

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 19

This rather strongly worded revelation is aimed at Martin Harris, who had pledged to underwrite the publication of the Book of Mormon. Fairly late in the printing process, but prior to its completion, he became hesitant about his pledge when prospects of its sales looked dim. The result is the Lord commanded him in no uncertain terms to keep his pledge.

The section is unique in its content, rhetoric, and tone. The likely reason for this is the Lord intended to both motivate Harris to keep his pledge as well as prove the revelation was of Himself and not a product of Smith's desires (hence the emphatic self-declarative statements in v. 1-3 and 13-24, and the threat of punishment for failure to heed His commands in v. 6-12). As such, the Lord would have addressed matters that had been on Harris' mind which were unknown to Smith and presented in such a way that it was unmistakably from the Lord, hence the content of v. 25-31. See the historical material below for additional context.

Verses 1-3 are an authority statement, verses 4-12 are a general explanation of eternal punishment and suffering, and verses 13-19 are an explicit warning to Martin Harris alone that he must repent and do what the Lord has commanded or he will be punished with that punishment described in v. 4-12. Verses 20-41 then provide a list of things Martin Harris needs to repent of, intermingled with additional warnings of failure to repent.

1 I am Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world. 2 I, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father, concerning me--having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself-- 3 Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof, judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done.

v1-3 A series of emphatic authority statements. Based upon Joseph Knight's recollection, Harris demanded of Smith a revelation of the Lord, and the Lord provided it, in no uncertain terms.

v1 "I AM Alpha and Omega", note the usage of the emphatic pronoun "I am", which in this usage indicates divinity, cp.

Exod. 3:14, John 8:58. The alpha and omega are the first and last letters on the Greek alphabet (see comments on D&C 17:1 "Urim and Thummim") implying the first and last, which is made explicit later in the verse. That Jesus is the "first and last" has many applications, such as that from Matt. 23:11, or that He is the Creator/ Initiator and the Redeemer/Consummation. The first and last also form a merism, a statement of comprehensive all-inclusivity.

4 And surely every man must repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless. 5 Wherefore, I revoke not the judgments which I shall pass, but woes shall go forth, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, yea, to those who are found on my left hand.

6 Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written *endless torment*. 7 Again, it is written *eternal damnation*; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory. 8 Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles. 9 I speak unto you that are chosen in this thing, even as one, that you may enter into my rest. 10 For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore-- 11 Eternal punishment is God's punishment. 12 Endless punishment is God's punishment.

v4-12 Verses 6-12 form a parenthesis on the subject of v. 4-5, where the Lord addresses the syntax and usage of the KJV English and His use and application of it. The Lord explains that the suffering is "eternal" not in that it is without end, but because He is eternal and therefore His punishment is eternal, or has eternal consequences. The torment described in v. 5 is a temporary condition (cf. D&C 76:40-43) with eternal consequences (i.e., eternal damnation).

The Lord is probably emphasizing the eternal nature of His judgements at this point in time because Harris is fearing temporal things, like the Book of Mormon not selling well and him losing his farm, and so on. Harris' immediate present fear is of temporal things, and the Lord wants him to concentrate on spiritual and eternal things instead, and to not fear man.

v6-7 "it is written *endless torment*...it is written *eternal damnation*", the two phrases are set off in italics to signify them as the portion of quoted text referred to by the "it is written", just as quoted scriptures are italicized in Joseph

Smith-History. The text was not italicized in the 1833 Book of Commandments or 1835 Doctrine and Covenants editions, and first appears in the 1921 edition D&C and remains thereafter.

Torment and damnation are not synonymous, but are two different things. While one of the effects of damnation would be torment in hell, the word also has additional legalistic connotations of judgement and condemnation over and above any suffering. While those in terrestrial and telestial glory will be delivered from their torments, they will not be delivered from their damnation, as they will be closed off from the presence of the Father and Son, which presence those in the Celestial kingdom enjoy.

v6 While the suffering and torments of sin do end with the second resurrection, for all but sons of perdition, the permanency of damnation remains, cf. D&C 76:81-112. Any who fail to participate in celestial marriage and obtain the Celestial kingdom are damned forever, cf. D&C 132:4-6.

13 wherefore, I command you to repent, and keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., in my name; 14 And it is by my almighty power that you have received them; 15 Therefore I command you to repent--repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore--how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

16 For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; 17 But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; 18 Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit--and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink-- 19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

20 wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my spirit. 21 And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me. 22 For they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish. 23 Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my spirit, and you shall have peace in me. 24 I am Jesus Christ; I came by the will of the Father, and I do his will.

v13-24 Following the authority statement and an explanatory parenthesis, the Lord gives Harris a superlative statement command him to repent, or suffer. The statement is a superlative because the command "repent" is repeated three times in v. 13, 15, 20.

v18-19 Another parenthesis explaining the acute nature of the Lord's suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here He indicates that while in the flesh here experienced the equivalent of eternal torment, and it resulted in him bleeding from every pore, cp. Mosiah 3:7.

v19 "partook and finished my preparation", note the way the Lord addresses His period of mortality in such a fashion as to make it a discreet portion of His existence. He sees it in retrospect as a period of preparation that then enabled Him to complete and fulfill His mission. Compare D&C 49:5-6 where the Lord speaks in a possessive manner about His "Only Begotten Son" and "Son of Man", i.e., He is possessively referring the mortal tabernacle He possessed in the same manner as we have here in v. 19.

v21-23 These verses emphasize the importance of Harris preaching only repentance and not any other complex doctrines. These verses are addressing the same subject as v. 29-31, just as v. 26-27 are talking about the same thing as v. 34-35. The Lord is repeating Himself for emphasis.

v21 In addition to some of the other verses in this section which were changed superficially, these verses were altered slightly.

1833 Book of Commandments
And I command you,
that you preach nought
but repentance; and
show not these things,
neither speak these things
unto the world,

1835 Doctrine and Covenants
And I command you,
that you preach nought
but repentance; and
show not these things,

unto the world,
until it is wisdom in me.

The 1833 version has the additional prohibition of speaking, obviously prohibiting Harris from verbally preaching anything

but repentance. The 1835 addition of "until it is wisdom in me" would be leading into the admonition of v. 22, namely to not preach complex doctrines until it is wisdom in the Lord to do so, which would be the subject of Hebr. 5:14.

v22 "they cannot bear meat", the "meat" is based upon the KJV English of 1 Cor. 3:2 and Hebr. 5:12. There, a better translation would be "solid food" and not specifically the flesh of an animal.

"Meat" is not necessarily good doctrine that edifies. There is plenty of "meat" which does not edify, see Hebr. 5:12-14, Hebr. 9:9-11, Hebr. 13:9-10, and also cp. Isa. 28:7-9 which is the likely original source of the milk-meat analogy. As stated in Hebr. 5:14:

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Strong meat is for those who can discern the good from the bad, for not all meat is good. The usage of the analogy in Hebrews is over the Law of Moses prohibition regarding clean and unclean food, which Judaizers within the early church were arguing over, as stated in Hebr. 13:9:

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For [it is] a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

The meat the Lord is rejecting in v. 22 is not the true doctrine of v. 1-20, but the complex doctrines which are only for those who are mature enough in the faith to be able to discern good from bad. The "meat" in v. 22 is the "tenets" of v. 31. Also compare the JST/IV on Matt. 7:10, which states:

And the mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves; for it is not meet to give that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls unto swine, lest they trample them under their feet.

25 And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife; nor seek thy neighbor's life.

26 And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the

Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God-- 27 which is my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and look not for a Messiah to come who has already come.

28 And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private.

29 And thou shalt declare glad tidings, yea, publish it upon the mountains, and upon every high place, and among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see. 30 And thou shalt do it with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers. 31 And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost.

v25-31 Following the general command to repent, Harris now receives a series of specific things he needs to repent of. This list touches on a series of rather private matters (v. 25, 28, and 29-31) which are not directly related to do at all with the publication of the Book of Mormon. The Lord commenting on such private matters would have proven to Harris that the commandment was from Himself and not Smith.

v25 This verse addresses two rather serious allegations: adultery and murder. The historical record does indicate Martin's relationship with his wife Lucy was strained. She was envious of his connections to Smith and ultimately turned against both Smith and the Church and was apparently the one who plotted against Smith in regard to discrediting him with the altered version of the Book of Lehi (cf. ch. 23, 25, and 28 of Lucy Mack Smith's History of Joseph Smith by His Mother). In 1831 they legally separated and the portion of his farm which was not sold to cover the expense of publishing the Book of Mormon was deeded to her. Lucy Harris insinuated Martin was an adulterer in her affidavit to Doctor Philastus Hurlburt, see the historical material below. In 1836, shortly after Lucy's death, Martin remarried.

In a letter Smith wrote to the Church while he was incarcerated at Liberty Jail he explicitly accuses a number of apostates of adultery, and references Harris explicitly, but Harris is not among those identified as adulterous:

We have been misrepresented and misunderstood, and belied...we have waded through an ocean of tribulation

and mean abuse, practiced upon us by the ill bred and the ignorant, such as Hinkle, Corrill, Phelps, Avard, Reed Peck, Cleminson, and various others, who are so very ignorant that they cannot appear respectable in any decent and civilized society, and whose eyes are full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin. Such characters as McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, are too mean to mention; and we had liked to have forgotten them (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 3, pages 232-233).

v30 "reviling not against revilers", cp. D&C 18:20.

v31 There shall be no doctrinal disputes, preach only repentance. If the person is only disputing, then they are unrepentant and refusing to humble themselves.

"tenets", the doctrine of the Church, i.e., anything over and above the first principles and ordinance of the gospel, the "meat" of v. 22, which is potentially harmful to those new in the faith.

32 Behold, this is a great and the last commandment which I shall give unto you concerning this matter; for this shall suffice for thy daily walk, even unto the end of thy life. 33 And misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these counsels, yea, even the destruction of thyself and property.

34 Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy family. 35 Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage.

36 Leave thy house and home, except when thou shalt desire to see thy family; 37 And speak freely to all; yea, preach, exhort, declare the truth, even with a loud voice, with a sound of rejoicing, crying--Hosanna, hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord God!

v32-41 These verses are the closing summary wherein the Lord states flatly for the last time what Harris is to do (v. 32). If he fails to do what is commanded he will be damned (v. 33). Therefore, he is to keep his pledge to fund the printing of the Book of Mormon (v. 34-35) and preach the gospel (v. 36-37). Verses 34-37 repeats material from v. 26-29 for emphasis.

38 Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and

great shall be your blessing--yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof. 39 Behold, canst thou read this without rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for gladness? 40 Or canst thou run about longer as a blind guide? 41 Or canst thou be humble and meek, and conduct thyself wisely before me? Yea, come unto me thy Savior. Amen.

v38-41 Conclusion of the revelation. Pray always so the Lord may bless you with eternal spiritual treasures (v. 38). Harris should rejoice at hearing the Lord is willing to bless him with spiritual wealth for his sacrifice of a portion of his material wealth (v. 39). But, if he doesn't, then he will be as one who is spiritually blind (v. 40). If he does humble himself and keep the Lord's commands, the Lord will be his Savior (v. 41).

v38 An admonition to seek after spiritual wealth rather than physical wealth, similar to those given to Cowdery in D&C 6:3, 7, 20, 27.

v40 To paraphrase, "If you fail to do these things, you will be a blind person trying to lead the blind".

v41 Naturally, the Lord would prefer Harris to be humble and meek and to come unto Him. Note the strong dichotomy drawn here in v. 40-41 as Harris is portrayed as ending up either a blind guide or a humble servant embraced in the arms of His Savior.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 19

The little we know about this revelation comes from Joseph Knight, Sr, included in the historical commentary in the first excerpt. The second excerpt comes from a statement from Lucy Harris concerning Martin's conduct, which statement came after their separation and was given to a man hostile to the church. Lucy and Martin never reconciled. The third excerpt comes from the Millennial Star, an editorial commentary by Orson Pratt on Martin Harris' character wherein he quotes this section as evidence of Martin's wickedness. What prompted that editorial was Harris' intended visit to the British Isles to proselyte the Strangite religion, of which he was presently attached to.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments dated 1833 pages 39-42, then in the Doctrine & Covenants in 1835 pages 174-176. It was published in Times & Seasons, volume 3, number 24, pages 943-944, dated October 15, 1842 and then in Millennial Star, volume 4, number 8, pages 113-114, dated December, 1843.

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

When the translation of the Book of Mormon was nearly completed, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris solicited Egbert B. Grandin, manager and principal owner of the Wayne Sentinel, a newspaper printed in Palmyra, to print the manuscript. Grandin declined the request as did Thurlow Weed of Rochester when confronted with the proposition. The Prophet and his associates finally prevailed upon E.B. Grandin, and Martin Harris later signed a mortgage (25 August 1829) that bound Harris to pay Grandin \$3,000 within eighteen months for the printing of 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon or forfeit sufficient of his 240-acre Palmyra farm to pay the \$3,000. In March 1830, prior to the completion of the printing of the Book of Mormon, a group of townspeople near Palmyra voted not to purchase the book if it were published. Fearful that he might lose his farm if the book did not sell, Harris approached the Prophet Joseph Smith regarding the matter, and requested a revelation. Joseph Knight, Sr., remembering the occasion, made the following remarks:

[Martin Harris] Came to us and after Compliments he says, "The Books will not sell for no Body wants them. Joseph says, "I think they will sell well." Says he,

"I want a Commandment [revelation]." "Why," says Joseph, "fulfill what you have got." "But," says he, "I must have a Commandment." Joseph put him off. But he insisted three or four times he must have a Commandment. [The following day] he got up and said he must have a Commandment to Joseph and went home. And along in the after part of the Day Joseph and Oliver Received a Commandment which is in Book of Covenants [section 19]. [This quote also published in "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," BYU Studies, Autumn 1976, p. 37]

(Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 30-31)

Excerpt from Mormonism Unveiled

Palmyra, Nov. 29, 1833.

Being called upon to give a statement to the world of what I know respecting the Gold Bible speculation, and also of the conduct of Martin Harris, my husband, who is a leading character among the Mormons, I do it free from prejudice, realizing that I must give an account at the bar of God for what I say. Martin Harris was once industrious attentive to his domestic concerns, and thought to be worth about ten thousand dollars. He is naturally quick in his temper and his mad-fits frequently abuses all who may dare to oppose him in his wishes. However strange it may seem, I have been a great sufferer by his unreasonable conduct. At different times while I lived with him, he has whipped, kicked, and turned me out of the house. About a year previous to the report being raised that Smith had found gold plates, he became very intimate with the Smith family, and said he believed Joseph could see in his stone any thing he wished. After this he apparently became very sanguine in his belief, and frequently said he would have no one in his house that did not believe in Mormonism; and because I would not give credit to the report he made about the gold plates, he became more austere towards me. In one of his fits of rage he struck me with the but end of a whip, which I think had been used for driving oxen, and was about the size of my thumb, and three or four feet long. He

beat me on the head four or five times, and the next day turned me out of doors twice, and beat me in a shameful manner. -- The next day I went to the town of Marion, and while there my flesh was black and blue in many places. His main complaint against me was, that I was always trying to hinder his making money.

When he found out that I was going to Mr. Putnam's, in Marion, he said he was going too, but they had sent for him to pay them a visit. On arriving at Mr. Putnam's, I asked them if they had sent for Mr. Harris; they replied, they knew nothing about it; he, however, came in the evening. Mrs. Putnam told him never to strike or abuse me any more; he then denied ever striking me; she was however convinced that he lied, as the marks of his beating me were plain to be seen, and remained more than two weeks. Whether the Mormon religion be true or false, I leave the world to judge, for its effects upon Martin Harris have been to make him more cross, turbulent and abusive to me. His whole object was to make money by it. I will give one circumstance in proof of it. One day, while at Peter Harris' house, I told him he had better leave the company of the Smiths, as their religion was false; to which he replied, if you would let me alone, I could make money by it.

It is in vain for the Mormons to deny these facts; for they are all well known to most of his former neighbors. The man has now become rather an object of pity; he has spent most of his property, and lost the confidence of his former friends. If he had labored as hard on his farm as he has to make Mormons, he might now be one of the wealthiest farmers in the country. He now spends his time in travelling through the country spreading the delusion of Mormonism, and has no regard whatever for his family.

With regard to Mr. Harris' being intimate with Mrs. Haggard, as has been reported, it is but justice to myself to state what facts have come within my own observation, to show whether I had any grounds for jealousy or not. Mr. Harris was very intimate with this family, for some time previous to their going to Ohio. They lived a while in a house which he had built for their accommodation, and here he spent the most of his leisure hours;

and made her presents of articles from the store and house. He carried these presents in a private manner, and frequently when he went there, he would pretend to be going to some of the neighbors, on an errand, or to be going into the fields. -- After getting out of sight of the house, he would steer a straight course for Haggard's house, especially if Haggard was from home. At times when Haggard was from home, he would go there in the manner above described, and stay till twelve or one o'clock at night, and sometimes until day light.

If his intentions were evil, the Lord will judge him accordingly, but if good, he did not mean to let his left hand know what his right hand did. The above statement of facts, I affirm to be true.

LUCY HARRIS.

(Eber D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, pages 254-257, quoting Lucy Harris's statement from the Doctor Philastus Hurlburt affidavits ["Doctor" was his literal first name, not his title], this was the first published anti-Mormon book and the Hurlburt affidavits are a collection of documented statements collected by him after he was excommunicated from the Church in an effort to discredit it and various prominent founding members)

Excerpt from Millennial Star

One of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the Devil a number of years ago--turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy. He was filled with the rage and madness of a demon. One day he would be one thing, and another day another thing. He soon became partially deranged or shattered, as many believed, flying from one thing to another, as if reason and common sense were thrown off their balance. In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the "Shakers" or follows of Anne Lee. He tarried with them a year or two, or perhaps longer, having had some flare ups while among them; but since Strang has made his entry into the apostate ranks, and hoisted his standard for the rebellious to flock too, Martin leaves the "shakers," whom he knows to be right, and has known it for many years, as he said, and joins Strang in gathering out the tares of the field. We understand

that he is appointed a mission to this country, but we do not feel to warn the Saints against him, for his own unbridled tongue will soon show out specimens of folly enough to give any person a true index to the character of the man; but if the Saints wish to know what the Lord hath said of him, they may turn to the 178th page of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and the person there called a "wicked man" is no other than Martin Harris, and he owned to it then, but probably might not now. It is not the first time the Lord chose a wicked man as a witness. Also on page 193, read the whole revelation given to him, and ask yourselves if the Lord ever talked in that way to a good man. Every one can see that he must have been a wicked man, and the Lord said that that revelation was the last he should receive; and no wonder that a man without revelation should join Anne Lee, Strang, or any other imposition or strong delusion, having rejected the truth.

The fate of such as turn away from the this church and remain apostates, is truly awful. See *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, page 213:--"Hearken and hear, O ye my people, saith the Lord and your God, ye whom I delight to bless with the greatest blessing, ye that hear me; and ye that hear me not will I curse, that have professed my name, with the heaviest of all cursings." Let all the Saints beware that they keep in their bosoms the spirit of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Give no place to the Devil, nor to those who have gone out from us, that it might be made manifest that they are not of us. Receive them not into your houses, neither bid them God speed, lest you be partakers of their evil deeds; but pray to be delivered from evil, and pray for the spreading forth the work of God, and for men to repent, and seek to act accordingly.

As many of the readers of the Star have not the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, we insert the revelation to Martin Harris, that all may see how the Lord spoke to him, through Joseph Smith, years ago. His instructions are therein plainly laid down, what he shall preach and what he shall not preach, so that every person to whom he speaks, or with whom he converse can be able to call him to order, if he exceeds his limits, and require him to stick to the text which the Lord has given him, which was the last to him to the end of his life.--If the Lord had not foreseen that he would fall away, he never would have refused to give him more revelations; but he foresaw what has already happened, and told him that he following revelation should suffice, even to the end of his life: -- [text of D&C 19

quoted] (Orson Hyde, *Millennial Star*, volume 8, number 8, pages 124-125, November 15, 1846)

Copyright © 2021 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.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.