

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 1

For an opening chapter, D&C 1 is surprisingly negative. It is loaded with judgement themes, allegations of deliberate apostasy, and a general condemnation of the world. The inexorable nature of the Lord's words are emphasized along with issues concerning His power over and in His servants. Given the negative and authoritative summons rather than a congenial invitation, one has to wonder if one of this book's purposes is to seal the fate of the wicked and the rebellious.

Based upon subject alone, I would arrange the text as follows:

Introduction (v. 1-3) Announcing judgement on the rebellious
A - (v. 4-8) The servant's interaction with the world
 B - (v. 9-16) The Day of the Lord, Babylon destroyed
A - (v. 17-23) The servant's interaction with the ecclesia
 B - (v. 24-33) Foundation of the Church
Summary (v. 34-36) Preparation for eschatological division
Conclusion (v. 37-39) Command to search the Lord's words

In these and all my comments on the D&C I use the term "ecclesia" to refer to the body of the believers, the people of faith. I use the term "Church" to refer to the institution governed by the Priesthood. This is done simply for clarity.

1 Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together. 2 For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. 3 And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.

v1-3 These verses summon all the inhabitants of the earth to pay heed to this book because all the inhabitants of the earth will be judged by it's contents. The Lord's concerns and operations are over all of mankind, not just some select fraction.

v1 The summons, "Hearken, O ye people of my church...Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea" indicates that all persons, whether they be in the Church or not, whether they be gathered together or scattered abroad are being addressed. There is no group of earth's inhabitants that is not

summoned, Jews and gentiles, near and far. This is further emphasized in the first line of the v. 2 and the last line of v. 6.

"him who dwells on high", a classic OT authority statement, cp. Isa. 66:1-2, Ps. 50.

v2 This verse employs the imagery of Isa. 6:9-10. In Isa. 6, Isaiah is summoned by the Lord to deliver a message that hardens hearts, closes ears and blinds eyes because they are deliberately ignoring the Lord and His servant. Here however, we have the reversal of this self-imposed rationalization at the bar of Judgement, cf. 2 Ne. 9:14-16, Jacob 6:9, Alma 42:23. The servant condemns the rebellious and the Lord judges them. Using this Isaianic material serves to equate Smith and Isaiah in that they both appear to be called to a similar task.

"voice", cp. v. 38.

"none to escape", emphasizes the universal nature of Judgement.

v3 Those who thought they had beaten their consciences into submission and had hidden their evil deeds away from the light of day will be confronted with them at Judgement. Beyond the personal realization of their sins, all things concerning the history of man will be revealed at the ushering of the Millennium, cf. 2 Ne. 30:16-18, Matt. 10:26.

4 And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days. 5 And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them. 6 Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth. 7 Wherefore, fear and tremble, O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed in them shall be fulfilled. 8 And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious;

v4-8 These verses equate the authority of the Lord's servants with His own authority, and indicates the servants have the power to seal up the rebellious to destruction.

v4 Verse 4 echoes the predictions that the gospel will ultimately be preached to all nations, kindred and tongues.

"whom I have chosen", emphasizes the elect nature of the Lord's servants and clearly indicates who the Lord has put His hand upon.

v5 No earthly force can thwart the Lord's servants, cp. Isa. 54:17. The only thing that can stop them is themselves, i.e. rebellion and personal apostasy.

v6 The Lord indicates that He is reserving the right of authorship for this "book of commandments". His servants are only to publish this book, the Lord claims authorship.

v7 Again, the inexorable nature of the Lord's word, cp. Isa. 55:8-11.

v8 While the servants obviously possess the Lord's authority as indicated by v. 6, here sealing the rebellious up to Judgement has more to do with their rejection of the servants than any ordinance work. You could call the dusting of the feet an ordinance that seals people up to destruction (cf. D&C 24:15), but here the context seems more specifically aimed at rejecting this "book of commandments" and the testimony of the servants, cp. v. 2.

9 Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure-- 10 Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man. 11 Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear: 12 Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh; 13 And the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth. 14 And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people; 15 For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; 16 They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.

v9-16 These verses answer the question "What are the servants sealing the rebellious from v. 8 up for?" They are sealing them up for the Day of the Lord. The servant's interaction with the

world is such that it polarizes the rebellious and the humble. And, those that rebel are ripe for destruction.

The Day of the Lord, or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in NT parlance, is the purging of wickedness from the earth in preparation for the Millennium, cp. Isa. 2:12-17, Isa. 30:27-33, Joel 2, Mal. 3:2, D&C 112:23-26.

v9-10 Verse 9 emphasizes physical destruction and v. 10 emphasizes spiritual damnation. Both are a result of the Day of the Lord.

v9 "the wrath of God", cp. Deut. 32:22-25, Isa. 5:25, Ezek. 21:1-10, 2 Ne. 26:2-6.

v10 Works-based judgement is implied, cp. Matt. 7:15-23. How we treat each other is the core of the Law of Moses and the Beatitudes, cp. Matt. 22:37-39.

v13 This verse is a paraphrase of Isa. 34:5. There, the Lord is saying he will be punishing the wicked in both heaven and earth. That the sword is bathed in heaven means it is cutting through heaven and is landing on earth. In Isa. 34:4 it is plain the sword is doing destruction in heaven and causing part of it to be closed up. The general context on Isa. 34 is the Day of the Lord. The various judgements on the earth at the Second Coming will be paralleled in heaven with the second phase of the First Resurrection and those of the Second Resurrection being booted out of spirit prison into 1000 years of suffering (cp. Rev. 20:1-6, D&C 88:100-101). See my comments on Isa. 34 for additional discussion on this subject.

"bathed" is a poor translation by the KJV on Isa. 34:5. A better translation would be "satiated". The Hebrew term in Isa. 34:5 which is translated to "bathed" in the KJV is:

07301 ravah {raw-vaw'}

a primitive root; TWOT - 2130; v

AV - water 4, make drunk 2, fill 2, satiate 2, bathed 1, satisfied 1, abundantly satisfy 1, soaked 1; 14

1) to be satiated or saturated, have or drink one's fill

1a) (Qal) to take one's fill

1b) (Piel)

1b1) to be drunk, be intoxicated

1b2) to drench, water abundantly, saturate

1c) (Hiphil) to saturate, water, cause to drink

Smith preserved the KJV language to maintain the rhetorical connection to the KJV on Isa 34:5.

v14 The Lord holds people accountable for what He says and what His servants say, cf. Deut. 18:19, John 5:45-47. Those who reject Him and His servants will be punished accordingly.

"the arm of the Lord shall be revealed", this phrase is a Semitism. The imagery is that of a strong man rolling up his sleeve so that his arm, and therefore his muscles, are exposed to view. You get to see his strength firsthand. In this case, the Lord's arm, or power, will be exposed when He exercises His anger on His enemies to their destruction.

"cut off", in other words, "destroyed", cf. Isa. 53:8, Matt. 24:37-42, D&C 63:54.

v15 This verse describes deliberate rebellion. Those who are deliberately rebellious are those who will be cut off. People in genuine ignorance obviously don't fall into this category (e.g., in the New World destruction that attended Christ's death there were non-believers who survived the disasters, cf. 4 Ne. 1:1-2).

v16 As the footnotes in the 1981 edition D&C indicate, this verse is a compound of quotes largely from Isaiah. It effectively serves as a one verse distillation of Isa. 40-47.

17 Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; 18 And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets-- 19 The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh-- 20 But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; 21 That faith also might increase in the earth; 22 That mine everlasting covenant might be established; 23 That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

v17-23 The servant's mission is different for those who are willing to heed the word of the Lord. Here the servant's mission is to warn the ecclesia and to bring those who will listen to repentance.

v17 The Lord's goal is not to destroy everyone, He wants to get them to repent so He sends His servants to warn those who will listen.

v18-19a "And also gave...the mighty and strong ones", this appears to be a parenthesis on historical prophets who predicted latter-day servants. One would assume the "others" referred to in v. 18 were those prophets who preceded Smith based upon the statement at the end of the verse.

v19b-23 This is a laundry list of goals the Lord has for His servants and what He would like the ecclesia to do.

v20 refers to invoking the name of the Lord in covenant making, cf. Isa. 65:1. The Lord wants His people to covenant with Him.

24 Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding. 25 And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known; 26 And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed; 27 And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent; 28 And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time. 29 And after having received the record of the Nephites, yea, even my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., might have power to translate through the mercy of God, by the power of God, the Book of Mormon. 30 And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually-- 31 For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; 32 Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven; 33 And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.

v24-33 The result of the servant's actions in v. 17-23 is the sanctification of the ecclesia and the founding of the Church. Consider Isa. 6:5-8 where Isaiah confesses his unworthiness to be a prophet (i.e., a prophet is the Lord's "mouth" and him saying his lips were "unclean" indicated that he felt he was not suited for the calling because he was a sinner). The result was an angel came to him and placed a hot coal to his lips and pronounced him sanctified. Isaiah then responded that he was able to be a witness for the Lord when He asked for witnesses. Here in this text, we have the Lord indicating that He taught, chastened and

humbled (i.e., sanctified) His servants and the account of it is in the record. The result is they did His bidding in bringing forth the Book of Mormon and establishing the Church. Compare Ether 12:27.

v24 "their weakness...their language", referring to the same thing Moroni lamented over in Ether 12:23-25, see also Mormon 8:17.

v25 That the imperfections of Smith and his contemporaries are revealed in the text exhibits their humanity and the impartial manner in which the Lord deals with them.

In the Genesis stories of the OT all of the early patriarchs had at least one flaw revealed in each of them. This was almost certainly deliberately done in order to draw a distinction between them and the Lord and His Messiah and to discourage any kind of ancestor worship or personality cult from developing based upon a sanitized characterization of the person.

v30-33 "speaking unto the church collectively...saith the Lord of Hosts", a parenthesis unequivocally stating that a corporate benediction does not excuse individuals within the ecclesia from their sins. This indicates there are sinners among the ecclesia and if they do not repent they will be rejected.

v30 This verse indicates this is the only living Church, the only Church with His authority, and the Lord is generally pleased with the ecclesia as a whole.

v33 When people deliberately rebel against the Spirit, it will ultimately abandon them to their destruction, cf. Moroni 9:4. As it is the Spirit that teaches and brings spiritual things to remembrance (cf. John 14:26, 15:26, 16:12-13), when the Spirit leaves so does the knowledge, cf. Alma 12:11.

34 And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth: I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh; 35 For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion. 36 And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world.

v34-36 These three verses distill the message of the preceding text into a sharp dichotomy. The servant has one effect on the world (v. 4-8) which prepared them for destruction. The same

servant has a different effect on those who would listen (v. 17-23), and setting the foundation for Zion as a result. Here we have a very sharp contrast drawn that presents only two camps: the Lord's saints or the worldly, cp. Isa. 65:13-15. The contents of v. 35 forward a blatantly eschatological interpretation, cp. 1 Ne. 14:1-17, 1 Ne. 22:7-28.

v36 "Idumea", also called Edom, representing the wicked world, cf. Isa. 34:5.

37 Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. 38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same. 39 For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen.

v37-39 concludes with a command to "search these commandments". The Lord pronounces them True, endorses their testimony, and states all predictions contained therein will be fulfilled. The Lord states that whether He states it Himself or His servants state it is the same and binding. The Lord presents the Truth as independent and eternal and the Spirit will bear record of it.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 1

The first three excerpts are composed of a quotation of Smith's own comments on the revelation of the contents of D&C 1, a concise commentary on the historical events surrounding the revelation and subsequent attempt to publish the Book of Commandments, then a more verbose commentary.

These are followed by two articles from the Church periodical The Morning and The Evening Star. The first is an article openly addressing subscribers to the periodical, as well as Church members in general, addressing the events that forced an interruption in the publication of that periodical. The second is the text of a letter sent to the Governor of Missouri and his reply to the letter. The letter to the Governor quotes a document published by those unfavorably disposed towards the "Mormons" and recounts the events that resulted in the destruction of the press. When including these articles I have attempted when possible to maintain the format of the text as it appeared in the original print when possible.

Excerpt from History of the Church

"The conference lasted two days. In the afternoon of the first day of the conference, according to the minutes of the meeting, the preface to the Book of Commandments was 'received by inspiration.' The same afternoon, the following occurred: 'Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., said that inasmuch as the Lord had bestowed a great blessing upon us in giving commandments and revelations, he asked the conference what testimony they were willing to attach to these commandments which would shortly be sent to the world. A number of the brethren arose and said that they were willing to testify to the world that they knew that they were of the Lord.'

"In the second day's proceedings of the conference it is recorded: 'The revelation of last evening read by the moderator [this was Oliver Cowdery]. The brethren then arose in turn and bore witness to the truth of the Book of Commandments; after which Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., arose and expressed his feelings and gratitude concerning the commandments and preface received yesterday.'" (Footnote, HC 1:222.)

"I returned from the conference at Orange, to Hiram; and as Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were to start for Independence, Missouri, a special conference was appointed for the first of November, at which I received the following: [Section 1, quoted.]" (Joseph Smith, History of the Church 1:221-22.)

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Hiram [Portage County, Ohio], the city of highest elevation in the Western Reserve, is thirty miles southeast of Kirtland, Ohio. When Joseph Smith received this revelation, he and his family were living in the home of John and Elsa Johnson, members of the Church.

Known as the "Lord's Preface," this revelation was received by Joseph Smith between the first two sessions of a special conference held 1-12 November in Hiram, Ohio. According to the "Far West Record" (1 November 1831), the "Preface [was] received by inspiration." In attendance at the conference were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, William E. McLellan, Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, and Lyman E. Johnson. The conference had been convened to make necessary decisions and arrangements for the printing of the revelations received by Joseph Smith.

In the first of five sessions, "[Oliver Cowdery] made a request desiring the mind of the Lord through this conference of Elders to know how many copies of the Book of Commandments, it was the will of the Lord should be published in the first edition of that work. Voted that there be ten thousand copies struck."

The first printing was halted on 20 July 1833 when a mob in Independence, Missouri, destroyed the printing press along with all but a few unbound sheets of the Book of Commandments. (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, D&C Section 1, page 3)

Excerpt from *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants*

Initially, the Prophet did not record his revelations at the time he received them, but the Lord instructed him in July 1830 to "continue calling upon God in my name, and writing the things which shall be given thee" (D&C 24:5). Joseph immediately began "copying and arranging the revelations received up to that time, evidently with a view to their publication in book form" (D&C, 1921 ed., p. iii). Parley P. Pratt, who was present when several of these divine communications were given, described how the Prophet received them: "Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each, sufficiently long for it to be recorded, by an ordinary writer, in long hand. This was the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written. There was never any hesitation, reviewing, or reading back, in order to keep the run of the subject" (Autobiography, p. 62). William E. McLellan, another close associate, likewise recalled: "I, as scribe, have written revelations from the mouth of [the Prophet]. And I have been present many times when others wrote for Joseph; therefore I speak as one having experience. The scribe seats himself at a desk or table, with pen, ink, and

paper. The subject of enquiry being understood, the Prophet and Revelator enquires of God. He spiritually sees, hears, and feels, and then speaks as he is moved upon by the Holy Ghost, the 'thus saith the Lord,' sentence after sentence, and waits for his amanuenses to write and then read aloud each sentence. Thus they proceed until the revelator says Amen, at the close of what is then communicated. I have known [Joseph], without premeditation, to thus deliver off in broken sentences, some of the most sublime pieces of composition which I ever perused in any book" (Ensign of Liberty, pp 98-99).

Of the revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, some thirty-seven sections, more than one-fourth of the total, were received during 1831 alone. These revelations were copied by hand for the use of the early Saints, but demand for them grew. Therefore, at a conference in November 1831, the Church considered publishing the "Book of Commandments." During that conference the Lord revealed what is now Doctrine and Covenants 1 to be "my preface unto the book of my commandments" (D&C 1:6). An early Latter-day Saint cited Oliver Cowdery's account of what happened on that occasion: "A committee had been appointed to draft a preface, consisting of...O. Cowdery and, I think, Sidney Rigdon, but when they made their report...the Conference then requested Joseph to enquire of the Lord about it, and he said that he would if the people would bow in prayer with him. This they did and Joseph prayed.

"When they arose, Joseph dictated by the Spirit the preface found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants while sitting by a window of the room [John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio] in which the conference was sitting; and Sidney Rigdon wrote it down. Joseph would deliver a few sentences and Sidney would write them down, then read them aloud, and if correct, then Joseph would proceed and deliver more, and by this process the preface was given" (William Kelley, in Saints Herald, 16 Jan. 1882, p. 67). At this point, William E. McLellin voiced some concerns about the wording of the Prophet's revelations. In response, the Lord issued the challenge quoted in Doctrine and Covenants 67:5-8. "After the foregoing was received," Joseph wrote in his history, "William E. McLellin, as the wisest man, in his own estimation, having more learning than sense, endeavored to write a commandment like unto one of the least of the Lord's, but failed; it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord. The Elders and all present that witnessed this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ, renewed their faith in the fulness of the Gospel, and in the truth of the commandments and revelations which the Lord had given to the Church through my instrumentality" (History of the Church, 1:226). Consequently, the conference decided to print several

thousand copies of the revelations. Before the conference adjourned, the Lord also revealed what is now Doctrine and Covenants 133 to be an "appendix" for the book.

The revelations were to be printed on a press that would also publish a Latter-day Saint newspaper in Independence, Missouri. By the summer of 1833 the project of publishing the revelations was nearing completion. Then, on July 20, a mob broke into William W. Phelps's home and destroyed the press. Through the quick and courageous action of Church members who happened to be at the scene, several hundred of the unbound sheets were rescued. Mary Rollins Lightner, who was a teenager at the time, recalled the attack: "The mob renewed their efforts again by tearing down the printing office, a two story building, and driving Brother Phelps' family out of the lower part of the house and putting their things in the street. They brought out some large sheets of paper, and said, 'Here are the Mormon Commandments.' My sister Caroline and myself were in a corner of a fence watching them; when they spoke of the commandments I was determined to have some of them. Sister said if I went to get any of them she would go too, but said 'they will kill us.' While their backs were turned, prying out the gable end of the house, we went, and got our arms full, and were turning away, when some of the mob saw us and called on us to stop, but we ran as fast as we could. Two of them started after us. Seeing a gap in a fence, we entered into a large cornfield, laid the papers on the ground, and hid them with our persons. The corn was from five to six feet high, and very thick; they hunted around considerable, and came very near us but did not find us" ("Autobiography," Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, July 1926, p. 196). The Saints cherished and bound the few copies they were able to save. The revelations in the Book of Commandments roughly paralleled the first sixty-four sections of our present Doctrine and Covenants, but we do not know how many other revelations might have been included if the printing had not been disrupted. (Milton V. Bachman Jr. and Richard O. Cowan, Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants, page 3)

Article from The Evening and The Morning Star

TO THE PATRONS OF THE EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR.

CIRCUMSTANCES having rendered it impossible to issue the present number of the Star previously, its former patrons, no doubt, have been furnished with various reports, from various sources, explanatory of its delay, which have been contradicted or exaggerated, equally as often as they have been circulated, until the public mind has despaired of any thing authentic on the

subject.

It is not our intention to give a minute detail of occurrences which have occasioned a removal of the location of the Star, in this address, as following articles are plain on that subject; but it may be expected, perhaps, that we shall give the outlines of the course which we intend to pursue while we are favored with the privilege of conducting the columns of this paper.

In the address of the former Editor, as well as his prospectus, it will be seen, that the Star was pledged to the cause of spreading the truth, without meddling with 'politics, or the gainsayings of the world;" which course was strictly observed. But on the subject of controversy, we will here remark, that, when ever we may deem it of any real benefit to our fellow men, to enter the field against our opponents in principles upon the subject of our faith, we shall be at liberty so to do, always observing the strictest rules of decorum and respect, toward every individual who may controvert the principles of religion with us.

In our opinion, no one subject when controverted, requires more prudence and judgment than that of religion. When parties of different principles contend with all the ingenuity and talent they possess, and are found to deviate in the least from the known precepts of scripture, we have reason to believe do a greater injury to the cause than good. But as we value the worth of souls, and hold sacred the principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, so we shall endeavor to correct our opinions by the word of truth, keeping in view our only object, to enlighten mankind, and point to them the way of salvation.

Ours is a day of the deepest interest to the human family, and an age fraught with the greatest consequences to the inhabitants of the earth, according to the testimony of all the holy prophets, who have written since the world began. Six thousand years have nearly passed since Omnipotence spake this universe into being by the Word of his power: when from a wide expanse of chaos the elements were brought to perfect order, and this vast globe shone out with magnificence and splendor, touched with the power of the Almighty: when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Almost two thousand years have rolled into eternity since the Son of Man bowed his head upon mount Calvary, for the sins of the world, when he said, [John 19:30] It is finished! and gave up the ghost.

Wars and rumors of wars are spreading over the world; nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom; calamity upon calamity, and pestilence following plague; iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold; almost every man seeking his own interest, to the destruction of his neighbor, and the hearts

of this generation so grossly hardened, that no man can trust even his brother; and more than all these, that great day fast approaching when this scene of wickedness shall close; the veil of eternity be rent, and the Son of God be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with all his holy angels, with power and great glory.

When with the bible in his hand, can doubt for a moment the near approach of that day when Israel shall be gathered to his own land, and the captivity of Jacob's tents return? when the seed of Abraham shall possess their promised inheritance in that choice country that once flowed with milk and honey? when the Lord will turn to his people a pure language, that they may all call upon his name to serve him with one consent; when even his suppliants the daughter of his dispersed, shall bring his offering from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia? and when the great river Euphrates shall be dried up, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared?

As we previously remarked, we do not design to detail the particulars which have occasioned a removal of the location of this paper; but it may not be improper to offer a few reflections upon the subject, as a part of the scene transpired before our eyes. With propriety we may say, that, of all subjects on earth who are bound to respect the principles of their government, the people of the United States, certainly, are of that class. The thought that our liberty was purchased with the blood of our fathers, ought to kindle emotions of patriotism in the bosom of every individual, and inspire it with just indignation against those who should in any way, even with the smallest pretext, rise up and disgrace his character as a republican, by violating those feelings which served as a main spring of action for those who achieved our freedom.

The freedom of speech, the liberty of conscience, and the liberty of the press, are three main principles in the Constitution of a free government; take from it these, and adieu to the blessings of civil society: deprive a citizen of the enjoyments guaranteed in these, and his life is not worth possessing. Men shudder at the thought of the dissolution of States, and the breaking of those links which hold governments together; but when ever those sacred principles are suffered to be trampled upon, and no arm raised to defend them, the lengthy documents, the long harangues, the great parade and the splendid show, are like the idle wind; they are like vain tales; they are beneath the empty fable, for they can profit no man.

It has become our duty to relate one of the most shocking scenes, which has disgraced the character of any citizen of the United States, since her freedom was purchased by the shedding of blood. We recollect the history of the persecution of the

Quakers, and of the Baptists in time gone by, but we thought we could with propriety cherish a belief, that no set of creatures wearing the human form, and enjoying the privilege of being classed as citizens of this Republic, could be so blind to all feelings of common humanity, laying aside patriotism and liberal principles, as to rise up in open violation of the Constitution of our country, and persecute, even unto death a fellow being for his religion.

But our limits not allowing us to proceed farther, we submit these few reflections to a candid community, with the following documents, and the proceedings of an innocent people, who have been vilely persecuted and slandered.

O. [OLIVER] COWDERY.

Kirtland, December, 1833.

(The Evening and The Morning Star, Vol. 2, No. 15, December 1833, pages 113)

Article from The Evening and The Morning Star

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, DANIEL DUNKLIN,
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI.

We, the undersigned, citizens of the republic of the United States of Jackson county, members of the church of Jesus Christ, (vulgarly called Mormons,) believing in God, and worshipping him according to his revealed will contained in the holy bible, and the fulness of the gospel contained in the book of Mormon, and the revelations and commandments of God through Jesus Christ, respectfully show:

That, we your petitioners, having purchased lands of the United States, and of the State of Missouri, and of the inhabitants of said State for the purpose of improving the same and peaceably enjoying our rights, privileges, immunities, and religion, according to the Constitution and laws of the State and National Governments, have suffered unjustly and unlawfully in property, in person, and in reputation, as follows: First, in the spring of 1832, some persons, in the deadly hours of the night, commenced stoning or brick-batting some of our houses and breaking in our windows, disturbing ourselves, our wives and our children, and also, some few days after, they called a county meeting to consult measures to remove us, but after some confusion among themselves, they dispersed with doing no more than threatening, on that day. In the fall of the same year, they

or some one, burned a large quantity of hay in the stack; and soon after commenced shooting into some of our houses, and at many times insulting with abusive language.

Secondly, about the middle of July last, yea, in fact, previous, they commenced brick batting our houses again, and breaking in our windows. At this time, July 18th, the following document was in circulation:

"We, the undersigned, citizens of Jackson county, believing that an important crisis is at hand, as regards our civil society, in consequence of a pretended religious sect of people, that have settled and are still settling in our county, styling themselves Mormons, and intending, as we do to rid our society 'peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must,' and believing as we do, that the arm of the civil law does not afford us a guarantee, or at least a sufficient one against the evils which are now inflicted upon us, and seem to be increasing by the said religious sect, deem it expedient, and of the highest importance to form ourselves into a company for the better and easier accomplishment of our purpose, a purpose which we deem it almost superfluous to say, is justified as well by the law of nature, as by the law of self preservation.

It is more than two years since the first of these fanatics, or knaves, (for one or the other they undoubtedly are,) made their first appearance amongst us, and pretending as they did, and now do to hold personal communion and converse face to face with the most high God, to receive communications and revelations direct from heaven; to heal the sick by laying on hands, and in short, to perform all the wonder working miracles wrought by the inspired apostles and prophets of old.

We believed them deluded fanatics or weak and designing knaves, and that they and their pretensions would soon pass away; but in this we were deceived. The arts of a few designing leaders amongst them have thus far succeeded in holding them together as a society, and since the arrival of the first of them they have been daily increasing in numbers, and if they had been respectable citizens in society, and thus deluded they would have been entitled to our pity rather than to our contempt and hatred: but from their appearance, from their manners, and from their conduct, since their coming among us, we have every reason to fear, that with but very few exceptions, they were of the very dregs of that society from which they came, lazy idle and vicious. This we conceive is not idle assertion, but a fact susceptible of proof, for with these few exceptions above named, they brought into our county little or no property with them, and left less behind them, and we infer, that those only, yoked themselves to the Mormon ear, who had nothing earthly or heavenly, to lose by the change; and we fear that if some of the

leaders amongst them, had paid the forfeit due to crime, instead of being chosen ambassadors of the most High, they would have been inmates of solitary cells. But their conduct here stamps their characters in their true colors. More than a year since, it was ascertained that they had been tampering with our slaves, and endeavoring to sow dissensions and raise seditions amongst them. Of those their mormon leaders were informed, and they said they would deal with any of their members who should again, in like case offend, but how specious are appearances, in a late number of the Star, published in Independence by the leaders of the sect, there is an article inviting free negroes and mulattoes from other States to become mormons and remove and settle among us, this exhibits them in still more odious colors. It manifests a desire on the part of their society, to inflict on our society an injury that they know would be to us entirely insupportable, and one of the surest means of driving us from the county; for it would require none of the supernatural gifts that they pretend to, to see that the introduction of such a cast amongst us, would corrupt our blacks and instigate them to bloodsheds.

They openly blaspheme the most high God, and cast contempt on his holy religion, by pretending to receive revelations direct from heaven, by pretending to speak unknown tongues; by direct inspiration, and by diverse pretences derogatory of God and religion, and to the utter subversion of human reason:

They declare openly that their God hath given them this county of land, and that sooner or later they must and will have the possession of our lands for an inheritance, and in fine they have conducted themselves on many other occasions in such a manner, that we believe it a duty we owe ourselves to our wives and children, to the cause of public morals, to remove them from among us, as we are not prepared to give up our pleasant places, and goodly possessions to them, or to receive into the bosom of our families, as fit companions for our wives and daughters the degraded and corrupted free negroes and mulattoes, that are now invited to settle among us.

Under such a state of things, even our beautiful county would cease to be a desirable residence, and our situation intolerable! We, therefore agree, that after timely warning, and receiving an adequate compensation for what little property they cannot take with them, they refuse to leave us in peace, as they found us, we agree to use such means as may be sufficient to remove them, and to that end we each pledge to each other our bodily powers, our lives, fortunes, and sacred honors.

We will meet at the court house at the town of Independence, on Saturday, next, 20 Inst. to consult ulterior movements."

Among the hundreds of names attached to the above document were:

Lewis Franklin, Jailor.
Samuel C. Owens, County Clerk.
Russel Hicks, Deputy Clerk.
R. W. Cummins, Indian Agent.
Jones H. Flournoy, P. Master.
S. D. Lucas,
Col. and Judge of the Court.
Henry Childs, Att'y at Law.

N. K. Olmstead, M. D.
John Smith, J. P.
Sam'l. Weston, J. P.
William Brown, Const.
Abner F. Staples, Capt.
Thomas Pitcher, Deputy Const.
Moses G. Wilson, Merchant.
Thomas Willson, Merchant.

On Saturday the 20th. July last, according to the foregoing document, there assembled suddenly in the town of Independence at the court house, between four and five hundred persons who sent Robert Johnson, James Campbell, Moses Willson, Joel F. Childs, Richard Fristoe, Abner F. Staples, Gan Johnson, Lewis Franklin, Russell Hicks, S. [Samuel] D. Lucas, Thomas Willson, James M. Hunter, and Richard Simpson, to some of your petitioners namely, Edward Partrage, A. S. Gilbert, John Corril, Isaac Morley, John Whitmer, and W. [William] W. Phelps, and demanded that we should immediately stop the publication of the Evening and Morning Star, and close printing in Jackson county, and that we as Elders of said church should agree to remove out of the county forthwith. We asked for three months for consideration They would not grant it -- We asked for ten days -- They would not grant it but said fifteen minutes was the longest, and refused to hear any reasons: Of course the conversation broke up.

The four or five hundred persons, as a Mob, then proceeded to demolish or raise to the ground, the printing office and dwelling house of W. W. Phelps, & Co. Mrs. Phelps, with a sick infant child and the rest of her children, together with the furniture in the house, were thrown out doors; the press was broken, the type pied -- the book work, furniture, apparatus, property, &c. of the office were principally destroyed and the office thrown down, whereby seven hands were thrown out of employment and three families left destitute of the means of subsistence.

The loss of the whole office, including the stoppage of the Evening and Morning Star, a monthly paper, and the Upper Missouri Advertiser, a weekly paper, was about six thousand dollars, without the damages, which must result in consequence of their suspension.

The mob then proceeded to demolish the store house and destroy the goods of Gilbert Whitney, & Co. but Mr. Gilbert assuring them that the goods should be packed by the 23rd Inst.: they then stopped the destruction of property and proceeded to do personal violence. They took Edward Partridge, the bishop of the church from his dwelling house by force, and a Mr. [Charles] Allen, and stripping them of their coats, vests and hats, or caused them to do it themselves, tarred and feathered them in the

presence of the mob before the court house. They caught other members of the church to serve them in like manner, but they made their escape With horrid yells and the most blasphemous epithets, they sought for other leading Elders, but found them not -- It being late, they adjourned until the 23rd. Inst.

On the 23 Inst. early in the day, the mob again assembled to the number of about 500, many of them armed with rifles, dirks, pistols, clubs and whips; one or two companies riding into town bearing the red flag, raising again the HORRID YELL -- They proceeded to take some of the leading elders by force declaring it to be their intention to whip them from fifty to five hundred lashes apiece, to demolish their dwelling houses, and let their negroes lose to go through our plantations and lay open our fields for the destruction of our crops.

Whereupon John Corril, John Whitmer, W. [William] W. Phelps, A. S. Gilbert, Edward partridge, and Isaac Morley, made no resistance, but offered themselves a ransom for the church, willing to be scourged or die, if that would appease their anger toward the church, but being assured by the mob that every man, woman, and child would be whipped or scourged until they were driven out of the county, as the mob declared that *they* or the *mormons* must leave the county, or *they* or the *mormons* must die.

The mob then chose a new committee, consisting of Samuel C. Owens, Leonidas Oldham, G. W. Simpson, M. L. Irwin, John Harris, Henry Childs, Harvey H. Younger, Hugh L. Breazeal, N. K. Olmstead, James C. Sadler, William Bowers, Benjamin Majors, Zachariah Waller, Harman Gregg, Aaron Overton and Samuel Weston, who with Edward Partridge, Isaac Morley, John Corril, W. [William] W. Phelps, A. S. Gilbert and John Whitmer, entered into the following stipulation.

"Memorandum of agreement between the undersigned of the mormon society, in Jackson county Missouri, and a committee appointed by a public meeting of the citizens of said county, made the 23rd day of July, 1833.

It is understood that the undersigned members of the society, do give their solemn pledge each for himself, as follows to wit:

That Oliver Cowdery, W. [William] W. Phelps, Wm. [William] E. McLellin, Edward Partridge, Lyman Wight, Simson Carter, Peter and John Whitmer, and Harvey Whitlock, shall remove with their families out of this county on or before the first day of January next, and that they, as well as the two herein after named, use all their influence to induce all the brethren now here to remove as soon as possible -- One half, say, by the first of January next, and all by the first day of April next. To advise and try all means in their power to stop any more of their sect from moving to this county, and as to those now on the road, they will

use their influence to prevent their settling permanently in the county, but that they shall only make arrangements for temporary shelter, till a new location is agreed on for the society. John Corril and A. S. Gilbert are allowed to remain as general agents to wind up the business of the society, so long as necessity shall require; and said Gilbert may sell out his merchandise now on hand, but is to make no new importations. -- The Star is not again to be published, nor a press set up by any of the society in this county. --

If the said Edward Partridge, and W. [William] W. Phelps move their families by the first day of January as aforesaid, that they themselves will be allowed to go and come in order to transact and wind up their business.

The committee pledge themselves to use all their influence to prevent any violence being used so as long as a compliance with the foregoing terms is observed by the parties concerned." To which agreement is subscribed the names of the above named committee, as also those of the mormon brethren named in the report as having been present.

The damages, which your petitioners have sustained in consequence of this outrage and stipulation are, at present, incalculable. A great number of industrious inhabitants who were dependent on their labors for support, have been thrown out of employment and are kept so by the threatenings of those who composed the mob. [See their resolutions as published in the Western Monitor number 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.] In estimating the damages which have resulted from the beginning to this time from those illegal and inhuman proceedings against your poor and persecuted petitioners, were they to name many thousands of dollars, it would be short of a remuneration. Most of the mechanic's shops have been closed, two pair of Blacksmith's bellows have been cut in pieces. Our merchant, as you will see by the foregoing stipulation, has been forbidden to import or bring into the county any more goods, by which his business has been ruined. Soon after the above stipulation was made, some of your petitioners proceeded to make a new location in Van Buren county on the south, but the settlers in that county drew up an agreement among themselves to drive us from that county after we had commenced laboring there, they threatened to shoot our cattle and destroy our labor, and in fact, "The foxes have holes and the birds of their air have nests, but we have not where to lay our heads" We were obliged to return.

Since the stipulation was entered into, some of our houses have been broken open and the inmates threatened to be shot if they stirred, and also, some of our houses have been stoned or brick-batted.

Also, that since some publications, have appeared in the

Western Monitor and other papers, censuring the conduct of the mob, the leaders have began to threaten life, declaring that if any of the mormons attempted to seek redress by law or other wise, for character, person or property, they should die!

Now THEREFORE, for ourselves, as members of the church, we declare, with the exception of poverty, which has not yet become a crime, by the laws of the land, that the crimes charged against us, (so far as we are acquainted,) contained in the documents above written, and those in the proceedings of the mob, as published in the Western Monitor of August 2nd, are not true. In relation to inviting free people of color to emigrate to this section of country And other matters relative to our society, see the 109th, 10th, and 11th, pages of the Evening and Morning Star, and the Extra accompanying the same, dated July 16th, -- which are annexed to this petition. Our situation is a critical one, we are located upon the western limits of the State, and of the United States -- where desperadoes can commit outrages and even murder, and escape, in a few minutes, beyond the reach of process -- where the most abandoned of all classes from almost every state may too often pass to the Mexican states, or to the more remote regions of the Rocky Mountains to escape the grasp of justice -- where numerous tribes of Indians, located by the general Government amid the corrupting influence of midday mobs, might massacre our defenseless women and children, with impunity: --

Influenced by the precepts of our beloved Savior, when we have been smitten on the one cheek, we have turned the other also, when we have been sued at the law, and our coat been taken, we have given them our cloak also, when they have compelled us to go with them a mile, we have gone with them twain, we have borne the above outrages without murmuring: -- But we cannot patiently bare them any longer: according to the laws of God and man, we have borne enough. Believing, with all honorable men, that whenever that fatal hour shall arrive that the poorest citizen's person, property, or rights and privileges, shall be trampled upon by a lawless mob with impunity, that moment a dagger is plunged into the heart of the Constitution, and the Union must tremble! Assuring ourselves that no republican will suffer the liberty of the press; the freedom of speech, and the liberty of conscience, to be silenced by a mob, without raising a helping hand, to save his country from disgrace. We solicit assistance to obtain our rights; holding ourselves amenable to the laws of our country whenever we transgress them.

Knowing, as we do, that the threats of this mob, in most cases, have been put into execution, and knowing also, that every officer, civil and military, with a very few exceptions, has pledged his life and honor, to force us from the county, dead or

alive; and believing that civil process cannot be served without the aid of the Executive; and not wishing to have the blood of our defenseless women and children stain the land which has once been stained by the blood of our fathers to purchase our liberty; we appeal to the Governor for aid; asking him by express proclamation, or other wise, to raise a sufficient number of troops, who, with us, may be empowered to defend our rights, that we may sue for damages in the loss of property for abuse -- for defamation, as to ourselves -- and if advisable try for treason against the government; -- that the law of the land may not be defied, nor nulified, but peace restored to our country: -- And we will every pray.

[On the foregoing we may remark, that it falls far short of setting forth the actual suffering situation of the petitioners, and the wanton and malicious conduct of the inhabitants by whom they were surrounded. Excepting a few individuals, those who were engaged in the outrage were persons of little or no reading; and being thus ignorant, were the more easily persuaded to believe, that their privileges and rights as citizens were about to be unlawfully taken from them; and when once roused to acts of violence, were constantly heated by the insinuations of a few, who ought to have been the first to rise in the defence of innocence and virtue, and bring to justice wild infatuated violators of the peace of society by the majesty of the civil law.

We insert the following communication from his Excellency the Governor of Missouri, in answer to the foregoing petition. The candid patriotic spirit which it breaths, is truly becoming a man entrusted with the honor of extending an arm in support of those who are unjustly trampled upon; and having it in his power to enforce due reverence to the Constitution. Ed. Star.]

"City of Jefferson, Executive Department, Oct. 19th, 1833.
To Edward Partridge, W. [William] W. Phelps, Isaac Morely, John Corril, A. S. Gilbert, John Whitmer, and others:

Your memorial soliciting my interposition against violence threatened you, and redress for injuries received by a portion of the citizens of Jackson county, has been received, and its contents duly considered. I should think myself worthy the confidence with which I have been honored by my fellow citizens, did I not promptly employ all the means which the Constitution and laws have placed at my disposal, to avert the calamities with which you are threatened.

Ours is a Government of laws, to them we all owe obedience, and their faithful administration is the best guarantee for the enjoyment of our rights.

No citizen, nor number of citizens, have a right to take the redress of their grievances, whether real or imaginary, into their own hands: Such conduct strikes at the very existence of society, and subverts the foundation on which it is based. Not being willing to persuade myself that any portion of the citizens

of the State of Missouri are so lost to a sense of these truths as to require the exercise of force, in order to ensure a respect of them.

After advising with the Attorney General, and exercising my best judgment, I would advise you to make a trial of the efficacy of the laws, the Judge of your circuit is a conservator of the peace. If an affidavit is made before him by any of you, that your lives are threatened and you believe them in danger, it would be his duty to have the offenders apprehended and bind them to keep the peace. Justices of the peace in their respective counties have the same authority, and it is made their duty to exercise it. Take, then, this course, obtain a warrant, let it be placed in the hands of the proper officer, and the experiment will be tested whether the laws can be peaceably executed or not. In the event they cannot be, and that fact is officially notified to me, my duty will require me to take such steps as will enforce a faithful execution of them.

With regard to the injuries you have sustained by destruction of property, &c. the law is open to redress, I cannot permit myself to doubt that the courts will be open to you, nor that you will find difficulty in procuring legal advocates to sue for damages therein.

Respectfully,
Your ob't. servant,

DANIEL DUNKLIN

W. W. PHELPS, ESQ. Independence, Mo."

(Vol. 2, No. 15, December 1833, pages 114-115)

Copyright © 2001 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurtn@cybcon.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.