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## Witnesses to the Truth

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the many witnesses to the truth of the restored gospel. The Three Witnesses saw the plates and bore witness of the validity of the Book of Mormon. The Holy Spirit also is a witness to the truth.



# Witnesses to the TRUTH

By President David O. McKay

**H**OW MAY we know God? How may we feel a nearness to him? Young people are earnestly asking these and other eternal questions, and they long for the answers.

In the world today belief in Jesus Christ is too perfunctory, too conventional. The conviction of Christ as deity does not seem to possess the souls of men, and yet the reality of God the Father, the reality of Jesus the Christ, the risen Lord, is a truth which should possess every human soul, for God is the center of the human mind as surely as the sun is the center of this universe, and once we feel his Fatherhood, once we feel his nearness, once we sense the divinity, the deity of the Savior, the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ follow as naturally as the day the night, and as night the day.

There are three ways, among others, in which we should like to ask the young people of Israel, particularly, to seek their God and to feel his nearness. One is to think, to reason. Though reason to the soul may be only "as the borrowed rays of moon and stars to lonely, weary, wandering traveler—" yet it is a guide and will lead us to him. Too few men use it positively with a desire to know the truth.

Another pathway is to accept the witness of men who have known him, who have seen him. I think we pay too little attention to the value of these witnesses. The very first act of the Twelve after Christ's ascension was to choose a man from among those who had been eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection. That was what they wanted the Apostle to be who was to take Judas' place—a witness of his resurrection. (Read in the first chapter of Acts.)

Mind you, many men in the world today accept Christ as a great teacher, but that is not the fact which is going to transform their souls. He *was* a great teacher, the greatest

teacher of men, but he was also Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, the divine Redeemer of the world, and a member of the Godhead—and it is he of whom I speak when I plead for young men to come close to him.

The early Apostles were to be witnesses of the resurrected Christ in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And let me here say that we ought not to question the integrity of these men. I believe in them; I cannot believe that they wanted to deceive; I cannot believe that they were deceived—I cannot. In the measurement of time we are a long way from them, I know; but if we study carefully their lives and their histories, we shall find that their testimonies are reliable and that the integrity of their lives is unquestioned.

These men who were to be witnesses declared before their enemies, the very men who had put Jesus Christ to death on the cross, that they had seen the risen Lord. Here is Peter's testimony given immediately after the resurrection:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

"*Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. . . .*

"*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*" (Acts 2:22-24, 32.) (Italics author's.)

Ah, but the doubting critic says, and he says conscientiously, if we had absolute proof that this was Peter's testimony, it would have force. But the author—Luke—received the witness personally of the men who saw Jesus Christ after he was resurrected. We

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know from authentic sources that Luke was in Rome with Mark, and also that Mark was in Jerusalem at the time that these great events took place. We know that Luke was in the house of Philip, the evangelist, and stayed many days at Caesarea. We know that at that time he went to Jerusalem and conferred with James who presided over the Church at Jerusalem—James the brother of the Lord, who had accepted the gospel after the resurrection. The testimony of James, Luke heard, and in all probability the testimony of Peter, because Peter was there as one of the leaders when Luke went up to Jerusalem on that occasion. Men were living, five hundred of them at that time, who had seen the resurrected Lord. What about the integrity of these witnesses? What right had Luke to suspect them? He did not; he accepted their testimony as valid, and their testimony of the resurrected Lord convinced him of the divinity of the work of Jesus Christ to which he subscribed and of which he became a member.

He heard from Paul, day after day and night after night, the testimony that he gave, and if there is any question about the direct testimony of Peter, we have the direct testimony of Paul. Paul testifies that he saw the risen Lord. With that testimony you are all acquainted. He further testifies that the risen Lord was seen of Cephas (Peter), “. . . then of the twelve:

“After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

“After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (I Cor. 15:5-8.)

I cannot doubt that testimony. Why can the world? This testimony is of the *resurrected* Lord, not Jesus the teacher, not the Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus the Lord, the Redeemer of mankind.

Let me call your attention to another witness nearer to us than the ancient Apostles—the testimony of Joseph Smith the Prophet who is practically of our generation. In

measurement of time, Cephas, Paul, Luke, and others are a long way from us. But Joseph Smith testified that the risen Lord appeared to him, that he was introduced by the Father, who said, “This is my Beloved Son; hear him.” If that testimony stood alone it would be, as Christ said his testimony would be, of no avail when he spoke of himself. But Joseph Smith has other witnesses whose integrity cannot be questioned. Of Joseph’s wonderful testimony, I am merely suggesting a line of thought that young men may follow and come nearer to a conviction of the divinity of Jesus the Christ if they will be conscientious and true, and not “play pranks with their souls,” but be honest as Joseph Smith was honest, and as these other men were honest to death in their testimonies.

Three witnesses corroborated Joseph Smith’s wonderful vision, and in that testimony which they give they bear record of another truth, the immortality of man: For if Jesus Christ lived after death, and the angel Moroni came as these three witnesses declared, then you and I will live after death! Man is immortal. Oh, what a wonderful revelation, what it means to men who now but perfunctorily and in a conventional manner accept the gospel of Christ! These three men testified:

“Be it known unto all nations, kindred, tongues, and people, unto

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### FLASHING WINGS

By Manfred A. Carter

IN DREAMS, I harvested the summer light  
And walked on grass but never bent it  
down;  
My moving hands were swifter than my  
sight—  
I mocked the sun, like some immortal  
clown.  
Where strange bright motion on a flower  
bell  
Came in my dream, I caught a humming-  
bird  
Above that gold and crimson color spell—  
Its throbbing, soundless fear could not be  
heard.  
Those flashing wings lay crippled in my  
palm,  
With heaven’s shining motion weak and  
slow,  
My heedless hands had brought a mortal  
calm;  
It was too late to let those bright wings go.  
Then slow tears washed my mournful  
soul awake,  
I knew some dreams are not for hands  
to take.

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.*

“Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris.”

In Palmyra some years ago I read in one of the local papers a testimony, or memorandum, given by a man who knew these three witnesses personally. He never joined the Church, but in that local paper I read this testimony of the integrity of one of these witnesses:

John H. Gilbert, on September 8, 1892, the man who set the type of the Book of Mormon, says this of Martin Harris:

“Martin Harris was a good farmer owning a farm of about one hundred and fifty acres about a mile north of Palmyra village, and had money at interest. Martin, as everybody called him, was considered by his neighbors a very honest man.”

Martin, the honest man, says to the world, “God’s voice declared to us that the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated are true; an angel of God came down and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the records.”

“A very honest man,” bears the witness; why should we doubt it?

In Pittsburgh years ago, I heard President B. H. Roberts bear witness in a most inspirational meeting, that he heard David Whitmer, another of the three special witnesses, testify in these words:

“Young man, if that book (pointing to one of the early editions of the Book of Mormon) is not true, then there is no truth in this, God’s world.”

The integrity of these three witnesses cannot successfully be questioned.

But there is a greater witness than the witness of men, great as that is. There is a witness of the

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## "Those Were the Two Happiest Years"

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diligently to serve her Heavenly Father to the best of her ability, for she remembered the passage in the Doctrine and Covenants that reads:

And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me! (D. & C. 18:15-16.)

Her prayers had been answered, and that night was the beginning of her spiritual diary, and she knew that this was the beginning of her "two happiest years. . . ."

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Spirit. God does reveal today to the human soul the reality of the resurrection of the Lord, the divinity of this great work, the truth, the divine and eternal truth, that God lives, not only as a power, an essence, a force—as electricity—but as our Father in heaven. Oh, why do men try to make that power, recognized by science and religion everywhere, a mere "force!" I sometimes wish that such men would kneel down and try to pray to electricity. Imagine trying to pray to electricity! You can not do it, and yet this is one of the greatest known forces. You can, however, pray to God the Father, a Personal Being. God reveals to the soul his existence. He reveals the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to earth to give to men the great reality of the existence of God and his Son; and in that spirit and with such witness in my soul I bear testimony today that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world.

God help us and all the world to sense the reality, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is established among men, and through obedience to it the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man may become realities to every son and daughter of Adam. God hasten the day when that testimony will be real in every heart.

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