

## TESTIMONY OF DAVID WHITMER.

## IS IT TRUE, OR FALSE?

*Editors Herald:*—In the *Saints' Herald* of April 15th, 1879, I notice an article from the pen of Elder T. W. Smith, which originally appeared in the *Fall River (Mass.) Herald*, in which article the writer makes mention of the testimony of David Whitmer, as published in the *Chicago Times*, in 1875, and further says:

"I personally heard him state, in January, 1877, in his own house in Richmond, Ray county, Mo., in most positive language, that he did truly see, in broad day-light, a bright and most beautiful being, an 'angel from heaven,' who did hold in his hands the golden plates, which he turned over leaf by leaf, explaining the contents here and there."

I have heard the same from the mouth of Father Whitmer, more than once; and every time I ever heard him tell the particulars of that glorious scene, he always told it just the same; and as far as I have ever heard, from reliable witnesses, he has always told the same story—"straight as a nail." Had Elder Smith stopped at the end of the above quoted sentence, I would have had no ground for bringing his name into this article; but he did not. He further adds:

"He also described the size and general appearance of the plates, and he further said that he saw Joseph translate, by the aid of Urim and Thummim, time and again, and he then produced a large pile of foolscap paper closely written in a very fair hand, which he declared was the manuscript written mainly by Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, as the translation was being read by the aid of the Urim and Thummim of the characters on the plates by Joseph Smith, which work of translation and transcription he frequently saw."

I, too, have seen the "manuscripts" and examined them. I, too, have heard Father Whitmer say that he was present many times while Joseph was translating; but I never heard him say that the translation was made by aid of Urim and Thummim; but in every case, and his testimony is always the same, he declared that Joseph first offered prayer, then took a dark colored, opaque stone, called a "seer-stone," and placed it in the crown of his hat, then put his face into the hat, and read the translation as it appeared before him. This was the daily method of procedure, as I have often heard Father Whitmer declare; and, as it is generally agreed to by parties who know the facts, that a considerable portion of the work of translation was performed in a room of his father's house, where he then resided, there can be no doubt but what Father David Whitmer is a competent witness of the manner of translating.

I am aware of the fact that the "Urim and Thummim" story has long been foisted upon the world as the true account of the origin of the Book of Mormon; but the times demand, and, the interest of truth demands, that the truth should be told. We need not be afraid of truth; and I greatly doubt if anybody will be ultimately benefitted by the perpetuation of a falsehood, which was invented for the purpose of gaining prestige, in the minds of the people, for ambitious leaders.

The proofs are clear and positive that the story of Urim and Thummim Translation does not date back, for its origin, further than 1833,

or, between that date and 1835; for it is not found in any printed document of the Church of Christ up to the latter part of the year 1833, or the year 1834. The "Book of Commandments" to the Church of Christ, published in Independence, Mo., in 1833, does not contain any allusion to Urim and Thummim; though the term was inserted in some of the revelations in their reprint in the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants" in 1835.

Who originated the Urim and Thummim story, I do not know; but this I do know, that it is not found in the first printed book of revelations to the Church of Christ, and there is other testimony to show that it is not true. It is proper to notice what it is claimed the Urim and Thummim was. P. P. and O. Pratt both say it was an instrument composed of two clear or transparent stones set in the two rims of a bow. It is also confounded with the "Interpreters," which were shaped something like a pair of ordinary spectacles, though larger.

Now let us see. David Whitmer declares, and I have shown him to be a competent witness, that Joseph Smith translated by aid of a dark stone, called a "seer stone," which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph thrust his face.

In the *Saints' Herald* of June 15th, 1879, pages 190 and 191, I find a letter from President W. W. Blair, in which he states some facts, learned from Mr. Michael Morse, who married a Miss Hale, "a sister to Sr. Emma." Among other things which I have not space to notice here, but which your readers can find by following the reference I have given, President Blair says:

"He states that Joseph told him that he found the gold plates, from whence it is claimed the Book of Mormon was translated, in a stone box. (Some of late have said that Joseph at first professed to have found them in an iron box). He further states that when Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon, he (Morse), had occasion more than once to go into his immediate presence, and saw him engaged at his work of translation. The mode of procedure consisted in Joseph's placing the Seer Stone in the crown of a hat, then putting his face into the hat, so as to entirely cover his face, resting his elbows upon his knees, and then dictating, word after word, while the scribe—Emma, John Whitmer, O. Cowdery, or some other, wrote it down."

The above agrees perfectly with David Whitmer's statements, and goes far to confirm Father Whitmer's testimony; but this is not all. In the *Saints' Herald* of October 1st, 1879, in an article headed "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," on first page of the *Herald*, third column, near the bottom of the page, Sr. Emma is represented as saying:

"In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us."

This statement was made to President Joseph Smith, by his mother in February, 1879. The wife of Joseph Smith—who acted sometimes as his scribe, certainly is a competent witness, and her last testimony is entitled to respectful consideration, and she says Joseph translated by a stone placed in his hat.

Why did not Mrs. Bidamon not say that Joseph translated by aid of Urim and Thummim? The reason is obvious in the light of the facts, to which I have briefly alluded: because he translated with a stone, a Seer

Stone; not two clear stones set in the rims of a bow. Thus we see that Mr. Morse and Mrs. Bidamon both agree that Joseph Smith used a stone and not Urim and Thummim, nor Interpreter either.

Will those who hold the Urim and Thummim story to be correct, still continue to give the lie to David Whitmer, Michael Morse and Mrs. Emma Bidamon? Or will they have the courage to admit that those who have held high positions have been guilty of gross fabrication?

With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state that he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim; but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone, called a "Seer Stone," which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light. Then, a spiritual light would shine forth, and parchment would appear before Joseph, upon which was a line of characters from the plates, and under it, the translation in English; at least, so Joseph said.

In her last testimony Mrs. Emma Bidamon said to President Joseph Smith:

"David Whitmer I believe to be an honest and truthful man. I think what he states may be relied on."

So say all who know him. And as sure as he is truthful and honest, the Book of Mormon was translated by means of a Seer Stone. And if it was not, I say distinctly that David Whitmer, the only surviving witness to the Book of Mormon, is not truthful.

J. L. TRAUGHBER, JR.,  
MANDEVILLE, Mo., Oct. 13, 1879.

## TELESTIAL WORLD.

Much has been said by our opponents against the word "telestial," and much wonder is expressed as to the meaning of it, when speaking of the divine authenticity of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; some declaring that it is not an English word, and that there is no word in any language from which it could have been derived. I heard one of our Elders say that he believed "stelestial" would be the more appropriate word to express the sense intended. I have concluded to offer a few thoughts on the subject, and I hope that if "mine opinion" is erroneous, some one more competent than myself may give us the true meaning and derivation of the word telestial, that we may be able to give a certain, sensible, and satisfactory answer to any that may ask us to define the word.

I believe that telestial is derived from the Greek word *telos*, the end: as *telos*, the end, and *logos*, a word or discourse; from which comes the word teleology, discoursing upon, or the science of the ends for which things were created. *Telie*, derived from *telos*, means relating to the end. Telescope is derived from *telos* the end, and *scopio* to spy, and literally signifies to look to the end. From "*telos*" the end, and "*tial*," suffixed, pertaining to; hence telestial, pertaining to the end, the last, or most distant of the glories from the central, celestial or heavenly glory world. As the celestial is the first, or central sphere or world, whose inhabitants enjoy the presence, brightness and glory of the Father and Son, and the terrestrial world is the habitation of