

rance. How dangerous for people in their ignorance to obey the Gospel! Yet shall we say that they shall not obey it, because they are very ignorant? No. Let them step forth with all their hearts and obey the Gospel, that they may be put in possession of the Holy Ghost; then if they will seek to cultivate their minds, cherishing that Spirit in their hearts and developing every principle of righteousness, and doing away every iniquitous practice, they shall receive more and more of the Holy Spirit, with its gifts. So in regard to these heavenly manifestations.

In the year 1829, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris were chosen as witnesses to behold the angel of God; to behold the plates in the hands of the angel; to gaze upon the ancient engravings, and to hear the voice of the Lord, at the same time, proclaiming to them, that the plates had been translated correctly, and commanding them to bear record of the same to all peoples, nations and tongues, to whom the work should be sent.

Now this was truly a great manifestation. But who was Oliver Cowdery? Who was David Whitmer? Who was Martin Harris? Poor, weak, frail men; two of them quite young, one of middle age. They had but very little experience; they knew nothing about the arrangement of the organization of the Priesthood, as we now know; they had no Teachers to visit them from week to week. Yet in the midst of all this ignorance, what a glorious manifestation they received from heaven! They lacked experience; they had not been prepared as Joseph was. He was prepared by a series of years of experience, in beholding visions and angels.

In the year 1823, the angel first came to him, telling him about the

plates, also telling him that he would return one year afterwards, when he would give him further instruction. Why this delay? Why not commit to his charge the plates at once? It was because of his want of experience. It is true, he had previously received a heavenly vision some four years before, in which he had seen the face of God, the Father. But he lacked all other qualifications; he was left more or less to himself, and the angel was determined to impart to him experience, year after year, for the space of four years; during which, whenever Joseph needed chastisement he received it at the appointed time; his failings were corrected; he was shown wherever he had erred; and he was taught what to do: he was instructed little by little, until he learned, by practice, to do the will of God. Then the sacred records were committed to him; but not so with the three witnesses referred to, and hence they kept not the holy commandments as they ought to have done. They had too much knowledge for their limited experience. You recollect what the Lord has said upon this subject—Where much is given, much is required; and where but little is given, but little is required. Much was given to these three witnesses, and much was required at their hands. Hence a sin that they might commit would throw them into tenfold more darkness than any man who had never seen so great things. This accounts for their apostasy, not for their denying the truth, for they never did that; they held fast to the truth; they declared that the Book of Mormon was true and never denied their testimony. It is not a matter of mere faith with them; they knew it. But how great is the darkness in them that sin against so much light! The Lord told us,