until at the judgment bar of God; then you will see and understand. . . . May God be with you, is my prayer.
>
> Your brother in the faith of Christ,
> David Whitmer.[1]

What ever had been the attitude of the "Saints' Herald" in printing much of the previous chastenings of David Whitmer, it is seen by this issue that they afforded Mr. Whitmer every opportunity to vindicate himself as these letters appear uninterrupted by editorial comment. At the foot of the letter written to Joseph Smith (above) is this penned statement:

> Please publish the above letter, Bro. Joseph, and right under it the following letter to the brethren.

It would seem that the direct appeal to the President had changed the attitude of the editor, for Mr. Whitmer's wish is granted and the letter appears as requested, containing a lengthy answer to many of the previous charges made against him in this publication.

> Dear Brethren: I want you to understand that the following remarks are addressed to the one who has been writing against me unjustly of late in the Herald. . . . These remarks are to the writer who has judged me hastily.[2]

Mr. Whitmer accuses this individual of obtaining his information from letters written to the "Millennial Star," and other papers of the church, "so long after the occurance of these things that his dates are wrong, and he had forgotten the first names of three of the elders whom he says spoke against me concerning some charges." David added that just because accusations are made is no indication that they are true, and judgment should not

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

be made on the basis of one side of a story. As an example he cites the article by James J. Safford, "who (I have been told by perfectly reliable men) apostatized from the Reorganized Church some years ago, and is such today. Yet this individual had his insinuations published in the Herald, with one of the editors calling particular attention to it, thus making it semi-official." Many of these things written against him, he writes, are from hearsay, and from the pen of men who went to Salt Lake in polygamy, yet they are quoted as "church history," being commented upon as though every word of it was true. He then handles some of the charges thus:

> After I had left the Latter Day Saints I heard that they had given me a trial and cut me off. The only charges I ever heard they had against me (until I read this Herald) were, for not believing some of Bro. Joseph's revelations, and not teaching them; and for not believing and teaching the "Word of Wisdom." The proceedings of this trial, and all these other charges against me, I never heard of in my life before. . . . I do positively deny all these charges against me, except concerning these revelations. . . . I will clear myself from their own evidence. To show you how this editor in the Herald has done, you will notice that he put the words "using money" in letters of emphasis to make the brethren believe that the Whitmer here referred to is myself; and tries to make it appear that I used the money belonging to the church, by emphasizing these words: It says "Phelps and Whitmer;" Well--the Whitmer . . . is not myself, it is my brother John Whitmer who is dead. In the charge about selling the land in Zion, it says also "Phelps and Whitmer," and this also refers to John, because I never owned any land in Zion. Please note well the following point, as it clears me from their own evidence. Elder Lyman Wight stated that he considered all other accusations against them (us three brethren) of minor importance, compared to their selling their lands in Jackson county. . . . So you see they admit that all other accusations against us were of minor (small) importance. Now as I never owned any land in Jackson county, I guess I am clear of everything![1]

Mr. Whitmer emphasizes the point that he had already left the Church before this trial, using as evidence the fourth charge against him, viz. "In neglecting the duties of his calling and separating himself from the church while he yet had a name among us." Then referring to other charges

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[1] Ibid. (For a discussion of the charges from which David Whitmer is defending himself, see Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 3-8, 13-20.)

the Herald made against him he says:

> I positively wrote no letters to Kirtland about Joseph, nor did I write any letter to the High Council at Far West. . . . I have no doubt but what some one, not very conscientious, wrote these things against me to the Millennial Star, and wrote them a long time after I had left the body, and wrote most of it on hearsay. So we see that all they had against me was for "not keeping the word of wisdom," and disbelieving some of Joseph's revelations, and not teaching them.[1]

David Whitmer defends his ignoring the "Word of Wisdom" on the basis of his not accepting it as a revelation, but writes that all those who believe that it is such and still do not observe it are under condemnation.

In answering the story concerning the "girl soothesayer," quoted from Lucy Mack Smith, by Mr. Stafford, he writes:

> I only desire to state briefly the facts in regard to that history. First--I do not believe that Lucy Smith wrote those things about me. Did not some man write that history for her? If she wrote those things about me, it occured in this way: she had been told those things by some one, and believing them to be true, she wrote them. It is certain that she knew none of these things of her own personal knowledge. . . . I will state, that the whole of these things from first to last are entirely false, and Satan is at the foundation of them all. I suppose the girl to who [sic] reference is made, was Adaline Fuller. She was a meek, humble girl, who had but little to say to any one. She was a good, honest girl, of strong faith, and if there ever lived on this earth a humble follower of Christ, she was one. In those days several of us had this gift. I would call it a gift of discernment, or prophecy; but noen of them pretended to dictate for the church. She, nor any of them, never did give a revelation for the church, or to any member of the church. I have no knowledge whatever of her ever receiving a revelation that I would fill Joseph's place when he died. . . . We never did hold any secret meetings at my house, or any other house; and this girl never did give any revelations at any of our meetings. As to her jumping out of her chair and dancing over the floor and boasting of her power, I say this is false in toto [sic] . . . .[2]

Commenting on the revelations received through Hiram Page's stone, he says: "Oliver and I never thought much about them, and thought they might be from God, or might be from Satan."

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

Mr. Whitmer takes the editor to task for giving publicity to an admitted rumor in such a way as to make it seem true.

> Concerning my encouraging the Missouri mobocrats to push their persecution against the church in 1838--which finally resulted in the death of Joseph and Hyrum in 1844. . . . This is the first time that I have ever heard of such a rumor. He says: "We regret the existance of such a rumor." . . . If he really does regret that this rumor exists, why did he publish it in the Herald, thus spreading it to thousands of people? . . . . Such a rumor may have existed; if so, it may have originated in this way: when I came to Richmond, General Parks, who was in charge of the State Malitia, was short of wagons and teams, and they were scarce here then; so he pressed me and my team into service and I was forced to go and drive a wagon load of baggage to Far West. I told them if I had to go I would take no gun. They said "all right;" and I took no gun. . . . God knows that I did not encourage the militia in the least to persecute the Saints. . . . Our persecutions began five years before I left the body in 1833; now was I in any way the cause of that? Brethren, it is ridiculous; it is wrong; it is injury to an innocent man; and an injury to the cause and to my testimony of the Book of Mormon!

With a final admonishment to the editor to seek the way of Christ and see "wherein he is in error," David Whitmer commences "the first chapter of my epistle, as I have already written it."[1]

The controversy seems to have been dropped, or at least to have lost its momentum after David's letter to the "Saints' Herald." Little is said of David Whitmer or his church movement today. The attitude of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, sometimes known as "Josephites," might be summarized in the words of the "Saints' Herald,"

> It is evident that in the over-ruling providence of God, David Whitmer has been kept in Richmond till now for the sole purpose of bearing witness to the calling of Joseph as a prophet, seer, and revelator and translator, and also to the divinity of the Book of Mormon.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., November 13, 1886.

CHAPTER XI

"TO ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST"

It did not take David Whitmer, his brother John, and his brother-in-law Hiram Page, long to come to the realization that their hasty acceptance of the overtures of William E. M'Lellin in 1847, was not "consistent with the attributes of him who holds the destiny of all men in his own hand."[1] Hiram Page's letter, writing for David, to Hazen Aldrich and others, enumerates a number of practices and beliefs that they no longer were able to recognize as harmonious with the wishes of the Lord. For example, the offices of "High Priest," "Seer," and others of the Melchizedek Priesthood, other than that of an "Elder," they could not recognize as a part of Christ's Church. They believed that "every effort of men to bring about the gathering of the saints into bodies is sowing seeds of discord." The belief was expressed by the Whitmers, that all sects would receive the degree of glory which their works merited and that when a man received authority from God by ordination, it remained with him until death or such time as he should deny the faith or defile the priesthood. They felt that any Elder with this authority could ordain others; and it was the privilege of each branch to appoint its own presiding officers, etc.[2] Emphasized was the point that all controversial points of doctrine were to be decided by

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[1]Hazen Aldrich, The Olive Branch, Vol. 2, No. 2, Aug. 1849, pp. 27-28.

[2]Ibid.

the council of the Church, "not the high council, but the spiritual authorities. . . that have no right to interfere with the temporal matters, except being stewards of their own."[1]

This statement suggests that possibly there were still some rancor in the minds of these men who had been thus deprived of their membership back in 1838, at Far West. Yet so convinced were they of the correctness of the work of M'Lellin when he visited them in 1847--appointing David Whitmer as president--that Mr. Whitmer even sought Oliver Cowdery as his assistant, writing that "It is the will of God that you should be one of my councilors in the presidency of the Church . . . to stand in relation to me as you (Oliver Cowdery) stood to Joseph. . ."[2]

It is not as though there was no existing church for Mr. Whitmer to meet with; his family had maintained a branch in Richmond since their arrival there; and he had always been active in it.[3] He refused to "affiliate with any of the various branches that had sprung up through false teachings."[4] He wrote that "After Brother Joseph was killed, many came to me and importuned me to come out and be their leader, but I refused."[5] He gave as the reason, "A one-man leader to the Church is not the teaching of Christ." This seems to be borne out in the comments of Orson Pratt and

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[1] Ibid.

[2] J. H., October 2,1848 (Quoting a letter of Orson Hyde to Brigham Young and Council; Orson Hyde taking his information from "The Ensign of Liberty," May 1848).

[3] One Hundredth Annual Conference Report, April, 1930, p. 122.

[4] Conservator, November 18, 1881.

[5] David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 38.

Joseph F. Smith when they visited him in 1878, for they found an organization with "six Elders and two priests. . . . David and John were two of these six Elders, four others, viz. John C. Whitmer, W. W. Warner, Philander Page, and John Short, having been ordained by David and John."[1]

From the viewpoint of the letter of Hiram Page, succession to the leadership of the Church would be impossible; yet mention is made of blessings and ordinations received by David Whitmer from the Prophet Joseph Smith. Mr. Whitmer himself, says in his booklet,

> I will tell you that he [Joseph Smith] had so much confidence in me that in July, 1834, he ordained me as his successor as "Prophet, Seer and Revelator" to the Church. He did this of his own free will and not at any solicitation whatever on my part. I did not know what he was going to do until he laid his hands upon me and ordained me. Now bear in mind, brethren, that I am not claiming this office: as I have told you, I do not believe in any such an office in the Church of Christ.[2]

The "Far West Record" account of Joseph Smith's comment on this ordination was:

> President Joseph Smith, Jun., gave a history of the ordination of David Whitmer which took place in July, 1834, to be a leader or a Prophet to this Church, which (ordination) was on condition that he (Joseph Smith, Jun.,) did not live to God himself.[3]

Mr. Whitmer said this ordination took place in the Camp of Zion, on Fishing River, Missouri, and that there were many present in that council of Elders when Joseph appointed him that were still living (1878).

In 1890, two years after the death of Mr. Whitmer, the Church of Christ publication, "The Return," published an account of a blessing

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[1]Mil. Star, Vol. 40, pp. 769-74.

[2]David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 70.

[3]Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 32; "Far West Record," p. 108 (March 15, 1838).

purportedly given to David, in Kirtland, Ohio, 1836. The explanation is that of Elder J. L. Traughber, Jr., of Forsyth, Missouri, who said that Mr. Whitmer gave him the details of the circumstance of the delivery of the blessing.

> He David was out attending to some business for the church, buying provisions I think, and while he was away, some persons had Joseph inquire for them. After they had received something, Oliver Cowdery asked, "Is there not something for Brother David?" With tears running down his cheeks, Joseph answered, "Yes, there is," and proceeded to dictate the blessing . . . which was written by Oliver Cowdery, and by him presented to David when he returned home to Kirtland.[1]

Elder Traughber said the blessing was with the manuscript of the "Book of Mormon" (in the possession of David Whitmer) when he last saw it.

> BLESSING OF DAVID WHITMER, DELIVERED BY JOSEPH SMITH, JR.
> Oliver Cowdery being scribe
>
> Blessed of the Lord is Brother David, for he is truly a faithful friend to mankind, and he should be beloved by all because of the integrity of his heart. All his words are steadfast as the pillars of heaven, because truth is his only meditation, and he delights in it, and shall rejoice in it forever. The Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob shall be on his right hand and on his left, and shall go before his face, and shall be his rearward, and his enemies shall become as easy prey unto him; for, behold, he it is whom the Lord has appointed to be the captain of his host, and the guidance and direction of him who is appointed to say unto the strength of the Lord's house, Go forth and build up the waste places. A mighty shaft shall he be in the quiver of the Almighty in bringing about the redemption of Zion, and in avenging the wrongs of the innocent. He shall yet stand upon the land of Zion, from which he has been driven, and shall find an inheritance therein, and shall be a ruler in Zion until he is well stricken in years, and shall enjoy an abundance of the precious things of the lasting mountains, and shall have part with the brethren in all good things of the earth, and shall never want a friend. He shall bring down his adversaries under his feet, and shall walk upon their ashes when their names are blotted out. His name shall be a blessing among all nations, and his testimony shall shine as fair as the sun, and as a diamond, shall it remain untarnished. There shall not be spot upon his character while he liveth, neither his seed after him to the last posterity. He shall not be forsaken, nor his seed found begging bread. Amen.[2]

Elder Edward Stevenson, eight years after his first visit to Mr.

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[1] E. Robinson, op. cit., Vol. 2, No. 2, February, 1890, pp. 212-213.

[2] Ibid.

Whitmer, desired to see "once more the only surviving witness. . . . Eight years ago I visited him, and 52 years ago I heard him bear his testimony, as also Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris."[1]

> David Whitmer is now past 81 years of age and only by a hair's breadth has escaped from a death bed. He is very feeble, his frame weighing less than one hundred pounds.[2]

Yet in this weakened condition, a movement was set afoot to spread the activities of the "Church of Christ." Elder Stevenson suggested that the "Whitmerites" and the "Hedrickites" unite, so as to make a stronger body; where upon "Mr. Whitmer (John C.) said he expected to visit Independence in a few weeks, when he hoped to be able to baptise all the Hedrickites into his church."[3]

After the Death of David Whitmer (1888), E. Stevenson, Andrew and Joseph Black, went to Richmond to visit John C. Whitmer (son of Jacob, the witness), to obtain information from him concerning the Church of Christ over which he was then presiding. John C. had been ordained to the office of an Elder by his uncle, David Whitmer, on January 28, 1876,

> receiving instructions to go forth and preach the Gospel as it had been taught by Joseph, the Prophet, and organize a new church according to the original pattern, in which he (John C.) was to be the first Elder. In obedience to this, he immediately commenced his labors and succeeded in baptising the first three individuals on the following Feb. 17 (1876). Others followed, and soon the new church commenced to hold meetings and completed their organization as far as their numbers would permit them. They now [1888] claim about one hundred members, all told.[4]

At this time it was found that most of the members were in and around Richmond and Independence, Missouri though there were some scattered in Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, Tennessee, California, and "a few other

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[1]Nibley, op. cit., p. 98. [2]Ibid.

[3]Andrew Jensen, "Apostate Organizations," "Whitmerites."

[4]Ibid.

states." They were holding meetings in a small school house about a mile and a half south of the city of Richmond, calling themselves the "Church of Christ."

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was in a better position to observe the success of this church, it being in their immediate vicinity. Writing of the movement in 1886 they give the following:

> What is known as the Whitmerite movement was at this time attracting some attention, and some of its representatives were actively disseminating its theories. The claim was made that David Whitmer had the right of presidency over the church by reason of his ordination. . . July 3, 1834 [refuted by David in his own book]. These claims attracted some attention from both members of the church and the outside world. . . . The Whitmerite movement began to wane, and secured thereafter but a small amount of attention from any source.[1]

Speaking of David Whitmer's attempt at reviving the church, after making a comment upon his book of 1887, the church historians continue:

> In obedience to the dictation of the spirit, he took an active part in an effort to revive the work of God. This resulted in an attempt to an organization of the church and the gathering of a few to his standard. Missionaries were sent out to different parts of the country, and some agitation of the issues raised by his address was had in different places in the Church. This interest, however, was not permanent, and gradually the influence of it died out. At present [1897] there is little or nothing being done by the advocates of his theory.[2]

A communication of the First presidency (Reorganized Church, April 6, 1887) indicates that there was a bit of irritation felt at the time.

> The effort lately made by Elder David Whitmer, J. C. Whitmer, J. J. Snyder, and W. B. Brown, to create a diversion from the faith as held by us has not met the success which it may well be believed those who made it thought it entitled to, though it has been annoying to some and in that sense harmful.[3]

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[1]Heman C. Smith, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 551.

[2]Ibid., pp. 559-60.

[3]Ibid., p. 562.

A comment in a publication of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the year 1908, informs us that the church (Whitmer) was still functioning to a limited extent, giving a brief synopsis of its existance at that time.

> At one time the followers of D. W., so one of them now living in Independence informed the writer, numbered about three or four hundred. He taught that Christ was the head of the Church, and that the Holy Spirit would lead its members aright, hence no formal organization was necessary. A few elders and priests were ordained and religious services were kept up in Richmond, Mo., for many years, and for a time in Independence. The sect has decreased in numbers until it now has only about one hundred members, who are widely scattered. About fifteen years ago one of its elders named R. P. Brown, accompanied by his wife, who shares her husband's faith, went to Jerusalem, and it is reported that he has made a few converts there.[1]

July 4, 1950, Izora Dear declared there to be but two members left; she and her sister Mamie Koontz, daughters of John C. Whitmer--first Elder of the Church of Christ from 1876. There were no meetings being held![2]

The real emphasis of this revival of the Church of Christ seems to have been centered around the booklet written by David Whitmer at Richmond in 1887. Mr. Whitmer had lost a "thumb of his right hand in an explosion of an old-fashioned powderflash." John J. Snyder therefore acted as scribe during the preparation of, "AN ADDRESS TO ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST."[3] It can be said that this work represented the thinking and beliefs of David Whitmer at the time of his death, though they are sometimes at variance with his attitude at various other stages of his disaffection from the Church of his early manhood. Well-stricken in years, the octogenarian was still

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[1]Liahona The Elder's Journal (Independence, Mo.,: Published by the Missions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.) Vol. V, No. 37, February 29, 1908, pp. 997-8.

[2]Statement of Izora Dear, personal interview.

[3]David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 3.

sound of mind if we can accept the statement of his attending physician.[1]

The pamphlet is divided into two parts. Part First is an address to those who have not read the "Book of Mormon." In this section he attempts to get his readers to over-look some of their prejudices and to investigate this volume. He defends his own validity as a witness and makes light of the time-worm "Spaulding Manuscript" story with its claim that Sidney Rigdon was the real author of the "Book of Mormon," declaring that "the wise men of the world could never write a book like it." He then gives a number of "Book of Mormon" quotations, among them some on baptism, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, on who shall be baptized, on establishing a New Jerusalem, on the Three Witnesses, and on the calling of the gentiles to repentance.[2]

Part Second, Mr. Whitmer titles, "To Believers in the Book of Mormon." It seems to be a concerted effort to point out the many supposed errors that the various churches that had accepted the "Book of Mormon" had fallen into. He places the responsibility upon their having followed the "fallen" Prophet Joseph Smith and those who had remained associated with him. Mr. Whitmer says

> I know that the Latter Day Saints are teaching some errors in doctrine, and I hope to convince the honest in heart among them of this fact. . . . but I will speak the truth as the Spirit of God moves upon me to speak it. . . . Now the Spirit of God Moves upon the Elders of the Church of Christ [David's church] to go forth unto all the believers in the Book of Mormon, and unto all other people, crying repentance, and calling on them to heed the teachings of Christ. I do not mean to persecute Joseph the translator of the Book of Mormon. I loved him . . . . [but] Joseph, like many of those of old whom God had chosen, fell into error; and why should we want to follow any man into error?[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 95; Conservator, January 26, 1888.

[2]David Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 23-33; Book of Mormon; 3 Nephi, 11:22-26; Moroni, 4 & 5; Moroni, 6; 3 Nephi, 20:21-21:29; Ether, 2:3-5; 3 Nephi, 30:1, 2.

[3]David Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 34, 35.

Mr. Whitmer points out that Joseph Smith himself, received a revelation indicating that "Some revelations are of God, some revelations are of men, and some revelations are of the Devil." To illustrate this contention, reference is made to the difficulty Martin Harris had had in raising the money for the printing of the Book of Mormon; some of the brethren even suggesting that Harris was in transgression in not selling his own farm at a great sacrifice to raise the money. Hyrum Smith said he would attempt to raise the money in some other way, suggesting the possibility of selling the copy-right to the book in Toronto, Canada.

> He persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. . . . [He] received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Canada on this mission, but they failed intirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money.[1]

It was then that they are supposed to have asked of Joseph how he could have received such a revelation, and through the stone he purportedly received the message indicating the several possible sources of revelation.

David Whitmer then enumerates a number of errors that the Church had fallen into as he saw it. First, the Church was never intended to be presided over by a "Prophet, Seer and Revelator;" though he admits that as this error crept in, none of the brethren detected it. The "next grevious error. . . was in ordaining High Priests in June, 1831, . . . at the instigation of Sidney Rigdon." He points out that the Lord warned Joseph of his weakness repeatedly in such revelations as:

> Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men. For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God . . . he must fall and

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[1] David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 41.

> incur the vengeance of a just God upon him. . . . And behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on the persuasions of men.[1]

"I give you my testimony," continues Mr. Whitmer, "that the Lord had to chastise Brother Joseph time and again, as a father would a disobedient child, to help him through the Book."[2]

The third error that came into the Church by revelation was polygamy.

> I had doubts in regard to Brother Joseph's connection with the Spiritual Wife doctrine, but I have recently seen Vol. I, No. 1, of the old Latter Day Saints' "Herald," which has settled this matter in my mind.[3]

Through the reading of the first issues of the "Saints' Herald," a publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Mr. Whitmer is convinced that many of this church's leaders were aware of this revelation (D. & C. sec. 132) had by Joseph Smith, and were suppressing it by hiding or destroying this particular issue of the "Herald." His final thrust at the Reorganized Church on this issue is:

> Now brethren . . . you must accept this revelation on polygamy, or else you must lay aside the book of Doctrine and Covenants; for the commandment is, His word ye shall receive as if from God's own mouth.[4*]

Other errors that have come into the Church he lists as: "baptism for the dead," "gathering" and building of the city of New Jerusalem, "changing the name of the Church," and a few errors taught in the Doctrine and Covenants.[5] He then states that all those who would reject the "Book of Mormon" because of the weaknesses of Joseph Smith, should also reject

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[1] D. & C., Section 3, vss. 3, 4, 6.

[2] D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 49. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 53, 54. [5] Ibid.

[*] D. & C., 21:5.

Psalms and Proverbs because of the sins of David and Solomon.

Mr. Whitmer denies that it is according to the teachings of Christ that one man should receive revelations for the Church, claiming that for eight months prior to the organization of the physical church in the year 1830, the Church was as fully organized as it could ever be; the purpose for its physical organization was so that the state would recognize their right to perform marriages, hold church property, etc.; the only officers that were necessary were Elders, Priests, and Teachers, all of which they had before April 6, 1830. He asks the question, who was

> "Prophet Seer and Revelator" to the church at Jerusalem? They had none. Who was "Prophet Seer and Revelator" to the church upon this land? They had none. And we had no such an office in the church in these last days for the first eight months of its existance, until Brother Joseph went into this error on April 6th, 1830. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In the church upon the Eastern continent, after Christ had ascended to His Father's throne and left the work with his disciples to carry on, they went to God for themselves, each and all of them receiving the will of God by the various gifts of the Holy Ghost. . . . If any man lacks wisdom, and desires to know the will of the Lord concerning himself, let him ask of God for himself, not ask of the Prophet Seer and Revelator to inquire of the Lord for him.[1]

Mr. Whitmer suggests that Jesus is the one who holds this high office ("Prophet Seer and Revelator") and "as you know, we were commanded in the beginning to rely upon that which is written. . . . As I have said, you have the scriptures before you, and if you will wrest them, it shall be to your own destruction."

> This matter of a one-man mouthpiece of God to the church, has proven the great curse of the work of God in these last days.[2]

David Whitmer also objected to the need of a Doctrine and Covenants, declaring that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are all that are needed for

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[1] Ibid., pp. 58-61.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

all the doctrine of Christ is contained in these two sacred books. "The Book of Mormon tells us that the sealed records yet to come forth will contain great mysteries of things that are to transpire before the end of the world[1]; but this is another thing outside of the gospel or doctrine of Christ."[2]

> In June, 1829, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and myself received this commandment through the stone: "Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon these things which are written (then at that time, June, 1829), for in them are all things written concerning my church, my gospel, and my rock."[3] . . . . The revelations received through the stone in 1829, agree with the teachings of Christ in the Bible and Book of Mormon; but in order to support the errors which were afterwards introduced by men, some of the early revelations have been changed and added to.[4]

He further objects to the use of the word "apostle" for "disciple," claiming that there is only one twelve who are called apostles, and they are to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, including the twelve disciples whom Christ chose on this land. He points out that the word "disciple" in the "Book of Commandments" is made to read "apostle" in the Doctrine and Covenants.[5]

> I consider the Book of Doctrine and Covenants a creed of religious faith. You can see from the first edition (Kirtland, 1835) that men, on the authority of other men, and no authority from God, "arranged the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ" in that book, and in August, 1835, adopted it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith by a unanimous vote of the high council, thus making it a law of the church for the first time. . . . Where is their authority from God for making this creed, and making it a law to the church?. . .[6]

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[1] B. of M., 2 Nephi, 27:7-10.

[2] D. Whitmer, op. cit.

[3] B. of C., Chap. XV, vs. 3. Cf. D. & C. Sec. 18, vs. 3b-4. (Note that the "foundation of" has been inserted between "concerning" and "my church")

[4] D. Whitmer, op. cit. pp.

[5] D. Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 62, 63. [6] D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 68.

Mr. Whitmer does not deny the validity of certain of the revelations that were given to Joseph Smith. The ones given up to June, 1829,

> were given through the "stone" through which the Book of Mormon was translated. These are the only revelations that can be relied upon, and they are not law. The Lord told us not to teach them for doctrine; they were given mostly to individuals, the persons whom God chose in commencing His work, for their individual instruction, and the church had no need of them.
>
> They never should have been kept with the sacred papers and records of the church, and never published in a book to become public property for the eyes of the world. It was not necessary for the whole church to ever see them. . . . Of course I believe in God revealing His will to His servants in these days, by the various gifts of the Holy Ghost; but I believe in it according to the Scriptures. . . .
>
> "Make not thy gift known unto any, save it be those who are of thy faith."[1] But they published these things in a book, and made them known to the world!"[2]

"The main reason why the printing press was destroyed [Jackson County], was because they published the Book of Commandments. It fell into the hands of the world, and the people of Jackson County, Missouri, saw the revelations that they were considered by the church as intruders upon the land of Zion, as enemies to the church, and that they should be cut off out of the land of Zion and sent away."[3] Mr. Whitmer then adds that they were specifically told to keep these things from going abroad in the world.[4] All revelations after June, 1829—and there were none recorded until March, 1830, a period of 9 months—"came through Brother Joseph as 'mouthpiece.'"[5]

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[1] B. of C., Chap. 5, vs. 5. Cf. D. & C., Section 6, vs. 12.

[2] D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 68.

[3] D. & C., 52:42; 64:35; David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 69.

[4] Ibid., 45:72.

[5] D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 71.

David Whitmer objected to the changes and additions that were made to some of the revelations, pointing out that the Lord, in His preface to the "Book of Commandments," specifically accepts the commandments as they were then (November 1, 1831). "Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful."[1] Why then were changes and additions made in the Doctrine and Covenants printed in 1835? He challenges the right to "claim that the same power which gave these revelations, had authority to change them," and referred to Jeremiah as having added "like words," in rewriting the book that Jehoiakim had burned in the fire.[2] The words added to the Doctrine and Covenants were not "like words," for they altered the meaning of the revelations. In the following quotation David Whitmer indicates such changes:

> "And he (Joseph) has a gift to translate the Book, and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift."
>
> But in the Doctrine and Covenants it has been changed and reads thus:
>
> "And you have a gift to translate the plates, and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you, and I have commanded you that you shall pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant you no other gift until it is finished."[3]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The next important change I will notice is in a revelation given to Martin Harris . . . .
>
> "And I command you that you preach naught but repentance; and show not these things unto the world, for they cannot bear meat, but milk they must receive: Wherefore, they must not know these things lest they perish."
>
> But in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants it has been changed and reads as follows:
>
> "And I command you that you preach nought but repentance, and show not these things unto the world, 'until it is wisdom in me,' etc.,"[4]

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[1] D. & C., 1:37.

[2] Bible (King James authorized version), Jeremiah, 36:32.

[3] D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 73; B. of C., 4:2. Cf. D. & C., 5:4.

[4] Ibid., pp. 74, 75; B. of C., 16:22, 23. Cf. D. & C., 19:21, 22.

Another change is an omission in the fifth section of Doctrine and Covenants. "Half of a page has been left out of this revelation. I believe that the object of those who left it out was to strike out the following words:

> "And thus, if the people of this generation harden not their hearts, I will work a reformation among them, and I will put down lyings, etc., . . . and I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples in the days of old."[1]
>
> They knew that the order of the offices in the Church of Latter Day Saints was not like the order of the Church of Christ of old; because the Church of Christ of old had in it only elders, priests and teachers: so they left out this part of the revelation when they published the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.[2]

According to Mr. Whitmer, one of the most objectionable changes as can be seen from the foregoing, was the addition of the office of High Priest in the Church. He refers to the addition made to Section 20 including the office which was no part of the revelation as it was printed in the "Book of Commandments." "The part added . . . speaks of high priests, and other high offices that the church never knew of until almost two years after its beginning: As if God had made a mistake in the first organization of the church, and left out these high important offices which are all above an elder."[3]

> High Priests were only in the church before Christ; and to have this office in the "Church of Christ" is not according to the teachings of Christ in either of the sacred books. Christ himself is our great and last High Priest.[4]

These "errors" are not all laid at the feet of Joseph Smith; those associated with him are accused of having induced him to make many of the

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[1] B. of C., 4:5. (This is not found in the D. & C.--Section 5--It is omitted between vss. 16 and 20.)

[2] D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 76.

[3] Ibid., p. 75.

[4] Ibid., p. 78.

changes; but ultimately the blame has to rest with him. It is wrong, then, writes Mr. Whitmer, to think of Joseph as the "Choice Seer" spoken of by Lehi to his son Joseph.[1] "But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins," according to David Whitmer, means that he will be a descendant of Lehi's Joseph, therefore a Lamanite, which Joseph Smith was not. Furthermore:

> "And not to the bringing forth of my word only saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word." Brother Joseph never convinced a single Lamanite that I ever heard of.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This whole chapter treats of the one matter; a blessing is pronounced upon Little Joseph, because a Great Seer is to be of his seed, that should not all be destroyed.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Again it says, "they who seek to destroy this Choice Seer shall be confounded." Those who sought to destroy Brother Joseph were not confounded, but they destroyed him.[2]

In a letter from Elder Edward Stevenson to President John Taylor (telling of a then recent visit to David Whitmer), Stevenson wrote that he had learned that the first difficulty or dispute between Mr. Whitmer and Joseph Smith was in 1836, over the name of the Church. David had insisted that it should be the Church of Christ and not the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.[3] The latter name didn't become official until the year 1838.[4]

> When Christ established His church upon this land, in the days of the Nephites, He gave them special instructions from His own lips concerning the name by which His church must be called. He gave them a strict commandment to call the church by His name, which He said was Christ. The Nephite brethren obeyed this commandment and called the church "THE CHURCH OF CHRIST," as seen in many places in the New Covenant

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[1] B. of M., 2 Nephi, 3:6.

[2] D. Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 84-87; B. of M., 2 Nephi, 3:11, 14.

[3] J. H., Jan. 7, 1878 (Quoting a statement by David's son David J. Whitmer).

[4] D. & C., 115:3, 4.

> of the Book of Mormon. . . . When Christ appeared to them on the third day of His mission upon this land, the first thing they said to Him was this:
>
> "Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter. And the Lord said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the NAME OF CHRIST, which is my name? for by this name shall ye be called at the last day; . . . "[1]

The changing of the name of the Church was one alteration that was apparently a source of contention with David Whitmer from the time the change was made. The history of this man's life bears out the fact that many of these other so-called errors were the result of many years of deliberation and contemplation apart from the Church. However, evidence indicates that the church of the "Whitmers'" as it functioned in Richmond, Missouri, and the church with which he was associated briefly in 1847 (M'-Lellin's), both were called "The Church of Christ."

Mr. Whitmer closes his booklet with:

> Brethren, I have this to say in conclusion. I will not argue and dispute with you. In the spirit of love and meekness I have told you in plain and simple words what the Spirit of God has moved upon me to speak. . . . I am not asking you to hear me; I refer you to the words of eternal turth, as they are contained in the two sacred books. I will always pray for you, that you may some day see that you are in error in believing and teaching the doctrines which men have added to the doctrines of Christ. My days to stay here are not many . . . , but I have rid my garments of your blood and the blood of all men. . . . May God have mercy upon you to humble your hearts before Him, that you may be guided into the light of truth, is my prayer through the name of Christ. Amen.
>
> DAVID WHITMER.
>
> Richmond, Mo., April 1st, 1887.[2]

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[1]D. Whitmer, op. cit., pp. 90-91; B. of M., 3 Nephi, 27:3-5ff. (Prior to this it was called "Church of the Lamb of God," 1 Nephi, 14:10; "Church of God," 2 Nephi, 9:2; Alma, 4.)

[2]D. Whitmer, op. cit., p. 93.

CHAPTER XII

DAVID WHITMER THE WITNESS AND THE MAN

Of the thousands David Whitmer reported as visiting him in his life time, there is no known account of any one ever being able to withstand or refute him successfully where his testimony to the "Book of Mormon" was concerned. A few attempted to convince "the world" that David Whitmer had denied his testimony, but even organizations of rather unlimited means have been unable to sustain such charges. The publishers of the "Appleton Cyclopedia" refused to retract their statement that the testimony had been denied. Writing in response to a query in 1878, they said:

> The article "Mormons" was written by one of our most intelligent and impartial contributors, Mr. Robert Carter, and is intirely correct and just in all its statements.[1]

The article which brought about this query, stated that the witnesses to the "Book of Mormon" "renounced Mormonism and avowed the falsity of their testimony."[2] So forcefully and widely known did the rebuttal of all such charges become through the years, that it would be difficult to find any such charge made against David Whitmer in a modern American published encyclopedia. Not only was he able to convince many of his hearers to the truthfulness of his repeated affirmations of the heavenly manifestation, but he was so convincing in doing so that a number of them appear to be trying to persuade their readers that he is telling the truth. This may

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[1] J. H., January 7, 1878. [2] Ibid.

be seen in such statements as:

> 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. . . .[1]
>
> Skeptics may laugh and scoff if they will, but no man could listen to Mr. Whitmer as he talks of his interview with the angel of the Lord, without being most forcibly convinced that he has heard an honest man tell what he honestly believes to be true.[2]

The variance with which many of the details are told may have a tendency to detract somewhat from the validity of his testimony in the minds of some. Certainly there are many details that are definitely in conflict with what has been accepted as history. The only phase of the repeatedly retold experiences that is completely consistent is <u>that he did see the heavenly messenger and the messenger did actually show the witnesses the plates and other items, and he did hear a voice from heaven declaring that they had been translated correctly by the gift and power of God.</u> This much of the testimony of David Whitmer cannot be gainsayed. As to the conflicting details of some of the stories, certainly many of them can be traced to the variance with which a man would tell a story when trying to recall it after a fifty year lapse of time. Undoubtedly some of the details are the result of much speculation and reflection upon the experiences, with advantage of a perspective, impossible when in the proximity.

Some of the contradictions are assuredly the result of inaccurate reporting. Mr. Whitmer frankly admitted that it was necessary for him to have some of "the brethren write to some of the papers correcting the mistakes in them."[3] This was at the time he was having so much difficulty

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[1]<u>Conservator</u>, November 18, 1881. [2]<u>Richmond Democrat</u>, January 16, 1888.

[3]<u>Saints' Herald</u>, February 5, 1887, p. 89ff.

with the Reorganized Church.

Ofttimes newspapers taking an account from another paper would fail to give the details in the same way. For example, the Chicago "Inter-Oceanic's" release which it borrowed from the Omaha "Herald."[1] At times, even though the reported interviews are years apart, there are definite signs of borrowing or using another paper's account. The following is two descriptions of David Whitmer with a lapse of six years between them. Other than breaking them apart for the purpose of comparison, the continuity of the two articles is unchanged.

CHICAGO "TIMES" August, 1875	KANSAS CITY "JOURNAL" June 5, 1881
He is now 70 years of age, but as hale and hearty as most men at 50.	. . . and found the patriarch resting in an invalid's chair, looking very pale and feeble. . . .
In person he is above the medium height, stoutly built though not corpulant,	In person he is about medium height, of massive frame though not corpulant,
his shoulders inclining to stoop as if from so long supporting his massive head rather than from the weight of years,	His shoulders slightly bent as with the weight of years.
his frank manly and benevolent face closely shaven, and his whole exterior betokening him to be one of nature's noblemen.	His manly, benevolent face was closely shaven, his hair snow white, and his whole appearance denoted one of nature's nobleman.
The rudiments of education he learned in school, and a lifetime of thought and research have served to expand and store his mind with vast funds of information.[2]	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.[3]

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[1] Ibid., November 13, 1886.

[2] Salt Lake Herald, August 7, 1875.

[3] Kansas City Journal, June 5, 1881.

Not a great deal of liberty was taken with the earlier account, but neither was there any credit given. Little details in a man's description may amount to nothing, but in matters of religious belief the changing of the color of a stone, the question of whether they were sitting on a log or had the log between them, the addition of an item or the leaving of one out, the fact of an angel just speaking generally or speaking directly to one particular person, etc., can sometimes make a great deal of difference to those of meticulous thinking and reasoning habits.

Mr. Whitmer's "fallen Prophet" contentions created considerable animosity among many who found themselves in the dilema of castigating him for his charges against Joseph Smith while at the time defending him in order that there be a basis for their own church's existence. This placed David Whitmer in a rather protected position in promoting his Church of Christ philosophy; a philosophy which was quite out of harmony with that of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and its struggling "illegitimate" sister the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The former Church, firmly entrenched in the inter-mountain west, showed no great concern for the Whitmerite movement, but it had the early appearance of a threat to many members of the latter. The minutest affront, real or imaginary, often became a matter of the gravest importance. Such as the story quoted in the Chicago "Inter-Ocean":

> On one occasion the prophet had indulged in a stormy quarrel with his wife. Without pacifying her or making any reparation for his brutal treatment, he returned to the room in the Whitmer residence to resume his work on the plates:
>
> The surface of the magic stone remained blank, and all his persistent efforts to bring out the coveted words proved abortive. He went into the woods again to pray, and this time was gone fully an hour. His friends became positively concerned, and went about to institute a search, when Joseph entered the room, pale and haggard, having suffered a vigerous chastisement at the hands of the Lord. He went straight in humiliation to his wife, entreated her and received her

> forgiveness, returned to his work and, much to the joy of himself and his anxious friends surrounding him, the stone again glared forth its letters of fire.[1]

The editor of the "Saints' Herald" felt that "this paragraph has the ring of a malicious attempt to bring reproach upon the memory and work of Joseph," so he went into a lengthy defense of the Prophet and the love he and his wife had for each other. Not stopping there, a comparison is drawn between David Whitmer and his brother-in-law, another of the Three Witnesses, by which Mr. Whitmer is made to suffer. Yet in all this the Witness, David, is made to feel that his defense of Joseph as a Prophet, and the divinity of the Book of Mormon are a great responsibility that he is doing well.

Frequently the charge is made that Mr. Whitmer is ambitious to become the leader of the restoration movements. In the actual activities of the man, it seems quite the contrary. Although others in other factions of the movement make frequent mention of his ordination at the hand of the Prophet Joseph Smith to become his successor, and although those of the group with which he is associated, acknowledge his right to this position (after Joseph's death[2]), Mr. Whitmer, after considering the M'Lellin experience, quite definitely does not seek to become the "Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church." He denies the existence of any such office and when the Church of Christ in Richmond (Whitmer faction) was reactivated in 1886, John C. Whitmer, nephew of the witness, is the one selected and ordained by David Whitmer to be the First Elder of the Church of Christ (as was the case, said Mr. Whitmer, in the Church organization prior to April 6,

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[1] Saints' Herald, November 13, 1886, p. 706.

[2] David Whitmer, op. cit., p. 95.

1830, when Joseph Smith was designated as Prophet Seer and Revelator).

One is led to wonder why an individual, so much a part of the Church and its activities at the beginning, could have (in less than a decade) become so disaffected. The process of this disaffection seems to be quite largely exposed to view as Mr. Whitmer gradually develops his theme in "An Address to All Believers in Christ." It does not seem to be so much revealed in the "fallen prophet" theme as it is in David Whitmer's explanations for the cause of Joseph Smith's falling. Specifically again and again Mr. Whitmer's booklet, but also found in the numerous interviews, is the significant idea: Joseph "was once an humble man; but he became ensnared by Sidney Rigdon, David Patten, Brigham Young, and others."[1] "Your [Joseph III] father did become ensnarled by wicked men, and through their influence he did introduce doctrines of error."[2] Only one man is universally named in these expressions, <u>that is Sidney Rigdon</u>. Observe the following:

> After Sidney Rigdon came into the church. . . we began to make proselytes faster; but greater numbers coming into the church does not always signify great <u>spiritual</u> prosperity.[3]

> The next grievous error which crept into the church was in ordaining High Priests in June, 1831. This error was introduced at the instigation of Sidney Rigdon. The office of High Priest was never spoken of, and never thought of being established in the Church until Rigdon came in. . . . In February, 1831, Brother Joseph came to Kirtland where Rigdon was. Rigdon was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. He soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph's affections, and had more influence over him than any other man living. He was Brother Joseph's private counsellor, and his most intimate friend and brother for some time after they met. Brother Joseph rejoiced, believing that the Lord had sent him this great and mighty man, Sidney Rigdon, to help him in the work. Poor Brother Joseph![4]

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[1] <u>Saints' Herald</u>, February 5, 1887, p. 708.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>

[3] D. Whitmer, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 45.

[4] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 46.

It would not be easy for the third man baptized in this new dispensation to accept replacement by a newcomer![1] Not that alone, but Sidney was an old man by David's standards, and this was a young man's church. Sidney Rigdon was 43 years of age while David and the youthful Prophet were but young men not yet 26! It was probably at this time that the real difficulty between Mr. Whitmer and the Church began, though there is no indication of it for several more years.

Another change that was offensive to David Whitmer was the altering of some of the printed revelations. Notice who gets the blame!

> I was told that Sidney Rigdon was the cause of these changes being made: by his smooth talk he convinced Brother Joseph and the committee that it was right.[2]

And on the matter of the Melchizedek Priesthood:

> In no place in the word of God does it say that an Elder is after the order of Melchisedec, or after the order of the Melchisedec Priesthood. An Elder is after the order of Christ. This matter of "priesthood," since the days of Sidney Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling-block of the Latter Day Saints.[3]

After Rigdon joined the Church, the position of David Whitmer became, more or less, secondary in Kirtland; only in Missouri was he in a position of primary importance, and when the Presidency of the whole Church moved to Far West, or it became apparent that they were going to, David Whitmer became noticeably indifferent. The capstone for a long list of injuries received over a period of several years, imagined or real, was set when Sidney Rigdon wrote the proclamation and engineered the banishment of the Whitmers from Far West.

As to the character of Mr. David Whitmer, even E. D. Howe, arch-enemy of Mormonism from an early time in its existence (wrote one of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 43.

[2] Ibid., p. 77.

[3] Ibid., p. 80.

earliest anti-Mormon books "Mormonism Unveiled," 1834), could find little for which to condemn him. Many years later Brigham Young made a comment indicating the esteem in which many of the early members of the Church held David Whitmer during his years in Jackson County, Missouri.[1] Brigham Young, successor to Joseph Smith, Jun. as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was also desirous of having David Whitmer come back and die in this Church.[2] But in this President Young must have been disappointed. Mr. Whitmer was too firmly rooted in his adopted home of Richmond. David Whitmer had had an opportunity to rejoin the Church at Winter Quarters (now Florence, Nebraska) in 1848.[3] His close friend and associate for many years, Oliver Cowdery, tried to induce him to again cast lots with the Church, but this was at a time when he was coming to realize the supposed errors the Church had been led into—he was then breaking with the M'Lellin group.

David Whitmer's honesty and integrity became a matter of great importance to him. Not only did he come to his own defense, but his city (Richmond, Mo.) became imbued with the same seemingly contagious spirit. Any affront to David seemed to be an offence against the people of Richmond. The Church of Christ in Richmond never at any time had more than a small congregation; in general the people did not accept the Whitmers' religious convictions. Nevertheless they believed that David Whitmer was an honest man, and they were firmly convinced that he believed that he had seen and heard the Heavenly Messenger of whom he testified; but it was not necessary for them to so believe.

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[1] J. H., June 15, 1856. [2] Ibid., August 26, 1871.

[3] Ibid., February 27, 1848 (Private letter of Oliver Cowdery to Brigham Young).

It seems clear, that David Whitmer keenly sensed the responsibility that was his in bearing testimony to the world. As a result of this he so influenced his family and others associated with him that years after his demise, citizens of his city remember him for his integrity. This responsibility became even a greater mission after Martin Harris died leaving him, David, the last of those who had seen the precious records.

The assurance, felt in all factions that accepted the "Book of Mormon," that David Whitmer would remain steadfast in his testimony, was expressed in a Salt Lake City paper several years before he died, at a time when it was quite apparent that he would never rejoin the Church.

> These three persons [the Three Witnesses] . . . were severally excommunicated for disaffection or transgression. Their disconnection with the Church has been cited as evidence against the Book of Mormon. To us it is very strong proof in its favor. If there had been any collusion between Joseph and them, he would not have dared to withdraw fellowship from them, for fear of exposure. And after they were cut off from the Church, their testimony concerning the Book of Mormon and this divine manifestation to them remained the same. It never wavered, never changed. Among friends or among foes, they maintained their integrity so far as this was concerned, and nothing could induce them to retract a syllable. . . . David Whitmer is still living, and . . . has never faltered or been shaken in his atestations sic of the same facts. He is not connected with the Church . . . but has repeatedly testified to the angelic vision as at first.[1]

After his death this same paper wrote:

> The memory of David Whitmer is entitled to respect, if for no other reason than that he honestly adhered to his testimony to the last, and withstood all the persuasions of men used to induce him to take a different course.[2]

David Whitmer lived to gain the respect of his community and most every one who was associated with him, thereby becoming an ever more valid and acceptable instrument in the accomplishing of the instruction received from heaven over a half century earlier:

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[1]Deseret News, April 7, 1881. [2]Ibid., January 26, 1888.

> These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.[1]

The last act of his life was to have his sanity vouchsafed, that he might with his final breath bear witness again.[2] David the man was a capable David the witness.

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Inscriptions of David Whitmer Grave-marker

East side
No Inscription

North side
Julia A. Whitmer
Died Feb. 25, 1889
Aged 74 yrs. 18 days.

South side
David Whitmer
died
Jan 25, 1888
aged
83 yrs. 20 days

West side
The record of the Jews
and the record of the
Nephites are one

Father
and
Mother

WHITMER
--

Small stone barely visible against tree is for David J. and wife. The other small stone over grave of Geo. W. Schweich.

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[1]Joseph Smith, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 55.

[2]Richmond Democrat, January 26, 1888.

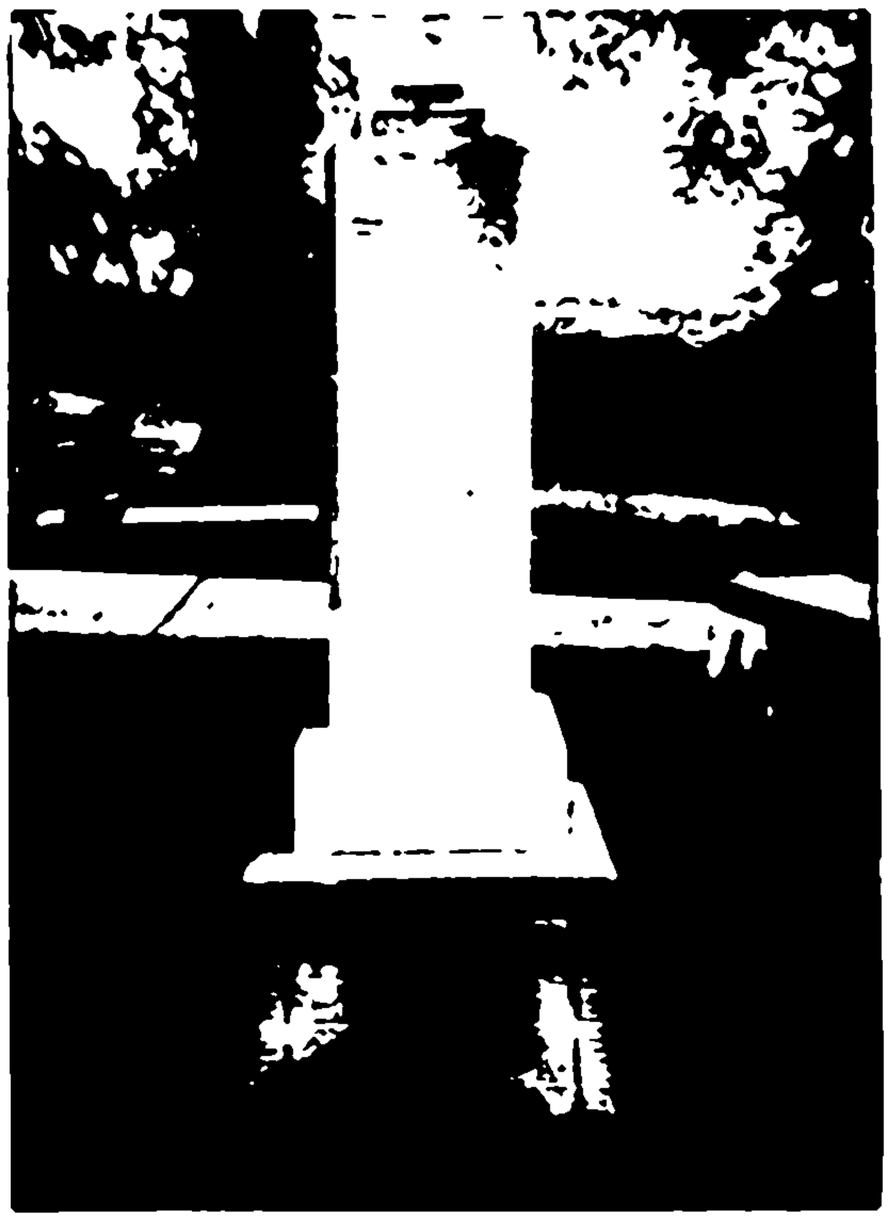


Fig. 10
South side of Marble shaft.

Fig. 11
North side

Fig. 12
West side

Fig. 13
The David Whitmer cemetery lot in the new cemetery.

APPENDIX A

THE "CHICAGO TIMES" INTERVIEWS DAVID WHITMER

August 7, 1875, the "Salt Lake Herald" reprinted from the "Chicago Times" the following:

DAVID WHITMER
The Only Living Witness to the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon

The Old Man Interviewed on What He Saw and Heard

The Past, Present and Future

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses who testified to "all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people," that they had seen the golden plates upon which were engraved the hieroglyphics, that were translated into the Book of Mormon, has been interviewed by a reporter of the Chicago "Times", and the result is given in four columns of that paper on August 7th. We reproduce the sujoined [sic] from the published interview:

DAVID WHITMER

was born near Harrisburg, Pa., and when he was but four years old his parents removed to New York, settling at a point midway between the northern extremeties of lakes Cayuga and Seneca, two miles from Waterloo, two miles from Seneca river, four miles from Seneca falls, seven miles from Geneva, and twenty-two miles from Palmyra. He is now 70 years of age, but as hale and hearty as most men at 50. In person he is above the medium height, stoutly built though not corpulant, his shoulders inclining to stoop as if from so long supporting his massive head rather than from the weight of years, his frank, manly and benevolent face closely shaven, and his whole exterior betokening him to be one of nature's gentlemen. The rudiments of education he learned in school, and a life-time of thought and research have served to expand and store his mind with vast funds of information. The "Times" reporter found him at his pleasant two-story white frame residence near the center of the town of Richmond, Mo., and in company with Hon. J. T. Child, editor of the "Conservator", was admitted, introduced, and received a cordial greeting. When the object of the call was made known, Mr.

Whitmer smilingly and meditatively remarked that it was true that he had in his possession the original records, and was conversant with the history of the church of Christ from the beginning, but was under obligation to hold both history and records sacred until such time as the interests of truth and true religion might demand their aid to combat error. Presently he became quite animated, rose to his feet and with great earnestness and good nature spoke for half an hour on the harmony between the Bible and the original Book of Mormon, showing how the finding of the plates had been predicted, referring to the innumerable evidences, in the shape of ruins of great cities existing on this continent, of its former occupation by a highly civilized race, reverently declared his solomn conviction of the authenticity of the records in his possession, and closed by DENOUNCING THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS OF UTAH as an abomination in the sight of the Lord. While he believed implicitly in the original book, he protested against the Book of Covenants, which was simply a compilation of special revelations that Smith and his successors had pretended to have received. Joe Smith, he said, was generally opposed to these revelations, but was frequently importuned by individuals to reveal their duty, and oftimes he was virtually compelled to yield, and in this way the original purity of the faith was tarnished by human invention, and the accepted records of today cumbered with a mass of worse than useless rubbish. Should Brigham Young, or any of his infatuated satelites, ever dare to declare any of their interpretations to be from the original tablets, or proclaim that their pernicious doctrines or practices were authorized by the true version, then he, David Whitmer, would bring forth the records and confound them. Until that time he alone would be the custodian of the sacred documents. When

THE QUESTION OF POLYGAMY was broached, and it was asked if the original Book of Mormon justified that practice, Mr. Whitmer most emphatically replied: "No! it is even much more antagonistic to both polygamy and concubinage than is the bible. Joe Smith never, to my knowledge, advocated it, though I have heard that he virtually sanctioned it at Nauvoo. However, as I cut loose from him in 1837, I can't speak intelligently of what transpired thereafter.." David Whitmer believes in the bible as implicitly as any devotee alive; and he believes in the Book of Mormon as much as he does in the bible. The one is but a supplement to the other according to his idea, and neither would be complete were the other lacking. And no man can look at David Whitmer's face for half an hour, while he carily and modestly speaks of what he has seen, and then boldly and earnestly confesses the faith that is in him, and say that he is a bigot or an enthusiast. While he shrinks from unnecessary public promulgations of creed, and keenly feels that the Brighamites and Danites and numerous other ites have disgraced it, yet he would not hesitate, in emergency, to STAKE HIS HONOR AND EVEN HIS LIFE upon its reliability. His is the stern faith of the puritans, modified by half a century of benevolent thought and quiet observation. He might have been a martyr had he lacked sense and shrewdness to escape

the death sentence that was pronounced against him by the high priests of the church he had helped to build. As it is, he is the only living witness of the wonderous revelation made to Joseph Smith the founder of Mormonism.

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, Mo., 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 desciple 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 seer-stone. 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. He declares that he has never been a Mormon, as the term is commonly interpreted, but is a firm believer in the book, in the faith of Christ, and the fulfillment of the prophecies in due time. Some of them have ALREADY BEEN FULFILLED; for instance, that which declares that the saints shall be driven from city to city, and also the prediction that the twelve apostles shall lead them to the devil.

In 1837 David and his brother John, then living in Far West Missouri, were warned that they must make a confession of their apostacy or be killed, as the leaders of the chufch were conspiring against them. They determined to accept neither horn of the dilemma, and arranged for flight. At an appointed time John emerged from the back door of his house, gave the preconcerted signal by raising his hat, and hastily mounting horses in waiting, they rode away. John, as clerk of the church, had its records,and Oliver Cowdery bore off the original translation, and eventually transfered it to the keeping of David. Since that memorable day both John and David Whitmer have kept aloof from the so-called Latter-day Saints, although firm as ever in the faith as taught by the Book of Mormon. John is a man of fine education, and abundantly able to defend his faith from assaults from any quarter.

The above article is rewritten in the "Journal History of the Church" and also is found as Document 1693 in the archives of the Church. In the same "Journal History of the Church" under the date, September 18, 1875, and as Document 2096, the "Salt Lake Herald" verifies the "Chicago Times" article as follows:

DAVID WHITMER

He Says That Interview was Substantially Correct

A gentleman from this city - not a Mormon - having entertained doubt of the genuiness of the reprinted interview of the Chicago "Times" correspondent with Mr. David Whitmer, relative to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and other matters, as published in the "Herald" some weeks ago, wrote to Mr. Whitmer, making inquiry as to the reliability of the statements attributed to him, and here is the answer which he received:

Richmond, Mo., August 17, 1875.

In the fear of the Lord, and under the guardianship of my aged grandfather, I write to you from him: "The conversation in which I gave the outlines of my experience and history to the reporter of the Chicago "Times", and published by them--which was copied by the "Herald"--is substantially correct. There may be a few minor errors, but they do not interfere at all with what I gave him in substance, or the purpose of the Almighty Father in disseminating his truth."

Under his instruction, (David Whitmer) I am sir, your obedient servant,

Geo. W. Schweich

APPENDIX B

DAVID WHITMER INTERVIEWED BY EDWARD STEVENSON

The "Journal History of the Church" under date of December 23, 1877 gives the following letter from Elder Edward Stevenson as copied from Document 1170:

Hudgins House, Richmond, Ray Co., Mo.
Dec. 23, 1877.

Orson Pratt,
Salt Lake City,

Dear Bro: I have just returned from the third interview with David Whitmer, since our arrival at this place, night before last. David looks pretty well preserved, and weighs heavier than ever before 152 lbs; and stands 5 feet 10, fair, and prominent features. Bro. Hyrum Clark and myself met him at his own fireside and were made welcome, and he was very free to converse, each interview lasting several hours. I asked him in regards to the names of the six members at the organization of the Church on the 6th day of April, 1830, and he gave them as follows: 1st Joseph Smith, 2, Oliver Cowdery, 3rd, David Whitmer, 4th, Hyrum Smith, 5, John Whitmer, 6, Christian Whitmer and as near as he could remember, about 12 N. [sic] dinnertime. He also said there were 40 or 50 persons present many of whom were in the Church.

He showed us the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon written by four different persons, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, Emma Smith, and Christian Whitmer. It was clean and well cared for, written on foolscap, and about 2 inches thick. It came into his hands from Oliver Cowdery at his death, and now he is by the side of both the father and the mother of David Whitmer, and some others of the Whitmer family, about half a mile north of Richmond. We visited the spot today. The city now contains about 2000 inhabitants. A large courthouse stands in the same square on the spot where the old stood about 40 years ago. Some of our brethren will remember the old one. The old log jail is substituted by a blacksmith and wagon shop. A shock of earthquake rent the new courthouse in 1862, but it still stands. 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 the plates of gold, also the brass plates, 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 12 Apostles.

David has just two children, a son 44 years of age, [and] a daughter, both living here, the latter a widow. David will be 73 years of age in January, and his brother John, 2 years and 6 months older and lives at Far West.

I had a very pleasant interview today with General Doniphan and attended the Christian Church of which he is a member. Gen. Atchison is still alive and 2 other members of the bar, all of which lived at Liberty, Clay County, Mo. at the time of the expulsion of our people from Jackson County when Clay County received them. We had the opportunity to-day of explaining some of our views at our hotel in the presence of General Doniphan and others, and also several times while on the cars.

With kind regards,

E. Stevenson.

P. S. Martin Harris was not with Oliver and David, but subsequently witnessed the plates, etc. probably the next day.
E.S.

Under the date of January 7, 1878 the "Journal History of the Church" includes a letter from Elder Stevenson to President John Taylor containing substantially the same information with the following addition:

From his only son David, who was born at Liberty, Clay County, Mo. in 1833, I learned that the first difficulty or dispute between his father and the Prophet was in 1836 about the name of the Church, objecting to calling it the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he wishing it to be called the Church of Christ. He related many very interesting items of seeing one of the Nephites in company with the Prophet and Oliver, when Joseph's countenance became almost transparent, etc....

In a letter to the "Herald", January 21, 1878, Edward Stevenson gave the editors a bit of additional information gleaned from the same interviews.

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.

APPENDIX C

DR. P. WELHELM POULSON REPORTS HIS VISIT WITH DAVID WHITMER

Dr. Poulson, living in Ogden, wrote to the editors of the "Deseret News" concerning a visit he had had with David Whitmer. The "News" published those portions of the letter it thought would be of interest to its readers in its issue of August 16, 1878.

Ogden City, August 13, 1878.

Editors Deseret News:

Several persons have inquired of me about David Whitmer, especially since the publication in the "News" of a letter about the late John Whitmer. If the "Deseret News" will give the space in its columns it will afford me pleasure to write what I know about him from my visit to Richmond, Mo. and also my personal conversation with him.

He is now 73 years old but is a wonderfully well-preserved man, tall and erect as a pine, well proportioned, with a military bearing, Roman nose and dark eyes full of fire and expression. His forehead is broad and large, and his head nearly bald, but well balanced.

In company with a son and grandson, Mr. Whitmer keeps a livery and feed stable at Richmond, Mo., the old grandfather is principally relieved from business, but he makes his regular trips down to the stables, and to the minute as in olden times.

David Whitmer's sister [Elizabeth Ann] was married to Oliver Cowdery, whose remains rest in the graveyard at Richmond, and who practiced law in that town from 1838 to 1849, [only intermittently] when he died in full faith and bore testimony about his visions. On his death-bed he requested to be buried without any display or large attendance, and he wanted no gravestone to be erected over his ashes. David Whitmer said his brother-in-law was, in many respects, a peculiar man. David's brother, Jacob Whitmer, one of the witnesses, lived and died in Richmond, and his grave is only a short distance from Cowdery's. On Jacob's grave is erected a fine marble stone. On the top of the stone appears his name and next we discover the cut of the Book of Mormon laid open, with a blooming rose resting on the divine, and the book resting upon the closed up Bible. Jacob Whitmer died April 21, 1856, aged 56 years, 2 months and 26 days.

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 breast-plate, 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- They 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.

I- Martin Harris, who died lately in Smithfield, Utah gave a testimony in Salt Lake City Tabernacle that he saw the plates by faith and the power of God.

He- Martin Harris is correct. He was not by us at all when he first saw the angel. First when we told him what we had seen, and were the second time in prayer all together, and when the angel appeared for a second time, we saw Martin Harris by us, and he saw, and we saw it, and our testimony which we give to the world is true exactly as you read it, we saw by the gift and power of God. 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 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 theplates 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 it 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.

I- You are in good health?

He- I am in very well in deed for my age. I am not troubled with anything except a little rheumatism or what it is in my hops. I was thrown from a buggy, and feel ever since some weakness over my hips.

This conversation was mostly written down word for word half an hour after the interview with David Whitmer, esq., who will recognize it as his words, and I send it that the public may form a better idea about this truly remarkable man.

Yours truly,

P. Wilhelm Poulson, M.D.

APPENDIX D

THE REPORT OF ELDERS ORSON PRATT AND JOSEPH F. SMITH

The following report is given as it has been preserved in "The Latter-day Saints Millennial Star", No. 49, vol. 40, pp. 769-774.

New York City, Sept. 17, 1878

President John Taylor and the Council of the Twelve:

Dear Brethren, - We desire to make the following hastily written report of our mission to the Eastern States....

. . . . . .

Coming to Lexington by narrow gauge railway, we crossed the Missouri River by ferry, and took broad guage railway from this point to Richmond, eight miles.

At Richmond we put up at the Shaw House, before the cyclone, a three story brick building, but has been restored, since the tempest, only two stories, now kept by Mr. Warren Ewing, son-in-law of the original proprietor, Mr. S. Shaw, once a freighter to Utah, now dead. On Saturday morning, Sept. 7th, we met Mr. David Whitmer, the last remaining one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He is a good-sized man, 73 years of age last January, and well preserved. (He was born January 7th, 1805), he is close shaven, his hair perfectly white and rather thin, he has a large head and a very pleasant, manly countenance that one would readily perceive to be an index to a conscientious, honest heart. He seemed wonderfully pleased, as well as surprised, at seeing Elder Orson Pratt. Said he would not have known him as he had grown so fat and stout; he remembered him as a slender, bashful, timid boy. After a few minutes conversation he excused himself, saying he would return again to see us. This meeting was in the bar-room of the hotel. When he called again he was in company with Col. Childs, a middle-aged man and a resident of the place. By invitation we accompanied them to Mr. Whitmer's office, where we were introduced to Mr. David J. Whitmer, (eldest son of David) Mr. Geo. Schweich, (grandson of the old gentleman) Mr. John Whitmer, (son of Jacob Whitmer), Col. James W. Black, of Richmond, and several others. A couple of hours were very pleasantly passed in conversation, principally on Utah matters, when we parted for dinner, agreeing to meet Mr. Whitmer again at his office at 4:30 p.m.

Agreeable to appointment we met Mr. Whitmer and his friends, at his office, but as the place was too public for private conversation and as it seemed impossible to obtain a private personal interview with David Whitmer, by myself, we invited him and such of his friends as he saw proper to fetch along, to our room in the hotel. Mr. Whitmer apologized for not inviting us to his house, as it was "wash day," and he and his wife were "worn out" with the extra labor, exposure, etc., etc., consequent on re-building since the cyclone. He accepted our invitation to our room and brought with him James R. B. Vancleave, a fine looking, intelligent young newspaper man, of Chicago, who is paying his addresses to Miss Josephine Schweich (grand-daughter of David Whitmer), George Schweich, (grandson) John C. Whitmer, (son of Jacob), W. W. Warner, and another person whose name we did not learn. In the presence of these the following, in substance, as noticed in Brother Joseph F. Smith's journal, is the account of the interview.

Elder O. Pratt to D. Whitmer. Can you tell the date of the bestowal of the apostleship upon Joseph, by Peter, James, and John?

D. W. I do not know, Joseph never told me. I can only tell you what I know, for I will not testify to anything I do not know.

J. F. S. to D. W. Did Oliver Cowdery die here in Richmond?

D. W. Yes he lived here, I think, about one year before his death. He died in my father's house, right here, in January, 1849. Phineas Young was here at the time.

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

D. W. It was in June, 1929--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 the 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 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 around 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 and told 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 space, 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 at Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.

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

D. W. 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 it, 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 supposition was right, and 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, and 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 records will be brought forth?

D. W. When you 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.

Elder O. P. Have you in your possession the original MSS. of the Book of Mormon?

D. W. I have; they are in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. He placed them in my care at his death, and charged me to preserve them as long as I lived; they are safe and well preserved.

J. F. S. What will be done with them at your death?

D. W. I will leave them to my nephew, David Whitmer, son of my brother Jacob, and my namesake.

O. P. Would you not part with them to a purchaser?

D. W. No. Oliver charged me to keep them, and Joseph said my father's house should keep the records. I consider these things sacred, and would not part with nor barter them for money.

J. F. S. We would not offer you money in the light of bartering for the MSS., but we would like to see them preserved in some manner where they would be safe from casualties and from the caprices of men, in some institution that will not die as man does.

D. W. That is all right. While camping around here in a tent, all my effects exposed to the weather, everything in the trunk where the MSS. were kept became mouldy, etc., but they were preserved, not even being discolored, (we supposed his camping in a tent, etc., had reference to his circumstances after the cyclone, in June last), except only, as he and others affirm, the room in which the MSS. were kept. That was the only part of the house that was not demolished, and even the ceiling of that room was but little impaired. "Do you think," said Philander Page, a son of Hyrum Page, one of the eight witnesses, "that the Almighty cannot take care of his own?"

Next day (Sunday, Sept. 8) Mr. Whitmer invited us to his house, where, in the presence of David Whitmer, Esq., (son of Jacob), Philander Page, J. R. B. Vancleave, David J. Whitmer (son of David the witness), George Schweich, (grandson of David) Colonel Childs and others, David Whitmer brought out the MSS. of the Book of Mormon. We examined them closely and those who knew the handwriting pronounced the whole of them, excepting comparatively few pages, to be the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. It was thought that these few pages were in the handwriting of Emma Smith and John and Christian Whitmer.

We found that the names of the eleven witnesses were, however, subscribed in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. When the question was asked Mr. Whitmer if he and the other witnesses did or did not sign the testimonies themselves, Mr. W. replied, "each signed his own name."

"Then where are the original signatures?"

D. W. I don't know, I suppose Oliver copied them, but this I know is an exact copy.

Someone suggested that he, being the last one left of the eleven witnesses, ought to certify to this copy. Lawyer D. Whitmer (Jacob's son) suggested that he had better reflect about it first and be very cautious.

J. F. S. suggested that perhaps there were two copies of the manuscripts, but Mr. Whitmer replied that, according to the best of his knowledge, there never was but the one copy. Herein, of course, he is evidently uninformed.

Elder O. Pratt again felt closely after the subject of procuring the MSS., but we found that nothing would move him on this point. The whole Whitmer family are deeply impressed with the sacredness of the relic. And so thoroughly imbued are they with the idea and faith that it is under the immediate protection of the Almighty, that, in their estimation, not only are the MSS. themselves safe from all possible contingencies, but that they are a source of protection to the place or house in which they may be kept, and, it may be to those who have possession of them. Another reason why they cling to this relic is that David Whitmer has reorganized the "Church of Christ" with six Elders and two priests, after the pattern of the first organization, the two priests as we suppose representing Joseph and Oliver as holding

the Aaronic Priesthood from the hand of John the Baptist. David and John were two of these six Elders, four others, viz. John C. Whitmer, W. W. Warner, Philander Page, and John Short, having been ordained by David and John. And as the recent death of John has diminished the number of Elders to five it would be interesting to know if, according to their strict construction the vacancy can be filled.

Their creed is to preach nothing but the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Mr. Whitmer and others called on us again in the evening, at the hotel, and conversed, reiterating many things before stated. Upon inquiry, Mr. Whitmer told us that Oliver Cowdery had told him all about his visiting the Church at Council Bluffs and of his having been re-baptised. 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 Welch, and the islands of the sea, the book even having been translated into Hindostanee. 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."

This ended our interview with the last remaining witness who saw the plates of the Book of Mormon, yet not the last witness of its truth, for now such witnesses are multiplied into tens of thousands.

APPENDIX E

JOHN MURPHY'S PURPORTED INTERVIEW WITH DAVID WHITMER

David Whitmer had an article published in the Richmond (Missouri) "Conservator" denying certain charges made by one John Murphy. The following article appeared in the "Kingston Times" (Missouri) under the date of December 16, 1887 and may be a much belated report of the purported interview with Mr. Whitmer, although the article refers to him as "being nearly 80 years old."

MURPHY AND MORMONISM

I have for some time been waiting for an opportunity to report a conversation which took place between myself and Mr. David Whitmer, one of the surviving witnesses to the Book of Mormon. I had hoped to have a little talk with his brother John, but death intervened [July 11, 1878]. I had business in Richmond last June, and thought I would interview Mr. David Whitmer. I met him on the street near the courthouse and told him my business, and he invited me to walk to the livery stable conducted by himself and son. After we were seated in the office room the following conversation occured:

"I am an Irishman and live in Caldwell county. I have seen the Book of Mormon, with your name and that of your brother John as testamentary to the Book of Mormon. John is now dead, and you alone are left to satisfy my desire of knowledge concerning these matters."

"It is warm here: come down to the office of the livery stable." When seated he asked me for the points concerning which I wanted the information.

"First of all, I have heard that you saw an angel. I never saw one: I want your description of its shape, voice and brogue, and the construction of his language. I mean as to his style of speaking. You know you can often determine the class a man belongs to by his language."

"It had no appearance or shape."

"Then you neither saw nor heard anything?"

"Nothing in the way you understand it."

"How, then, could you bear testimony that you saw and heard an angel?"

"Have you never had impressions?"

"Then you had impressions, such as a Quaker has when the spirit moves him, or as a good Methodist in giving a happy experience--a mere feeling?"

"Just so."

"I think I understand you respecting the angel; but what about the reformed Egyptian writing on the plate discovered by Joseph Smith in the dave in New York? How did you know that the writing was Egyptian, and that the Book of Mormon is a correct translation?"

"Being impressed with the reality of it."

"In the same way in which you were impressed with the presence of the angel which interpreted the writing?"

"Yes."

"Do you know any other language than English?"

"No."

"Do you know anything of mesmerism or ventriloquism? Is it not possible you were imposed upon? You look to be honest."

"I do not know anything of these arts."

"You have perhaps read the history of Egypt: how the Carthagenians were the descendents of Phenicia, and how the Israelites sojourned in Egypt and the probability of the old Egyptian being akin to the language or idioms of Palestine: how the Persians ruled for a time in Egypt; and how Alexander and the Greeks ruled afterward, the Romans next and last of all the Arab? Now, all these languages are known to the linguists in the great universities of Europe, and what need was there for a miracle to decipher? The hieroglyphics are more ancient and the way to read them is discovered; consequently I do not see the need for an angelic visitor to teach us how to read them now-a-days. You thought doubtless you were impressed for good but have you considered the precedents for murdering taught in the first chapter of the Book of Nephi?" I stated the circumstances of Nephi being commanded by God to murder his uncle at night in the streets outside the walls of his home in Jerusalem. When he said that that looked bad, his tone

seemed to indicate that he had never before observed this wickedness in this book, witnessed by himself and recommended by his angel to the world. He had an honest, simple look, and my impression, which I think to be as good as his or his angel's, is, that he ought to consider and contradict his former testimony to an illusion, or perhaps cunning scheme being a fact, which has resulted in so much woe to many; and as he seems to be nearly 80 years old, he ought not to delay.

John Murphy.

APPENDIX F

DAVID WHITMER'S REBUTTAL OF MURPHY'S COMMENTS

As a result of the John Murphy comments, David Whitmer had a leaflet printed and distributed in defence of his testimony and of his character. The Richmond "Conservator" of March 25, 1881 included in its columns Mr. Whitmer's proclamation, the character voucher, and an editorial comment of its own.

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, Mo., that I, in 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 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 been published with that book, as one of 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 truthfulness of all my statements as then made and published.

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

And that no one may be deceived or misled by this statement, I wish here to state: that I do not indorse polygamy or spiritual wifeism. It is a great evil, shocking to the moral sense, and the more so, because practiced in the name of religion. It is of man and not of God, and is especially forbidden in the Book of Mormon itself.

I do not indorse the change of the name of the church, for as the wife takes the name of her husband, so should the Church of the Lamb of God take the name of its head, even Christ himself. It is the Church of Christ.

As to the High Priesthood, Jesus Christ himself is the last Great High Priest, this too after the order of Melchisedec, as I understand the Holy Scriptures.

Finally, I do not indorse any of the teachings of the so-called Mormons or Latter Day Saints, which are in conflict with the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as taught in the Bible and Book of Mormon; for the same gospel is plainly taught in both of these books as I understand the word of God.

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, Mo., March 19, 1881.

The original hand-written copy of this proclamation is found in the archives of the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, Utah. A photostatic copy of a portion of the statement, including the signature of David Whitmer, is shown below.

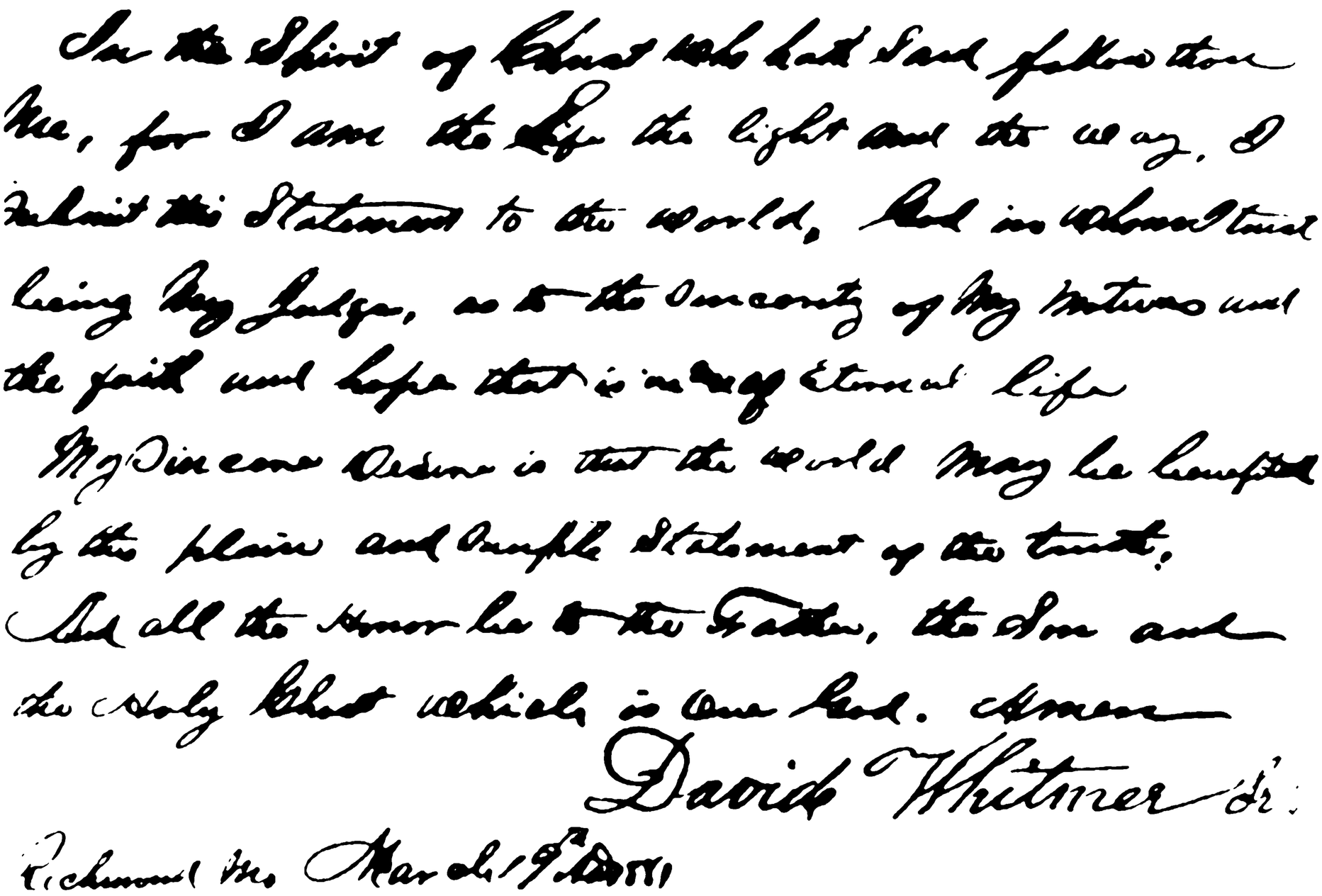

In the Spirit of Christ who hath said follow thou me, for I am the Life the light and the way. I submit this Statement to the world, God in Whom I trust being My Judge, as to the Sincerity of My motives and the faith and hope that is in me of Eternal life
My Sincere Desire is that the world may be benefited 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 Mo March 1887

Fig. 14
Photostat of last paragraphs of David Whitmer's proclamation

A character voucher given by a number of the more noted of the Richmond citizenry. It was included as a part of the leaflet distributed by Mr. Whitmer.

> We, the undersigned citizens of Richmond, Ray County, Mo., where David Whitmer 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, Mo., this March 19th. A. D. 1881
>
> A. W. Doniphan
> George W. Dunn, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit
> T. D. Woodson, President of Ray County Savings Bank
> Jacob T. Child, Editor of Conservator
> H. C. Garner, Cashier, Ray County Sav. Bank
> W. A. Holman, County Treasurer
> J. S. Hughes, Banker, Richmond, Mo.
> James Hughes, " " "
> D. P. Whitmer, Attorney-at-Law
> James W. Black, Attorney-at-Law
> L. C. Cantwell, Postmaster, Richmond, Mo.
> Geo. I. Wassen, Mayor
> James 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.
> Thos. McGinnis, ex-Sheriff, Ray County
> W. R. Holman, Furniture Merchant
> J. Q. Quesenberry, Merchant
> Lewis Salughter, Recorder of Deeds
> G. W. Buchanan, M. D.
> A. K. Reyburn

A photostatic copy of the above is on the next page.

and know him to be a man of the highest integrity, and of unquestioned truth and veracity. Given at Richmond Mo this March 19th AD 1881

A. W. Loughran

George W. Dunn, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit
T. D. Woodson President Ray County Savings Bank
Jas. O. Chilton, Editor & Commissioner
H. C. Kramer Cashier Ray County Nat'l Bank
M. A. Herbaugh, County Treasurer
J. S. Hughes Banker Richmond Mo.
James Hughes. " " "
D. P. Whitmer Attorney at Law
Clement H. Hall Attorney at Law.
H. C. Cantwell. Postmaster Richmond Mo.
Geo. S. Wilson. Mayor
Jas. A. Harris Former Collector
J. S. Hughes Circuit Judge 3rd Jud. Cir. Ray Co.
Geo. H. Triggs County Clerk Ray County
W. M. Mosby M. D.
Thos. McGinnis Late Sheriff Ray Co
W. R. Holman Hunter Merchant
E. P. Houghamon Merchant
Lewis Slaughter Recorder of Deeds
Geo. Buchanan M. D.
A. K. Leyburn

Fig. 15
Photostat of character voucher given David Whitmer

The Editorial comment made in the "Conservator" in the same issue containing the foregoing, is as follows:

AN EXPLANATION

Elsewhere we publish a letter from David Whitmer, an old and well-known citizen of Ray, as well as an indorsement 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 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 risided here for near 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 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.

APPENDIX G

MR. WHITMER'S STATEMENT TO THE KANSAS CITY "JOURNAL"

The following interview was published in the Kansas City "Journal", June 5, 1881. It was reprinted in the "Millennial Star", vol. 43, pp. 421-423 and 437-39. It appeared in the "Journal" less than three months after the circulation of David Whitmer's leaflet defending himself as a witness to the Book of Mormon.

. . . . . .

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 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 regards to these matters. For 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 newspaper men, 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 tenure the reporter at last induced the patriarch to furnish the desired facts, which he did in the following language:

"I was born near Harrisburg, Pa., January 7, 1905, 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 48, and a daughter, now aged 46,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, N. Y., and while there stopped with one Oliver Cowdery. A great many people in the neighborhood were talking about finding of certain golden plates by one Joseph Smith Jun., 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. Mr. Cowdery said he was acquainted with the Smith family, and he believed there must be some truth in the story of the plates, and that he intended to investigate the matter. I had conversation with several young men who said that Joseph Smith 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 him. Said I, 'How do you know that Joe Smith has the plates?' They replied, 'We saw the place 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, and learned that one night during the year 1823, Joseph Smith Jun., had a vision, and an angel of God appeared to him and told him where certain plates were to be found, and pointed out the spot to him, and that 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, and after several months, Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Penn., whither Joseph Smith 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, 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, Mr. Cowdery wrote me another letter in 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, and 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 therefor 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 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, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, were present during the translation. The translation was by Smith, 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 to 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 Smith 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 first received the plates he translated 116 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 safe keeping. 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 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 116 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.

"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."

"When did you see the plates?"

"It was the latter part of June, 1829. Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and myself were together, and the angel showed them to us. He 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 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. 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 a 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, some time 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, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Hyrum Smith, John Whitmer, Peter Whitmer and myself. 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 rapidly. In the fall of 1830, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, S. Peterson (and Oliver Cowdery) went to Kirtland, Ohio, 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, Mo., 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 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.

"About 500 people emigrated from Ohio to Jackson County, and the Church there increased in numbers with extraordinary rapidity during the ensuing two years. They lived in peace in Jackson until early in the summer of 1833, when difficulties arose between the Church and the citizens of the county. What first occasioned these difficulties I am unable to say, except that the Church was composed principally of Eastern and Northern people who were opposed to slavery, and that there was among us a few ignorant and simple-minded persons who were continually making boasts to the Jackson County people that they intended to possess the entire county, erect a temple, etc. This of course occasioned hard feelings and excited the bitter jealousy of the other religious denominations.

"The Church at Independence had a newspaper called the "Morning and Evening Star", which published the revelations and prophecies of Joseph Smith and the doctrines of the Church, and which also caused a great deal of hard feelings among the citizens.

"I was at that time living three miles east of Westport, and the first intimation I ever had that the people intended driving us out of the country was an afray between an organized mob of about eighty citizens and about eighteen Mormons, which occured at Wilson's store, near Big Blue, about the middle of the summer of 1833. The mob destroyed a number of our dwellings and fired upon the little party of Mormons, killing one young man and wounding several others. The Mormons returned the fire, killing the leader of the mob, a Campbellite preacher named Lovett. The next difficulty was in Independence, about the middle of July of the same year, when a large mob of armed men gathered infront of the Court House under the leadership, I think, of three men, named Wilson, Cockrell and Overton. A committee of ten was appointed to wait upon the leaders of the Church and state their demands, which were that the "Morning and Evening Star" newspaper office and all other places of business be closed and that we immediately leave the county. This was so sudden and unexpected that we asked time to consider the matter, which was refused, and a battle immediately ensued, during which the newspaper office, which stood on the southwest corner of the square, just south of the present site of Chrisman & Sawyer's bank, was torn down and the type scattered to the four winds. Bishop Partridge and another of the Saints were dragged from their houses and tarred and feathered upon the public square. Numerous other indignities were heaped upon us, but no one was killed.

"After this, difficulties of a like nature occured almost daily, until sometime in October when the final uprising took place and we were driven out at the muzzles of guns, from the county, without being given the opportunity of disposing of our lands. Our houses were burned and our property destroyed and several of our number killed. The indignities that were heaped upon us were simply terrible. We were beaten, our families grossly insulted, and we fled for our lives out of the county. We scattered in every direction, the larger portion going to Van Buren and Grand River. A short time after, the citizens of Clay County invited us to come there, which we did, and were treated with the utmost kindness."

"Did your people ever have an opportunity of selling their lands in Jackson County?"

"No, they did not, and it now by rights belongs to their descendents."

APPENDIX H

THE "CHICAGO TIMES" INTERVIEWS DAVID WHITMER AGAIN

Some six years after the interview of the "Chicago Times" previously given (Appendix A), the Richmond "Conservator", vol. 28, no. 35, under date of November 18, 1881, gives the following explanation and reprint in its columns:

THE LAST OF THE WITNESSES

We copy the following from the "Chicago Times", an interview had with David Whitmer, our fellow townsman:

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, and he was loath to believe in their actuality, not-withstanding 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, N. Y. 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 who was a Miss Hale before she was married.

In regard to finding the plates, he was told by Smith 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 Smith 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 forth-coming when the world was ready to receive them. At that time Mr. 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 dilusion—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 Smith, 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 Smith, 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 Cowdery what to write. Frequently one character would make two lines of manuscript, while others made but a word or two words. Mr. Whitmer emphatically asserts, as did Harris and Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had NO MANUSCRIPT, NOTES OR OTHER MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE save the seer stone 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 perloined the work of one Spaulding, a Presbyterian preacher, who had written a romance entitled "The Manuscript Found," Mr. 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, N. Y., 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, O., in the fall of 1830, of Parley Pratt and Oliver Cowdery, he being at that time a Reformed or Christian preacher,

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 existance. Upon being appealed to by Pratt and Cowdery for the use of his church he informed 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 fellow-men, he would do so, and would like to hear them. Then they gave him a copy of the book 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 Partridge, two influential preachers, were sent as delegates to New York to see Joseph Smith, 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 as UNTRUTHFUL AS IT IS RIDICULOUS.

In his youth Joseph Smith 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, 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 furthermost ends of the earth. A few years since, I was present at an interview between Mr. Whitmer and Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, who had been sent from Utah to Richmond 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 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. 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

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, magestic, ringing out from earth to the mighty dome of space, still lingers in his ears like a chime of silver bells."

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEWED BY PALMER, MARKS, DAVIS, AND PRATT

A communication to the "Bear Lake Democrat," July 14, 1883, is as follows:

Covington, Fountain Co., Ind.
July 3, 1883

Editor, Democrat:-

Elders W. M. Palmer, S. R. Marks, D. F. Davis and myself accompanied by O. Shelby of Indiana, on June 30, visited David Whitmer at Richmond, Ray Co., Mo., and heard him bear testimony to the truth of his testimony as it is recorded in the Book of Mormon. His mind seemed clear and his recollection of things pertaining to the translation of the Book of Mormon, and the visitation of the Angel, and the voice of the Lord, seemed to be vivid and perfect. He is quite feeble in body, and when he was relating to us some minor items he would falter a little, but when giving his testimony he would straighten up, his voice would be firm, his eye would flash and one could feel that he spoke by the spirit of truth. Our interview was short but very interesting. He received us kindly and bid us stick to the truth....

. . . . . .

M. W. Pratt

The following additional information on this interview is found in the "Journal History," under date of July 19, 1883: In a letter to the editor of the "Deseret News," S. R. Marks makes reference to the same visit, stating that on June 27th. they took a train at 8 P. M. for Richmond "to visit David Whitmer, the last of the eleven witnesses of the Book of Mormon." On arriving in Richmond, after some delay, June 29th., they learned from Mr. Whitmer's son and grandson that he wasn't very well so they stayed

over to speak with him on the following day. They put up at the Wasson House.

> In the Morning, June 30th, Mr. Whitmer visited us at the hotel. He is a fine-looking, intelligent man and seemed pleased to see us. We interrogated him in regard to his testimony given in the Book of Mormon, Elder W. M. Palmer being the chief speaker, although questions were asked by Mr. Shelby and the Elders. He bore a powerful testimony to the divine authenticity of the book and the restoration of the Gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, stating his testimony as given in the Book of Mormon is absolutely true just as it is given there. He further stated that if that is not truth there is no truth; if there is no truth then there is no God and if there is no God there is nothing. He declared that the angel stood before him and he distinctly heard the voice of God declaring that the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and related many things that transpired in the early history of the Church, which was of great interest to us, and which adds another to the very numerous testimonies we have received of the divine mission of the great latter-day Prophet, Joseph Smith.

APPENDIX J

DAVID WHITMER VISITED BY JAMES H. HART

From the "Journal History" of the Church, August 23, 1883, the following excerpt of a letter to the "Deseret News" is taken:

> Having some business in Richmond, Ray Co., I took occasion to call upon Mr. David Whitmer, who was suffering considerably from the intense heat, but had, not-withstanding, 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 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 non-believers, 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 existance. 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, 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 and He would lead them to discover 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. Whitmer, "has been fulfilled to the very letter."

Mr. David Whitmer, Junr., 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 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 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."

Appearing in vol. 12, no. 12 (October 1909), pp. 955-59, of the Improvement Era, Mr. Hart has the following:

THE LAST WITNESS

An Interview With David Whitmer, In August, 1883

(It is worthy of historic mention that this poem was read and approved by David Whitmer. At a subsequent visit by the author, shortly before David's death, in the presence of his grandson who was, at the time of this writing, the custodian of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon and other relics, he expressed much pleasure in the receipt and reading of said poem, and accepted and acknowledged it as authentic in its entirety.—J. H. H.)

I met an aged man the other day,
In Richmond, Missouri, in County Ray,
His step was feeble, but his eye was bright,
And in it beamed intelligence and light.

He was a living witness with eleven,
Of ministrations from the courts of heaven;
Ten of said witnesses have passed away,
And he has now but little time to stay.

Three score and ten had bleached his aged head.
His Prophet, friends, lie numbered with the dead;
He on Missouri's battlefield alone
Was left to grapple with the dread cyclone.

It swept away his home, but left intact
The room and box with Nephite records packed,
And finished up its sacreligious raid
Within the old graveyard among the dead.

It ruthlessly destroyed the tombs, which care
Of sympathetic friends erected there;
And recklessly tore up the very ground
Where Oliver's remains might once be found.

Give me the quiet valleys of the West,
Of all our broad domain, in which to rest;
For there the righteous may escape the rod
Of retribution from Almighty God.

"Pray, is it true," I asked, "that you have been
With heavenly messengers, and have seen
The records called the plates of brass and gold,
Of which Moroni in his book has told?

"'Tis said you saw an angel from on high,
While other witnesses were standing by,
And that the messenger commanded you
To testify that this strange work is true.

"Not questioning your statement that I've read,
Or what the other witnesses have said,
Yet, I would like to know from you direct,
If we have read or heard these things correct?"

He lifted up his voice and thus replied:
"My written statement I have ne'er denied,
I saw the angel and I heard his voice,
And wonderous things that made my heart rejoice.

"This interview was sought with earnest prayer,
The Prophet and the Three Witnesses were there,
But Martin, conscience-strick'n declined to stay,
And wandered off alone to watch and pray.

"I do not know the angel's rank nor name,
Who on this great and glorious mission came,
I know that he was clothed with power and might,
And was surrounded with effulgent light.

"No tongue can tell the glory and the power
That was revealed to us in that blest hour;
The plates of brass and gold the angel took
And placed before us like an open book.

"We saw the fine engravings on them, too,
And heard the voice declare, the book is true;
No power on earth could from our minds efface
The glorious vision of this trysting place.

"We've done as then commanded we should do,
And testified the 'Mormon book' is true;
And was translated by the power given
The Prophet Joseph from the God of heaven.

"Thousands of people have been here to see
The 'copy' Oliver has left with me:
The characters, moreover, Martin took
Professor Anthon--words of sacred book.

"Some visit me who 'Mormonism' hate;
Some ranking low, and some of high estate,
I tell them all, as I now say to you,
The Book of Mormon is of God, and true.

"In yonder room I have preserved with care
The printer's copy and the words so rare;
The very words from Nephi's book
That Martin to Professor Anthon took.

"If this be not the truth, there is no truth,
And I have been mistaken from my youth;
If I'm mistaken, you may know from thence
That there's no God, no law, no life, no sense.

"I know there is a God--I've heard his voice,
And in his power and truth do still rejoice;
Though fools may ridicule and laugh today,
They yet will know the truth of what I say.

"I've suffered persecution at the hands
Of hireling preachers and their Christian bands;
I've braved their hatred, and have them withstood
While thirsting for the youthful Prophet's blood.

"They came four hundred strong, with visage bold,
And said, 'Deny this story you have told;
And by our sacred honor we'll engage
To save you from the mob's infuriate rage.'

"A mighty power came on me, and I spake
In words that made the guilty mobbers quake;
And trembling seized the surging crowd and fear,
But, left unharmed, I felt that God was near."

Thus spake the aged witness, of the way
The Lord commenced his work in this our day;
If men will not believe what God hath said,
They'll not believe should one rise from the dead.

Here was a man who in his youth, amazed,
Upon a messenger of heaven gazed;
Presenging plates of rich and varied size,
That filled his soul with wonder and surprise.

Not only he, but there were others, ten,
All truthful, brave and honorable men;
With same integrity have ever told
That they had seen the sacred plates of gold.

I asked a gentile lawyer if he knew
These witnesses as honest men, and true;
"Well yes," said he, "They're honest as the day,
And I can vouch for every word they say.

"What David Whitmer says, the people know
May be regarded as precisely so:
He's not a man to shade the truth or lie,
But on his word you safely may rely.

"And Mr. Cowdery, I have known him too:
More truthful man than he I never knew;
And as a lawyer he was shrewd and bright,
And always made an honorable fight."

"Think you that Joseph Smith could them deceive,
By forging plates could make these men believe
That they had seen an angel of the Lord,
And make them perjurers with one accord?"

"These men were model citizens," said he,
"Men of sound judgment, honest, brave and free:
Men who believed that Joseph Smith was right,
And willing for his cause to boldly fight."

I asked a gentile doctor, and was told
That David Whitmer's word was good as gold.
That "Cowdery was fairly idolized;"
There names would ever be immortalized.

"Although it's all a mystery to me,
I know that they were true as men can be,
I'd stake upon their word my soul, my life,
So would his daughter, my beloved wife.

"I seldon hear the so-called Christians preach,
They nothing know, can therefore nothing teach,
My wife has told me more of truth and God,
Than taught by preachers in their grand Synod."

I interviewed an aged woman there,
The doctor's guest, moreover, his belle-mere,
In youthful days, Miss Whitmer was her name,
Now Mrs. Cowdery, of historic fame.

Nobility was stamped upon her face,
Like royal signet of her father's race;
And David's lineaments were plainly there,
But mounded, it may be, with greater care.

She talked of thrilling scenes of early life,
When Oliver and she were man and wife;
When youthful prophets strove with all their might
To spread abroad the Gospel's glorious light.

"I know," she said, "this work will never fail,
Though all the nations may its friends assail,
'Tis come, as I have heard the prophets say,
To ever stand, though earth may pass away."

Such is the substance of an interview
That tends to show this mighty work is true;
And being true, 'tis folly to oppose
The unseen power by which the Kingdom grows.

Some states have spent against it rage and fury,
Dispoiled its people without judge or jury;
And forced them in the mountain vales to hide,
And trust in Him who doth his people guide.

'Twas not the province of poor, erring man
To formulate this great and glorious plan,
Nor is it in the power of man to stay
Its onward progress, or block up its way.

Bloomington, Idaho. James H. Hart.

APPENDIX K

THE "REORGANIZED" CHURCH REPORTS AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID WHITMER

The following excerpt of an interview with Mr. Whitmer is taken from the "History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," as published by the Reorganized Church, vol. IV, pp. 446-47.

> On April 25 [1884], Elder Whitmer was visited by Elders E. C. Briggs and Rudolph Etzenhouser. The following account from the pen of Elder Briggs is interesting both for testimony and historic incidents: ... [David Whitmer speaking] "Would you like to see them [the manuscripts]? ... I was present when Joseph gave these manuscripts to Oliver. O, it was such a solomn charge. He (Joseph) said, 'I feel it in my bones that there will be a division in the church, like it was with the Nephites and Lamanites, and if these manuscripts are not preserved, I fear that the church may be injured, and when you deliver them up to others, be sure they are left in good hands.' I now see why they should be preserved. A deligation once waited on me from Utah, Orson Pratt headed it, to secure them. And he said:
>
> "Set your own price on them. There is millions in the treasury and we are authorized to draw any amount from them, so you may not be particular, ask any price."
>
> I replied, "they are not for sale." he said:
>
> "Why not?"
>
> I answered, "I know that is enough. There is not enough gold in the world to purchase them." Pratt urged the matter saying:
>
> "You are not very well off, and it will do your children good."
>
> I then told him, "You have not got enough money in Utah to purchase them."

APPENDIX L

ELDER JAMES H. MOYLE REPORTS HIS INTERVIEW WITH MR. WHITMER

Elder Moyle is probably the last individual who related his experience with David Whitmer. He visited him in July, 1885, and lived until February 19, 1946. While President of the Eastern States Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he gave the following report of his visit to Richmond, Missouri, during the One Hundredth Annual Conference, April, 1930. It is found on pp. 121-22 of that "Conference Report."

> I shall never forget my experience early in July, 1885, as I was returning home from the University of Michigan where I graduated in 1885. I went directly to Richmond, Missouri, for the sole purpose of meeting the then remaining living witness to the divinity of the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer. I inquired of the Bus driver, the hotel clerk, and others, as far as possible, as to the character and reputation of David Whitmer. All said he was a fine old man, an excellent citizen, and was highly respected in the community. I introduced myself by presenting him with a book that I thought would please him, and said to him that I had just graduated from college. He was then in his eighties, with his hair and beard white [must have referred to unshaven stubble, as there is no other reference to a beard], but in fair health. It was about three years before his death. I said to him: "I was born and reared in the Church and I do pray of you to let me know if there is any possibility of your having been deceived. I am just commencing life as you are preparing to lay it down, and I beg of you to tell me if there is anything connected with the testimony which you have borne to the world that could possibly have been deceptive or misunderstood." I further said, in an earnest youthful appeal, that I didn't want to go through life believing in a falsehood, that it was in his power to make known the truth to me. He described to me the details of the occasion, of the angel presenting the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. The scene was in the woods, with nothing between the angel and himself except a log that had fallen and was lying between them. He declared that he saw the angel who had with him the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and that in the presence of the angel he did hear the angel declare that they had been translated correctly. While I am speaking from memory, the

foregoing most essential facts to me and which are the sole object of my visit, were so indelibly impressed upon my mind, that they are perfectly clear and unmistakable. I asked him many questions concerning his experiences with the origin of the Book of Mormon, and why he left the Church, all of which he endeavered to answer frankly. We talked for a considerable time. His mind seemed clear and his mentality above rather than below the average. He said he had never left the Church, that they had maintained a branch of the Church in Richmond, and that he had always been active in it; that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and that the revelations he received up to the year 1835 were from God, but that he accepted none of them subsequent to that time. He appeared to have become embittered against Sidney Rigdon especially, and I fancied turned against the Prophet because of his placing Rigdon ahead of those who had stood by the Prophet in his early work.... His sincerity was plainly shown when I asked him if he would sell the manuscript and place a price upon it. He replied that he would not.

Substantially the same information is given in a report found in the "Deseret News" Church Section, August 2, 1944. Elder Moyle here makes the admission that he

> ... entered in a little diary which I kept the mere fact that I had visited David Whitmer and that he had verified all that had been published to the world concerning the Book of Mormon by him in his testimony....

which would indicate that Elder Moyle is definitely speaking from memory, and not from notes taken at the time of the interview.

APPENDIX M

REPORT OF CHICAGO "TRIBUNE" SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

This article appeared in the Chicago "Tribune," December 15, 1885, and was reprinted in the "Deseret News" of December 24, 1885.

DAVID WHITMER

He Describes the Translation of the Golden Tablets at Which He Assisted

David Whitmer, one of the founders of the Mormon Church, and a resident of this quaint and interesting village for almost a half a century, lies at the point of death. At the family homestead are gathered the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the dying patriarch, and beside the death-bed is the devoted woman who linked her life and fortune with his more than forty years ago. When your correspondent called at the house today and was summoned into the bed-chamber where Father Whitmer was calmly awaiting the final summons, a smile lighted up the old man's countenance as he half rose and feebly pressed the visitor's hand, and then as if overcome by the effort, his head sank back on the pillows. When told of the visitor's mission and that he had journeyed from Chicago for an historical sketch of one who had played so important a part in translating the Mormon Bible and proselyting for the Mormon Church, the request for information was met with a cheerful response. Fearing, however, that the task would be too great, the family deputed a member of the household to relate the history in the presence of Father Whitmer, the narration being closely followed by him and subjected to frequent corrections and interpolations.

While yet an infant his father, who served his country through the Revolutionary War, removed with his family to western New York and settled on a farm in Ontario County, near Watkins Glen. The father, who was a hard-working, God-fearing man, was a strict Presbyterian and brought his children up with rigid sectarian discipline. Besides a daughter, who married Oliver Cowdery, the village school-master, there were four sons--Jacob, John, David, and Christian--who helped their father till his farm until they had arrived at the age of manhood. During the early part of June, 1829, Oliver Cowdery incidently learned that a young man named Joseph Smith had found a valuable golden treasure in the northern part of the county, and imparted the information to David. They decided to investigate the rumor, and Cowdery traveled to

the home of Smith for that purpose. On the road he found the community teeming with excitement over the alleged treasure, and heard several persons threatened to kill the finder unless he divided his wealth with them. When asked how they knew such a treasure had been found, several asserted that they had seen the recepticle from which it was taken by Smith. Cowdery, assured them that there was more to the vague rumors than he had at first believed, pushed on to the home of Smith, who was living on his father's farm near Manchester. At first he found Smith to be uncommunicative, but was finally permitted to view the treasure, and was greatly impressed by the sight. In fact his wonderment was so great that he at once wrote to David to come without delay. David did so and was equally mystified.

The treasure consisted of a number of golden plates, about eight inches long and seven inches wide, about as thick as ordinary sheeting, and bound together in the form of a volume by three gold rings. A large portion of the volume was securely sealed, but on the loose pages were engraved hieroglyphics [expressive] of some language at that time unknown to any of the persons mentioned. Together with the golden tablets were a pair of spectacles, set in silver bows.

Mr. Whitmer then described Smith's story of the vision in which the location of the plates was revealed, with the history of the Nephites, Moroni's labor, and Smith's finding of the tablets, with which everyone is familiar.

TRANSLATING THE PLATES

Whitmer and Cowdery were greatly impressed by the recital of this strange story, and were conducted to the hill, where they personally viewed the recepticle in which Moroni, at the beginning of the fifth century, had concealed the history of his fathers. Smith 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 disigned 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.

The work of translating the tablets consumed about eight months, Smith acting as the seer and Cowdery, Smith's wife, and Christian Whitmer, brother of David, performing the duties of emanuensis in whose handwriting the original manuscript now is. Each time before resuming

the work all present would kneel down in prayer and invoke the divine blessing on the proceeding. After the prayer, Smith would sit on one side of the table and the emanuensis, 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 specticles 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 pronounciation, 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.

MORE MIRACULOUS DEVELOPMENTS

A miracle is related by Mr. Whitmer as occuring while the translation was in progress. It seems that Smith, who was puffed up with his great importance as a confidentual secretary to the Lord, displeased the Master by entering into some carnal confab in relation to the work. For this offence he was punished by having the celestial visitant, who first commissioned him to inaugerate 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.

About this time 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 Smith, 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 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.

This worked just as satisfactory as the old method, but at no time thereafter was the backsliding Joseph 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

discover what the first had on the Gentiles. That he was not pleased has not yet been revealed to the world.

THE ANGEL IN THE PASTURE

After the translation was completed Smith informed Cowdery, Whitmer, and 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.

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. 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 desciples 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 dissentions occured.

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. Whitmer asserts that nothing could have been more improbable, as neither Smith, himself, nor the other desciples knew Rigdon until they moved to Ohio.

HE KEPT THE RECORDS

The original manuscript from which the Book of Mormon was printed is still in Mr. 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

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 from Salt Lake 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 business man 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 hom thoroughly convinced that Mr. Whitmer was proof against all financial temptation so far as concerned his records.

It was while the Church was flourishing at Kirtland that the name was changed from Church of Christ to Latter-day Saints. Mr. 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 Smith and Rigdon had been tarred and feathered.

For a time the Church flourished in Jackson County, with headquarters at Independence, but when the trouble occured 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 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 they have continued to teach the precepts according to the original Church.

THE LORD'S ANOINTED

David Whitmer engaged in teaming at his new home, and in the campaign when the malitia 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, 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 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,

and says it is eminately 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 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 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.

A GOOD CITIZEN

As a citizen of Richmond he stands deservedly high, having filled the office of mayor and councilman. Upright in his dealings with men and just toward all, he has progressed gradually with the country until he and his children have secured good business standing and are regarded among the best citizens of Ray County.

Of those who took part in the original translation, Joseph Smith was shot by a mob in 1844; Oliver Cowdery died in this county thirty years ago, leaving a wife and daughter, both of whom are yet living and reside in Silver City, Mo., John Whitmer, prosperous farmer, died at Far West in 1878, leaving children and grandchildren. Jacob Whitmer passed away many years ago, and his son John C., a white-haired Elder of the Church of Christ, continued to preach the religion of his father in and about Richmond.

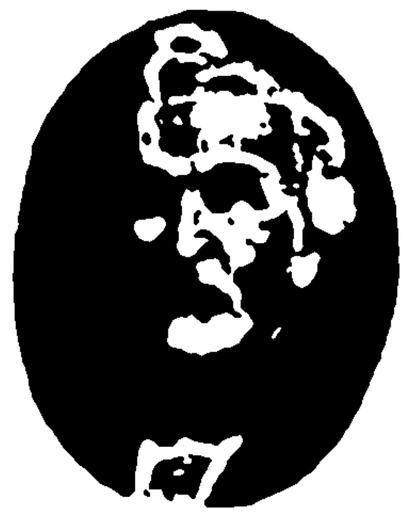
David Whitmer has two children, a son and a daughter. The son David J., is without issue. The daughter, Mrs. Julius Schweich, resides here and is the mother of two children, both whom have children. George, the eldest of Mrs. Schweich's children is a shrewd business man and is associated with his uncle, David J. Whitmer, in the livery business. His sister Josie, is the wife of J. R. Van Cleve, private secretary to the Collector of Customs at Chicago.

APPENDIX N

THE TESTIMONIES OF THE WITNESSES

A photostat of the pictures of the Three Witnesses and the testimony they signed. Also the testimony of the Eight Witnesses. These testimonies have appeared in all copies of the Book of Mormon since its first publication in the year 1830.

Oliver Cowdery



David Whitmer

Martin Harris

THE TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES

Be It Known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates, and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery
David Whitmer
Martin Harris

AND ALSO

THE TESTIMONY OF EIGHT WITNESSES

Be It Known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Christian Whitmer
Jacob Whitmer
Peter Whitmer, Jun.
John Whitmer
Hiram Page
Joseph Smith, Sen.
Hyrum Smith
Samuel H. Smith

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