

ELDER SAMUEL W. RICHARDS

One of the Lions of the Lord in early missionary work and as President of Missions in the early decades of the New Dispensation,

Perhaps the most valuable and enduring single contribution that Elder Richards made to the great Latter-Day work was obtained and transmitting to the general knowledge of the Church, in a permanent form, the last written testimony of Oliver Cowdery respecting the Book of Mormon and its translation; and the restoration of the Priesthood, both Aaronic and Melchizedek. Nothing that the writer could say personally of Elder Richards, whom he knew quite intimately and through many years, and hence would equal in importance this testimony of those important events, and hence I give them here as my contribution to the Richards Family Associations Reunion on the Centennial Anniversary of the birth of Samuel W. Richards.

The testimony here referred to has the following setting: For about eleven years previous to his return in October of 1848, at a special conference held at Kanessville (now Council Bluffs), at which the case of his return to the Church of the new Dispensation by rebaptism. (Oliver Cowdery) It was his intention to join the main body of the Church in Salt Lake Valley at that time, but he was appointed to assist Elder Orson Hyde in bringing out a periodical under the title of "the Frontier Guardian" in which work he engaged, and before he could make the proposed western journey, he died at the home of his brother-in-law, and fellow witness to the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer, in Richmond Mo., on March 3, 1850, Before starting from Winter Quarters to Richmond, the stormy, weather and almost impassable conditions of the roads compelled him to spend some two weeks at the temporary home of Elder S. W. Richards, who had just returned from his foreign mission in England.

"To hear him describe in his pleasant but earnest manner", says Elder Richards, "the personalities of those heavenly messengers with whom he and the Prophet had so freely held converse, and enchanting to my soul,"*****Before taking his departure, he wrote and left with the writer of this the following statement, which we believe to be his last living testimony thereof, oft repeated, of the wonderful manifestations which brought the authority of God to men on earth:

SIGNED TESTIMONY OF OLIVER COWDERY.

"While darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people; long after the authority to administer in holy things had been taken away, the Lord opened the heavens and sent forth his word to the salvation of Israel, In fulfillment of the sacred scriptures, the everlasting gospel was proclaimed by the mighty angel (Moroni), who, clothed with authority of his mission, gave glory to God In the highest, John the Baptist, holding the keys to the Aaronic Priesthood; Peter, James and John, holding the keys to the Melchizedek Priesthood, have also ministered for those who shall be heirs of salvation, and with these administrations ordained man to the same Priesthood. These Priesthoods, with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Blessed is the Elder who has received the same, and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall endure to the end. "Accept assurance, dear Brother, of the unfeigned prayer of him who, in connection with Joseph the Seer, was blessed with the above ministrations, and the who earnestly and devoutly hopes to meet you in the celestial glory.

(Signed) OLIVER COWDERY

TO ELDER SAMUEL W. RICHARDS, JANUARY 13, 1849