

THE CIRCUMSTANCES, SITUATION, AND PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH

A PROCLAMATION TO THE SAINTS SCATTERED ABROAD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

BELOVED BRETHREN:-The relationship which we sustain to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, renders it necessary that we should make known from time to time, the circumstances, situation, and prospects of the Church, and give such instructions as may be necessary for the well being of the Saints, and for the promotion of those objects calculated to further their present and everlasting happiness.

We have to congratulate the Saints on the progress of the great work of the "last days," for not only has it spread through the length and breadth of this vast continent, but on the continent of Europe, and on the islands of the sea, it is spreading in a manner entirely unprecedented in the annals of time. This appears the more pleasing when we consider, that but a short time has elapsed since we were unmercifully driven from the state of Missouri, after suffering cruelties and persecutions in various and horrid forms. Then our overthrow, to many, seemed inevitable, while the enemies of truth triumphed over us, and by their cruel reproaches endeavored to aggravate our sufferings. But the Lord of Hosts was with us, the God of Jacob was our refuge, and we were delivered from the hands of bloody and deceitful men; and in the state of Illinois we found an asylum, and were kindly welcomed by persons worthy the character of freemen.

It would be impossible to enumerate all those who, in our time of deep distress, nobly came forward to our relief, and, like the good Samaritan, poured oil into our wounds, and contributed liberally to our necessities, and the citizens of Quin-

cy en masse, and the people of Illinois, generally, seemed to emulate each other in this labor of love. We would, however, make honorable mention of Governor Carlin, Judge Young, General Leech, Judge Ralston, Rev. Mr. Young, Col. Henry, N. Bushnell, John Wood, J. N. Morris, S. M. Bartlett, Samuel Holmes, and J. T. Holmes, Esquires, who will long be remembered, by a grateful community, for their philanthropy to a suffering people, and whose kindness, on that occasion, is indelibly engraved on the tablets of our hearts in golden letters of love.

We would likewise make mention of the legislators of this state, who, without respect to parties, without reluctance, freely, openly, boldly, and nobly, have come forth to our assistance, owned us as citizens and friends, and took us by the hand, and extended to us all the blessings of civil, political, and religious liberty, by granting us, under date of December 16, 1840, one of the most liberal charters, with the most plenary powers ever conferred by a legislative assembly on free citizens, "The City of Nauvoo," the "Nauvoo Legion," and the "University of the City of Nauvoo."

The first of these charters (that for the "City of Nauvoo") secures to us, in all time to come, irrevocably, all those great blessings of civil liberty which of right appertain to all the free citizens of a great civilized republic; it is all we ever claimed. What a contrast does the proceedings of the legislators of this state present when compared with those of Missouri, whose bigotry, jealousy, and superstition, prevailed to such an extent as to deny us our liberty and our sacred rights. Illinois has

set a glorious example to the whole United States, and while she requires of us implicit obedience to the laws, (which we hope ever to see observed) she affords us the protection of law, the security of life, liberty, and the peaceable pursuit of happiness.

The name of our city (Nauvoo) is of Hebrew origin, and signifies a beautiful situation, or place, carrying with it, also, the idea of rest; and is truly descriptive of the most delightful location. It is situated on the east bank of the Mississippi river, at the head of the Des Moines Rapids, in Hancock county, bounded on the east by an extensive prairie of surpassing beauty, and on the north, west, and south, by the Mississippi. This place has been objected to by some on account of the sickness which has prevailed in the summer months, but it is the opinion of Doctor Bennett, that Hancock county, and all the eastern and southern portions of the City of Nauvoo, are as healthful as any other portions of the western country, to acclimatized citizens; whilst the northwestern portion of the city has experienced much affliction from fever and ague, which, however, Doctor Bennett thinks can be easily remedied by draining the sloughs on the adjacent islands in the Mississippi.

The population of our city is increasing with unparalleled rapidity, numbering more than 3,000 inhabitants. Every facility is afforded, in the city and adjacent country, in Hancock county, for the successful prosecution of the mechanical arts and the pleasing pursuits of agriculture. The waters of the Mississippi can be successfully used for manufacturing purposes to almost an unlimited extent. Having been instrumental, in the hands of our heavenly Father, in laying a foundation for the gathering of Zion, we would say, let all those who appreciate the blessings of the Gospel, and realize the importance of obeying the commandments of heaven, who have been blessed of heaven with the possession of this world's goods, first prepare for the general gathering; let them dispose

of their effects as fast as circumstances will possibly admit, without making too great sacrifices, and remove to our city and county; establish and build up manufactures in the city, purchase and cultivate farms in the county. This will secure our permanent inheritance, and prepare the way for the gathering of the poor. This is agreeable to the order of heaven, and the only principle on which the gathering can be effected. Let the rich, then, and all who can assist in establishing this place, make every preparation to come on without delay, and strengthen our hands, and assist in promoting the happiness of the Saints. This cannot be too forcibly impressed on the minds of all, and the Elders are hereby instructed to proclaim this word in all places where the Saints reside, in their public administrations, for this is according to the instructions we have received from the Lord.

The Temple of the Lord is in process of erection here, where the Saints will come to worship the God of their fathers, according to the order of His house and the powers of the Holy Priesthood, and will be so constructed as to enable all the functions of the Priesthood to be duly exercised, and where instructions from the Most High will be received, and from this place go forth to distant lands. Let us then concentrate all our powers, under the provisions of our magna charta granted by the Illinois legislature, at the "City of Nauvoo" and surrounding country, and strive to emulate the action of the ancient covenant fathers and patriarchs, in those things which are of such vast importance to this and every succeeding generation. The "Nauvoo Legion" embraces all our military power, and will enable us to perform our military duty by ourselves, and thus afford us the power and privilege of avoiding one of the most fruitful sources of strife, oppression, and collision with the world. It will enable us to show our attachment to the state and nation, as a people, whenever the public service requires our aid, thus prov-

ing ourselves obedient to the paramount laws of the land, and ready at all times to sustain and execute them.

The "University of the City of Nauvoo" will enable us to teach our children wisdom, to instruct them in all the knowledge and learning, in the arts, sciences, and learned professions. We hope to make this institution one of the great lights of the world, and by and through it to diffuse that kind of knowledge which will be of practicable utility, and for the public good, and also for private and individual happiness. The Regents of the University will take the general supervision of all matters appertaining to education, from common schools up to the highest branches of a most liberal collegiate course. They will establish a regular system of education, and hand over the pupil from teacher to professor, until the regular graduation is consummated and the education finished. This corporation contains all the powers and prerogatives of any other college or university in this state. The charters for the University and Legion are addenda to the city charter, making the whole perfect and complete.

Not only has the Lord given us favor in the eyes of the community, who are happy to see us in the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of freemen, but we are happy to state that several of the principal men in Illinois, who have listened to the doctrines we promulgate, have become obedient to the faith, and are rejoicing in the same; among whom is John C. Bennett, M. D., Quartermaster-General of Illinois. We mention this gentleman first, because, that during our persecutions in Missouri, he became acquainted with the violence we were suffering while in that state, on account of our religion; his sympathy for us was aroused, and his indignation kindled against our persecutors, for the cruelties practiced upon us, and their flagrant violation of both the law and the Constitution. Amidst their heated zeal to put down the

truth, he addressed us a letter, tendering to us his assistance in delivering us out of the hands of our enemies, and restoring us again to our privileges, and only required at our hands to point out the way and he would be forthcoming, with all the forces he could raise for the purpose. He has been one of the instruments in effecting our safety and deliverance, from the unjust persecutions and demands of the authorities of Missouri, and also in procuring the city charter. He is a man of enterprise, extensive acquirements, and of independent mind, and is calculated to be a great blessing to our community.

Dr. Isaac Galland also, who is one of our benefactors, having under his control a large quantity of land, in the immediate vicinity of our city, and a considerable portion of the city plat, opened both his heart and his hands, and "when we were strangers, took us in," and bade us welcome to share with him in his abundance, leaving his dwelling house, the most splendid edifice in the vicinity, for our accommodation, and partook himself to a small, uncomfortable dwelling. He sold us his large estates on very reasonable terms, and on long credit, so that we might have an opportunity of paying for them without being distressed, and has since taken our lands in Missouri in payment for the whole amount, and has given us a clear and indisputable title for the same. And in addition to the first purchase, we have exchanged lands with him in Missouri to the amount of eighty thousand dollars. He is the honored instrument the Lord used to prepare a home for us, when we were driven from our inheritances, having given him control of vast bodies of land, and prepared his heart to make the use of it the Lord intended he should. Being a man of extensive information, great talents, and high literary fame, he devoted all his powers and influence to give us a standing. After having thus exerted himself for our salvation and comfort, and formed an intimate ac-

quaintance with many of our people, his mind became wrought up to the greatest feelings, being convinced that our persecutions were like those of the ancient Saints, and, after investigating the doctrines we proclaimed, he became convinced of the truth and of the necessity of obedience thereto, and, to the great joy and satisfaction of the Church, he yielded himself to the waters of baptism, and became a partaker with us in our sufferings, "Choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

In connection with these, we would mention the names of General James Adams, judge of probate, of Sangamon county; Dr. Green of Shelby county, R. D. Foster, and Sidney Knowlton, of Hancock county; Dr. Knight, of Putnam county, Indiana; many others of respectability and high standing in society, and nearly all the old settlers in our immediate neighborhood. We make mention of this that the Saints may be encouraged, and also that they may see that the persecutions we suffered in Missouri were but the prelude to a far more glorious display of the power of truth, and of the religion we have espoused.

From the kind, uniform, and consistent course pursued by the citizens of Illinois, and the great success which has attended us while here, the natural advantages of this place for every purpose we require, and the necessity of the gathering of the Saints of the Most High, we would say-let the brethren who love the prosperity of Zion, who are anxious that her stakes should be strengthened and her cords lengthened, and who prefer her prosperity to their chief joy, come and cast in their lots with us, and cheerfully engage in a work so glorious and sublime, and say with Nehemiah, "We, His servants, will arise and build." It probably would hardly be necessary to enforce this important subject on the attention of the Saints, as its necessity is obvious, and is a subject

of paramount importance; but as watchmen to the house of Israel-as shepherds over the flock which is now scattered over a vast extent of country, and the anxiety we feel for their prosperity and everlasting welfare, and for the carrying out the great and glorious purposes of our God, to which we have been called, we feel to urge its necessity, and say-Let the Saints come here; this is the word of the Lord, and in accordance with the great work of the last days. It is true, the idea of a general gathering has heretofore been associated with the most cruel and oppressing scenes, owing to our unrelenting persecutions at the hands of wicked and unjust men; but we hope that those days of darkness and gloom have gone by, and, from the liberal policy of our state government, we may expect a scene of peace and prosperity we have never before witnessed since the rise of our Church, and the happiness and prosperity which now await us, is, in all human probability, incalculably great. By a concentration of action, and a unity of effort, we can only accomplish the great work of the last days which we could not do in our remote and scattered condition, while our interests, both temporal and spiritual, will be greatly enhanced, and the blessings of heaven must flow unto us in an uninterrupted stream; of this, we think there can be no question.

The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings which always flow from faithfulness and concerted effort, never attended individual exertion or enterprise. The history of all past ages abundantly attests this fact. In addition to all temporal blessings, there is no other way for the Saints to be saved in these last days, [than by the gathering] as the concurrent testimony of all the holy Prophets clearly proves, for it is written-"They shall come from the east, and be gathered from the west; the north shall give up, and the south shall keep not back." "The sons of God shall be gathered from far, and His daughters from the ends of the earth."

It is also the concurrent testimony of all the Prophets, that this gathering together of all the Saints, must take place before the Lord comes to "take vengeance upon the ungodly," and 'to be glorified and admired by all those who obey the Gospel.'" The fiftieth Psalm, from the first to the fifth verse inclusive, describes the glory and majesty of that event.

"The mighty God, and even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth (that He may judge the people). Gather my Saints together unto me; those that have made covenant with me by sacrifice."

We might offer many other quotations from the Scriptures, but believing them to be familiar to the Saints, we forbear.

We would wish the Saints to understand that, when they come here, they must not expect perfection, or that all will be harmony, peace, and love; if they indulge these ideas, they will undoubtedly be deceived, for here there are persons, not only from different states, but from different nations, who, although they feel a great attachment to the cause of truth, have their prejudices of education, and consequently, it requires some time before these things can be overcome. Again, there are many that creep in unawares, and endeavor to sow discord, strife, and animosity in our midst, and by so doing, bring evil upon the Saints. These things we have to bear with, and these things will

prevail either to a greater or less extent until "the floor be thoroughly purged," and "the chaff be burnt up." Therefore, let those who come up to this place be determined to keep the commandments of God, and not be discouraged by those things we have enumerated, and then they will be prospered—the intelligence of heaven will be communicated to them, and they will, eventually, see eye to eye, and rejoice in the full fruition of that glory which is reserved for the righteous.

In order to erect the Temple of the Lord, great exertions will be required on the part of the Saints, so that they may build a house which shall be accepted by the Almighty, and in which His power and glory shall be manifested. Therefore let those who can freely make a sacrifice of their time, their talents, and their prosperity, for the prosperity of the kingdom, and for the love they have to the cause of truth, bid adieu to their homes and pleasant places of abode, and unite with us in the great work of the last days, and share in the tribulation, that they may ultimately share in the glory and triumph.

We wish it likewise to be distinctly understood, that we claim no privilege but what we feel cheerfully disposed to share with our fellow citizens of every denomination, and every sentiment of religion; and therefore say, that so far from being restricted to our own faith, let all those who desire to locate themselves in this place, or the vicinity, come, and we will hail them as citizens and friends, and shall feel it not only a duty, but a privilege, to reciprocate the kindness we have received from the benevolent and kind-hearted citizens of the state of Illinois.

JOSEPH SMITH
SIDNEY RIGDON
HYRUM SMITH
PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH

Nauvoo, Illinois 15 January 1841