

WE WILL NOT TURN BACK

One of the great contributions of pioneer life and of pioneer colonizing was the fact that the Latter-day Saints did not turn back.

By Elder Clifford E. Young (1883–1958)

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Clifford E. Young was born on December 7, 1883, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. In 1941 he was called as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He died on August 21, 1958. The following is an excerpt from a general conference address given in April 1947, the 100th anniversary year of the Saints' arrival in Utah. For the full address in English, go to scriptures.byu.edu.

This is a great year, an anniversary year, and I think we may reflect on some of the things that have gone before, and they may give us inspiration for the future.

I am thinking this morning of a little log cabin that stands down in Liberty Park [in Salt Lake City, Utah], built by my grandfather Riter. It was transported there from one of our pioneer lots by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers and others who are interested in preserving shrines that they may be a source of inspiration to the people.

This little log cabin is no different from many that were built in 1847. It was originally a one-room log cabin and built in that year. Later on, a partition was placed in it so that



there were two rooms. The mother who lived in that little log cabin was a convert to the Church from Pennsylvania. She, her sisters, her mother, and her husband were caught in the “gospel net” (see Matthew 13:47). . . . They too were pioneers. They came out of the world. The physical hardships may not have been quite so severe when they came, but they pioneered nevertheless. They left their homes, their kindred, and many times their own parents for an unpopular faith because they had in their souls a testimony of the divinity of this work.

Experiences of a Pioneer Family

Well, this little family to which I referred, the mother who at one time lived in this little log cabin, came to Nauvoo, there to find not a home as she expected, because shortly after she came, she was to witness the Martyrdom of the Prophet [Joseph Smith] and his brother, [Hyrum] the patriarch. Then the family moved on, and they started across those boggy Iowa plains. . . . I doubt that you and I can visualize, can appreciate, the difficulties under which they traveled. As they began their



journey, they met with discouragement, hunger, lack of things to keep them warm. The conditions were indescribable, yet there was no complaint. Oh, some of them felt and wondered why.

In this little band there was a father who was a practical fellow. He was a Pennsylvania Dutchman. He left a home where things were reasonably secure, and he said one day to his wife, “We’d better turn back. We’d better go back whence we came. Conditions are so uncertain.” That is a natural thing for any father to say. It is a natural thing for a mother to think. They were traveling among Indians and were not sure just where they were going, and conditions were not very favorable. They naturally would think of their children. They had two boys. They thought of the boys’ welfare, not of their own. I am wondering how many of us would want to turn back, but that mother wouldn’t turn back.

She had been caught in the “gospel net” (see Matthew 13:47), and she knew it was true, and so she said, “We will not turn back—we’ll not turn back; we’re going on!” That was my grandmother Riter, and her faith and indomitable spirit have always been an inspiration to me and that spirit should be a source of inspiration to all of us.

No Turning Back

This Church is now celebrating the 117th anniversary of its organization. There has been no turning back since that memorable day; there must be no turning back now. Some perhaps have dropped by the wayside. One of the great contributions of pioneer life and of pioneer colonizing was the fact that the Mormon people did not turn back. You have read the story of other pioneer companies who came to the West in those early periods. Many of them started out perhaps with 30 or 40 people and ended with

half the number. They were not home builders; they were trappers; they were men seeking something else than homes. But it was different with the Latter-day Saints. They were to come west under the direction and inspiration of a great leader to build homes, and there was little turning back. That is the inspiration for us today, my brethren and sisters, that there be no turning back, there be no wavering.

. . . We are gratified about [the growth of the Church], but when we come to analyze it, numbers mean very little. We are only strong, we’re only powerful and influential insofar as we live the things that God has revealed for us, His children. We are only a great people as we cling to those concepts that were revealed for our benefit and blessing. . . .

God help us that we may live so to do and that we may not turn back and not waver but be worthy and strong in the faith. ■