

An Impressive Letter from the Pen of Joseph Smith

LAMAR C. BERRETT*

Because of rivalry and jealousy among the Missouri Saints, the Prophet Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney were appointed to sit in council with them in April 1832. (D & C 78: 9-10.) This was the second visit by Joseph Smith to the Missouri area.

After grievances were amicably settled, the three brethren returned to Kirtland by stage via St. Louis and Vincennes, Indiana. At a point between Vincennes, Indiana, and New Albany (near Greenville) they had a run-away when the horses became frightened. Joseph and Sidney jumped out of the coach unhurt; but when Bishop Whitney attempted to jump, his coat caught and threw him into the wheel. His leg and foot were broken in several places. Joseph and Newel stayed at Mr. Porter's Public House at Greenville for four weeks, and Elder Rigdon returned to Kirtland. While attending Brother Whitney as he recuperated from his injuries, Joseph Smith was poisoned. He vomited so profusely that he dislocated his jaw. He replaced it himself and then made his way to the bedside of Newel K. Whitney where Newel administered to him and he was healed instantly. The Prophet Joseph Smith indicated that the effect of the poison was so powerful it caused much of the hair of his head to be loosened. He was grateful to be alive, however, and said, "thanks be to my Heavenly Father for his interference."

Sometime in the four weeks while Newel K. Whitney was bedfast, Joseph Smith wrote an intimate letter to his wife, Emma.¹ His impressive account of his struggle for repentance and his assurance of his own forgiveness is touching; it is one of the most authentic glimpses of the Prophet's repentance and effort for worthiness.

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¹This letter was discovered by James R. Harris in 1960 in the possession of the Chicago Historical Society, who graciously supplied us with a copy of the letter. See DHC 1:271-2 for the instance of writing.

June 6th Greenville Floid ^[Indiana] \wedge Co []
1832

Dear Wife

I would inform you that Brother Martin has arrived here and braught the pleasing news that our Familys were well when he left them which Greatly Cheared our hearts and [re]vived our Spirits we thank our heavenly Father for his goodness [] unto all of you us and \wedge ~~[you]~~. Martin arrived on Satterday the Same week he left Chagrin haveing a properous time we are all in good heath Brother Whitneys leg is gaining and he thinks he Shall be able to to perform his about Journy so as to get home \wedge ~~as soon as~~ the 20th. my Situation is a very unpleasent one although I will endeavor to be Contented the Lord asisting me I have visited a grove which is Just back of the town almost every day where I can be Secluded from the eyes of any mortal and there give vent to all the feeling[s] of my heart in meaditation and prayr I have Called to mind all the past and moments of my life and am left to morn [] Shed tears of sorrow for my folly in Sufering the adversary of my Soul to have so much had in times past ul power over me as he has \wedge but God is mercif \wedge

June 6th Greenville ^{Indiana} Ind. Co ~~Ind.~~ 1832

Dear Wife
 I would inform you that Brother Martin
 has arrived here and brought the pleasing
 news that our families were well when he
 left them which greatly cheered our hearts
 and revived our spirits we thank our
 heavenly Father for this goodness ~~to~~ ^{sent}
 us and ~~for~~ ^{all of you} Martin arrived on Saturday
 the same week he left Chicago having
 a prosperous time we are all in good health
 Brother Whitney's leg is gaining and in that
 he shall be able to ^{about} ~~to~~ ^{about} his
 journey so as to get home ~~as soon as the~~
 20th my situation is a very unpleasant one
 although I will endeavor to be contented the
 Lord assisting me I have visited a grove
 which is just back of the town almost
 every day where I can be secluded from the
 eyes of any mortal and there give vent to all
 the feelings of my heart in meditation and
 praise I have called to mind all the past
 moments of my life and am left to mourn ^{and}
 shed tears of sorrow for my folly in supposing
 the adversary of my soul to have so much
 power over me as he has ^{had in times past} but God is merciful

and has forgiven my Sins and I rejoice that he
 Sendeth forth the Comforter unto as many as
 believe and humbleth themselves before him

lost
 I was grieved to hear that Hiram had \wedge his
 little Child I think we Can in Some degree
 Sympathise with him but we all must be

of the Lord
 reconciled to our lots and say the will \wedge be done
 her husband

[] Sister Whitney wrote a letter to [] \wedge which
~~which~~ was very cheering [] and being unwell
 at that time and filled with much anxiety

o

it would have been very Consoling to me to
 have received a few lines from you but as you
 did not take the trouble I will try to be conte
 -nted with my lot knowing that God is my
 friend in him I shall find comfort I have
 given my [] life into his hands I am prepared
 to go at his Call I desire to be with Christ

I Count not my life dear to me only to do his
 will I am not pleased to hear that William
 Mclelin has come back and disobeyed the voice
 of him who is altogether Lovely for a woman
 I am astonished at Sister Emaline yet I cannot
 believe she is not a worthy sister I hope She

find

[] will \wedge him true and kind to her but have
 no reason to [] expect it his Conduct merits the
 disapprobation of every true follower of Christ

and has forgiven my sins and I rejoice that he
 sendeth forth the Carpenter unto as many as
 believe and humbly themselves before him
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~~will~~ ^{will} ~~him~~ ^{him} true and kind to her but have
 no reason to expect it his conduct merits the
 disapprobation of every true follower of Christ

but this is a painful subject I hope you will
 excuse my warmth of feeling in mentioning this []
 Subject and also my inability in conveying my ideas
 in writing I am happy to find that you are Still
 in the faith of Christ and at Father Smiths I
 hope you will Comfort Father and Mother in
 their trials and Hiram and ~~Jerus~~[] Jerusha
 and th[e r]est of the Family tell Sophronia I
 remember her and Kalvin in my prayers my
 respects to the rest I Should like See little
 Julia and once more take her on my knee and
 converse with you on [] all the Subjects whi-
 -ch concerns us things I Cannot is not prud-
 -ent for me to write I omit all the important
 [] things which could I See you I could make
 you acquainted with tell Brother Will[] that
 I and Brother Whitney will arrange the[]
 business of that farm when we Come give
 my respects to all the Brothern Br— Whitney
 Family [] tell them he is Chearful and
 patient and a true Brother to me I Subscr-
 -ibe myself your Husband the Lord bless
 you peace be with so Farewell untill I return

Joseph Smith Jr.

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Joseph Smith Jr