

# AN ADDRESS

To Believers in the Book of Mormon.

---

BY DAVID WHITMER

---

# AN ADDRESS

## To Believers in the Book of Mormon.

BY DAVID WHITMER

DEAR BRETHREN:

I have concluded not to request the *Saints' Herald* to publish my epistle, as I will not enter into a newspaper controversy. Believing that all the brethren who are rid of prejudice, and desire the truth only as Christ has given it to us in the two sacred books, will write for my pamphlet, which will be sent to them free of charge. I thank the *Herald* for publishing the letters of Bro. John C. Whitmer and myself. I desire to say a few words concerning some points wherein I have been misunderstood in my letter in the *Saints' Herald* of February 5, 1887. I thought I had written very plainly, but I see some of my meanings have been misconstrued. I think it best to answer these things in this circular, outside of the pamphlet, for several reasons. I make no replies to any individual in the pamphlet, but begin at the first and make a plain, simple statement of the truth. In reply to the editorial, "*Weighed in the Balance*," recently printed in the *Saints' Herald*, I make the following brief statements, not to strive for the mastery, but for the sake of the honest in heart, so that they can see and understand the truth:

You say: "*Now, if David Whitmer's statements are to be taken, then the testimony of Oliver Cowdery (and John Whitmer) must be set aside; and if it was false in one regard, does it not throw suspicion upon what he may have stated in others, the Book of Mormon included?*" I will not say what I think of your construction upon my statements in this regard. I will now make this subject so plain that you cannot help but understand me, if you did not before. I did not say that Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had not endorsed the Doctrine and Covenants in 1836. They did endorse it in 1836; I stated that they "*came out of their errors* (discarded the Doctrine and Covenants), *repented of them, and died believing as I do to-day*," and I have the proof to verify my statement. If any one chooses to doubt my word, let them come to my home in Richmond and be satisfied. In the winter of 1848, after Oliver Cowdery had been baptized at Council Bluffs, he came back to Richmond to live, and lived here until his death, March 3, 1850. John Whitmer, when he left the Latter Day Saints in 1838, owned some land at Far West, Mo. (adjoining this county), and lived upon it from 1839 until his death at Far West, July 11, 1878. He came to Richmond very often. Now, in 1849 the Lord saw fit to manifest unto John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself nearly all the remaining errors in doctrine into which we had been led by the heads of the old church. We were shown that the Book of Doctrine and Covenants contained many doctrines of error, and that it must be laid aside; also that when

God's own due time came for building up the waste places of Zion, that the Church of Christ must be established upon the teachings of Christ in the two sacred books. Now I hope you understand me on this point. There is no disagreement between my testimony and the testimony of these brethren. They were led out of their errors, and are upon record to this effect, rejecting the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. John Whitmer was clerk of the Church of Christ, built upon the Book of Mormon and Bible alone. I made this matter sufficiently plain in my former letter, and I cannot exactly see how you have put the construction upon my statements that you have.

The next point where you have misunderstood my meaning is this: I did not say and did not mean that "*all others who may have held the authority during the establishing of the church at its organization, and prior to his (my) being so called out had forfeited their authority, and he (I) alone retained it.*" You misunderstand me altogether. I said "*I was called out to hold the authority*"—the authority that God gave to me. Others had the authority. I was not judging as to whose authority was good or whose authority was not good. I am not judging as to the authority of any man now in the Church of Latter-Day Saints, as I have told you in years past, you doubtless have authority to act in your church. But the Lord has made it known to me that the CHURCH OF CHRIST is another church, and that no man has authority to officiate in the ordinances thereof, without coming into it according to the gospel of Christ. You say, "*He (I) then and there laid down and voluntarily surrendered his (my) authority by so withdrawing.*" If this be the case, then the three Nephites lost their authority by withdrawing from the church which had gone into error and blindness. Likewise Nephi, whom God commanded to withdraw from his brethren because of their wickedness. But we see their authority was still good, although they were commanded to come out and be separated from among their brethren who were in transgression. I withdrew from "THE CHURCH OF LATTER DAY SAINTS;" I have been worshiping God in the CHURCH OF CHRIST ever since. I objected when they changed the name of the church, and always did hold to the name which Christ gave us in 1829—THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The next matter I desire to notice is this: The reason why I quoted from that letter, written by the heads of the church while in Liberty Jail, was to show that the heads of the church had gone into error; if the heads of the church had not gone into error I would not have been called out from among them, but would have been commanded to continue to work with them. This is the reason why I quoted from that letter, and the reason why I mentioned that matter at all. It was necessary.

I did not say that the *whole* church had gone deep into error and blindness; I said many of them—the majority—and it so proved, because, in a few years afterwards, the great majority of them went from Nauvoo to Salt Lake, believing in the doctrine of polygamy. Only a very few of those in Nauvoo rejected the doctrine of polygamy.

You say that I, "*in order to make an argument, assume what is not claimed for section 17 in the Doctrine and Covenants by the book itself, that it is a revelation in its entirety.*" I said it was a revelation—that it is in the Book of Commandments as a revelation; and that paragraphs 16 and 17 are added to it in the Doctrine and Covenants. I repeat that it is a revelation, and will prove it to you. You did not quote all the heading over this revelation as it is in the Book of Commandments; and your book must be the same for there was only one edition printed. I will quote it all; "*The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ, given in Fayette, New York, June, 1830.*" So you see it is a revelation, given in Fayette, N. Y., June 1830. I was present when Brother Joseph gave this revelation; and I know that paragraphs 16 and 17 were added to it, after the High Priests were introduced, to give their

duties and the duties of other officers, that the church never knew or thought of until almost two years after its beginning. What difference does it make whether the Doctrine and Covenants claim it as a revelation in its entirety or not? It is a revelation; and those two paragraphs have been added, having been thrust into the middle part of it. Then why should the *Herald* accuse me of *assuming* so and so "*in order to make an argument*"?

I was present when Brother Joseph gave nearly every revelation that is in the Book of Commandments, besides many other revelations that were never printed, and I knew everything that was in them, and when I tell you that I know they were changed and added to, I know what I am saying. One of the most important changes is in the very revelation that was given to myself and Brother Oliver, to search out the Twelve. This is the one about relying upon the Book of Mormon alone in building up the Church. Many, many times have I read and studied it, and I tell you I know that those seven words were added to it, reversing the meaning entirely. I was present when your father gave this revelation. What Oliver Cowdery, F. G. Williams, and W. W. Phelps have written in the *Messenger and Advocate*, and other publications, does not conflict with my testimony that these revelations were changed. They admit in their quotations which you have published, that the revelations have been added to; that a few items have been added from other revelations, etc. But you have made it appear as if they have testified that no changes were made.

The errors that these men refer to are "*typographical and other errors.*" Now do you suppose that the type-setters in the printing office made the error, and added to that revelation concerning Brother Joseph's gift, adding twenty-two words to one paragraph, leaving room for Brother Joseph to take upon himself the gift of seer to the church when God commanded him to pretend to no other gift, for He would grant him no other gift, except to translate the Book of Mormon? And do you suppose those other changes are typographical errors? Of course you must know that the important changes and additions to these revelations did not happen by any errors or mistakes—typographical, transcribing manuscript, or any other kind of mistakes. How can you help but see and understand that these revelations were wilfully changed and added to? You have the Book of Commandments before you. There is only one hundred and sixty pages in it. You have it all. You must remember that the *Herald* of December 25, 1886 has already admitted that these revelations were changed, claiming that—"*God had the same right to authorize his appointed Seer to add to any of the revelations certain words and facts, that he has to give him any revelations at all.*" Now, I think it would have been better for you not to have made any reply whatever upon the subject of the revelations being changed. Those who are spiritually blinded enough to believe that God authorized those changes spoken of in my letter, may have the right to believe that God works in that manner, but I will not believe it, and thousands of others will never believe it. When God gave his word, saying he would grant Brother Joseph no other gift but to translate the Book, he meant what he said. Brother Joseph giving the revelations of 1829 through the same stone through which the Book was translated, was the same gift. He then gave up the stone forever, and told me and the rest of us that he was through what the Lord had given him the gift to do. In the pamphlet I explain how it was that Brother Joseph afterwards took upon himself the great gift of leader of the church, and a Seer, without the seer stone. The Lord had reference in this matter to a great gift, and not the ordinary gifts of the Spirit. The Lord also meant what he said in those other revelations which were changed by man.

Since writing this article, I see in the *Saint's Herald* of March 12th, 1887, that you

now claim only one reason for these changes and additions to the revelations; and that is, that they happened by mistake in transcribing manuscript, or copying. Are you sure you realize what you are claiming? Is it possible that any one can believe that those changes could have happened by a mistake in copying before the Book of Commandments was printed? In the revelation to rely upon the Book of Mormon in building up the church, there are seven words added in one paragraph which changes the original meaning entirely; In the one concerning Brother Joseph's gift, twenty-two words are added in one paragraph, which reverse the original meaning entirely. In the one which gives the duties of High Priests, etc., eighty-seven words are added. In other revelations there are also words added, all of which shows too plainly on the face of it, that these changes were wilfully made to cover up errors into which they had drifted. I made it plain in my letter that God would not work in that manner, authorizing any one to add words or facts to revelations, changing and reversing the original meaning, so you have abandoned that idea; and now you have resorted to the idea and claim that they happened by mistake before the Book of Commandments was printed. I am sorry that there are any among you who are so blinded and prejudiced, in their attempts to cover up the error of those who have introduced doctrines which are not in the written word, that they will believe these changes happened by a mistake in copying, before the Book of Commandments was printed. Those who make this claim, have to believe as follows: that those seven words, those twenty-two words, and those eighty-seven words were in the revelations when God first gave them, and were accidentally overlooked and left out by those brethren who copied off the revelations to have the Book of Commandments printed from. Do you not know that this would have been utterly impossible? Brethren, it is ridiculous for any one to attempt such a claim as this, as an excuse for the important changes and additions to these revelations. The facts are too plain. I will add no more. I have thus spoken plainly, but in the spirit of meekness, so that all the honest in heart may understand and be led out of error, into the truth as it is in Christ.

The word "*it*" in my quotation in the *Herald* means the same as the word "*them*"; it refers to the Book of Mormon; the word "*them*" was used to refer to the plates—being the same thing.

I stated in my letter that I was in Hiram, Ohio, when Brother Joseph and those brethren arranged the revelations for the Book of Commandments. I want to say again that I was there, and I am an eye witness to what I have formerly stated. When you read the pamphlet, you will know more concerning this matter, and I think you will be satisfied on this point. You say I make a number of mistakes here, for the history of the church, written in September, 1844, says that W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were the persons who arranged these revelations. I say positively that I remember these things as if it was yesterday, and know positively that W. W. Phelps was then in Independence, attending to the printing office, and so was Oliver Cowdery. My Brother John was then in Hiram, Ohio, but he was not one of the committee who arranged those revelations. Brother Joseph had Brother John to wait there for some time, until he (Joseph), Sydney Rigdon, Orson Hyde and others got those revelations ready to send to Independence to be printed. They had Brother John take them on horseback to Independence. In the pamphlet I tell you of something that occurred in Hiram, Ohio, at that time, when I told Brother Joseph and Sydney Rigdon that those revelations should never be printed in a book; that it was against the will of the Lord to do it. When you read it, you will be satisfied. The "church history," as you call it—an article written to the church papers in Nauvoo, in September, 1844, a few years before nearly all those in Nauvoo went to

Salt Lake—is not correct. Do you not know that many, many errors in facts and dates are in articles written to the old church papers? I know it.

Now, I want to tell you where you have made another mistake, and the records which I have, and several men whom I know now living who are eye-witnesses to the fact, as well as myself, being an eye-witness, will bear me out in this. You say the Book of Commandments was never printed complete. I say it was printed complete (and copyrighted). It was printed complete, and many copies distributed among the members of the church, before the printing press owned by the church was destroyed. Brother Joseph and the brethren received it at first as being printed correctly; but they soon decided to print the Doctrine and Covenants. I have a copy of it which was printed complete. Brother Jacob Whitmer gave his copy to Brother John C. Whitmer, his son, who now has it, and upon the title page of which is this in large letters: "A BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO LAW ON THE 6TH OF APRIL, 1830. ZION. PUBLISHED BY W. W. PHELPS & CO., 1833." These books were finished complete, and bound in paper covers. I tell you I was in Jackson County at the time, and know what I am saying. I am an eye-witness to these facts, and there are other witnesses yet living. I received my Book of Commandments, complete, before the press was destroyed by the mob, as did many other brethren. The main reason why the press was destroyed was because this book was printed and got into the hands of the world. The people saw in the revelations that they were intruders upon the land of Zion, as I will show in the pamphlet.

It displeased the Lord when they printed those revelations in a book. I will prove this later on to your entire satisfaction from what is in the revelations themselves. I objected from the first to having those revelations printed.

Again you misconstrue my meaning in this. I did not say or mean that the *Saints' Herald* was striving to defend the church as it is to-day in Utah. I said that the people—the church—which the *Herald* was striving to defend, was the people who afterward went to Salt Lake; that these were the people who had gone deep into error and blindness in 1838; that you were striving to defend the actions of these people who, in 1838, pretended to cut me off from the church. Is this not true? Again, I did not say that the Reorganization was organized by new converts. I said it was "*built up principally of members—not of the old church, but new converts.*" Of course I understand it was organized by those of the old church, who rejected the doctrine of polygamy. You misconstrue my meaning also, when you say I ask people to put their trust in me. I did not say this, or imply it, as all my writing is against the sin of putting trust in an arm of flesh—in any man. Here are my words: "*May God help you to look to Him, and not to any man (myself included) for the truth as it is in Christ. Rely upon the teachings of Christ in the New Testament and Book of Mormon, which come forth to us to settle all disputations about doctrine, then you can not be led into error by any man.*" Is this asking people to put their trust in me? I refer them to God, in humble prayer, and to the two sacred books of God, which contain all the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only leader and head of the church, according to all the teachings which He has ever given us. When you read the pamphlet, you will not think any longer that I have a desire to lead, or any desire whatever to become conspicuous or great. God, in whom I trust, knows my heart and my motives, and all that man can say about it matters very little to me. I am old, and because I have a brother do my writing for me at my dictation, the *Herald* has accused me of being led by others, saying of the work that I am doing, that they are "*pained to find him (me) in any way compromised with others, in such unchristian,*



wretched work." Let God and the honest in heart judge, as to whether or not I am engaged with others in an unchristian, wretched work. Being reviled, I will not return it; being persecuted, I will suffer it. I will say to the brethren that I am being led by none but Christ.

As to my being "so enfeebled in nerve-force that I can scarcely sign my name legibly," I will say that though I am now past eighty-two years of age, I am in good mental and bodily health for one of my years. I had the misfortune, over forty years ago, to lose the thumb on my right hand, and since that time I have not been a very good writer.

I regret that the editors of the *Herald* have resorted to this and other questionable means to cry me down, but TRUTH will stand, even if contended for by an aged man soon to meet his God; for God is the author of truth.

You have left out the date as to when those things were written about John Whitmer, W. W. Phelps and myself to the *Millennial Star*. I will venture to say that they were written to that paper by some one in Nauvoo, just prior to the exodus to Salt Lake. The idea of Brother John, W. W. Phelps, and myself trying to palm ourselves off as Presidents of the Church after we had been cut off. I made this inatter sufficiently plain in my statements in the letter to the *Herald* of Feb. 5, 1887, and those who desire to doubt my word may have the right and privilege to do so. There is no use of repeating it here. In regard to writing letters to Kirtland, Ohio, and to the High Council, I repeat what I have formerly stated. Suppose that I had signed the letter with Brother John and Brother Phelps that you publish, is there anything insulting to the High Council in it? If that letter was written by Brother John or Brother Phelps, one of them may have signed my name to it. Brethren, I will tell you this: Beginning in 1835 grievous errors and abominations were practiced by some persons in the church. I have told you, but a small portion of what I know of my own personal knowledge. I have read some things written from Nauvoo in the church papers and other records which I know are not true. There were some things published after Brother Joseph's death, claiming to have been written by him, which I do not believe Brother Joseph wrote; and I have told the Elders of the Reorganization so, when they have been here to see me in years past. I will not mention the items, as I do not want to multiply words. I hope this circular and the pamphlet will be the last testimony that I will be obliged to send forth in the cause of truth.

Again, you say, "*Elder Whitmer, in defense of his statement, etc., \* \* \* \* says a majority signifies nothing. He should read the Book of Mormon, to which he calls our attention as being the sole standard in the doctrine and organization of the church, more closely before he goes too far.*"

It grieves me to see that the editors of the *Herald* are so blind in understanding the Word of God. Of course you know that I was speaking of a majority in the church, and in all your references to the Book of Mormon, it is speaking of a majority of the people of the nation. The vote of the people of the nation is a very different thing from the vote of the people of the church. Why could you not see this? I will give you the passage you refer me to in your editorial, and let the brethren judge. Anyone can see that it refers to the voice of the people, and not the voice of the church (Alma 1: 7), "*For they knew, that according to their law, that such things (voting for a man to occupy a public office outside the church) must be established by the voice of the people; therefore, if it were possible that Amlici should gain the voice of the people, he, being a wicked man, would deprive them (the church) of their rights and privileges of the church, etc., for it was his intent to destroy the Church of God.*" There is as much difference between the two questions, as there is between the State of Missouri voting

for a governor, and the Latter Day Saints voting in a church assembly upon a church question.

See also the two other references which you give (Alma ii : 5, and Mosiah xiii : 3). All of them refer to the voice of the people of the nation, and not the voice of the church, which is a very different matter. Which was right, Abinidi, or the whole church that was against him? Mormon, or the whole church that was against him? The small church that numbered eight souls in the days of Noah, or the whole world?

I want to say this to the meek and the humble; and, brethren, remember it! oh, remember it! Of course the editors of the *Herald* may be conscientious, but in their blindness, by their wisdom and learning and many words, they are perverting the truth. I will give you a plain example of it. They have written several columns to prove that Brother Joseph was not persuaded by men; but God says in plain words that *he was* persuaded by men. Now you can choose for yourselves and believe God or the editors of the *Herald*, just as you like. The very time when Brother Joseph should have been strongest, while he was translating, God said to him these words: "*Behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men.*" (Sec. 2:3). But the editors of the *Herald* will not take God's word for it. This is an example of the way they are perverting the truth in their blindness, by their learning and many words. I say I know that Brother Joseph was persuaded and led by Sydney Rigdon for some time. Rigdon became Brother Joseph's most intimate friend and brother after he came into the church, but this close friendship did not last. What you have written to prove that Brother Joseph was not persuaded by Sydney Rigdon, does not prove anything, for Brother Joseph was persuaded and influenced by him during their first and intimate acquaintance in Ohio, at which time many errors were introduced into the Church of Christ through the direct influence of Sydney Rigdon. If you prefer to be blinded by the *Herald* in this matter, when God says that Brother Joseph was persuaded by men, I cannot help it. I have performed my duty in trying to show you the errors in doctrine which you are in.

I pray to God continually that the brethren will look to Him only, and to His word, and not to any man for the truth as Christ has given it to us. We have the promise that the Holy Ghost will guide us into all truth. Be sure you have the Holy Ghost. If you have any doubt about having it, seek God in fasting and prayer until you know you have the Spirit of God. When a man has the Holy Spirit in his heart, he has all *prejudice, malice, hatred* (towards any one, even an enemy) cast out of his heart; and his heart is filled with the unbounded love of God, which reaches out and takes in all men. Remember the words of Christ, "*Love your enemies,*" "*For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?*" From a few of the letters I have lately received, I can see that some of the Latter Day Saints count me as their enemy, because I have told them the truth in order to bring them out of believing some doctrines which Christ never taught, so that they may be established upon the two sacred books, and receive much more of the Spirit of God than they now have. I thank my heavenly Father that I can love even those who have written me abusive letters. I pray for them, that they may in time find out their error and repent. I stated in my letter that I loved Brother Joseph and his father. I see from Brother Joseph's article, "*Weighed in the Balance,*" that he doubts this. I cannot help it. God knows it is true. Brother Joseph may not be able to understand how it is that I love his father and himself. All those who have the love of God — charity — as they should have, can understand how it is, and all such persons will believe me; but others will not, for they cannot know and understand the things of God. I know it



is not natural, but the natural man cannot understand some things of the Spirit of God. They are spiritually discerned.

You call me an apostate, and say that an evil spirit has led me to preach repentance and reformation to you before I go down to the grave. In this manner was Abinadi sent alone of God to preach to the church, when they had all gone into error. But his brethren were in blindness, and the great majority of them rejected the words of Abinadi, telling him he was of an evil spirit. But the Lord in time brought destruction upon the church for rejecting the words of Abinadi. King Noah had been annointed by his father, who was in authority ; he had many priests around him who thought certain they were not in error, and needed no repentance ; they believed they were the only true and accepted people of God. Why was it they could not see and understand ? Because they were in spiritual blindness. I want to ask you who is an apostate from the faith, he who stands for the doctrine as Christ taught it to the "twelve" at Jerusalem, and the "twelve" upon this land, or he who teaches more or less and establishes it for his doctrine ?

May the Lord be with you to guide you into the truth, is my prayer, through the name of Christ. Amen.

DAVID WHITMER.

Richmond, Mo., April 1, 1887.