

Witnesses Readers Theater

Pioneer Cemetery, Richmond Missouri

Martin Harris



My name is Martin Harris. I was interviewed over 50 times¹ and there are over 100 sources² documenting my consistent and bold testimony. Bearing testimony of the Book of Mormon would energize and enliven me, renewing my health and strength, especially in my old age.³ To illustrate the reality of Moroni and the plates I would often point to an object, the sun shining,⁴ a chopping block, an axe-head, my hand or an apple tree and then insist that just as plainly as they see the object I saw the plates.⁵ “Just as plain as you see that chopping block, I saw the plates; and sooner than I would deny it I would lay my head upon that chopping block and let you chop it off.”⁶ “It is not a mere belief, but a matter of knowledge. I saw the plates and the inscriptions thereon. I saw the angel, and he showed them unto me.”⁷ “It is not a mere belief,”⁸ “knowledge supersedes belief.”⁹ “I might as well deny my own existence as to doubt the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon or the divine calling of Joseph Smith.”¹⁰ “I know what I know.”¹¹ When I was 87 I came to Utah. As I looked over the Salt Lake Temple being constructed I felt impressed and declared, “Who would have thought the Book of Mormon would have done all this.”¹² At the age of 88 I was rebaptized in front of the Endowment House in Salt Lake City and then received my own endowments.¹³ I am the only witness to bear testimony of the Book of Mormon outside of North America. A few hours before my death, I was unable to recognize close friends and relatives, but I bore this

testimony, “The Book of Mormon is no fake. I know what I know. I have seen what I have seen and I have heard what I have heard. I have seen the gold plates from which the book of Mormon is written. An angel appeared to me and others and testified to the truthfulness of the Record, and had [I said it wasn’t true] I would have been a rich man, but I could not have testified other than I have done and am now doing for these things are true.”¹⁴

Oliver Cowdery



I am Oliver Cowdery. I became acquainted with the Smiths while teaching school in Palmyra. When Joseph Smith Senior told me about Joseph and the plates it “seem[ed] to work into my bones and I [could] not get it out of my mind.” I prayed and “firmly believed that it was the will of the Lord” for me to go to Joseph and help where ever I could.¹⁵ The Lord showed me the plates, Joseph Smith, and the work that was about to come forth in a vision before I even met Joseph.¹⁶ I led a mission to the Native Americans. In Kirtland thousands flocked to hear us preach. After I was excommunicated I became a lawyer. One time, the opposing lawyer confronted me, trying to undermine my reputation and ridiculed me for my testimony that was in the Book of Mormon. With tears streaming down my face, I bore this testimony, “What I have there said that I saw, I know that I saw. Whatever my faults may be, what I have given to the world, was literally true.”¹⁷ “I want you to remember what I say to you. I am a dying man, and what would it profit me to tell you a lie? I know ... that this Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God. My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my understanding was touched, and I know that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind—it was real.”¹⁸ When I died I had accepted a mission call from President Brigham Young. My dying words were, “Brother David [Whitmer], be true to your testimony of the Book of Mormon.”¹⁹ “You have been indebted to others ... for evidence [of the Book of Mormon ... but it is necessary that you receive a

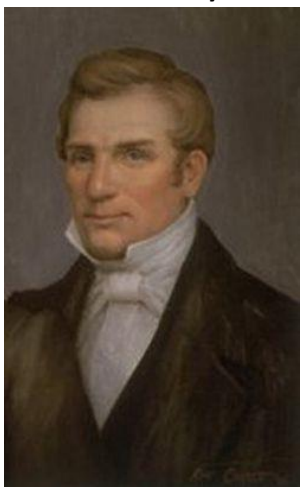
testimony from heaven for yourselves ... so that you can bear testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon ... [I encourage everyone] to never cease striving until you see God face to face.”²⁰

David Whitmer



I am David Whitmer. I gave at least 72 different interviews²¹ and thousands came to see me.²² In all those interviews I bore a bold and consistent testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon. I want you all to know that “I was not under any hallucination, nor was I deceived! I saw with these eyes and heard with these ears! I know whereof I speak!”²³ “It was no delusion.”²⁴ “If you are open to investigation and conviction I pray you to read the Book of Mormon with a prayerful heart. ... The Book carries conviction with it.”²⁵ In 1833 the Saints were forced from Zion, Jackson County Missouri. They tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and Charles C. Allen. Afterward they took me and several others to the town square. The mob pointed their guns at us and told us that if we would deny the Book of Mormon they would let us go. I was not willing to do that. “[I] lifted [my] hands above my head and bore witness that the Book of Mormon was the word of God.”²⁶ This testimony caused the mob to fear and they let us go. “I wish now, standing as it were in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God, once and for all to make this public statement: ‘That I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof ... Those who know me best, well know that I have always adhered to that testimony.’”²⁷ “I also testify to the world that neither Oliver Cowdery or Martin Harris ever at any time denied their testimony. They both died reaffirming the truth of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.”²⁸

Hyrum Smith



My name is Hyrum Smith. I love the Book of Mormon. In the most difficult times I turned to the Book of Mormon for peace. After spending 6 months in the Independence, Richmond, and Liberty Jails I told the Saints, “I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to (the plates), wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself as ever I did in my life.”²⁹ As I left my family, the Saints, and the city I loved and headed to Carthage I knew I may not leave that jail alive. I found comfort in the words of the Book of Mormon prophet Ether. The night before I was martyred, I taught from the Book of Mormon and, with my brother Joseph, bore testimony to the Guards of the divinity of the Book of Mormon.³⁰ I was shot and died sealing my testimony of the Book of Mormon with my own blood.³¹

Joseph Smith Sr.



My name is Joseph Smith Sr. Religion had divided my home 3 times and caused my wife, Lucy Mack Smith a lot of pain until Joseph reorganized the Church on April 6, 1830. With the reorganization of the Church my family was finally united under God. One day a very religious man came to my house with a police officer. He said I owed him \$14. That was the first time I had heard that I owed him any money, but he said if I would burn the Book of Mormon, he would forgive the debt in full. I only had \$6 which I offered to pay him and then settle the remainder of the debt shortly after. My wife Lucy also offered a beautiful gold bead necklace, which was also denied. The religious man had the officer throw me into debtor’s prison. I preached every Sunday and when I was released, I baptized 2 of the inmates.³² I too loved the Book of Mormon and I too gave my life for that testimony.

Samuel Smith



I am Joseph's little brother Samuel Smith. I was just about 12 years old when Joseph saw God the Father and Jesus Christ in what we now call the First Vision. I grew up hearing the rumors and slanders against my brother. While Joseph was translating the plates, I went to Harmony to help him on his small farm. While there, Joseph and Oliver showed me the Book of Mormon manuscript, read from the scriptures and labored to persuade me that the work they were doing was of God, but [I] was not easily persuaded. I went into the woods to pray to ask God if my brother Joseph was doing God's work. I received the answer that the work of translating the plates was true. I was the third person baptized into the Church.³³ Shortly after the Church was organized on April 6, 1830 I was called as the first missionary of the Restored Church even though I wasn't a very powerful preacher.³⁴ Because of my simple and plain testimony of the Book of Mormon many were brought into the true Church.³⁵

Hiram Page

My name is Hiram Page and I am the brother in law to David Whitmer and his brothers. I was faithful to my testimony of the Book of Mormon until my last breath and whenever I had the opportunity to bear testimony of its truthfulness I would do so. I count it a privilege to be one of the 8 witnesses to the Book of Mormon.³⁶ As a witness to the Book of Mormon I suffered a lot in Missouri. One night, a mob attacked the settlement where my family was living. They beat 10 to 15 men and tore down their homes.³⁷ When the mob discovered who I was they beat and whipped me. The mobbers paused and said that if I would deny the Book of Mormon they would let me go. I told them, "How can I deny what I know to be true." They continued to pound me and then asked again for me to deny the Book of Mormon. I could not do it even as they threatened to kill me. They resumed beating me giving me 60 or 70 blows with a hickory rod until one of the mobbers realized that I was willing to die for my testimony of the Book of Mormon and convinced them to stop.³⁸

Peter Whitmer Jr.

I am Peter Whitmer, Junior. When Joseph and Oliver came to my father's house I felt drawn to the work and became "[their] zealous friend."³⁹ I scribed for Joseph when Oliver needed a break.⁴⁰ Because of my faithfulness, the Lord called me to be one of the Eight Witnesses. While the Book of Mormon was being printed, the Lord asked me to stay with the Smiths and protect the manuscript. I spent many sleepless nights on the alert. I also protected the printer's manuscript while Oliver and Hyrum transported it to the Grandin Building for printing.⁴¹ I was called on a special mission with Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt to teach the Native Americans. "Ever since I had an acquaintance with the writing of God (the Book of Mormon) I have [seen] eternity with perfect confidence."⁴²

John Whitmer

My name is John Whitmer. "to say that the Book of Mormon is a revelation from God I have no hesitancy ... I desire to testify to all ... that I have most assuredly seen the plates from whence the Book of Mormon is translated and that I have handled these plates, and know of a surety that Joseph Smith Jr. has translated them Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God."⁴³

¹ Richard Lloyd Anderson, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2004/explaining-away-the-book-of-mormon-witnesses>, retrieved 12/13/2022

² See evidencentral.org/recency/evidence/martin-harris as retrieved on 9/30/2022

-
- ³ See Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 113
- ⁴ See Early Mormon Documents 2:314
- ⁵ See Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 116
- ⁶ "Statement of Comfort Elizabeth Godfrey Flinders to N. B. Lundwell," September 2, 1943, as cited in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 116
- ⁷ See Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 116
- ⁸ *The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon*, Deseret News, 2 April 1927
- ⁹ See Autobiography of Alma Jenson, BYU Library
- ¹⁰ "The Passing of Martin Harris," *The Improvement Era* 29 (1926):470
- ¹¹ Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 117
- ¹² Edward Stevenson, "Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. III," *Millennial Star* 48 (June 7, 1886), p. 390
- ¹³ <https://doctrineandcovenantscentral.org/history/martin-harris/> retrieved 12/14/22
- ¹⁴ Eldin Ricks, *The Case of the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 20-21
- ¹⁵ History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, 138-139
- ¹⁶ Joseph Smith Papers, *Histories*, 1:16
- ¹⁷ Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, 2:258; given just 5 years after the death of Oliver Cowdery; Seymour B. Young, LDS Conference Report, April 1921, 114-116; George Q. Cannon, Journal of Discourses 22:254; For additional information and commentary on the courtroom confession see Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 57-60
- ¹⁸ Testimony of Jacob Gates as quoted in Larry C. Porter, *The Testimony of Oliver Cowdery*, Ensign, December 1996
- ¹⁹ Letter to David Whitmer dated March 8, 1887 as quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 63
- ²⁰ "General Charge to the Twelve," 21 February 1835, *History of the Church* 2:195-96
- ²¹ Cook, Lyndon W., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, (Grandin Book Company, 1993).
- ²² See Anderson, Richard Lloyd, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 79
- ²³ Memoirs of Joseph Smith III as cited in See Anderson, Richard Lloyd, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 88
- ²⁴ David Whitmer, *A Proclamation*, Richmond (1881) as cited in Anderson, Richard Lloyd, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 87
- ²⁵ David Whitmer, *A Proclamation*, Richmond (1881) as cited in Anderson, Richard Lloyd, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 86
- ²⁶ Greene, John P, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons or Latter Day Saints, from the State of Missouri under the Exterminating Order* (1839), 17.
- ²⁷ See David Whitmer, *An Address to all Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, (1887), 8-9
- ²⁸ See David Whitmer, *An Address to all Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, (1887), 8
- ²⁹ "To the Saints scattered abroad," *Times and Seasons*, vol 1, no 2 (Dec. 1839), 23; see also original found at <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol1/page/n37/mode/2up?view=theater>
- ³⁰ History of the Church 6:600; See also Dan Jones Account, "The Martyrdom of Joseph Smith and his Brother Hyrum" as found in BYU Studies, 24 Winter 1984: p 101
- ³¹ D&C 135
- ³² History of Joseph Smith by his Mother, 179-181, 186 (179-186)
- ³³ History of the Church 1:44
- ³⁴ Orson Hyde, a missionary companion said that Samuel was "a man slow of speech and unlearned, yet a man of good faith and extreme integrity." ("The History of Orson Hyde," *Millennial Star*, 1864, vol. 16, 774)
- ³⁵ History of the Church 7:221
- ³⁶ Philander Page, Andrew Jenson, Historical Record, vol 7 (1888), 614
- ³⁷ Don Carlos Smith Journal 30 September 1838
- ³⁸ *William E. McLellin's Lost Manuscript*, 167
- ³⁹ *History of the Church* 1:49
- ⁴⁰ "Peter Whitmer Jr.," *D&C Reference Companion*, 679
- ⁴¹ Proctor and Proctor, *Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 204-5
- ⁴² See Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, 614
- ⁴³ "An Address to the Patrons of the Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate" (March 1836)