

Three Special Witnesses

Doctrine and Covenants 17



“And unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true.”

Ether 5:3

Finished with the Plates

Joseph Smith delivered up the plates, the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim to the angel Moroni when he was finished and had accomplished the work God had required of him

Rely upon *my* Word—Only by Faith

Faith is the force by which everything in the Kingdom of God takes place



View of the Plates



The records were engraved on plates which had the appearance of gold.

Each plate was neatly seven by eight inches in width and length, being not quite as thick as common tin.

They had engraving on both sides and were bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, and fastened at one edge with three rings running through the whole.

The volume was about six inches in thickness, and part of it was sealed.”

Andrew Jenson



The Sword of Laban

Laban, a Book of Mormon contemporary of Nephi in Jerusalem (600 BC) possessed a unique sword. "The hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and the blade thereof was of the most precious steel" (1 Nephi 4:9)

Nephi made many swords "after the manner of the sword of Laban (2 Nephi 5:14)

The sword of Laban seems to have been preserved as a sacred object among the Nephites

Author: Benson, Reed A.

"The people having loved Nephi exceedingly, he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defense, and having labored in all his days for their welfare"

Jacob 1:10



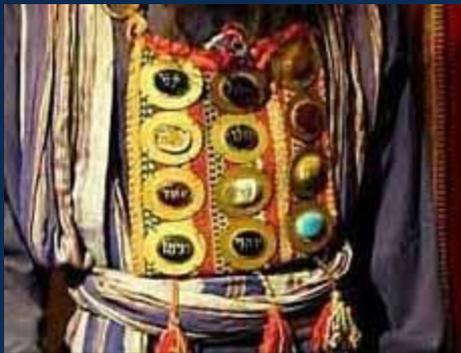
Urim and Thummim



The place where God resides is a Urim and Thummim, and this Earth is to become one, in its sanctified state (D&C 130:8,9)

John describes the earth, in its sanctified state, as a “sea of glass” (Rev 4:6, 15:2, and D&C 130:7)

The Urim and Thummim acted as a director from God. The Doctrine and Covenants are revelations from God through the Urim and Thummim



Hebrew Oracle Device

The Brother of Jared



Artistic rendition of Seer Stone

“And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write.”

Ether 3:23

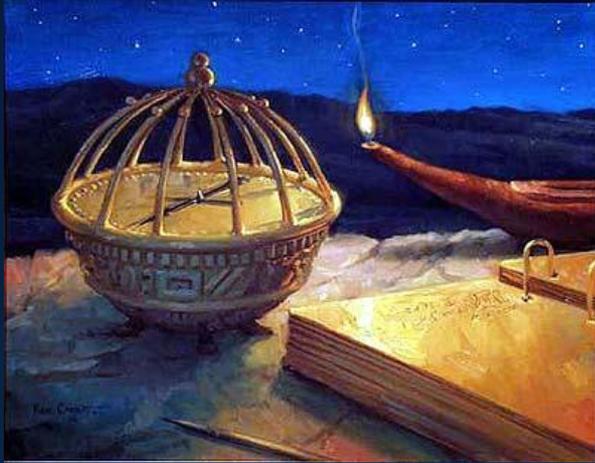


The instrument which Joseph had was that which was given to the brother of Jared, and deposited with the Jaredite Record, also known as the Book of Ether. It was entrusted to the care of Alma, the son of Alma, and finally hidden in the hill Cumorah.

“Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Miraculous Directors--Compass



“And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord said unto him: Look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written.

And it came to pass that when my father beheld the things which were written upon the ball, he did fear and tremble exceedingly, and also my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and our wives.

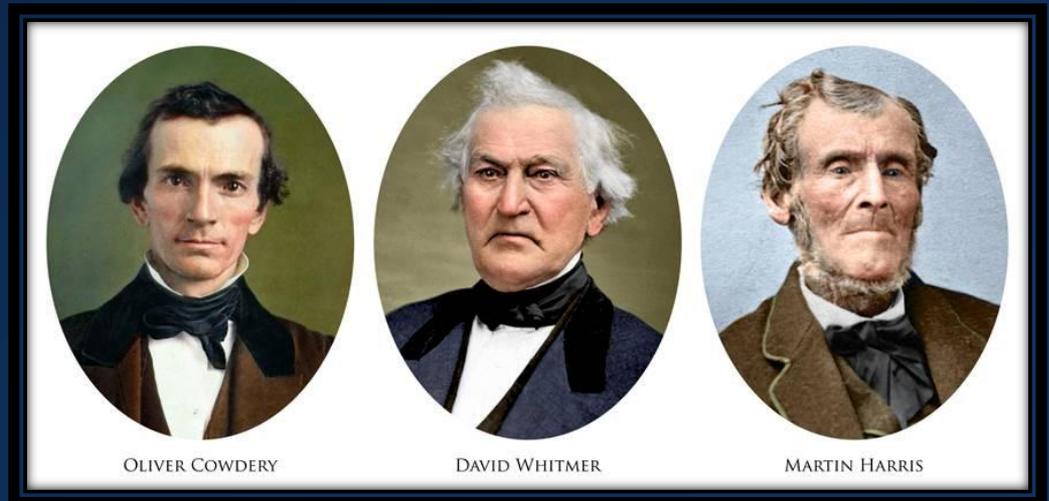
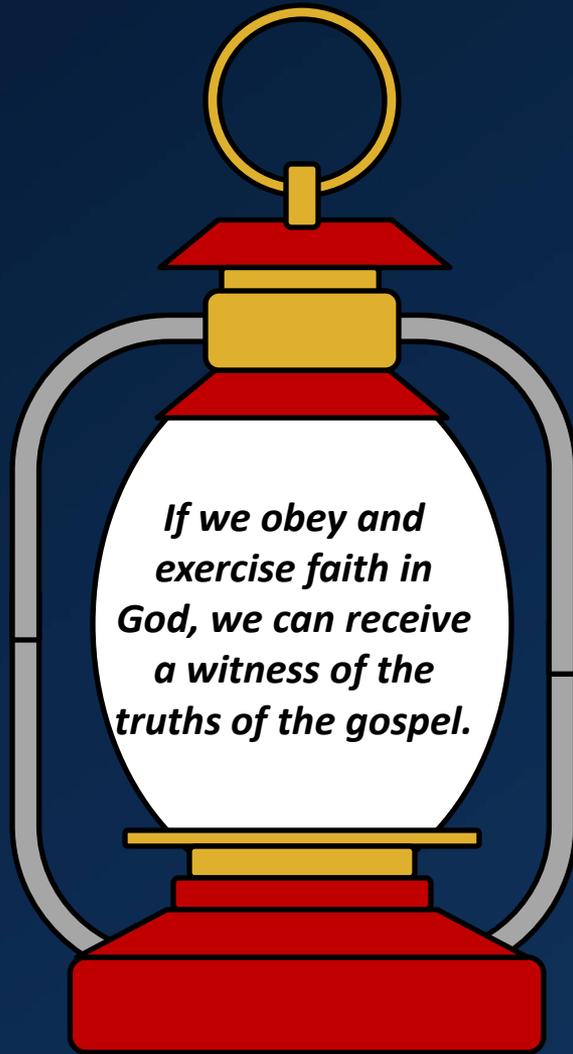


And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them.

1 Nephi 16:26-28

Permitted to See the Plates

Although we may not have the opportunity to see the same physical objects the Three Witnesses saw, we can receive a witness of truths of the gospel.



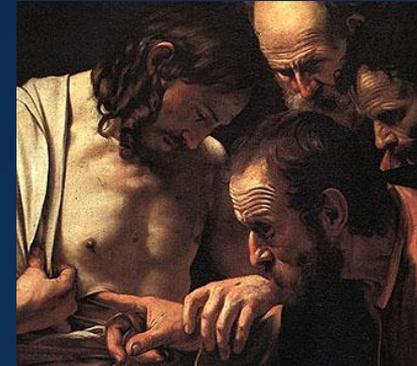
Law of Witnesses

The Three Witnesses fulfilled an important law established by the Lord.

“whenever the Lord has established a dispensation by revealing his gospel and by conferring priesthood and keys upon men, he has acted in accordance with the *law of witnesses* which he himself ordained. This law is: ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.’

“Never does one man stand alone in establishing a new dispensation of revealed truth, or in carrying the burden of such a message and warning to the world. In every dispensation, from Adam to the present, two or more witnesses have always joined their testimonies, thus leaving their hearers without excuse in the day of judgment should the testimony be rejected.”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie



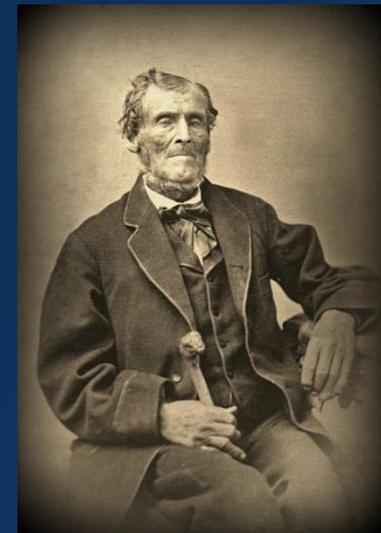
Be Humble and Repent

“The next morning, after attending to the usual services, namely, reading, singing and praying, Joseph arose from his knees, and approaching Martin Harris with a solemnity that thrills through my veins to this day, when it occurs to my recollection, said,

‘Martin Harris, you have got to humble yourself before God this day, that you may obtain a forgiveness of your sins.

If you do, it is the will of God that you should look upon the plates, in company with Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer”

Lucy Mack Smith



Retired to the Woods

“Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and [I] ... retired [to the woods near the Whitmer home], and having knelt down, we began to pray in much faith to Almighty God. ...

“According to previous arrangement, I commenced by vocal prayer to our Heavenly Father, and was followed by each of the others in succession.

We did not at the first trial, however, obtain any answer or manifestation of divine favor in our behalf.

We again observed the same order of prayer ... but with the same result as before.



“Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us,...

The Angel Held the Plates

...and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. ...

We heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, 'These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.'

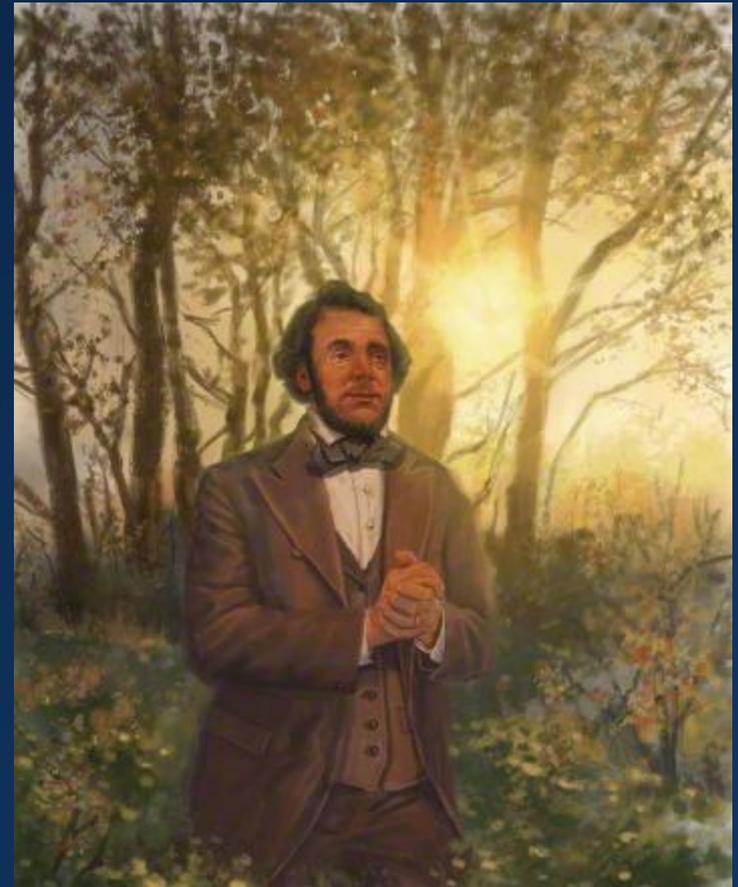


“Tis Enough”

“I now left David and Oliver, and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance, fervently engaged in prayer. He soon told me, however, that he had not yet prevailed with the Lord, and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer, that he also might realize the same blessings which we had just received.

We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desires, for before we had yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view, at least it was again opened to me, and I once more beheld and heard the same things; whilst at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, “Tis enough; ’tis enough; mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld””

History of the Church



Returning Home

“When they returned to the house it was between three and four o’clock p. m. Mrs. Whitmer, Mr. Smith and myself, were sitting in a bedroom at the time.

On coming in, Joseph threw himself down beside me, and exclaimed, ‘Father, mother, you do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself.

They have seen an angel, who has testified to them, and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear, and it rejoices my soul, that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world.’ Upon this, Martin Harris came in: he seemed almost overcome with joy, and testified boldly to what he had both seen and heard. And so did David and Oliver, adding that no tongue could express the joy of their hearts, and the greatness of the things which they had both seen and heard”

Lucy Mack Smith



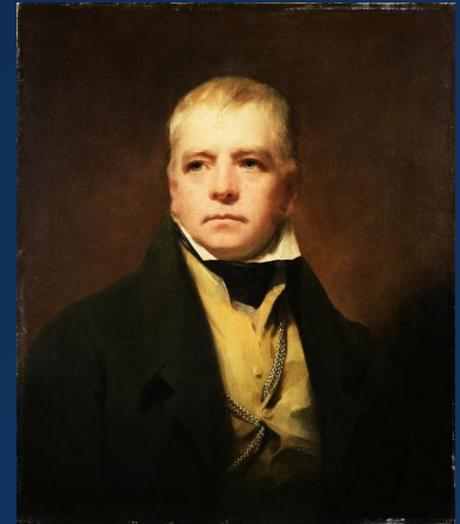
Spirit Testifies of the Truth

“And he has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him, and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.”



“Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries.
Happiest he of human race
To whom our God has given grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, and force the way;
And better had he ne’er been born
Who reads to doubt, or reads to
scorn.”

Sir Walter Scott



This is poem is copied in Lord Byron's
own Bible

Eight Witnesses



The Testimony of the Eight Witnesses
A few days after the Three Witnesses saw the gold plates, “eight additional witnesses—faithful men who were close to the Prophet during the translation—were also chosen to see the plates. ... Joseph was permitted to show them the plates near the Smith residence in Manchester when he was making arrangements for the printing of the book. [See *History of the Church*, 1:58.]

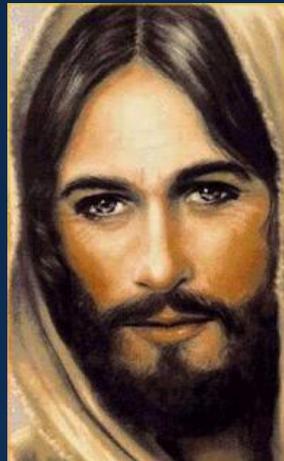
The Eight Witnesses testified that they handled and lifted the plates and saw the engravings on the individual leaves. Their testimony is also contained in all published editions of the Book of Mormon”

(*Church History in the Fulness of Times Student Manual*, 2nd ed. [Church Educational System manual, 2003], 60–61).

Grace of the Lord

After a man has done all that he can for himself, it is only by the grace of the Lord (that is, by his love, mercy, and condescension) that he can gain salvation (see 2 Nephi 11:24; 25:23)

These three men were promised that if they would do all that they were instructed in this revelation, the Lord's grace is sufficient to ensure their salvation.



“We are all transgressors of the law to some extent, no matter how good we have tried to be—we are therefore unable in and of ourselves to receive redemption from our sins by any act of our own.

“... it is by the grace of Jesus Christ that we are saved.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith

Sources:

Suggested Hymn: #147 *Sweet is the Work*

Joseph Smith –History 1:52, 59-60

Andrew Jenson *Historical Record*, p. 363 from Hyrum M. Smith *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* p. 77

Sword of Laban-- Author: Benson, Reed A. BYU Education 1992 Publication Harold B. Lee Library

Elder Russell M. Nelson *A Treasured Testament* July 1993 Ensign

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 436.)

Lucy Mack Smith (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Preston Nibley [1958], 151–52).

History of the Church, 1:54–55).

Lucy Mack Smith (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 152).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:309.)

The Urim and Thummim

There is difference of opinion among Bible students concerning the use of this sacred instrument; but it is generally admitted that through it the divine will on important questions was ascertained in some manner not described. In the original Hebrew text of I Samuel 14:41, ("Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, **Give a perfect lot...**" presupposed by the translators of the *Septuagint*, we read, "And Saul said, O Jehovah, the God of Israel, why hast thou not answered thy servant this day? If the iniquity be in me, or in Jonathan my son, give Urim; and if it be in thy people Israel, give Thummim.:

The Hebrew words rendered * * * Give perfect (lot) are a mutilated fragment of the longer text preserved in the *Septuagint* * * *). The priest who cast the lots on this occasion was evidently Ahijah" This shows that the people of God anciently enquired of the Lord through Urim and Thummim. When, however, the Spirit of prophecy was poured out in great abundance, the sacred instrument was not necessarily needed.

After the organization of the Church the Prophet Joseph could ascertain the mind and will of the Lord without any outward aid. The office of the Sprit is to lead into all truth.—Hyrum M. Smith pg. 20

Septuagint---from the Latin word *Septuagint* (meaning seventy), is a translation of the Hebrew Bible and some related texts into Koine Greek.
Wikipedia

Jewish Urim and Thummim: Objects connected with the breastplate of the high priest, and used as a kind of divine oracle.

"revelation and truth" or "lights and perfections"

It is called a "breastplate of judgment" ("ḥoshen ha-mishpaṭ"); it is four-square and double; and the twelve stones were not put inside the ḥoshen, but on the outside.

Jewish Encyclopedia.com

George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron, later **George Gordon Noel, 6th Baron Byron**, FRS (22 January 1788 – 19 April 1824) : commonly known simply as **Lord Byron**, was an English poet and a leading figure in the Romantic movement. Among Byron's best-known works are the lengthy narrative poems *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the short lyric *She Walks in Beauty*. He is regarded as one of the greatest British poets and remains widely read and influential.

Sir Walter Scott, 1st Baronet, FRSE (15 August 1771 – 21 September 1832) was a Scottish historical novelist, playwright, and poet. Scott was the first English-language author to have a truly international career in his lifetime, with many contemporary readers in Europe, Australia, and North America. His novels and poetry are still read, and many of his works remain classics of both English-language literature and of Scottish literature. Famous titles include *Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Waverley*, *The Heart of Midlothian* and *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

Wikipedia

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"One of the most solemn oaths ever given to man is found in these words of the Lord relative to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. 'He [meaning Joseph Smith] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him,' saith the Lord, 'and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.' (D&C 17:6.)

"This is God's testimony of the Book of Mormon. In it Deity himself has laid his godhood on the line. Either the book is true or God ceases to be God. There neither is nor can be any more formal or powerful language known to men or gods" ("The Doctrine of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, May 1982, 33).

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris never faltered in bearing testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

As history attests, however, they did falter in other Church-related areas. David Whitmer left the Church and never came back. Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris both left the Church but were eventually rebaptized and died in full fellowship. But even while they were out of the Church, all three continued to bear solemn witness of the reality of their experience on that day. They undoubtedly felt the weight of the Lord's warning to them to keep his commandments or the gates of hell would prevail against them.

Francis W. Kirkham wrote about Oliver Cowdery's death that "in the year 1878, David Whitmer said to Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith concerning his departure: 'Oliver died the happiest man I ever saw. After shaking hands with the family and kissing his wife and daughter, he said, "Now I lay me down for the last time; I am going to my Savior"; and he died immediately, with a smile on his face.'" (*New Witness for Christ*, 1:248.)

The *Richmond Democrat* carried the following account of David Whitmer: "On Sunday evening, at 5:30 (Jan. 22, 1888), Mr. Whitmer called his family and some friends to his bedside, and addressing himself to the attending physician, said: 'Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind, before I give my dying testimony.' The doctor answered: 'Yes, you are in your right mind, for I have just had a conversation with you.' He then addressed himself to all around his bedside in these words: 'Now you must all be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, the Bible and the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) is true, so you can say that you have heard me bear my testimony on my death-bed. All be faithful in Christ, and your reward will be according to your works. God bless you all. My trust is in Christ forever, worlds without end. Amen.'" (In Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:270.)

The last testimony of Martin Harris was given to Elder William Harrison Homer, who was with him at the time of his death.

Elder Homer recorded:

"The next day, July 10, 1875, marked the end. It was in the evening. It was milking time, and Martin Harris, Jr., and his wife, Nancy Homer Harris, had gone out to milk and to do the evening's chores. In the house with the stricken man were left my mother, Eliza Williamson Homer, and myself, who had had so interesting a day with Martin Harris at Kirtland. I stood by the bedside holding the patient's right hand and my mother at the foot of the bed, Martin Harris had been unconscious for a number of days. When we first entered the room the old gentleman appeared to be sleeping. He soon woke up and asked for a drink of water. I put my arm under the old gentleman, raised him, and my mother held the glass to his lips. He drank freely, then he looked up at me and recognized me. He said, 'I know you. You are my friend.' He said, 'Yes, I did see the plates on which the Book of Mormon was written; I did see the angel; I did hear the voice of God; and I do know that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, holding the keys of the Holy Priesthood.' This was the end. Martin Harris, divinely-chosen witness of the work of God, relaxed, gave up my hand. He lay back on his pillow and just as the sun went down behind the Clarkston mountains, the soul of Martin Harris passed on. ...

(Signed) William Harrison Homer.

"Signed in the presence of Mrs. W. H. Homer, Joseph Homer, Leah Widtsoe, John A. Widtsoe." (In *New Witness for Christ*, 1:253–54.)