



Type: Magazine Article

Credibility of the Witnesses

Author(s): J. M. Sjodahl

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 85, No. 43
(25 October 1923)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 676–678

Abstract: This series gives a biographical summary about each of the Eleven Witnesses. Sjodahl quotes portions of published testimonies of the Three Witnesses. The fourth part concludes the series with a summary of the Eight Witnesses.

beseech thee that the people of this great nation and the peoples of the world may overcome selfishness and refrain from strife, contention, and all bitterness, and that they may grow and increase in the love of country, in loyalty and patriotism, and in a determination to do that which is right and just.

We beseech thee, O God in heaven, that the people of Canada may ever seek thee for guidance and direction, that thy declaration that the American continent is a land choice above all other lands, and thy promise that it shall be protected against all foes, provided the people serve thee, may be fulfilled, and that the people may grow in power, and strength and dominion, and, above all, in a love of thy truth.

We thank thee, O Father in heaven, for the splendid treatment that has been accorded by the officials in the Dominion of Canada to those of thy people who have immigrated to this country, and we humbly pray thee to aid thy sons and thy daughters who have taken upon them thy name, so to order their lives in righteousness and truth that they may retain the good will of the people of this country and merit the same because of their good works.

(TO BE CONTINUED).

CREDIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES.

J. M. SJODAHL.

(Concluded from page 663.)

THE testimony of the eight witnesses differs from that of the three in this respect, that it deals with what we may call the material or temporal aspect of the case.

What I mean to say by this is, that they did not see an angel. They did not hear a voice from beyond. But they, nevertheless, saw the plates and handled them, and they examined the engraved signs and noted the "curious" workmanship. It was the Prophet Joseph, himself, who showed them the ancient record. Those are the facts of which they bear witness. In other words, they testify that, to their actual knowledge, the Prophet Joseph really had the plates in his possession. The story concerning the recovery of that record, they assure us, was not a myth; it was not fiction, but *Truth*.

What has been said of the character of the three witnesses is applicable also to the eight. They were men of irreproachable character, competent witnesses, and they never retracted their first statements. Joseph Smith, Sr., who was the first to receive the message of his chosen son as from the Lord, passed away September 18, 1840, after having endured all trials and hardships, for the sake of the Gospel. He was, at the time of his departure from this world, the Patriarch of the Church. Hyrum Smith,

as is well known, sealed his faithful testimony with his blood, June 27th, 1844, the day of the martyrdom of the Prophet, his brother, and the two, united in life, were not separated in death. Sannel Smith also passed away in 1844, faithful to the last. Of the Whitmers, Christian died in 1835, and Peter, Jr., in 1836, both in full fellowship. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were separated from the Church in 1838, but neither of them retracted his testimony at any time. The latter died forty years later, at Far West, maintaining the truth of his testimony to the last. Hiram Page was one of the prominent men of the Church who fell by the wayside in the year 1838. In the early days of the Church he sought to obtain revelations for the Church through a "seer stone" of his own, and even Oliver Cowdery and some of the Whitmers came very near being deceived by him.* The error was corrected by revelation, but it is to be feared that, in the case of Hiram Page, the spirit of apostasy prevailed; but he did not deny his testimony. He died in 1852, rejoicing to the last that he had been privileged to view the plates of the Book of Mormon.

Among the opponents of "Mormonism" whose attitude is not due to bigotry or wilful hostility, the real objection to the testimony of the witnesses is, that they consider any account of the appearance of angels in our day improbable, not to say impossible. People do not want to believe in the appearance of angels, because they, themselves, have not seen any. They do not want to believe in tangible connection between the world of spirit and of matter, because they have never consciously come in contact with the former.

But that is not a valid objection.

Who has ever seen an electron? Or an atom? Who had ever seen a microbe before the microscope revealed them? How many of the millions that inhabit the earth, or any city, say New York or London, have ever seen one, although there are microscopes to be obtained? If we must discard, as incredible, our belief in the existence of everything but that little which we are conscious of through the medium of our senses, our knowledge will not be much more extensive than that of the wild beast. The fact is that most of what we "know" is what we accept on the testimony of others. Why, then, should we refuse to give credence to competent testimony concerning existences beyond the limits of tangible matter merely because we have not been able to reach them? There is after all, no unbridgeable gulf between spirit and matter. In fact, "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes."†

Brigham Young tells us‡ that the spirit world is incorporated

*Doc. and Cov. 28: 11-14.

†Doc. and Cov. 131: 7.

‡Jour. of Dis., Vol. 2, p. 368.

within this celestial system. It cannot, he says, ordinarily be seen by our natural eyes, but if God should "touch our eyes," which is equivalent to saying, if our field of vision should be enlarged as by means of a divine microscope, figuratively speaking, then we could see spirits as plainly as we see each other.

There is nothing improbable in this. There must be "matter" beyond that which we generally recognize as such, for there are many "natural" phenomena which cannot be accounted for by what little is known of nature and natural laws.* Scientists have, therefore, assumed the existence of ether, to account for electric, magnetic, and other mysterious phenomena. It was generally described as a material substance of more subtle kind than material bodies, and filling even "empty space." However, some years ago Sir Oliver Lodget claimed that he had demonstrated that ether is the most solid substance in existence—a medium in which solid bodies, so called, and matter in general, float and move as air bubbles in water. Is it not just as easy to believe in a world of spirit in which spirits move and have their being?†

"Spirits, when they leave the bodies, do not pass out of the organization of this earth on which we live."

"Where is the spirit world? It is right here. Do the good and evil spirits go together? Yes, they do. * * * Do they go to the sun? No. Do they go beyond the boundaries of this organized earth? No, they do not. They are brought forth upon this earth, for the express purpose of inhabiting it to all eternity. Where else are you going? Nowhere else, only as you are permitted" (*Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 3, p. 368).

*Just as there are light waves beyond those which we see, and sound waves beyond the range of our hearing.

†In his little treatise on *The Ether of Space*.

‡There was formerly some talk about the "fourth dimension," as an explanation of some mysteries of nature; but the theory was never generally accepted, probably nor even understood, except by experts in philosophy. The discussion seems about to be revived, for exponents of Relativity have taken it up and added TIME to our three dimensions, as the fourth. See *Relativity*, by Albert Einstein, a good translation of which has been made by Robert W. Lawson, pp. 65 and 146. Those who regarded the spirit world as one of the four dimensions used to say that beings moving in the fourth dimension could not be seen by us who have only three; just as we would be invisible to beings moving in a flat world with only two dimensions—length and breadth and no height.—S.

FROM the commonest flower, treasured because its perfume outlives its beauty, to our noblest achievements, where the mind puts forth all its power, we are prompted by that future which absorbs the present. The more we feel that we are finite, the more we cling to the infinite.