

History of Joseph Smith, volume 1:260-265

According to previous intentions, we now began to make preparations to visit the brethren who had removed to the land of Missouri. Before going to Hiram to live with Father Johnson, my wife had taken two children (twins) of John Murdock's, to rear. She received them when only nine days old; they were now nearly eleven months. I would remark that nothing important had occurred since I came to reside in Father Johnson's house in Hiram, except that I had held meetings on the Sabbaths and evenings and baptized a number.

Father Johnson's son, Olmsted Johnson, about this time came home on a visit, during which I told him if he did not obey the Gospel, the spirit he was of would lead him to destruction, and when he went away, he would never return or see his father again. He went to the Southern States and Mexico; on his return he took sick and died in Virginia.

In addition to the apostate Ezra Booth, Simonds Ryder, Eli Johnson, Edward Johnson and John Johnson, Jun., had apostatized.

On the 24th of March, the twins before mentioned, which had been sick of the measles for some time, caused us to be broken of our rest in taking care of them, especially my wife. In the evening I told her she had better retire to rest with one of the children, and I would watch with the sicker child. In the night she told me I had better lie down on the trundle bed, and I did so, and was soon after awakened by her screaming murder, when I found myself going out of the door, in the hands of about a dozen men; some of whose hands were in my hair, and some had hold of my shirt, drawers, and limbs. The foot of the trundle bed was towards the door, leaving only room enough for the door to swing open. My wife heard a gentle tapping on the windows which she then took no particular notice of (but which was unquestionably designed for ascertaining whether or not we were all asleep), and soon after the mob burst open the door and surrounded the bed in an instant, and, as I said, the first I knew I was going out of the door in the hands of an infuriated mob.

I made a desperate struggle, as I was forced out, to extricate myself, but only cleared one leg, with which I made a pass at one man, and he fell on the doorsteps. I was immediately overpowered again; and they swore by G --, they would kill me if I did not be still, which quieted me. As they passed around

the house with me, the fellow that I kicked came to me and thrust his hand, all covered with blood, into my face and with an exulting hoarse laugh, muttered "Ge, gee, G—d—ye, I'll fix ye."

They then seized me by the throat and held on till I lost my breath. After I came to, as they passed along with me, about thirty rods from the house, I saw Elder Rigdon stretched out on the ground, whither they had dragged him by his heels. I supposed he was dead. I began to plead with them, saying, "you will have mercy and spare my life, I hope." to which they replied, "g—d—ye, call on yer god for help, we'll show ye no mercy;" the people began [coming] in every direction; one coming from the orchard had a plank and I expected they would kill me and carry me off on the plank. They then turned right, went about thirty rods further into the meadow and stopped. Someone said "Simonds, Simonds," pull up his drawers." Another replied: "Ain't ye going to kill 'im?" when a group of mobbers collected a little way off, and said: "Simonds, Simonds, come here;" and Simonds charged those who had hold of me to keep me from touching the ground (as they had done all the time), lest I should get a spring upon them.

They held a council, and as I could occasionally overhear a word, I supposed it was to know whether or not it was best to kill me. They returned after a while, when I learned that they had concluded not to kill me, but to beat and scratch me well, tear off my shirt and drawers, and leave me naked. One cried, "Simonds, Simonds, where's the tar bucket?" "I don't know," answered one, "where 'tis, Eli's left it." They ran back and fetched the bucket of tar, when one exclaimed, with an oath, "Let us tar up his mouth;" and they tried to force the tar-paddle into my mouth; I twisted my head around, so that they could not; and they cried out, "G—d—ye, hold up yer head and let us give ye some tar." They then tried to force a vial into my mouth and broke it in my teeth. All my clothes were torn off me except my shirt collar; and one man fell on me and scratched my body with his nails like a mad cat, and then muttered out: "G—d—ye, that's the way the Holy Ghost falls on folks!"

They then left me, and I attempted to rise, but fell again; I pulled the tar away from my lips, so that I could breathe more freely, and after a while I began to recover, and raised myself up, whereupon I saw two lights. I made my way towards one of them, and found it was Father Johnson's. When I came to the door, I was naked, and the tar made me look as if I were covered with blood, and when my wife saw me she thought I was all crushed to pieces, and fainted. During the affray abroad, the sisters of the neighborhood had collected at my room. I called for a blanket, they threw me one and shut the door; I wrapped it around me and went in.

In the meantime, Brother John Poorman heard an outcry across the corn field, and running that way met Father Johnson, who had been fastened in his house at the commencement of the assault, by having his door barred by the mob, but on calling his wife to bring his gun, saying he would blow a hole through the door, the mob fled, and Father Johnson, seizing a club, ran after the party that had Elder Rigdon, and knocked down one man, and raised his club to level another, exclaiming, "What are you doing here?" when they left Elder Rigdon and turned upon Father Johnson, who, turning to run toward his own house, met Brother Poorman coming out of the corn field; each supposing the other to be a mobber, and encounter ensued, and Poorman gave Johnson a severe blow on the left shoulder with a stick or stone, which brought him to the ground. Poorman ran immediately towards Father Johnson's, and arriving while I was waiting for the blanket, exclaimed, "I'm afraid I've killed him." "Killed who?" asked one; when Poorman hastily related the circumstances of the rencounter near the corn field and went into the shed and hid himself. Father Johnson soon recovered so as to come to the house, when the whole mystery was quickly solved concerning the difficulty between him and Poorman, who, on learning the facts, joyfully came from his hiding place.

My friends spent the night in scraping and removing the tar and washing and cleansing my body; so that by morning I was ready to be clothed again. This being the Sabbath morning, the people assembled for meeting at the usual hour of worship, and among them came also the mobbers; viz.: Simonds Ryder, a Campbellite preacher and leader of the mob; one McClentic, who had his hands in my hair; one Streeter, son of a Campbellite minister; and Felatiah Allen, Esq., who gave the mob a barrel of whiskey to raise their spirits. Besides these named, there were many others in the mob. With my flesh all scarified and defaced, I preached to the congregation as usual, and in the afternoon of the same day baptized three individuals.

The next morning I went to see Elder Rigdon, and found him crazy, and his head highly inflamed, for they had dragged him by his heels, and those, too, so high from the ground that he could not raise his head from the rough, frozen surface, which lacerated it exceedingly; and when he saw me he called to his wife to bring him his razor. She asked him what he wanted of it; and he replied, to kill me. Sister Rigdon left the room, and he asked me to bring his razor; I asked him what he wanted of it, and he replied he wanted to kill his wife; and he continued delirious some days. The feathers which were used with the tar on this occasion, the mob took out of Elder Rigdon's house. After they had seized him, and

dragged him out, one of the banditti returned to get some pillows; when the women shut him in and kept him a prisoner some time.

During the mobbing one of the twins contracted a severe cold, continued to grow worse until Friday, and then died. The mobbers composed of various religious parties, but mostly Campbellites, Methodists and Baptists, who continued to molest and menace Father Johnson's house for a long time. Elder Rigdon removed to Kirtland with his family—then sick with the measles—the following Wednesday; and, on account of the mob, he went to Chardon on Saturday, March 31st.

April first, I started for Missouri, in company with Newel K. Whitney, Peter Whitmer, and Jesse Gause, to fulfil the revelation. Not wishing to go by Kirtland, as another mob existed in that neighborhood (and indeed, the spirit of mobocracy was very prevalent through that whole region of country at the time), brother George Pitkin took us in his wagon by the most expeditious route to Warren, where we arrived the same day, and were there joined by Elder Rigdon, who left Chardon in the morning; and proceeding onward, we arrived at Wellsville the next day, and the day following at Steubenville, where we left the wagon; and on Wednesday, the 4th of April, we took passage on board a steam packet for Wheeling, Virginia; where we purchased a lot of paper for the press in Zion, then in care of W. W. Phelps.