

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 14

The standard opening address (v. 1-6) is followed with a more detailed and personalized address to David Whitmer (v. 7-11). The main point of the second section is the Lord "must bring forth the fulness of [His] gospel" to both Gentile and Israel alike (v. 10). If David receives a spiritual witness (v. 8) and assists in doing this work, then he will be greatly blessed (v. 11).

1 A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men. 2 Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word. 3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God. 4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God. 5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you. 6 Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things.

v1-6 The standard opening seen in D&C 11, 12. That this opening is delivered to a number of people indicates it can be applied to a broad audience.

7 And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God. 8 And it shall come to pass, that if you shall ask the Father in my name, in faith believing, you shall receive the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance, that you may stand as a witness of the things of which you shall both hear and see, and also that you may declare repentance unto this generation. 9 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who created the heavens and the earth, a light which cannot be hid in darkness; 10 Wherefore, I must bring forth the fulness of my gospel from the Gentiles unto the house of Israel. 11 And behold, thou art David, and thou art called to assist; which thing if ye do, and are faithful, ye shall be blessed both spiritually and temporally, and great shall be your reward. Amen.

v7-11 If David keeps the commandments he will be greatly blessed (v. 7, 11). His commandments are that he needs to receive the Holy Ghost that he may be a witness and declare repentance (v. 8), and he is to preach the gospel to all nations (v. 9-10).

Note David's brothers, John and Peter (cf. D&C 15, 16), are immediately called to preach repentance where David is

admonished to first obtain a spiritual witness.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 14

The first excerpt is a historical commentary that gives general overview of the events that led to Joseph's coming into contact with the Whitmer family, as well as a quotation of David Whitmer regarding Joseph's character. The second is Joseph's account of the events, the third presents two sets of comments by David Whitmer, and the fourth is Lucy Mack Smith's recounting of those events.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833 on page 32-33, then in the Doctrine & Covenants in 1835 on pages 169-170. It was published the Times & Seasons, volume 3, number 20, page 885, dated August 15, 1842. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 3, number 10, page 163, dated February 1843.

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Most of the Book of Mormon was translated between April and June 1829 in Harmony, Pennsylvania. As the work of translation continued, meager financial conditions and local animosity prompted Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to find assistance in finishing the work. The Prophet and Oliver, both of whom had become acquainted with the Whitmer family in Fayette, New York, decided to ask the Whitmers for help. (The Whitmers knew of the translation: before going to Pennsylvania, Oliver had conversed with David Whitmer about the ancient record and, after arriving in Harmony, had sent the Whitmers a small transcript of the translation.) Oliver Cowdery wrote, explaining the situation in Harmony and asking if they could live with the Whitmer family while completing the translation. In response David Whitmer traveled the 135 miles to Harmony to help with the move. The party left for Fayette about 1 June. Section 14 was received in Fayette shortly after their arrival.

David Whitmer later said of Joseph Smith and the translation;

He was a religious and straight forward man. He had to be, for he was illiterate and he could do nothing himself. He had to trust in God. He could not translate unless he was humble and possessed the right feelings toward everyone. To illustrate so you can see: One morning when he was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house

and he was put out about it. Something that Emma his wife, had done. Oliver and I went up stairs and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation, but he could not do anything. He could not translate a single syllable. He went down stairs, out into the orchard, and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, and asked Emma's forgiveness and then came up stairs where we were, and then the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful. [David Whitmer, The Saint's Herald, March 1, 1882]

(Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 24)

Excerpt from History of the Church

Shortly after commencing to translate, I became acquainted with Mr. Peter Whitmer, of Fayette, Seneca county, New York, and also with some of his family. In the beginning of the month of June, his son, David Whitmer, came to the place where we were residing, and brought with him a two-horse wagon, for the purpose of having us accompany him to his father's place, and there remain until we should finish the work. It was arranged that we should have our board free of charge, and the assistance of one of his brothers to write for me, and also his own assistance when convenient. Having much need of such timely aid in an undertaking so arduous, and being informed that the people in the neighborhood of the Whitmers were anxiously awaiting the opportunity to inquire into these things, we accepted the invitation, and accompanied Mr. Whitmer to his father's house, and there resided until the translation was finished and the copyright secured. Upon our arrival, we found Mr. Whitmer's family very anxious concerning the work, and very friendly toward ourselves. They continued so, boarded and lodged us according to arrangements; and John Whitmer, in particular, assisted us very much in writing during the remainder of the work.

In the meantime, David, John and Peter Whitmer, Jun., became our zealous friends and assistants in the work; and being anxious to know their respective duties, and having desired with much earnestness that I should inquire of the Lord concerning them, I did so, through the means of the Urim and Thummim, and obtained for them in succession the following revelations:

[text of D&C 14 follows]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, pages 48-49)

Excerpt from Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration

After thinking over the matter for a long time [the story of Joseph Smith securing the golden plates that he had heard from people in the area of Palmyra], and talking with [Oliver] Cowdery, who also gave me a history of the finding of the plates, I [David Whitmer] went home; and after several months, Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where Joseph Smith had gone with the plates on account of the persecutions of the neighbors, ... [to] see him [Joseph Smith] about the matter. He did go, and on the way stopped at my father's house and told me that as soon as he found out anything, either truth or untruth, he would let me know. After he got there he became acquainted with Joseph Smith, and shortly after, wrote to me telling me that ... Joseph had told him his [Oliver's] secret thoughts, and all he had meditated about going to see him, which no man on earth knew, as he supposed, but himself ... [He also told me that] he was convinced that Smith had the records, and that he [Joseph Smith] had told him that it was the will of heaven that he [Oliver Cowdery] should be his scribe to assist in the translation of the plates. He went on and Joseph translated from the plates and he wrote it down. Shortly after this, Cowdery wrote me another letter, in which he gave me a few lines of what they translated, and he assured me that he knew of a certainty that he had a record of a people that inhabited this continent, and that the plates they were translating gave a complete history of these people. When Cowdery wrote me these things and told me that he had revealed knowledge concerning the truth of them, I showed these letters to my parents and my brothers and sisters. Soon after I received another letter from Cowdery, telling me to come down into Pennsylvania, and bring him and Joseph to my father's house, giving as a reason therefore that they had received a commandment from God to that effect....

I did not know what to do, I was pressed with my work. I had some twenty acres to plow, so I concluded I would finish plowing and then go. I got up one morning to go to work as usual, and on going to the field, found between five and seven acres of my ground had been plowed during the night.

I don't know who did it; but it was done just as I would have done it myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow.

This enabled me to start sooner. When I arrived at Harmony,

Joseph and Oliver were coming toward me, and met me some distance from the house. Oliver told me that Joseph had informed him when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night, etc., and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me; all of which was exactly as Joseph had told Oliver, at which I was greatly astonished....

The next day after I got there they packed up the plates, and we proceeded on our journey to my father's house....

When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old fashioned wooden spring seat and Joseph behind us; while traveling along in a clear open place, a very pleasant, nice-looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, "good morning, it is very warm," at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, "No, I am going to Cumorah." This name was something new to me, I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked around enquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.... He [the stranger] was about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches tall and heavy set.... He was dressed in a suit of brown woolen clothes, his hair and beard were white. I also remember that he had on his back sort of a knapsack with something, shaped like a book. It was the messenger who had the plates, who had taken them from Joseph just prior to our starting from Harmony....

Joseph ... said that ... he had the plates of the Book of Mormon in the knapsack. [footnote: This is a harmony of different interviews with David Whitmer, one by an editor of the Kansas City Journal and the other by a Latter-day Saint. See Kansas City Journal, June 5, 1881, cited in M&S 43 (July 4, 1881):422-423 and MS 40 (December 9, 1878):772. See also Journal of Edward Stevenson, February 9, 1886, pp. 32-37, Church Archives and Lucy Smith, Biographical Sketches, pp. 136-37.]

Soon after our [Joseph, Oliver, and David] arrival home [in Fayette], I [David Whitmer] saw something which led me to the belief that the plates were placed or concealed in my father's barn. I frankly asked Joseph if my supposition was right, and he told me it was. Sometime after this, my mother was going to milk the cows, when she was met out near the yard by the same old man (judging by her description of him) who said to her: "You have

been very faithful and diligent in your labors, but you are tired because of the increase of your toil; it is proper therefore that you should receive a witness that your faith may be strengthened." There upon he showed her the plates. My father and mother had a large family of their own, the addition to it therefore of Joseph, his wife Emma and Oliver very greatly increased the toil and anxiety of my mother. And although she had never complained she had sometimes felt that her labor was too much, or at least she was perhaps beginning to feel so. This circumstance, however, completely removed all such feelings and nerved her up for her increased responsibilities. [M&S 40 (May 2, 1878):772-773] (Milton V. Backman, Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration, pages 119-121)

Excerpt from History of Joseph Smith by his Mother

We will now return to Pennsylvania where we left Joseph and Oliver busily engaged in translating the Record.

After Samuel left them, they still continued the work as before, until about the time of the proceedings that took place in Lyons, New York. Near this time, as Joseph was translating by means of the Urim and Thummim, he received instead of the words of the Book, a commandment to write a letter to a man by the name of David Whitmer, who lived in Waterloo, requesting him to come immediately with his team, and convey himself and Oliver to his own residence, as an evil-designing people were seeking to take away his (Joseph's) life, in order to prevent the work of God from going forth to the world. The letter was written and delivered, and was shown by Mr. Whitmer to his father, mother, brothers, and sisters, and their advice was asked in regard to the best course for him to take in relation to the matter.

His father reminded him that he had as much wheat sown upon the ground as he could harrow in two days, at least; besides this, he had a quantity of plaster of paris to spread, which must be done immediately, consequently he could not go, unless he could get a witness from God that it was absolutely necessary.

This suggestion pleased David, and he asked the Lord for a testimony concerning his going for Joseph, and was told by the voice of the Spirit to go as soon as his wheat was harrowed in. The next morning, David went to the field, and found that he had two heavy days' work before him. He then said to himself that, if he should be enabled, by any means, to do this work sooner than the same had ever been done on the farm before, he would receive it as an evidence, that it was the will of God, that he

should do all in his power to assist Joseph Smith in the work in which he was engaged. He then fastened his horses to the harrow, and instead of dividing the field into what is, by farmers, usually termed lands, drove around the whole of it, continuing thus till noon, when, on stopping for dinner, he looked around, and discovered to his surprise, that he had harrowed in full half the wheat. After dinner he went on as before, and by evening he finished the whole two days' work.

His father, on going into the field the same evening, saw what had been done, and he exclaimed, "There must be an overruling hand in this, and I think you would better go down to Pennsylvania as soon as your plaster of paris is sown."

The next morning, David took a wooden measure under his arm and went out to sow the plaster, which he had left, two days previous, in heaps near his sister's house, but, on coming to the place, he discovered that it was gone! He then ran to his sister, and inquired of her if she knew what had become of it. Being surprised she said, "Why do you ask me? was it not all sown yesterday?"

"Not to my knowledge," answered David.

"I am astonished at that," replied his sister, "for the children came to me in the forenoon, and begged of me to go out and see the men sow plaster in the field, saying, that they never saw anybody sow plaster so fast in their lives. I accordingly went, and saw three men at work in the field, as the children said, but, supposing that you had hired some help, on account of your hurry, I went immediately into the house, and gave the subject no further attention."

David made considerable inquiry in regard to the matter, both among his relatives and neighbors, but was not able to learn who had done it. However, the family were convinced that there was an exertion of supernatural power connected with this strange occurrence.

David immediately set out for Pennsylvania, and arrived there in two days, without injuring his horses in the least, though the distance was one hundred and thirty-five miles. When he arrived, he was under the necessity of introducing himself to Joseph, as this was the first time that they had ever met.

I will observe, that the only acquaintance which existed between the Smith and Whitmer families, was that formed by Mr. Smith and myself, when on our way from Manchester to Pennsylvania to visit Joseph, at which time we stopped with David over night and gave him a brief history of the Record.

When Joseph commenced making preparations for the journey, he inquired of the Lord to know in what manner he should carry

the plates. The answer was, that he should commit them into the hands of an angel, for safety, and after arriving at Mr. Whitmer's the angel would meet him in the garden and deliver them up again into his hands.

Joseph and Oliver set out without delay, leaving Emma to take charge of affairs during her husband's absence. On arriving at Waterloo, Joseph received the Record according to promise. The next day, he and Oliver resumed the work of translation, which they continued without further interruption until the whole work was accomplished. (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by his Mother, pages 147-150)

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