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.
Dear Wife,

I would inform you that Brother Martin has arrived here and brought the pleasing news that our Family's were well when he left them which Greately Cheerd our hearts and [re]vived our Spirits we thank our hevenly Father for his goodness [ ] unto all of you.

Martin arrived on Satterday the Same week he left Chagrin haveing a properous time we are all in good heath Brother Whitney's leg is gaining and he thinks he Shall be able to to perform his about Journy so as to get home\ as soon as the 20th. my Situation is a very unpleasent one although I will endeaver 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 meditation and prayr I have Called to mind all the past 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\ but God is mercif\
June 6th, 1838

Dear Sister,

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 relieved our fears and
renewed our spirits. We thank and
sincerely thank you for your kindness.

I am told that a large party of brothers and
sisters are arriving on Saturday.

The same week, the trip to Chicago is nearing
a prosperous time and we are all in good heart.

Brother Whitney is in Georgia and in that
state, he shall be able to do good work. I am
writing as to get home tomorrow. My
situation is a very unpleasant one,
although I will endeavor to be contented.

Last writing, I have received a great
number of letters from the town which is fast back of the town almost
which is fast back of the town almost
and have been delivered from the
weekly, which, if I can be included in the
letter of any mental and these give rise to all
the feelings of my heart in meditation and
the feelings of my heart in meditation.

And the letters of brothers for me fully in answering
the whores of my soul to take as much
and never mind me as a last but God is mindful.
and has forgiven my Sins and I rejoice that he
Sendeth forth the Comferter unto as many as
believe and humbleth themselves before him
lost
I was grieved to hear that Hiram had \^ his
little Child I think we Can in Some degree
Simpathise with him but we all must be
of the Lord
reconciled to our lots and say the will\^ be done
her husband
[   ] Sister Whitney wrote a letter to [   ]\^ which
which was very chearing [   ] and being unwell
at that time and filled with much anxiety
it would have been very Consalig to me to
have received a few lines from you but as you
did not take the trouble I will try to be conte
\^ncted 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 disobayed the voice
of him who is altogether Lovely for a woman
I am astonished at Sister Emaline yet I cannot
belive she is not a worthy sister I hope She
find
[   ] will \^ him true and kind to her but have
no reason to [   ] expect it his Conduct merits the
disappobration of every true follower of Christ
LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH

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No, her forgive my sins and I join that he
instruct forth the Comforter unto as many as
believe and humbleth them selves before you
I was pleased to hear that Harman had left
a little while I think the room in some degree
compassion with him but we all must be
summoned to our state and say the duty of
sister Hathorn wrote a letter to my which
which was very pleasing and engaging me well
at that time and filled with much anxiety
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 content
with my lot knowing that God is my
friend in time I shall find comfort I have
given my life into his hands I am prepared
to go at this I desire to be with Christ
I cannot part my life dear to me only to do his
will I am not pleased to hear that William
Hathorn has come back and destroyed the voice
of him who is altogether lovely for a woman
I am astonished at sister s other yet I cannot
believe she is not a worthy sister I hope the
well him true and thank to her that have
no reason to expect it this conduct must the
disappointment of many true followers 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 Jerusa[ ] 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 which concerns us things I Cannot is not prudent 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 Brotherh Br— Whitny Family [ ] tell them he is Cheerful and patient and a true Brother to me I Subscri-ibe myself your Husband the Lord bless you peace be with so Farewell untill I return

Joseph Smith Jr.
But this is a painful subject. I hope you will receive my sentiments of feeling on mentioning this subject and also my inability in conveying my ideas in writing. I am happy to find that you are still in the fact of Christ and at Father Smith and I hope you will comfort Father and Mother in their trials and Allen and Samuel Yerushalmi and the rest of the family. I trust you will remember me and the love in my heart to the rest. I should like to see little Julia and once more take her on my knees and compose with you on all the subjects which concern us. Things I cannot do now and I cannot write. I cannot write all the important things which could do you. I could make you acquainted with all the things that I and Brother Whitney will arrange the business of that farm when we come. Give my respects to all the Brethren. Brother Whitney is a brother to me of Israel, patient and true. Brother to me. Be yourself, your husband, the Lord bless you place. Be with us Farewell until next year.

Joseph Smith Jr.