

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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Florence, a suburb of Omaha, Nebraska—their Winter Quarters became a vital new center for planning, regrouping, preparing, and religious renewal. Surveyed in October 1846 and subsequently laid out in a grid with 14 streets, 38 blocks, and over 760 lots and stockyards, and with houses ranging from two-story brick homes to sod huts, Winter Quarters housed almost 4,000 Latter-day Saints by December 1846. For the next two years, the name was also loosely applied to scores of much smaller settlements on the river's east side, home for another 8,000 LDS immigrants.

After the establishment of SALT LAKE CITY in 1847 and upon orders from government officials concerned about settlement on Indian lands, the Saints vacated Winter Quarters in 1848 to go either to the Salt Lake Valley or back east across the river, where they created the city of Kanesville, Iowa (see COUNCIL BLUFFS).

Winter Quarters was more than a resting spot on the way to the West: It became a place of implementation and experimentation in Church practice and government. It was there, for example, that the LAW OF ADOPTION and PLURAL MARRIAGE were first openly practiced, though they had been taught in Nauvoo. Also at Winter Quarters Brigham Young and the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES deliberated at length about leadership and Church government before reorganizing the FIRST PRESIDENCY at Kanesville, December 1847. The role of BISHOP was also refined. Because of the needs created by the July 1846 departure of 500 able-bodied men to serve in the MORMON BATTALION, Winter Quarters became the first community divided into small WARDS (congregations) of 300 to 500 people, with a bishop responsible for each.

Winter Quarters also represents the tragic side of Mormon history: Some 2,000 Latter-day Saints died there and across the river between June 1846 and October 1848. This high death rate is attributable to excessive fatigue, heavy spring storms, generally inadequate provisions, the malaria then common along the river lowlands, improvised shelters, and the weakened condition of the “poor camp” refugees driven out of Nauvoo in the fall of 1846.

Winter Quarters tested Brigham Young's remarkable leadership abilities and the faith of thousands who followed him through sickness and wilderness to their eventual mountain refuge. In Latter-day Saint chronicles, Winter Quarters will

be forever remembered as a place of suffering and of faith.

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## WITNESSES, BOOK OF MORMON

See: Book of Mormon Witnesses

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## WITNESSES, LAW OF

The scriptural law of witnesses requires that in the mouth of two or three individuals shall every word be established (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19). This law applies in divine as well as human relations, for members of the Godhead bear witness of one another (John 5:31–37; 3 Ne. 11:32), and books of holy writ give multiple witness to the work of God in the earth (2 Ne. 29:8–13). The law of witnesses is prominent in the history and practice of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A witness gives personal verification of, or attests to the reality of, an event. To “witness” in the scriptural sense is much the same as in the legal sense: to give personal testimony based on first-hand evidence or experience. To bear false witness is a very serious offense (Deut. 5:20; 19:16–21). When prophets have an experience with the Lord, often he commands them to “bear record” of him and of the truths that have been revealed (1 Ne. 10:10; 11:7; D&C 58:59; 112:4; 138:60). In legal affairs, testimony is usually related to what a person knows by the physical senses. In spiritual matters there is additional knowledge or information received through the Holy Spirit.

The Bible illustrates that God often works with mankind through two or more witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:15–16). Likewise, latter-day scripture teaches the need for witnesses (D&C 6:28; 42:80–81; 128:3). One per-

son's word alone, even though it may be true, may not be sufficient to establish and bind the hearer to the truth. Witnesses provide the means of establishing faith in the minds of people, for faith comes by hearing the word of God through the power of human testimony accompanied by the Holy Ghost (Rom. 10:17; *TPJS*, p. 148; *Lectures on Faith*, 2). In the BOOK OF MORMON, the prophet NEPHI<sub>1</sub> combined his brother Jacob's testimony with Isaiah's testimony to reinforce and verify his own witness of the divine sonship of the Redeemer (2 Ne. 11:2–3). Likewise, Alma<sub>2</sub> called upon the words of ZENOS, ZENOCK, and MOSES to corroborate his own testimony of the Son of God (Alma 33:2–23).

When the keys of the PRIESTHOOD were restored to the Prophet Joseph SMITH and often when visions were received, the Prophet was accompanied by a witness. This is the case with the restoration of the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD, the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, the keys given in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE (Ohio), and the vision of the DEGREES OF GLORY (D&C 13; 76; 110). Subsequent to the translation of the Book of Mormon and prior to its publication, three men on one occasion, and eight men on a separate occasion, in addition to Joseph Smith, became witnesses of the Book of Mormon PLATES (see BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES). The Prophet Joseph was likewise accompanied in his martyr's death by his brother Hyrum, a second martyr or witness, making their testimony valid forever (D&C 135:3; 136:39). The meaning of the Greek word *martyr* is "witness."

The scriptures also indicate other ways in which the law of witnesses applies:

**THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.** JOHN THE BAPTIST testified of the divinity of Jesus (John 1:15; 3:26; 5:32–39), the Father testified of Christ (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 8:18), and Christ himself bore record of his own divinity as the Son of God (Matt. 26:63–64; John 11:4; 13:31). The theme of John 5–8 illustrates the principle of witnesses. When Jesus spoke in his own behalf, some Jews, referring to the law of witnesses, said, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true" (John 8:13). Jesus had earlier explained that both John the Baptist and the Father in Heaven had borne record of him (John 5:31–39; 8:18) and his testimony was therefore valid and binding. He declared that his works testified that he was the Son of God (John 5:

31–38). Peter also bore testimony that Jesus was the Son of God, a fact he had learned by revelation (Matt. 16:16).

**JESUS' RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.** Witnesses to the RESURRECTION of Christ included groups of women, two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and the apostles (Matt. 28; Luke 24; Acts 4:33; 5:32). Paul records that there were in Galilee over 500 witnesses to Jesus' resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:6). The Book of Mormon reports that about 2,500 people in America witnessed the resurrected body of Jesus Christ by seeing and touching it, and did "bear record" of it (3 Ne. 11:14–16; 17:25).

**AUTHENTICATION OF RITES AND CEREMONIES.** In the Church, witnesses are officially present for all baptisms and marriages. Witnesses also confirm proxy baptisms, endowments, marriages, and sealings in the temples on behalf of the dead (D&C 127:6). Missionaries travel in pairs as witnesses for one another (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; D&C 42:6; 52:10; 61:35; 62:5).

**ON JUDGMENT DAY.** In the final judgment that God will render to all mankind, the fact of the gospel having been taught on the earth by multiple witnesses will be important. Nephi<sub>1</sub> has written, "Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words" (2 Ne. 11:3; cf. 27:14).

In a very fundamental way, the Bible and the Book of Mormon are witnesses to each other. Each record establishes the truth found in the other, and the DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS establishes the truth of them both (1 Ne. 13:20–40; 2 Ne. 3:12; 29:8–14; Morm. 7:8–9; D&C 17:6; 20:11–12; 42:12). The written testimony of two nations, the Jews and the Nephites, is a witness to the world that there is a God (2 Ne. 29:8).

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